

Colossians
Part 7: The Sufficiency of Christ
2:8-15
2.12.2012

Colossians 2:8-15/Prayer

In this series thus far, I have told you a few times that there was a heresy or a false teaching spreading in Colossae. We are not certain what it was exactly, but there are clues to it. Paul now devotes some time to identifying and disarming it.

VERSE 8

He says in verse 8, “*See to it...*” So this is on them. They must look and watch and be careful “*that no one takes you captive* [the idea here is an invading army who takes back slaves] *by philosophy and empty deceit...*”

NOT AGAINST PHILOSOPHY

Now Paul is not against philosophy. We like philosophy. Its powerful, its effective, and its fun. So here is an example:

“*Why aren't squares round?*”

“*Why don't bachelors have wives?*”

That contradicts. You've just used philosophy; reason, logic. Paul isn't against that. He is against empty, deceitful, human systems that are “*according to human tradition...*” They are man-made, man driven, and human focused. **See when man goes, God goes down.** Then he says they are “*according to elemental spirits of the world.*” So they are human and spiritual. What does this mean?

IN ANCIENT WORLD

In the ancient world, there was a god behind everything. There were gods of weather, beauty, fertility, crops, light and darkness. And you had to **appease** those gods by living a certain way. In **our time** there is a big gap between the physical and the spiritual. In Paul's day, those lines were blurred, everything was spiritual. **So the elemental spirits are semi-demonic forces behind the physical elements that humans gave their allegiance.** But what does that mean?

LOOK AT 2:16

Look at chapter 2:16, “*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.*” Now look in **verse 21**: “*Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch.*” So the **heresy said**, “To be spiritual, to be saved, you had to eat and drink certain things, recognize certain days and festivals, and not touch certain things.” So things like alcohol, marriage, sex, and certain meats were forbidden.

THE MAIN ISSUE

The main issue was, to please God, you need more than Jesus. You need more rules, more boundaries, more laws, more work, more effort, more limits, more DO's and DONT's. Which is very appealing. Many sermons say “**DO MORE! BE BETTER!**” Be a better:

husband,

father

wife

pray more

read more

serve more, then God will be pleased

Paul called that demonic, empty, human centered, and enslaving.

BUT ITS VERY ATTRACTIVE

See, our heart longs boast. It longs to be good and worthy and righteous and justified without Christ.

SAY SOMEONE BRAGS ON KIDS

For example, when someone brags on your kids and says, *“They are so well behaved and polite and quiet.”* [no one tells me that! Doesn't a voice in your head go, *“We're good parents. They don't watch TV. They don't have cell phones. They don't watch Harry Potter.”* And that could be why. But your heart wants the glory and wants the credit. But its all grace. You are a sinner raising sinners. Good luck with that one. You need buckets of grace.

VERSE 8

The main problem is in verse 8, they are, *“not according to Christ.”* This teaching, this heresy is not against Christ. It includes Jesus. But it attempts to add to him, its Jesus plus something else. **But adding to Christ is subtracting from Christ.** He is all you need.

THE QUESTION WE OFTEN ASK

The question we often ask of something is, “Is this right or wrong?” “Can I do this?”

Can I:

“watch this movie?”

“Eat this food?”

“Buy this thing?”

“Date that guy?”

“Take that job?”

“Wear that dress?”

“Invest this money?”

So right or wrong is the main issue for us. But that can enslave you. Your **heart** can use that to puff you up, to make you prideful, self-righteous, cold towards others, and forgetful of Christ. See your **sins are dangerous**. But **good works** can be just as dangerous. You use those to crush others, and put God in your debt. You can do and do and do and then think, *“Now God can love me. Now He is pleased with me. Now He can bless me.”*

John Gertsner: The thing that really separates us from God is not so much our sin, but our damnable good works.

SO I'D RATHER YOU ASK

I'd rather us ask, “If I do this, will it magnify Christ more?” “Will I get more Him?” “Will it please Him?” “Will I love Him and trust Him more or less?” Those are different. They get us Christ!

