

The Exclusive Christ

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Bible Text: Colossians 2:8-9
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Well, grab your Bibles and go to Colossians 2. We're gonna be brief this evening just like I said, but I want us to look at two thoughts on these two Scriptures, actually one Scripture but we'll read two. Colossians 2, look at verses 8 and 9. Colossians 2:8-9. Let's talk about "The Exclusive Christ." The exclusive Christ and I want you to in this brief few moments to relash yourselves only and wholly to Jesus Christ plus nothing. Lash yourself to Christ by faith plus nothing else because he is the exclusive provision of God for us.

Colossians 2:8,

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

First of all, let's by introduction look at verse 4 for just a second where he says in verse 4,

4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

Now "deludes you" has the idea of cheating you out with false reasoning, cheating you of the prize by false reasoning. So there were those who would come into these churches, Paul would get the church started, he'd continue on his missionary journeys, he'd no longer get to the next town or two and he began to receive reports that the church is already beginning to entertain some other teachings. Now these guys were slick, they were sharp, they knew what to do. They would talk a lot like Paul, it would sound a lot like Paul's doctrine but then they'd have a little twist on it, they'd put a little spin on it so that at the end of it all it wasn't exclusively trusting Christ, it was Christ plus something else, and Paul calls these, they're deluding you, they're cheating you, they're robbing you, they're taking advantage of you, and they're using it with these false reasonings.

Now he uses two different categories to sort of discuss these false reasonings and I'll admit that though he seems to mention two, they are overlapping and intermingled but I wanna, I wanna talk to them in two ways. But, um, let me first of all emphasize the fact that this in the original Greek is in the imperative mood where he says the first part of

verse 8, "See to it that no one takes you captive." This is a command of God. For all you dads out there, the head of households, you are responsible to see to it that your wife and your children and those under your authority are not deluded, are not taken captive, are not led astray by false reasoning, things that sound right but they're not right, things that sound logical but they're not true. And oh, Satan is subtly doing this all over the world today. Matter of fact, um, I don't know how but I, I, I get on this feed sometimes and it has shown me service after service after service after service of some of the largest so-called church pastors in America today, and I listen to them to try to grasp, "Now just what are you saying?" And first of all, there's barely a thumb, a, a, a, a, a thumb whatever it is. What do you use when you sew, Pam? A thimble. I'm sorry, I'm jet-lagged bad. A thimble, there's not a thimble full of Scripture in their message and there's all this mumbo-jumbo stuff about you doing better and God's you're victor and all this, and I think, you know what that is? That is false reasoning. Now I struggle with coming out and just labeling all these guys classic false teachers but I'm getting closer to doing it. They're approach is like a false teacher in so many ways. Are, are, are you, dads, are you sharp enough spiritually, are you discerning? Look, Paul didn't say it's a good idea to be on alert, Paul says see to it. See to it. Don't let it happen. Don't let them come with these false reasonings.

Now left me first subpoint, our first main point, I should say, is he excludes man-made philosophy. They come in with man-made teachings and in our world today, a lot of it has to do with Freud and Skinner, worldly psychology and they weave all this psychological stuff and then they'll massage some Scripture around it, and what they've actually done is add to God's wisdom with man's wisdom. Now he says in verse 8, "See to it that no one takes you captive." The idea of a captive here is a plunderer who tries to carry away the sheep and those he cannot carry away, he scatters them so that they're not effective for the Lord. So in behind these philosophies, these false teachers will mix with Christianity, ah, is, is the notion to hurt the church and that's always driven at its source by Satan himself. Satan loves to scatter the sheep. Satan loves to lead astray. Satan loves to mess up what God's trying to build together.

So when he says don't let them take you captive, don't let the plunder come in and carry you away with these philosophies. Ah, most likely now in Paul's mind he's thinking about Gnosticism which became popular in the first century, where this group of Christian teachers would go around and say, "Well, Jesus is true and you've gotta believe in Jesus but we are superior elitists and we have special God-given spiritual insight where you can really know how to serve God and really know how to be saved. So they mixed up their worldly philosophers that exalted themselves and actually, um, that's what we're seeing a lot of today. We're seeing very talented, very clever communicators who are basically getting people dependent upon them, not upon the truth of the word and the Christ that's revealed in the word. It does me no joy to think that you're attached to me. I want you to know are you attached to the Christ this book reveals because I, I, I may be gone tomorrow. Don't plan on it but I may be gone tomorrow but if someone will faithfully exegete this text and preach it to you in the power of the Spirit, you'll still have the same Christ you've always had.

