

Week of February 19, 2012

Christ – the Center of My Belief

Passage Outline:

1. **Choose Fullness over Emptiness** - Colossians 2:8-14
2. **Choose Substance over Shadows** - Colossians 2:16-19
3. **Choose Relationship over Rules** - Colossians 2:20-23

What's This About?

Our study today is about keeping Christ the center of your belief by rejecting any thinking or practices that deny the centrality of Christ.

How Can Impact Your Life?

We will recognize the importance of sound doctrine and evaluate all spiritual-truth claims in light of the Bible and that have Christ as their focus and fulfillment.

1. **Choose Fullness over Emptiness** - Colossians 2:8-14

Colossians 2:8-14

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority... Having been buried with him in baptism [you are now] raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your sins... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

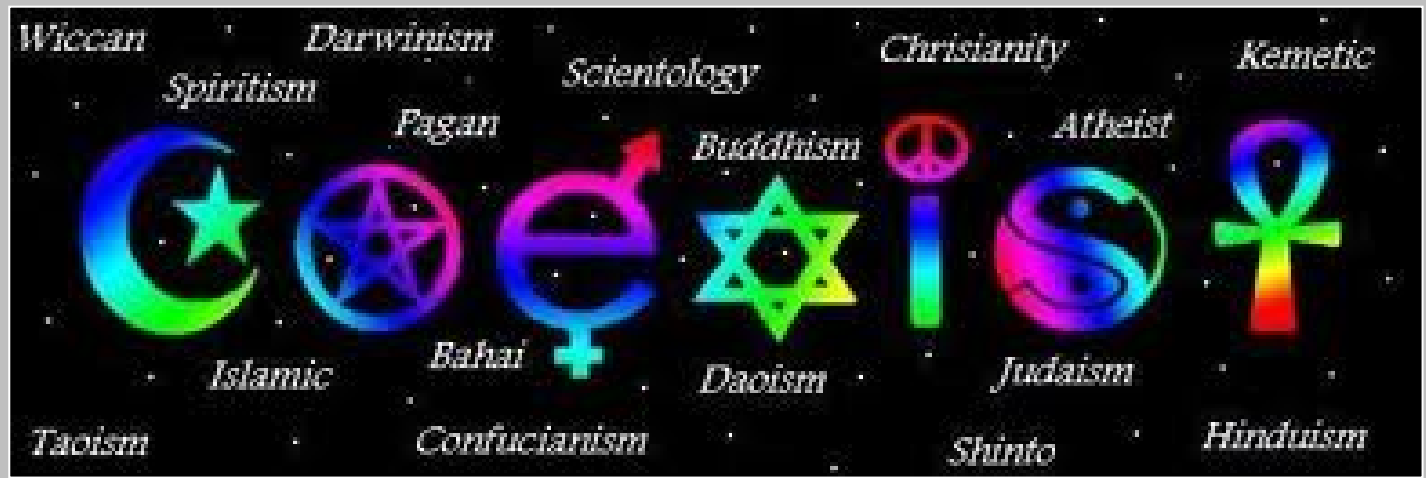
- A. Paul exhorted believers to guard against being taken **captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy**. The word *Philosophy* means “love of wisdom” and probably refers to the doctrine false teachers were touting as genuine wisdom.
- B. These false teachers were leading people with hollow, misleading words that had no real value.
- C. Paul urged believers to stay alert so false teachers would not take them captive, which has the sense of being victimized, of being kidnapped or taken by a slave trader.
- D. Paul did not want believers to become prey to false teachings **based on human tradition**—worthless, harmful doctrine based on handed-down theory, and not on the Scriptures.
- E. The false teachings also were **the basic principles of this world**, refers to the false teachers’ hodge-podge doctrine, likely including an emphasis on spiritual powers that occupied planets and stars and controlled people’s lives and futures. The teachers asserted that secret knowledge they could impart held the key to overcoming these powers. Combined with this erroneous doctrine were Jewish emphases on sabbaths, circumcision, the law, and special days and festivals.
- F. Paul warned that the false teaching was **not based on Christ**. Christ was not the teaching’s source or content. He is the source and measure of all human knowledge, of belief and life.
- G. The false teachers used the word **fullness** to refer to a series of powers emanating from God. They believed a holy God could not create matter, which they considered evil. Thus, God worked through

a descending order of beings, the last of which created the world. To relate to God, a person had to move through this series of powers. The false teachers claimed to have secret knowledge to enable individuals to work through the powers to get to God and His fullness.

- H. Paul asserted that **the entire fullness of God's nature**—the complete Deity—**dwells bodily in Christ**. Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate, fully human and fully divine. Paul answered those who denied Jesus' humanity or who separated divine Christ from human Jesus.
- I. Christ was all believers needed for salvation and full life. They were fully complete in Him. He was supreme **over every ruler and authority**; He was superior to all powers, real or imagined, the false teachers could name.

