

## Philosophy or Christ?

Colossians 2:8-10

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Tonight we're going to look at Colossians, Chapter 2, verses 8 through 10, in our study. Really, this is just the first part of a look at verses 8 through 15, which should be taken as a composite. We might title our discussion tonight, our study tonight, "Philosophy or Christ?" - because really, that's what Paul is dealing with in this passage. The word "philosophy" which appears in verse 8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy. The word "philosophy" is from two Greek words - phileo and sophia "phileo" means to love and "sophia" means wisdom. "Philosophy" is the love of wisdom. And throughout all of history, man has pursued this fascination with wisdom, and that is simply an etymological meaning of the word the love of wisdom - but philosophy itself really boils down to the effort of man to determine the ultimate causes in the earth and the universe... the effort of man to determine ultimate causes.

Throughout all the history of the world, man has pursued an understanding of what caused what is and why it is what it is and where it's going, and what its intent and purpose is. Man has sought to explain the reasons for existence, the purpose of living, all of the phenomena of the universe - it's really one great mystery that man has tried to solve. There have been many, many solutions offered by many, many different philosophers. There have been tens of thousands of philosophers and a different philosophy for every one of those, as well as millions upon millions of homespun philosophies and philosophers. Everybody has his own explanation of the universe.

I remember when I was in college, one of the most frustrating and depressing experiences I ever had was a course I took in European Philosophy. I'll never forget the course because of one particular student who just loved philosophy. He loved it. He was a very interesting fellow. He couldn't spell at all. That's why I always remember him. He couldn't spell anything. He had some kind of dysfunction in what he saw getting translated to his thought patterns and everything got inverted, twisted, and put upside down. And he couldn't spell anything I mean anything the, and or but, dog, cat nothing. Cat came out "tca" and the "t" would be upside down. It was an incredible situation. One day he came to me and he said, and I think it was only the first year I had been at this college, and he said, "I think you should run for Student Body Vice President." I said, "I don't want to run for Student Body Vice President. I'm not interested at all in doing that. I have enough to do playing sports. If I want to get through college and have any time to study, I can't do that." Well, he said, "I'm going to do it for you anyway." And so he proceeded to do an entire campaign for me, all over campus, and not one time was my name spelled anywhere near correctly. And naturally, as a result, I won in a landslide. It was the most hilarious thing that occurred on the campus during the whole year.

So I was stuck for the next year with being the Student Body Vice President, much against my will. But I always remember the class because he was in it and he used to write we had an exercise where we would have to respond to the professor by writing answers on the blackboard. And he would write these absolutely incoherent answers and I used to think to myself, "That to me is the

ultimate picture of philosophy." None of it made any sense at all. I hasten to add he got an A and I got a B. I think I got a B on the basis of attitude more than anything else. But it was very frustrating to study philosophy because of the fact that it was an exercise in the frustration of a degenerate mind, trying to determine ultimate truth without the help of God. And some of the solutions that people came up with were absolutely unbelievable. And no two of them ever agreed.

Most philosophers deny the existence of God. Those philosophers who do allow for the existence of God usually allow for His existence only as a general cause, perhaps in a deistic fashion, that somewhere back there someplace, sometimes, God kinda spun it all out, but most of them deny the existence of God altogether, and they try to explain everything in the universe in terms of their own rational thinking patterns very hopeless. I Corinthians, Chapter 2, verse 9: "Eye, hath not seen..." You can't discover truth by empiricism "...nor ear heard, neither have entered in the heart of man..." You can't discover truth by rationalism. "...the things that God has prepared for them that love Him." "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." The Spirit is the one who searches the deep things of God. Science that's empiricism. Philosophy that's rationalism. According to 1 Cor. 2:9, neither of them will ever discover ultimate truth.

