

Christ Verses Human Philosophy (lesson #10)

Colossians 2:1-8, 16-23

Col 2:1-8 – For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you & those in Laodicea, & for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, & attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father & of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom & knowledge. 4 **Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.** 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order & the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 **rooted & built up in Him & established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.** 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy & empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, & not according to Christ.

1. What is the means by which a Christian may be led away from the “all the treasures of wisdom & knowledge” that are found in Christ (2:4; Rom 16:18; Eph 4:14)?

“**Persuasive words**” – enticing words. “The art of persuasion is the height of oratory, but it easily degenerates into trickery & flashy deceit such as Paul disclaimed in 1 Cor 2:4 (Robertson’s Word Pictures)

Rom 16:17-18 – Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions & offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, & avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, & **by smooth** [good, kjv] [**useful in manner or morals: easy, good gracious, kind**] **words & flattering** [**eulogia (yoo-log-ee'-ah); fine speaking, i.e. elegance of language; commendation**] **speech deceive the hearts of the simple.**

Eph 4:14-15 (spiritual gifts given) – that we should no longer be children, tossed to & fro & carried about with every wind of doctrine, by **the trickery** [**kubeia (koo-bi'-ah); from kubos (a “cube”, i.e. die for playing); gambling, sleight of hand, pretense or fraud**] **of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting**, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ –

For the false teacher, the trick is to prove that what they have to say does not conflict with the doctrine of Christ, when actually it does.

Paul says that we must be ready to know truth from error.

2. Our walk in Christ is the result of “the faith as you have been taught”. There are several things mentioned in verse 7 that are the result of our walk in Christ, what are they?

Col 2:7 –

Paul changes the metaphor used to describe the Christian’s life from a “walk” to:

Rooted – growing a tree

Built up in Him – constructing a building

Established in the faith – to make our trust in the gospel firm or stable

As you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving – so there was no reason for them to find anything thankworthy in human (Gnostic) philosophies & their ascetic practices.

3. From the text, describe human philosophy & its potential for spiritual harm (2:8).

Col 2:8 – Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy & empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, & not according to Christ.

Describe human philosophy:

“Philosophy” – the pursuit of earthly wisdom:

“Empty deceit” – tricks, guile; like riches (Matt 13:22)

“Traditions of men” – a handing down or on; to hand over (worthless & harmful theories of men).

“According to the basic principles of the world” – “Basic principles” or “Rudiments” refers to anything in a row or series. Gnostic philosophy was built on a series of rules determined from experience in the world.

“Not according to Christ” – Christ is the yardstick by which to measure philosophy & all phases of human knowledge. The Gnostics were measuring Christ by their philosophy as many men are doing today. They have it backwards. Christ is the measure for all human knowledge since he is the Creator & the Sustainer of the universe
(Robertson’s Word Pictures)

Describe its potential for spiritual harm:

Philosophy has the power to “cheat” the Christian – to carry off as booty or as a captive or slave.

4. How is the word “tradition(s)” used in 2:8? And how is that different from the way it is used in 2 Thess 2:15?

“Tradition” paradosis – VINE’S: a handing down or on; to hand over, deliver

To the Colossians, Paul warned against being on the receiving end of human tradition. To the Thessalonians, he admonished holding to the divine traditions.

5. Discuss how verses 16-23 relate to what we have learned.

a. Verses 16-17 –

Col 2:16-17 – So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

They were not to allow the Judaizing teachers to convince them that keeping the ordinances of the old law was essential to their salvation.

b. Verses 18-19 –

Col 2:18-19 – Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility & worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 & not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished & knit together by joints & ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

They were not to allow Greek philosophy to capture their interest, for it would control their minds & daily activities, which should be given to Christ & His body.

c. Verses 20-22 –

Col 2:20-22 – Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations -- 21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22 which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments & doctrines of men?

Human philosophy, Gnosticism with its ascetic requirements have no lasting benefit. They perish with using.

d. Verse 23 –

Col 2:23 – These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, & neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh [**but to satisfy the flesh – nature of man that opposes God**].

These human rules or ascetic (severe) practices, whether Jewish or Greek, only satisfy the flesh or one’s lust for the pride of life.

“Participating in these practices gives one a reputation for spiritual wisdom & sacrificial humility, but they ‘do honor, not to God, but to man’s own pride’” (Robertson’s Word Pictures; & Phillips’ trans.).

6. Name as many human philosophies & religious traditions as you can think of that would effectively “cheat” the Christian of his reward?

Calvinism – TULIP

Denominationalism – “There are many roads to heaven”

Humanism – “We must look to ourselves for guidance!”

Secularism – “We must learn more about our world!”

Materialism – “We must protect our world, for it is all there is!”

Hedonism – “We must get pleasure from our world!”

These philosophies have given rise to other philosophies:

Evolution – “We are not responsible to a God, because we are the product of natural forces!”

Situation ethics – “We do what seems right to us!”

Which have given rise to various active sins:

Divorce – Homosexuality – Fornication – Disregard for marriage – Greed – Abortion – Suicide (assisted).