PAUL WANTS THEM

So Paul wants them to stay in grace, to see Christ as sufficient, to watch legalistic, man-centered philosophy. ***How do we stay in grace?*** With the Gospel of course. The Gospel keeps you in grace. It keeps you boasting and bragging in the Cross; in what Christ did, not what you do. But what does that look like? It means trusting that:

We are under Christ's authority (vv.9-10)

We are a new people in Christ (vv.11-12)

We are free in Christ (vv.13-15)

If we hold to that, you'll stay in grace. But if we forget this, we'll find ourselves doing more and more and more, **just to keep God happy, avoid suffering, and keep the blessings coming**. And we won't even notice it. We just struggle with grace don't we? We want to be loved by God, for a reason. Grace is love without reasons. It is one-sided love.

I WATCHED THE VOICE LAST WEEK

On the show singers audition to judges whose backs are turned. If they like the sound of the voice they hear, they turn their chairs around and the words I Want You light up. That is an example of worldly grace. Worldly grace says "*You are loved because you are worthy.*" Biblical grace says, "*You are worthy because you are loved.*"

So how do you stay in grace?

#1 WE ARE UNDER CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

Look at verse 9: "*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*" So in Christ, all of God dwells. He is not 1/3 God or 1/2 God, He is God. This means, that **you cannot know or experience God, outside of Christ**. To know God is to know Christ; to know Christ is to know God. This flies in the face of the heresy there. Christ was important to them, but he wasn't enough. They had to add more rules and regulations and teachings to Him. He was like God's sidekick.

VERSE 10

Verse 10: "*and you have been filled in him...*" All you need, you have. All you need to be spiritual, to please God, to be a worthy person, you already have. He goes on and says, "*who is the head of all rule and authority.*" Do you **hear what Paul is saying?** He is saying that Christ is over all those so-called gods and authorities and spirits and forces that decide what add to Christ.

You are under His authority. You are in Him. He declares you righteous. He declares you right in God's sight.

He declares you worthy before God. **NOT** your

quiet time

what you don't say

don't watch

don't wear

don't drink

how you parent

how much you give

how much you know

how much you read

how much you serve or lack thereof!

But thinking that it does, is so attractive. I've tried to impress God, with praying, with giving, with fasting. My heart just defaults to that. Which is so silly.

CHARLES SPURGEON

Told a story about a farmer and nobleman. The farmer grew this enormous carrot and brought it to his king. He said, "***O king, this is my best carrot. I want you to give it to you, as a token of my love for you.***" The king discerned his heart and then gave him a huge plot of his land. But in the king's court, there as nobleman who heard about this. He thought, "***If a carrot gets you that, what could something better get?***" So he brings the king a handsome black stallion. He said, "***O King, this is my best horse, I want to give it to you, as a token of my love for you.***" The king discerned his heart and said "***Thank you***" and dismissed him. He was perplexed by this. The King said to him, "***He gave me the carrot, but you gave yourself the horse.***"

WE DO THIS

We do this, we give ourselves the money. We give ourselves the prayer time. We give ourselves the sacrificial service. But **our authority is Christ**. He has accomplished all we need. Because of Him:

you can't be more or less loved by God.

You can't be more or less worthy in God's sight.

You can't be more or less just in God's sight.

You can't be more or less accepted by God.

But trusting that and feeling that is a daily battle. Please be cautious of the **magic bullet** for the Christian life.

I DID THE YOUTH CAMP SCENE

I did the youth camp scene. I went to some, I spoke at some. I know what happens there. Its getting better. But the message I heard was, "***Come to the Cross. Lay all your sins down. Lay all your lust and greed and Metallica CD's at the Cross, and leave them there. Nail them down and walk away.***" So I did that. Then Monday came. Those sins rode the bus back. So what do you do? Get saved again. Get baptized again. Pray it takes this time.

Then I realized sin wasn't going away. It is a Gospel battle to believe that Christ defines your value and worth and salvation.

So you are under Christ's authority...

2 YOU'RE A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST

Knowing that keeps us in grace. We are new people in Christ, the old is gone, the new has come. Look at verse **11**: "***In him also you were circumcised...***" In the Old Testament Jewish boys at birth (around) were circumcised. It was a sign of God's covenant with them. It said, "This person is mine." So when you met Christ, your spiritual birth, you also were circumcised. But this was spiritual. It was "***made without hands...***" It wasn't physical. It was spiritual.