No wonder Bertrand Russell, at the end of his life, 90 years of age, the vast majority of his life at least 70 of those years being spent as a philosopher, his last words were, "Philosophy has proved a washout for me." That's a long washout 90 years. Thomas Hobbs, the famous English atheistic philosopher, who fostered materialistic psychology and what is called "utilitarian morality," when he was drawing near his death, said this, "I am about to take a leap into the dark. I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of this world." End quote. David Hume, the deistic Scottish philosopher, was an immoral man in every sense of the word, totally indecent, completely dishonest. His biographers tell us that he was a teacher of immorality, a denier of God, and his death was so tragic that his attendants at his death said that he agonized to the point that he shook the entire bed and demanded that the candles be lit all night, that he never be left alone for one moment, and his lips were filled with word of cursing and remorse until he died.

And so it goes with philosophers so it goes with people who want to eliminate God and then in their own minds by their own human effort attempt to discover truth. Now the city of Colossae had its philosophers. The city of Colossae had its Hobbs, its Humes, its other philosophers... as every society does. Famous ones and backyard ones. And the little assembly of believers the church at Colossae was in danger of being captured by them, of being infiltrated by them, of being duped by them. Now, remember a little of the background about Colossae. It was a little town in the midst of the Lichas Valley. The Lichas Valley was so named for the Lichas River. It was approx. 100 miles from Ephesus, located in Asia Minor, and in that lovely little valley were 3 cities: Colossae, Hieropolis, and the most famous, because of the indication in Revelation, the city of Laodicea. Those 3 little cities occupied that territory. Now, one of those 3 the city of Colossae had a church. As far as we know, so did Laodicea, and perhaps so did Hieropolis as well. But it was a typical pagan city, in that it was occupied by Greeks, Romans and a population of Jewish people who had left their land.

Now, Paul had been in Ephesus for 3 years. During the time in which he was in Ephesus, he was instrumental in founding the church in Ephesus and the other churches in Asia Minor, and all of those churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 are in Asia minor, and most likely all of them were founded during that 3 year period, as well as some other churches, namely Colossae. And what probably happened was that while Paul was ministering in Ephesus, a man came there by the name of Epaphras. And Epaphras was won to Jesus Christ under the ministry of the apostle Paul. He's

mentioned in Chapter 4, verse 12. He was won to Christ by the apostle Paul and he returned to Colossae and became the founder of the Colossian assembly.

Now, six years have gone by since the church at Colossae was begun. Paul has finished his 3 years in Ephesus; after that, he spent a winter in Greece, from which he wrote perhaps Romans and Corinthians. Then he returned to Jerusalem. When he got there with his offering to give the poor saints in Jerusalem, it turned out that he was arrested. He was then taken to Caesarea and he was left in prison there. When his imprisonment was completed, he was brought to Rome to await his trial. That's what happened during those 6 years. And we pick the story up now as he's already in Rom, waiting his trial. Epaphras visits him in Rom and Epaphras unburdens his heart about the Colossian situation and Paul sends him back with this letter to try to help straighten it out.

Now, basically what Epaphras told him was mostly good, because there aren't any really serious, critical defections occurring in the congregation. Rather there is warning, lest that should occur. And the letter is mostly about warning them, relative to letting any false teaching, false philosophy infiltrate their congregation Colossae had its false teachers every place does. It had its philosophers with their human wisdom, loitering at the doorstep of the church, ready to enter in and vie for control and Paul simply warns them about it. Now this is always to be expected, that the church in every city, in every culture, in every country, in every century, will have to fight to hold its doctrinal purity. It will have to fight to keep its spiritual equilibrium. It will have to defend itself against errorists and maintain the truth always because Satan will always endeavor to topple the church, to drop it down to the level of false doctrine. That's Paul's great concern and that becomes the heart of the letter to the Colossians.

Now, as we come to Chapter 2, verse 8, we come to what is frankly the heart of the epistle... this is the heart of the epistle. Really, from Chapter 2, v. 8 through v. 23 that one section there Paul gives the main message of this letter to the Colossians. Because here he deals directly with the false teaching that is on the border of the church that is possibly to threaten the church in Colossae.