False Teachings Today

Have you seen this sign or bumper-sticker around today? Do you know what it stands for? What it means?



- J. Paul used Christian **baptism** to emphasize three major points of believers' identification with Christ: death, burial, and resurrection.
 - i. In the waters of Baptism, our sinful nature was put to dead and was buried **with Him**. Having died, we have made a complete break with our old life.
 - ii. Rising from the waters of Baptism, we also rose **with Him** to new life. The power that raised Christ from the grave gave newness of life to people formerly dead in sins.
- K. We were spiritually dead, but God raised us from spiritual death even as He raised Christ from the grave.
- L. We are **alive** together with Christ. God's giving us new life involved His forgiving our sin.
- M. Paul used the IOU's of his time to emphasize the magnitude of God's forgiveness. A **certificate of debt** was a personally signed, legal document acknowledging indebtedness. God blotted out or cancelled the believers' tremendous sin-debt they could not pay.
- N. God wiped away the bond of indebtedness **by nailing it to the cross**. Christ's atoning death is the means of people's freedom from their sin-debt to God.

2. Choose Substance over Shadows - Colossians 2:16-19

Colossians 2:16-19

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸Do not let anyone... disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. ¹⁹He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

- A. Paul urged believers not to allow **anyone** to **judge** their religious practices. *Judge* has the force of condemning.
- The false teachers criticized the Christians on diet and special days. Evidently, their doctrine was a mixture of Gentile and Jewish elements. They insisted some foods and drinks were approved and others were taboo.
 - The false teachers also promoted observance of holy days. The **festival** likely referred to the annual Jewish feasts; the **new moon** indicated the monthly festivals; and the **Sabbath day** referred to weekly observances.
 - Paul did not want believers to become entangled in rules and rituals that would shift their focus away from their personal relationship with Christ and His sufficiency for salvation and Christian living.

What Human Rules and Rituals?

Today, we must be aware of any teaching that judges or excludes certain actions on the basis of arbitrary human criteria. Church buildings styles and/or certain appointed furniture are often judged inappropriate based on these human criteria. What items in our Church building did God command us to have and use? Check mark **ONLY** those God Commanded!

Altar Lectern Pulpit Pews Organ Guitar Screen

Did God command us to use any of these? Yes No

Why did the Church choose to use these things? _____

- B. Paul declares that anyone who elevates these kinds of things has **lost connection to the head** - Christ. Christ was not Lord of his life.
- C. Christ's people—His church or body—drew its nourishment and unity from Him. God enables the body to grow.
- D. Spiritual growth occurs only in personal relationship with Christ. Also, we grow spiritually as we stay connected to a community of believers in Christ's body, the Church.

3. Choose Relationship over Rules - Colossians 2:20-23

Colossians 2:20-23

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

- A. Paul was concerned that some believers were turning to humanly-devised regulations that supposedly led to greater spirituality. That's why he stressed that believers had **died with Christ to these basic principles of this world**.
- B. The false teachers' rigid system included rules prescribing what could and could not be practiced.
- C. Paul stressed that a relationship with Christ, not religious rules, determined believers' spiritual condition.
- D. **Why**, then, were some Christians reverting to their former lifestyles, as though they **belonged to the world**? Why did they choose to become enslaved to (willingly **submit to**) humanly contrived, legalistic **regulations**?
- E. Paul quoted three legalistic regulations the false teachers prescribed: Do not handle; Do not taste; Do not touch:
- F. All these regulations concerned things that were consumable; they perished by **being used up**. They were temporary, not eternal.
- G. "Adiaphran" are things which God has not commanded nor forbidden. These rules were human in origin— **commands** and teachings concocted people.
- H. Paul knew that when we focus on such external, non-essential matters, they would replace a person's relationship with Christ.
- I. The hook is that some of these regulations seem reasonable and sound.
- J. We need to be aware that not all teachings that sound good or have the appearance of wisdom are actually of any value. Most become a subtle replacement for Jesus Christ.
- K. Paul highlighted three elements of these false doctrine being passed off as necessary for salvation and true spirituality:
 - i. Self-imposed worship: All things like style, tradition, music, liturgy, language, stained glass can all help us in worship but none has been commanded by God.
 - ii. False Humility: has the sense of a false self-denial openly displayed in such acts as fasting or major contributions.
 - iii. Harsh treatment of the body: conveys the idea of deliberately denying oneself valid physical needs to prompt unusual experiences they could interpret as religious.
- L. Paul emphatically refuted the **value** of such practices in helping believers combat evil. Such religious practices will never enable believers to overcome evil; only Christ's indwelling presence and power could do that.