

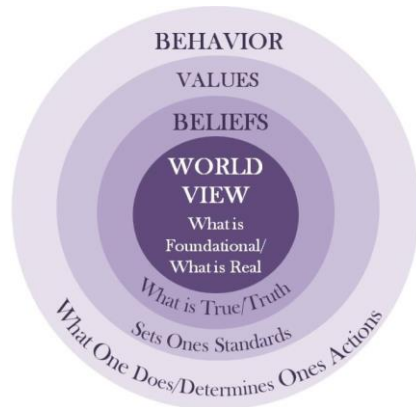
PHILOSOPHY OR CHRIST?

Deity is in Christ

Colossians 2:6-10

From the beginning of recorded history, man has pondered questions regarding his *ultimate reality* and *purpose*. He has continually sought an *explanation* for the universe around him and the *meaning* of his own existence. Many different *worldly philosophies* have inadequately tried to answer these questions.

The word **philosophy** comes from two Greek words...*phileo*, to love... and *sophia*, wisdom. **Philosophy** is the *love* and *pursuit of wisdom*. Because everyone has a *view regarding life*, in one sense, everyone is a *philosopher*...and has a *philosophy for life*. It's now called a *worldview*.



Most worldviews and most philosophers *deny the existence of God*...or *hold an unbiblical view of Him*, such as *deism*, *pantheism*, or *universalism*. It's a study of *unregenerate men* desperately trying to determine *ultimate truth* apart from God.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

~Romans 1:20-22

Francis Schaeffer once emphasized...*man cannot begin with himself and arrive at ultimate reality*. Paul agreed with that assessment.

“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”

~I Corinthians 2:6-10

The city of **Colossae** also had its *philosophers*. The church there faced the danger of being *infiltrated by false teaching*...just as we do in the church today. The church throughout history has had to fight to maintain its *doctrinal purity*. This was of great concern for **Paul**. As a result ...**Colossians 2:8-23** became the heart of this epistle.

The specific *heresy* threatening the **Colossians** isn't mentioned by **Paul** ...but we can see from **verses 8-23** *certain beliefs* that allow us to understand the attack that they are facing.

- **Verses 8-15** contain elements of *philosophy*.
- **Verses 16-17**, *legalism*.
- **Verses 18-19**, *mysticism*.
- **Verses 20-23**, *asceticism* (self-denial...self-discipline...abstinence).

Because those beliefs were shared by the *first-century Jewish sect* known as the **Essenes**, we can assume that they (or a group holding similar beliefs) were the ones threatening the **Colossian** believers.

This *heresy* also had components that were from an early form of **Gnosticism**...the belief that there was *a transcendent kind of knowledge beyond Christians doctrine, known only to elite individuals who had ascended to that level*. It was teaching that **Jesus** was *neither God* nor *the source of all truth*. Of course...this was a direct attack on His **deity** and **sufficiency**.

After exhorting believers *to continue in Christ*...the One in whom the *fullness of God dwelt*...and in whom *complete redemption* was brought

(vs. 6-7)...Paul then turned to condemn the Colossian *heresy* that was diverting them from Christ.

I. THE EXHORTATION...Walk in Christ (vs. 6-7)

Verses 6-7 concluded what Paul began to emphasize back in Colossians 1:15. And they can be the summary as such...*Divine exaltation* belongs to Christ and Christ alone (Colossians 1:15-20). And in Him is found...

- a. Reconciliation to God (1:21-23) (II Corinthians 5:17-21).
- b. The revelation of the mystery of Christ (1:24-27)...the Church being made up of both Jews and Gentiles as *joint heirs* in Christ.
- c. Believers' perfection (1:28-29)...to be made *complete* in Christ.
- d. Wisdom and knowledge (2:1-5).

As a result, believers should continue to *live in Him* (vs. 6-7).

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (vs. 6)...

The Christian life *continues* just as it *commenced* (began)...in Christ and Christ alone. **Having received Christ Jesus as Lord...**one must have a conviction about His *deity* and *sufficiency*. This allows the believer to *stand firm* against the attacks of *false teachers*.