Now, just to give you an overview of the book, Paul has already confirmed the truth relating to Christ in the great doctrinal section, Chapter 1, v. 15 through Chapter 2, v. 7. This is the doctrinal section. It presents the great doctrine of Jesus Christ and salvation. The first 14 verses are introduction. The great doctrinal section is 1:15 to 2:7. The practical section is 3:1 -Chapter 3, v. 1, he moves into the practical clear to the end ... Chapter 4, v. 6, really, and then **SCAT** personal words closing out. So you have a doctrinal section at the beginning, naming Christ and clarifying who He is and what salvation is; you have a practical section, dealing with what should characterize the lives of the Colossians and all believers. Now, in the middle of that, you have what I could possibly call a polemical section. Polemic means a dispute here is the argument of the book. Here is the dispute. Here is the dialog of Paul who says, "Now, let me get at this issue. I've talked about Christ; I've talked salvation; I'll talk about your practical life. But let me attack those false teachers." And he does it in the heart of the letter. And that's where we are.

Now, we're going to notice something interesting. There are 4 aspects to the false teaching that threatens the Colossians. We have a very hard time, incidentally, putting this heresy together, because Paul never names it officially. He only flirts around the borders of it and it's hard for us to crystallize just exactly what it is. But, it may become somewhat clear as we go through this section in the weeks to come. But this we do know: it had 4 elements. One it had the element of philosophy, according to vv. 8 thru 15, and that's what he talks about in 8-15. That whole section deals with this

whole problem of human philosophy. Secondly, it had in it an element of legalism. You might say No. 1 was humanism, No. 2 was legalism. Verses 16 and 17 are relative to legalism. Thirdly, it had an element of mysticism. In verses 18 to 19, it talks about a rather mystical worshipping of angels. And fourthly, it had an element of asceticism, a monastic kind of thing, a false kind of humility, withdrawing from normal patterns of life, like somekind of recluse or monk. So here is a conglomeration of human philosophy, legalism, mysticism and asceticism. And it my little computer, all that goes in and clicks out the word "Essenes" and we saw in our introductory study of the book of Colossians that it is very likely that the influence could have come from the community of Jews known as the Essenes. They were a community of Jews who seemed to fit these patterns. Now, that may be the case. Perhaps it was a form of that Jewish sect. Perhaps it was just/coincidentally similar series of things that really embody all of the possible kind of heresies that you could imagine.

Now, Paul has already called the Colossians to maintain pure allegiance to Jesus Christ. In verses 1 to 7, he says, "I have great conflict for you and I want you to hang onto Christ and the truth about Christ and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He's made this great, positive statement. I want you to hold onto Christ. I want you to commit yourself with pure allegiance to Him. And now he moves away from the positive to the negative: Here's what I want you to avoid... Chapter 2, vv. 8 to 23. Here's the polemic. Here's the argument.

Now, false teachers, as we've learned already in our study of Colossians, were claiming, as they have been continually claiming in the early years of the church, to have a superior knowledge. And they continue to do that even today. They come along and say, "Well, we know what you don't know. We have a system that is higher than yours. We have knowledge and insights beyond yours a higher, truer system than Christians have. And from the time of the New Testament, they always came along and said we have a superior "gnosis" the word for knowledge. We have a higher knowledge; we have a higher revelation; we have a higher apprehension of God's truth." And so Paul, in this section, counterattacks that. And what he's saying is that there is no higher truth; there is no nobler knowledge; there is no greater insight; there is no superior revelation, no matter what they claim. And against the enticing claim that a higher system was offered by this new teaching, he emphasized that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. Against the doctrine of eons, the doctrine of the series of emanations, intermediate spirit beings, through which the divine essence was distributed until it finally reached man in a diluted form. Paul set forth Christ as the only single embodiment of the fullness of God, Chap. 2, v. 9. There aren't a whole lot of eons and angel beings between us and God, through which God filters His personality. There is only one representation of God in human terms, and that is Jesus Christ. Against the idea that those spirit intermediaries should be worshipped by men, who must approach God through them, Paul shows they are nothing but demons who have been conquered by Christ. He says in verse 15, "He has spoiled the principalities and the powers." Against the idea of selfdenying asceticism and false humility, Paul shows that we are no longer attached to any fleshly things, since we have come to know Christ. We have moved into a spiritual dimension and fleshly abstinences have little significance.