Don't let them take you captive. Now he uses the word "philosophy" here, "through philosophy and empty deception." The "philosophy" is a word that means "that which is derived of man; that which comes from man's wisdom." The Bible has this statement about there's wisdom which comes down from heaven and that's the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ alone, and then there's the wisdom that comes up from the earth. It's natural, the Bible says, and demonic. It's of man. He says, "Be careful. They come in and they bring in these man, ah, foundationed or man-centered philosophies and when they put it all together, they're really contradicting sound doctrine."

Then he amplifies the word "philosophy" and he says "and empty deception." Actually that defines what philosophy is. Philosophy is empty deception. Best definition I've ever heard. It's an old statement, you've heard it before but you know what a, a, a, a, a philosopher is or what philosophy is? It's a blind man in a dark room trying to find a black cat that isn't there. Just, just talking about stuff of no real conclusion to it. Philosophy is always empty deception because it starts with man and when you start with man, you start with an empty starting point. What a, what a thing he's saying here. So be careful. If, if, if you're hearing preaching, listen for verse by verse exegesis of the text interpreted in its grammatical and systematic context. Make sure that's the kind of conclusions we're coming to. Matter of fact, what I'm doing here is a good example of what you need to look for, just unpacking what the text says and making application to our lives.

Now secondly, not only does he exclude man-made philosophy, Jesus is exclusive so he excludes man-made religion. He amplifies this on out in verse 8 and says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception," now here's the second category, it intermingles but I want to use it as a separate one, "according to the tradition of men," then he amplifies that, "according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Now when he says according to the traditions of men, he means those things that are passed down generation to generation, those sincerely held beliefs and practices that are not thoroughly biblical, they're just traditions of men, and as we want to point out and we do regularly here from this pulpit, a lot of what's happening in contemporary churches in Christianity that's not sound, let's be real honest and talk about that some of grandma and grandpa's traditions weren't all that sound either. There was a lot of traditionalism in some of the old, county seat, Baptist churches that wasn't very biblical or solid. I think I'd take it over some of the new stuff, but nevertheless too much of it was not thoroughly biblical, it was just a tradition, that, "That's the way my daddy did it and that's the way my granddaddy did it, and that's what my grandmother believed, that's what my great grandmother believed and that's good enough for me." That's wrong. You should honor and respect your forefathers of the faith but don't ever stop learning where they stopped, and that's the best way to honor. If they're in heaven, you know what they're saying? "Oh, dear child, don't stop on the errors I stopped on. You learn more about Christ and more about truth that I knew, and you go on for God." Don't we want every generation to go on for God further than we did? Of course we do.

So when he says, "Be careful, there's traditions that men begin to embrace," and what happens is one generation a few generations ago began to do a certain practice or a certain custom and then the next generation picked it up, and the next generation picked it up, and the next generation picked it up, and they believed it's absolutely true, ah, biblical practice when really the first generation just said, "This is an idea we might try," and now it's become a solidified tradition. Be careful. He says, "See to it that you don't get led astray by these."

Now not only traditions of men, he amplifies that with this phrase in verse 8, "the elementary principles of the world." I think this is most certainly pointing to the religious traditions of Judaism. That's the other side of the coin he was battling, the Gnostic philosophers, they'd try to mingle in with Christianity their teachings, and then the Judaizers, the traditional Jewish rituals and legalisms, they tried to bring that in and mixed that up with Jesus and both are wrong.

Now why would he call these things, um, that are the outward ceremonies and laws, rituals and laws of Judaism, why would he call them the elementary principles of the world? Because you can take any average 12 year old child and sit them down and tell you, tell them, "If you'll go through these motions, you'll dot these i's and cross these t's and do these do's and don't do those don'ts, God will accept you," and you'll think, "That makes common sense. That sounds logical." That's elementary. It's just not true. What he means is in the mind of fallen man, he loves works religion. It's just elementary to us. It's just the way we're cut. All men are born Arminians. All men are born saying, "I must do something. I must join something. I must go through some rite, some formula, some ritual. There are things I must do and then I can know God accepts me." Paul says, "Don't let that happen. Don't be taken captive by that teaching. Your salvation is by grace alone, in, by faith alone, in Christ alone. Period. I want to leave you shipwrecked on Jesus Christ and stranded on omnipotence." Nothing, nothing, nothing else. Not a Catholic tradition, not a Methodist tradition, not Episcopalian tradition, not a Pentecostal tradition, and not a Baptist tradition. Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ alone is our doctrine. Let everything else be done away with. Get rid of all of it. Get rid of everything, everything that we look to other than Christ.