So walk in Him...Walk refers to *daily behavior*. In this context, it means to *continue believing the truth about Christ...not wavering in one's belief*. Walking in Christ means *living in union with Him*. It means to *maintain a lifestyle patterned after Him*.

"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

~I John 2:4-6

Paul also gave the same kind of *exhortation* to other *churches* and other *believers* that he wrote to...to walk in Him.

Having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude (vs. 7)...

- **Firmly rooted...Having been firmly rooted...**Gk. *errizomenoi*, **perfect tense participle**...*action in the here and now*. Like a tree with *deep roots* in *rich soil*, believers have been *firmly rooted* in Christ. That planting took place at *salvation*. Christ then becomes the source of our *spiritual nourishment, growth, and fruit*.
- **Built up...now being built up in Him...**Gk. *epoikodomoumenoi*, **present tense participle**, indicating *continuous action*. As we walk in Christ, *studying the word*, believers will grow in His *grace* and *knowledge*, becoming *complete* in Christ. *Edified*.
- **Established...established in your faith...**Gk. *bebaioumenoi*, **passive voice participle**. Indicates that it is God who will *establish believers*. Having such a firm foundation for faith based on walking in Christ is imperative for a healthy Christian life.
- **Grateful...overflowing with gratitude...**Gk. *perisseuontes*...this is the only **participle** in this phrase that is in the **active voice**. It indicates that believers who are **firmly rooted** in Christ...being **built up** in Him...and **established in their faith**...will **overflow with gratitude** to God. A *grateful heart* for all God has given us in Christ will further strengthen our grip on the truth.

II. THE WARNING...The Deficiency of Philosophy (vs. 8)

There exist *two worldviews* that are *irreconcilable* and *in conflict* with each other. And they have been in conflict with each other *from the beginning of creation*. Ultimately it will determine *who will have authority* in our life.

- *Will it be God?* A Biblical Worldview.
- *Will it be ourselves?* A Humanistic Worldview.

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 (vs. 8)...

See to it...the **present tense imperative** indicates Paul's call to the Colossians to have *a constant watch* because *danger is near*. The church has always constantly faced the danger of...*false teachers, false prophets, ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing*, etc...but here, Paul specifically warns them to be careful **that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception**.

Takes you captive...Gk. *sulagogeō*, a rare word used only here in the New Testament...and not at all in extrabiblical Greek until long after Paul's time. It literally means *to kidnap* or *to carry off as spoils of war*. Paul is concerned that those who have been *redeemed* could be *vulnerable* and become prisoners of some spiritual predator *teaching false doctrine*.

Paul describes the means the *false teachers* would use to *kidnap* the Colossians.

- **through philosophy**...means *to love and pursue wisdom*. Here it would have referred to *a higher knowledge that could only be attained through a mystical experience*.

"...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

~II Timothy 3:7

- **and empty deception**...means *to fraud* or *trick*. The philosophy of the false teachers was not what it appeared to be. It sounded good, and seduced the minds of those who were deceived by it, but in reality, it was an *insipid illusion*.

"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

~II Corinthians 10:5

Paul then gives *two sources* for such *vain speculation*.

- **according to the tradition of men**...refers to *that which is given from one to another and is handed down through the years*. Just because someone believes something...and even if it is handed down through the years...it doesn't make it true.

Judaism is an example of the *effects of tradition*. The *Jewish leaders* and *teachers* had *encrusted* the Word of God with so many *customs, rituals*, and *teachings* that they were no longer able to distinguish *what was the Word of God, from the traditions of man*. (From the **10 Commandments** to *between 600-700 man-made laws* imparted by the **Jewish religious leaders**).

Mark 7 records an exchange between the **Scribes** and **Pharisees** and **Jesus** on this subject. In **verse 5**, they asked Jesus, *"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the traditions of the*

elders?" Jesus replied in **verses 8-9**, *"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men...You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."*

- **according to the elementary principles of the world**...the exact meaning of this phrase is difficult to translate. It literally means *things in a row* and primarily refers to the *letters of the alphabet*. It's being used to describe the heresy as being a false belief system of *rudimentary* and *simplistic teachings*...*regressing* from the *mature teachings* of Scripture to the *infant teachings* of an *immature religion*. It's describing one trying to live the Christian life based on *cliché's* instead of *the truths of the Word of God*.