Now, and I'm just giving you some overviews, I think it is important for us to see here an excellent example of how you deal with heresy. And as you look at what Paul is doing here, he's lambasting these 4 areas of heresy, all coming at the Colossian assembly, whether in one form or multiple forms, we're not sure. But you'll notice it is not a matter of bitter denunciation of the heresy. He doesn't name the heresy and then tear it apart piece by piece by piece. He doesn't do that. It is not a detailed discussion of the false teaching. It is not a fiery blast at the heresy. The thing that he does all the way

through here as he deals with heresy is positively affirm the truth. He just positively affirms the truth again and again and again and again. One commentator says this, "Mien he now reaches the very heart of his letter, the apostle dwells so eloquently upon the deity of Christ and the dignity and completeness of believers that the reader is left in some uncertainty as to the exact system of error against which the Colossians were to be on their guard." I think the point is obvious. If you know the truth, any system of error is going to collapse in the face of the truth. And so it's vital that Paul present the truth.

Now, these 4 things, Paul will be dealing with: philosophy, legalism, asceticism, and mysticism, but only one for tonight we'll begin to look at and that is philosophy.

Now, as we look at verses 8 to 15, and actually we'll only get 8 to 10 tonight, we see a simple contrast. Let me just give you 2 points and we'll just look at them simply. "Captured by philosophy" as opposed to "complete in Christ." And this is the story of every man, because every man is either captured by human philosophy or he is complete in Christ that's all. Pretty simple. A man either becomes a victim of human wisdom, human reason, human logic, or he becomes complete in Christ. That's the choice of every human being. You will choose man's wisdom or God's.

First of all, notice verse 8, "captured by philosophy" let's see what happens. "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." Now, Paul is warning them and he's saying this essentially. Beware lest those of you who were rescued out of the dominion of darkness and have already been translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love should be carried off like captives and enslaved again. It's similar to Galatians 5: "Don't be entangled again in the yoke of bondage." For freedom, Christ has set you free. Don't get tangled again in the yoke of bondage. Don't go back to a former human system legalism in Galatians. Here, don't go back to a former human system human philosophy or wisdom. So the warning is introduced by a call to vigilance, in its present tense, continually being beware a constant watchfulness, lest we be led astray. Be continually being aware. It never lets up. The church is always under siege by false teachers.

Our Lord warned us. Going back to Matthew 7, verse 15: "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Matthew 16, verse 6, Jesus says, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." The leaven of the Pharisees what is that? Legalism. Beware of those false philosophies. Paul warned also the 20th chapter of Acts, verse 29, speaking to those who are the Ephesian elders, "I know this that after my departure grievous wolves will enter among you, not sparing the flock of your own selves, shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch..." Therefore, watch! The apostle Paul in Philippians 3:2, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." The mutilation party those who want to circumcise. Peter warned as well in II Peter 3, verse 17: "Beware lest you being led away with the error of the wicked fall from your own steadfastness." Jesus said, "Beware." Paul said, "Beware." Peter said, "Beware." And it behooves us to hear the echo, "Beware." There will forever be an effort to woo you away from the truth. And you say, "Well, what am I supposed to beware of?"