Paul says, "See to it." This isn't a mild thing. "See to it." Nothing, nothing competes with pure and simple and whole devotion to Christ crucified, buried and raised again. That's your hope. Don't you come to me and say, "Well, I prayed this prayer." I'm glad you prayed the prayer but are you trusting Christ? You can pray the prayer a million times and never embrace him by faith. The flesh loves to do stuff like that. I'm not saying that's wrong, I'm saying that's not the basis of your faith. The basis of your faith is not what you did, it's who he is.

So he says, "See to it." You say, "Pastor, that's hard to grasp." I know it is and that's why you don't like it. As Spurgeon used to say, "Your flesh would love for me to give you something to do at the end of the sermon so you could feel like you're now right with God." Your flesh would love it. See to it that no one takes you captive because this stuff is so appealing to the natural man. Every religion known to man is filled with outward

ceremonies that cannot bring man to God or bring God to man. They all are the same way. Since the fall of man in the garden of Eden, man has clamored after some way he could participate in saving himself. Cain comes to God with the work of his hands, offered a grain vegetable sacrifice. Abel comes to God with a slain animal, pointing to the fact that someone on his behalf will die and save him and he cannot provide it. The Bible says Abel came in faith, trusting God's provision. Cain comes with the work of his hands and God says, "Cain, I reject it. I reject it." And what happened to Cain? He got mad. Have you ever noticed those who trust works salvation get mad easy? They do. You just be around one for a while and talk about it. They get mad, and you know what's gonna happen? At the judgment bar of God, God's gonna say, "You trusted your works. Depart from Me, I never knew you." You know what they're gonna, they're gonna get mad. They're gonna say, "I did all of this! I denied myself this and that! I turned away from this and that and I did this work and this work and I joined this church and I had the sacraments and I did the ceremonies and I was faithful to the rituals! I gave so much money!" God's gonna say, "Depart from Me, you and all your blasphemous proud works you would bring before the blood of My Son, claiming you have some merit to stand before the righteous dignity of the Triune holy God. Depart!" And they're gonna be angry. You ever wondered why the Bible says hell's full of weeping and gnashing of teeth? They're mad. They're angry and they'll never get over it. They'll burn with rage that God rejected their efforts. Cain got mad and the legalists have been mad every since.

The point is this: don't let any philosophy come in until you simple faith in Jesus is not enough. Don't let any religious teaching, religious rites, religious ordinances come in and somehow take you captive, teaching you that there's something other than simple faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is all you need because Christ is the only true Savior. He is perfection. Now think about it, the great Creator became my Savior and all God's fullness, the songwriter said, dwelleth in him. Now if God came to save you, what are you gonna add to that? How you gonna fix that? How you gonna make that better? You're gonna call, ah, ah, Sigmund Freud, the great father of psychology and say, "Can you, can you add a little bit to Jesus?" I'll run through that wall and run back on the other side and make two holes in this building if you said that. Don't you ever, ever, ever, ever hint to me that you gonna add something to Jesus. It is Christ and Christ alone that saves, and I might add, he's mighty to save. He is the perfect one. He's the only one. All others are empty deception.

Now when you go on to verse 8, he says, ah, "See to it," that's the command, men, heads of the households, you'd better make sure, God's ordering you this, "that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, the elementary principles of the world," now here's an interesting phrase, "rather than according to Christ." Here's what he's saying, any, if you take the tiniest molecule of philosophy and add it to Jesus, you've lost Jesus. You take the tiniest element of religious tradition or works and say, "You gotta have that in Jesus," you lose Jesus. You cannot add him to anything and keep him. The moment you bring something in the room in addition to him, he walks right out. There is no one that he will accommodate. Our salvation is Christ and Christ alone. Do not add philosophy to him. Do not add religion to him. Do not add works to him. Do not add ritual to him. Do not, do not add ethics to him

or morality to him or Freud to him or Skinner to him or anybody else. Christ and Christ alone saves and when we look to Christ, we reject all others.

"Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know
Could my tears forever flow.
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.
Foul I fly to fountain fly, fly I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes shall close in death.
When I soar to worlds unknown,
And see Thee on Thy judgment throne.
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

The exclusive Christ. This moment, at this time, throw yourself in whole complete dependence on Jesus Christ for your salvation and nothing else. It's not a good idea, Paul commands it, "See to it that no one tries to add anything else."