

The Inherent Danger of Speculative Christianity

“Colossians – Together for Christ”

Colossians 2:8-10

June 10, 2018

BIG IDEA

There’s a lot of really great-sounding talk going around in Christian circles that amounts to philosophical nonsense and ends up distracting people and leading them away from truth and into a life of confusion and false belief. This is what I call: Speculative Christianity. In this section we’ll learn how to “stay free.” We’ll learn more about Satan’s schemes and about victory that comes with Christ. We’ll learn to protect ourselves from the inherent danger of speculative Christianity.

THIS WEEK’S SCRIPTURE

Context:

The enemy wants us to become captive to speculative teaching that enslaves us. Here Paul describes the game that’s played by Satan and how to win.

Colossians 2:8-10

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

MAIN IDEAS

The Colossians were doing well. Paul was proud of them. He didn’t plant this church, nor was he the pastor. He had authority over it, though, and the man that brought the gospel to them, Epaphras, had given the Apostle good news. The Colossians were growing in their relationship to Jesus! But there were false teachers trying to distract them and steal their joy. It was vital that they stuck to the things that were important.

1. Speculative Christianity Puts Freedom at Risk

Whenever God is at work, the wolves will come. Paul sounded this alarm to the elders in Ephesus. He knew that without sound doctrine, foolishness could be presented as truth and it would be hard to decipher.

Acts 20:29-31 – I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Paul now explains the ways in which our freedom is at risk and how to stay out of captivity.

- a. **Can you think of a time when you were presented with teaching that sounded good, but that you ultimately discerned was false? How did you come to recognize that it was false teaching?**

- b. **What are some ways that we can guard against falling prey to false teaching? What tools has the Lord provided to help us discern truth?**

2. The Means of Captivity Are Speculative Philosophy and Empty Deceit

The Apostle is not speaking out against philosophy in general but against *false* philosophy. The kind of philosophy found in Colossae was empty deceit. This means “hollow, empty and deceptive.” It’s not based on the tenets of scripture. It’s based on two strategies that Satan will use to draw us into captivity. The first is *the empty pursuit of human tradition* and the second is *the empty deceit brought about by the elemental spirits of the world*.



Empty human tradition would denote ways of doing church, folk theology, and even protecting particular ways to interpret the Bible that are either: 1) without a biblical basis in fact, or 2) started as biblical truths, but that have been spun into something that no longer holds value.

Elemental spirits of the world denotes a cultural point of view that is overseen by the world of spirits, which is Satan and his kingdom.

2 Corinthians 4:4 – In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Mark 7:5 – And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”

Mark 7:8-9 – You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!

Colossians 2:8 – See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

1 Peter 1:18 – ...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold.

a. What are some human traditions that make it hard for Christ to be known in our culture?

b. How do you fight off the influence of an evil culture? Can you find scripture that will help you?



3. Freedom and Fullness are Gained Only From the All-Sufficient Christ

Colossians 2:9 – For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

Paul makes a quick contrast between the “elemental ideas of the world” and their subsequent deficiency and the fully sufficient Christ. Nothing can be added to Christ.

- a. False religion is pleasing to the senses but cannot save. Can you think of some examples of this kind of empty mindset?**

Christ is sufficient to save. “The fullness of Deity” is an important phrase because the errorists in Colossae taught that the spirit was good and that the flesh was evil. It would have been outside of their understanding to think that divinity could dwell in a human body.

- b. Are there things in your life that are hindering you that should be carried by the all-sufficient Christ? Can you pray now and ask him to help?**

4. Relying on Jesus Provides a “Get Out of Jail Free” Card

The following are practical ways to escape the inherent danger of speculative Christianity and the captivity that comes with it:

4a. Escape Captivity by Making a Decision That You Want to be Free

1 Timothy 1:3-5 – As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Frankly, some people would rather debate the finer points of Christian theology than get to work in order to be like Christ and get people saved.

As is the case with any part of the Christian life, in order to find freedom, you need to decide if you really want it.



1 Corinthians 10:13 – No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

- **Is there an area of your life in which you are in bondage to the lies and temptations of the enemy? Pray that God would give you the desire to be free from this and that he would provide the way out.**

Secondly:

4b. Escape Captivity by Trusting Christ and Not Your Own Efforts

- **Are you contented with Christ? Or are you trying to find joy and purpose on your own? This is a hard question. Take some time to think about it.**

Speculative philosophies largely rely on human wisdom, which is foolishness to God.

1 Corinthians 1:20 – Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

Thirdly:

4c. Escape Captivity by Immersing Yourself in the Things of Christ

What influences you will direct your behavior. If you spend your time being influenced by man's foolishness, you will become foolish.

- Join a Community Group
- Get into a Bible Study
- Listen to podcasts
- Read

The Bible says the "Word is a lamp unto my feet" (Ps. 119:105). Let it lead you. If you don't you will mess up your life at best, or spend eternity in hell at worst. That's a high price to pay.



- **Is there a step you can take today to immerse yourself more fully in the things of Christ?**

And finally, you can find the joy of freedom and help others to find it too.

4d. Escape Captivity by Spreading the Word

Christ is sufficient. People need to hear this message! Help Ridgewood make an impact. Let's live out our lives with Jesus in front of neighbors, friends, schoolmates and colleagues.

- **Take a moment and allow God to show you one person that needs to see Jesus from you.**

Reaching out and touching others will help you stay focused on the centrality of the gospel. You can then avoid the inherent danger of speculative Christianity.

PRAY

Jesus, protect me from deceit. Give me wisdom to discern truth. Give me a deep and burning passion for the lost. May I be a light of truth that shines for Jesus each and every day. Amen.

DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

- [*The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living As If He Doesn't Exist*](#) – a book from Craig Groeschel (Zondervan)
- [*Counterfeit Gospels: Rediscovering the Good News in a World of False Hope*](#) – a book from Trevin Wax (Moody)

NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

The Power of Christ Overcomes the Power of Darkness! – Colossians 2:11-15