Look at verse 8 again, "...lest any one spoil you." Now that's an interesting verb. That is a very rare verb. There's an interesting combination it's a combination word. The word, " " is there and " " it means to carry away, " ". The word,

" "is there. That's interesting, because that word means booty... not baby bootie, but booty that you take in a robbery or booty that you take in a war or whatever. And the word simply means to carry off booty. It was used in later nonBiblical Greek writing to speak of kidnapping, plundering a house, or raping a maiden. He is saying, "Don't let anybody kidnap you." "Don't let anybody plunder your treasury of truth." "Don't let anybody rape you." With their false teachings. There's real danger that somebody's going to carry you away, make you prey, make you a captive, lead you off like a war prisoner; that's the thing Paul is warning them against. Beware.

In II Timothy 3: 6, in the latterdays, it says, "There are those who creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins led away with various lusts." Same idea exactly leading somebody away captive. And the word can be used of a slave dealer, who carries away the people of a conquered nation to sell them as slaves. To Paul, it was unthinkable that those who had been ransomed, those who had been redeemed, and those who had been liberated, could submit to that old slavery again. Every once in awhile, somebody says to me, "Well, I used to go to Grace Community Church." I'll meet them in the market or somewhere. "Oft, you used to go? Where do you go now?" "Oh, we left there, because we discovered that Grace Community did not have the truth." And we have found the truth at the Church of the Living Word or at the whatever this thing is down here with no name... or at the soandso society, whatever it is the Royal Order of Goats I don't know what it is. People are always coming along and saying, "We've found the truth." And the truth of the matter is that they have forsaken the truth for slavery to human wisdom.

How is it that they're going to lead you off? How is it that they're going to capture you? Verse 8 "Be continually being aware that they don't carry you off like spoil..." or booty "...through philosophy." And then you have an equivalent there "...even vain deceit." Philosophy equals vain deceit. The means of capturing people is philosophy. High sounding knowledge and theory, but it's all human. Incidentally, this is the only use of the word in the New Testament. Philosophy is human wisdom human wisdom that sounds like it's divine... human wisdom that supposedly is greater than anything else that you've ever heard. That's what the cults always offer. "You don't know the truth until you know what we know." One writer says, "Everything that had to do with theories about God and the world and the meaning of human life was called philosophy at that time, not only in pagan schools but in the Jewish schools of the Greek city."

Now that historian Slatter is his name says that the term. "philosophy" was used of every single theory about God and the world, whether Jewish or Greek, in that era. That was the common term. So everybody coming along with any new theory about God or new theory about the world, its origins, its meanings and its destiny, constituted a philosopher with a philosophy. Josephus, the historian of that day, has shown that any elaborate system of thought and he says any moral or disciplinary thought pattern was called a philosophy. Josephus even says, and I quote, "There are three forms of philosophies among the Jews: the Pharisees, the Saducees, and the Essenes." That's a quote from Josephus' Jewish War No. 2, and that helps me to think maybe it was the Essenes who were propagating their philosophy. Whatever it was, it was a lie, and he calls it vain deceit. He links this term with philosophy to describe it.

Philosophy is empty deceit. It doesn't give you what you expect. The word "deceit" is interesting in the Bible. One of the words that's used in II Peter 2 is "guile" or "deceit". The original meaning of the word is fish hook. And the interesting thing about a fish hook is that it is not what a fish expects. What you see is not what you get in that circumstance. And he's saying that philosophy is the same

thing. It's a baited hook. You think it's going to be wonderful it turns out to be deceiving. For all of its claims, philosophy is an empty illusion. That's why Bertrand Russell says, after 90 years of it, that it's a washout. And that's why Hobbs and Hume lie on their death beds panicky without answers. It sounds good. It seduces the mind because it plays into the hands of pride. But it deceives. Truth is in the revelation of God, spoken finally and clearly in Jesus Christ. There is no value in speculative human philosophy.