"While we were children, we were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

~Galatians 4:3-5

Unless believers are *careful* and *diligent*, such *philosophy* can *ensnare* them...taking them **captive**. (ie. the *prosperity gospel*...*name it-claim it theology*...*faith healers*...*the Joel Osteen's*...etc.).

Rather than according to Christ...*"in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (**vs. 3**).

III. THE DECLARATION...The Sufficiency of Christ (**vs. 9-10**)

This is one of the most bold passages in all of Scripture. It presents the *glorious majesty* of Christ's *Personage*...and of His *complete sufficiency*. **Verse 9** is perhaps *the most definitive statement* of Christ's **deity** in all the epistles. It's the *rock* on which all attempts to disprove Christ's **deity** are shattered.

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (**vs. 9**)...

In Christ Jesus, **Deity**...*all the divine attributes of God the Father*...*dwelt* in His earthly body. This is a very strong statement of both, the **deity** and **humanity** of the God-man.

Fullness...Gk. *pleroma*, there is no **fullness** or *completeness* in **philosophy** based on *vain human reasoning*. Only in Christ can one have **fullness**. Apart from Him is *emptiness*...a *void*.

Deity...Gk. *theotetos*, a very strong word that's used only here in the New Testament...and it's used for Christ's *essence as God*. It's used to emphasize *divine nature*. The full **deity** of Christ is nonetheless **in bodily form**...full and complete *humanity* (**Colossians 1:22**).

Both Christ's **deity** and *humanity* were challenged by this early **Gnostic-like heresy**. Those *heretics* diminished Christ to be on an equal plain with *angels*...whose "*body*" was only *apparent...not real*. Paul affirmed here that Christ is both *fully God* and *truly man*.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

~I John 4:1-6

Dwells...Gk. *katoikeo*, means *to be at home* and *to settle down*. The **present tense** indicates that *the essences of Deity* continually *abides* at home in Christ.

And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority (vs. 10)...

Not only is all the **fullness** of God in Christ (**vs. 9**)...but also as believers *we have been given fullness in* Christ. Our **fullness** comes from Christ's **fullness**. We partake of that *divine nature* through Christ (**II Peter 1:4**). Obviously, we *aren't becoming a god*...but we are *being molded* in the *image* and *likeness* of God. We share in the *goodness* of the *nature* in which He *is*.

"For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace."

~John 1:16

The **perfect tense** of **have been made complete** indicates that the results of our *having been filled* is *eternal*.

He is the head over all rule and authority...He isn't one of a series of *lesser beings* emanating from God as the false teachers maintained. Rather, He is God Himself...and as a result...the head over all! Even over the angelic realm.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN AND TRUTHS WE MUST FACE:

- Everyone has a choice...whether to **FOLLOW HUMAN WISDOM** or to **COME TO CHRIST**. To *follow human wisdom* is to be *kidnapped* by the emissaries of Satan and his false religious and philosophical system...which leaves a person *spiritually incomplete*. To *come to Christ* is to come to the One who alone offers *completeness*.
- As a result of the fall, man is in a sad state of **INCOMPLETENESS**. *Morally* incomplete...*Spiritually* incomplete...*Mentally* incomplete...*Emotionally* incomplete. And unstable in all his ways.
- At salvation, believers become *"...partakers of the divine nature"* (**II Peter 1:4**)...and are **MADE COMPLETE**.

...As believers we are *Spiritually* complete because we have *fellowship* with God. We have imputed righteousness.

...We are *Morally* complete in that we recognize the authority of God's design and will. God's Word has authority in our lives.

...We are *Mentally* complete because we know the truth about ultimate reality. We have the mind of Christ.

...We are *Emotionally* complete because we are filled with the Holy Spirit and equipped to take every thought captive.