HE GOES ON...

"by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." So your old self, your flesh, your sinful nature was cut off when you met Christ. You are now a new person, with a new family, and new desires and new affections and new inclinations.

Look at **verse 12**: “*having been buried with him in baptism...*” So you died with Christ. Your baptism shows that. It portrays what happened to you, when you received Christ. You died and were buried and “*in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*” So His death is your death, His life is your life.

POINT HERE IS

But the point here is, you are **new**. You died to that old way of life. You are dead to **legalism** and **moralism** and **man-centered** earning and meriting God’s favor. You’re also dead to sin. You have no need for sin. You have no need for idols. You have no need for **lust** and **greed** and **pride** and **idolatry** and **envy** and **gossip** and **laziness** and **sinful anger** and **fear of man** and **sensual pleasures** and **un-forgiveness** and **bitterness** and **self-pity** and **leveling**. You are a new person.

NOW I WANT TO BE CLEAR ON SOMETHING

We are heavy on grace here. We are heavy on indicatives here, what Christ did for us. We are heavy on His work, not ours. I hope you hear that. You can’t overdue grace. Once you get grace, it radically changes you.

Grace is NOT: “God loves you as you are.”

Grace IS: “God loves as you are *and* will radically change you.”

Grace is NOT: “Do whatever sin you want and God deals with it.”

Grace IS: “He dealt with your sin, now do whatever He wants”

So if you hear all this **grace talk** and you:

still yell at your wife and kids

or you still view porn,

or you still aren’t giving

Grace hasn’t overtaken you.

GRACE IS RUTHLESS

Grace is ruthless! God will not give up on growing and maturing and molding and carving you to look like Christ. **Psalm 130** has been so real to me of late, especially verse 3-4:

*If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.*

So you under Christ’s authority, you are a new person in Christ, and thirdly

#YOU ARE FREE IN CHRIST

Verse 13 Paul says that you were dead in your trespasses. Trespass is a willful sin. The sign said “NO TRESPASSING!” And you hopped the fence. But **verse 13** says, “*God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses...*” So to God you were dead in your sins. You were a spiritual corpse. **Nothing**

you did was pleasing to God. Your best day was death in God's sight. But God **gave you life by,** forgiving **all** your past, present, and future sins.
But how?

VERSE 14

Look at verse 14: *"by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands."* The picture here is a book, a **ledger** as it were, that tallies every sin you commit. Every evil thought, every sinful gaze, every wrong motivation, it tallies. And you can never balance it. It stands against us. But God just cancelled it. But notice how, *"This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."*

ROMANS

So the Romans crucified criminals and above them was nailed their crime, their accusations. So what Paul is saying is that your crime, your sins, your trespasses, your record of debt, was nailed to a cross, but below that record was not you, it was **Someone else.**

Someone else took your place.

Someone else died there.

Someone else took your debt.

God's Son became God's enemy, to make you God's enemies (you and I), into His sons and daughters.

VERSE 15

Verse 15: *"He disarmed [stripped off] the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."* So when an army won a battle, they would parade through the streets with the spoils and the prisoners of the war. When Christ died, He disarmed all the rulers and powers and authorities in this world. He is now the Victor. He has all authority and rule and power and One Day, we'll all see that.

STRANGE THING IS

Now the strange this is, it was rulers and authorities that killed Christ. Rome and the Jews, they **stripped** Him, they **put Him to shame**, they **triumphed** over Him. But in so doing, God was disarming them, and putting them to shame and conquering them.

I READ THIS WEEK

I read this week that despite the down economy last year in America, that cosmetic surgery went up dramatically. That is so interesting to me. We saw the lowest numbers in years, but thousands were still spent just to look better.

WE ARE A SELF-FOCUSED PEOPLE

We must fight against that in our spiritual life. We must fight against:

putting God in our debt,

trying to pay God back,

buy God off,

trying to impress God

trying be good enough for Him

adding to Christ

thinking that doing more pleases Him

comparing ourselves to others

thinking *“Now God can love me. Now He can use me.”*

We must look to Christ

Robert Murray McCheyne: *“For every look at yourself take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely.”*