I think Herbert Carson has a good warning at this point. He says this, "This does not mean that he should come with a blind unreasoning faith, but it does mean that instead of bringing philosophical presuppositions which will color his study of Scripture and so prejudice his interpretation, a man comes as one conscious of the finiteness of his intellect and aware that his mind also is affected by his sinful nature. Thus he is willing to be taught by the Holy Spirit and acknowledges that it is the Word of God rather than his own reason which is the final arbiter of truth."

So Paul says, "Beware of philosophy." Beware of sane human mode, sane human theory, about God, about the world, whatever. Stick with the Bible. Where do human philosophies come from? Well, he gives you two sources in verse 8. Philosophy and vain deceit "...after the tradition of men..." that's source #1. Source #2: "...after the rudiments of the world..." and not after Christ.

Two inadequate sources: #1 tradition. It's always been the case. People have always believed it. You know what that does? That just perpetuates inadequate, depraved human thinking patterns. Tradition doesn't mean anything. Just because it's handed down doesn't mean it's true. If you've got error to start with and hand it down, it doesn't make it any better than what you started with. Here he's saying, "Philosophy comes after the tradition of men." One of the things that's so interesting and we don't really have time to develop this ... when you study philosophy, almost all philosophers, build on other philosophers. There's an incredible sequence that flows through the history of philosophy. And one guy goes this far, the next guy chops off a little bit of his philosophy and develops it, and the next guy...so what you have today in philosophy can go all the way back and almost all philosophy finds its roots in Aristotle and Plato. It's all just a changing and a variation in the flow of the tradition of man. The errors are perpetuated, perpetuated, perpetuated, perpetuated. Look at Judaism. By the time Jesus arrived on the earth, the Jews had built up such a monstrosity of philosophy, such a mess of human wisdom, that they were unable any longer to tell what the traditions of men were and what the Word of God was. Mark 7:5 The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders?" They had developed this sophisticated system all on the basis of tradition. In verse 8, Jesus says, "laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men." And verse 9, "Full well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your own tradition." There's nothing honoring about tradition. There's nothing sacred about tradition. It's just perpetuated human ignorance.

And so the Jews had their traditions. The Gentiles had traditions did you know that? They passed their same old philosophies on. I Peter "For as much as you know you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your vain manner of life received by tradition from your fathers." We're all victimized by it. We're all victimized by a passing on of error. I see my little child go off to school and come home and say, "Hey Dad, we didn't really come from monkeys, did we?" And I say, "No, we didn't come from monkeys." "But everybody says we came from monkeys and the book says we came from monkeys." And I asked the teacher why everybody says we came from monkeys. And she said because that's what scientists have always believed. And I said, 'Val, that's good proof that no matter how smart you are, without God and His revelation, you never get away

from error to truth, do you?"

So, where does this philosophy come from? It comes from all the philosophies before it. It just perpetuates the same old stuff. Second source rudiments of the world. Well, that's not an easy term to figure out. There are several possibilities. Let me just give you a general idea of what Paul has in mind. The term in its literal sense refers to the basic elements of learning. Rudiments would be ABC's it literally means "things in a column" or "things in a row" 1, 2, 3 or a, b, c. He says that this just comes from the ABC's of the world they think that it's graduate work, but it's googoo. You know, you go to philosophy and you'll get a doctor of philosophy. And Paul says that's A B C...rudimentary principles of instruction for childhood, not adequate for mature adults. That's rudiments. The thought then is that the return to philosophy would be to cast away the mature teaching of the Bible for the infantile poverty-stricken opinions of an immature religion drawing its being, not from God, but from this world. In Galatians, chapter 4, we find the same phraseology, verse 3: "Even so we were in bondage when we were children to the elements of the world." The elementary teaching of human religion is what he means. And in Galatians, he's talking about the Jews religion, and perhaps in Colossians, he's combining it with the Gentile religion, as well.

But what he means here is just the basics of the same old human religion. And what is the same old basic in all human religion? Salvation by what? Works... same old deal. The same terminology is used also in the 5th chapter of Hebrews. It just means basic human religion. Where does all this stuff come from? It comes out of tradition perpetuated error. Where else does it come from? It comes from man's own infantile, primer type religion. It isn't giving you some advanced, deep new, profound spiritual knowledge. You hear these guys advertising this ... I opened the Saturday paper yesterday and there are weird people promising new insights, new knowledge. This guy with beady eyes his name is Norvel or something he's going to transcend anything you've ever know; all he has to offer is infantile human religion, based upon the tradition of men that's been unable to find God because of its depravity. You want to know who the really advanced folks are? Look around you're sitting with them. The people who know the Word of God.

The word also interesting thought Colossians 2 again. The word "rudiments of the world" has a second possible meaning in the ancient world and I would guess that the one I just gave you is probably the one Paul had primarily in mind. But it's possible that the allusion could be broadened to include this. That was that it referred to elemental spirits--spirit beings--especially the people of that day were bound up in associating spirits with the stars and the planets. That's astrology and they were into it heavy. And it's amazing today that people think they've got a whole new thing astrology. That is not new. That's the same old rudiments of the world. Did you know Julius Caesar was an astrology buff and governed his whole life by what the stars told him? Did you know Alexander the Great did the same thing? Devout believers both of them in the influence of the stars. People who believed in this kind of stuff the elemental spirits connected with the planets - were in the grip of a rigid kind of determinism that was set by the stars and the influence of these spirits through these stars dominated their lives. And they used to say there was only one way of escape. You were absolutely a prisoner of the stars and the spirits of the stars unless you knew the right passwords and the right formula so you could escape the fatalism built into the stars. You had to have, they said, a secret knowledge a secret teaching.

And along come the false teachers and say, "We have the secret teaching that can relieve you from the fatalistic determinism of the stars." Jesus Christ can't save you from the spirits in the stars and planets. We have the secret information for that." And some of the people in the Colossian church

had probably been in that kind of system and when they were saved out of it, they still had lingering thoughts about it and the temptation may have been there to say, "Well, what if they're right?" But Paul warns them and he warns us to be constantly being aware of the false truths, that that stuff is just human tradition. It is just perpetuated ignorance; it is infantile, inadequate human religion of the past being revived. And it's nothing more. We have Christ. God is enough.

And that moves him to a second point complete in Christ. He says at the end of verse 8: "...not after Christ." And then he shifts gears, "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power." You don't need to be captured by philosophy you can be complete in Christ. You can chuck all that human philosophy. You can throw away all the traditional religions of the world. You can throw away all the manmade forms and theories. For in Him alone dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him. The word "dwelleth" in verse 9 "in Him dwelleth" continuous present tense still dwells. Jesus Christ is still the fullness of the Godhead still.

The word "Godhead" incidentally is the word for the essence of deity. He is still deity; He is still the fullness of deity just like He was in chapter 1, verse 19 it hasn't changed, "...please the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." The whole "pleroma" the whole fullness of God dwells bodily. The one who at Bethlehem took a human nature is in heaven now and still retains that humanity and will retain it throughout all the ages of eternity. I believe that verse 9 may be the greatest statement of the deity of Jesus Christ in any of the epistles. "In Him" modifying Christ in verse 8 "continually dwells" it doesn't come and go like the gnostics taught all the pleroma, the fullness of deity in a body. I don't know how you can deny it. Some harebrained character came along and says, "Christ is not God." What are you going to do with it?

And the result of that reality to us? You don't need philosophy. My? Because verse 10 says, if He is all there is of God, then ye are complete where? in Him. The one who is the head of all other spiritual beings, all other angelic beings, called principalities and powers. His fullness, beloved, is imparted to us. I don't know if you can understand that. Let me see if I can help you. The same terms are used: He is the pleroma of God and we are the pleroma in Him. God literally passes Himself to us through Christ. You are complete in Him. That's a perfect tense. We have been completed in Him with eternal results.

When you think about the fall of man when you think about what happened, it is pretty sad. When man fell, he fell into a sad state of incompleteness. An unsaved man is spiritually incomplete, for he's totally out of fellowship. He is morally incomplete, because he has no standard of conduct, and if he did, he couldn't live up to it. He is mentally incomplete, because he is incapable of knowing the truth. So you have a spiritually, morally, mentally incomplete man. And Jesus Christ enters the scene, and Paul simply says, "...and ye are complete in Him." II Peter 1:4, Peter says you become partakers of the divine nature.

Think of it you've become a partaker of the divine nature. A man instantly becomes spiritually complete he has fellowship with God. The life of God is in him. He becomes morally complete not because he's perfect practically, but because he recognizes the authority of God's will. He has a standard and the energizing Holy Spirit to give him the strength to obey. And he is mentally complete not in the sense of knowing everything but in the sense of having the truth and the resident truth teacher, the Holy Spirit. Christians are partners of divine life. What an incredible truth! When you became a Christian, you received everything you need everything! Peter said, "we have all things

that pertain to life and godliness." You don't need any higher knowledge. You don't need the words of Mary Baker Eddy. You don't need the words of Joseph Smith. You don't need the words of the Book of Mormon. You don't need the words of Auntie Deals Aunt Madame Blevatsky, Judge Rutherford, or anybody else. You don't need Mr. & Mrs. Filmore to add to what you have. You don't need Apostle Soandso to tell you anything other than what you have. You don't need Sun Yung Moon to come along and add to what you have. You don't need anything, because you are complete in Him.

I don't know about you, but, as a Christian, I have a sense of that completeness, don't you? My truth search is over. Is yours? I've found it. I can't even conceive of ever needing anything outside of Jesus Christ. Can you? Mat would it be? Every man has a choice. He can choose human philosophy which will capture him and carry him off in incompleteness to a spiritual, moral and mental sentence of doom. He can follow human wisdom which seems so high and so lofty and so fancy and is nothing more than the same old hackneyed tradition passed dam century after century ... the same old ABC's of human religion. or he can *come to* Jesus Christ and be lifted from out of this world to a spiritual, moral and mental completeness, The song and I used to love to sing this song says this, "He is all I need. He is all I need. Jesus is all I need."

Father, thank you for our timetonight. We've just kind of scratched really the surface of these thoughts. We're going to do more justice to them next time, as we really dig into the following verses in describing what that completeness mans. Complete salvation complete forgiveness complete victory. We're going to dig deep into whatthat completeness means. But just for now, it's so exciting to know that we're complete in Him nothing missing the life of God in us, the Spirit of God in us, the Word of God in us, the power of God in us all the fruit of the Spirit manifested love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, selfcontrol all those graces that you've given us faith and hope and love. And by the Holy Spirit wisdom and truth everything that could be conceivable to make life and eternity meaningful. Thank you for the words of Peter, "You have all things pertaining to life and godliness. You are partakers of the divine nature." Thank you, Father, for taking us, who aren't necessarily the brightest, smartest we don't have the doctor of philosophy degrees, who have maybe never been educated by the brilliant minds and fancy systems of our world. Thank you that you've hid those things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto us, the babes, because you get glory from simple trust. Father, it's my prayer tonight that somehow in our fellowship, you might speak to that struggling heart, that one life that is hanging in the balances between making a decision relative to being captured by philosophy or complete in Christ. I just pray that your Holy Spirit will minister to them, motivate them, convict them, that none would leave this place with a commitment to human wisdom, that none would leave this place trusting in logic, trusting in education, trusting in the most brilliant philosophy, but that they would know that only in the Word of God is there truth and only in the Christ of God is there completeness. Do your work, Father, in their hearts and in all our hearts. If we already are complete in you, make us thankful and help us to live our lives to the level of that perfection, that pleases you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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