

Colossians 2:8-10

Be held captive by Christ

10/11/2020

Open your Bibles to Colossians 2. I will read from verse 6

⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸See 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.

In this passage, Paul is speaking to genuine believers..... we saw that two weeks ago when Paul stated in verse 6 that the men and women at the church in Colossae had received Christ Jesus the Lord.

That statement implies several things..... it implies that they understood their sin, depravity, and their alienation from God..... they also knew that Jesus Christ was the only mediator and Savior from the sin that they would freely admit to....that Christ was the Messiah, truly god and truly man who lived a perfect life, and died a sacrificial death to reconcile man back to God.....

Remember, back in chapter 1 verse 6 and 7, they heard, understood, and learned the gospel or the good news about Christ from Epaphras...and as chapter 1 continues.....

they believed by faith that it was through the cross that they had peace with God..... it was through Christ's death, burial and resurrection..... and they subsequently repented of their sin, placed all their faith and trust in Jesus.

Paul is writing to or speaking to those who have given their lives whole heartedly to Christ. They had received Jesus the Lord...

Can Jesus be your savior, if he is not your Lord? NO. When Christ called people to himself throughout the gospel record, he called for a whole hearted commitment.....He called for a denial of self and a taking up of your cross and openly following him..... He said that if you love father, mother, sister or brother more than me, you are not worthy of me..... he told the Rich, young ruler to sell everything and follow Him.....He said things like, "You can't serve two masters, you will either love one and hate the other or hold to one and despise the other, you can't serve God and money."

The challenge was always to give up everything and follow Him. Martin Luther got it right when he wrote in the classic hymn, "A mighty fortress is our god"..... he wrote, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also....." To be a Christian, you let go of everything...

Which means there are not any "closet" Christians.

Christian believers are to make public confessions of faith....this actually begins with baptism.....Baptism should be done immediately upon conversion.... Immediately after a person's profession and confession of faith..... baptism does not save you, but it is an open confession before others that pictures and is a symbol outwardly of what took place inwardly... You were buried with Christ in the likeness of His death and raised with him in the likeness of his resurrection.... If you have not been baptized, let me encourage you to come and talk to me about it..... Again, baptism does not save you, but if you are saved, Scripture commands you to be baptized.... It is part of identifying your new life in Christ.....

in a sense, when you became a Christian, you were openly changing sides..... you were born into the kingdom and family of Satan, and now you were born again into the kingdom and family of God.....you have understood the truth about yourself, the truth about the Only One who could save you; and you do an about face, repenting of and leaving your sin behind..... and you now follow a new Master and a new Lord..... Jesus Christ....

And, we know that that a significant change has taken place because verse 6 goes on to say, "so walk in Him." You have received him as Lord, so walk in Him.....

Now, it is a fair question to ask "How?" How do I walk in Him?" Or, "How do I walk in Christ?" . simply put, walking in Christ or living in Christ means we are doing the things that Jesus did or does..... walking in Christ or living in Christ means we are living in obedience to Him..... so you go where he goes, you follow His lead, you act the way he acts.....

Part of the reason we know this comes from how Paul uses the word walk in I Thessalonians chapter 4.....If you will turn over a few pages to I Thessalonians chapter 4, I will read from verse 1:

"Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.² For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.¹"

This answers the how question....., "how am I to walk in Him or walk in Christ?" And the answer is simply, obey the instruction that Paul gave them..... obey the apostolic teaching..... obey God's Word..... the things that the Thessalonians had received from Paul because of

1 *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Th 4:1–2). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Paul's apostolic office were regarded as divine truth.....and it is obvious from the text that there were specific things that he said.....that when they obeyed them it pleased God..... then in verse 2, he confirms that he is talking about a body of divine truth because he states, "For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus."

My point is that walking in Christ, walking in Him is not subjective.....we are not waiting for an audible voice to tell us to live in purity, flee immorality, do not let the sun go down on your anger, do not lie to one another..... no.... here Paul tells the Thessalonians that obedience to his instructions or his commands or his teaching is how one might walk and please God..... by His grace, obey His Word, and you are walking in Him...

And, as you continue on in verse 7 of Colossians 2, you will note that this is also how a person is rooted, built up and established in the faith.....and the reason we know this is because of the little phrase, "As you were taught." Walking in Christ, being rooted in Christ, being built up in Christ and being established in the faith are all a result of teaching, instruction, and obeying God's Word.....

and if you remember from 2 weeks ago, being rooted is referring to the one time event of justification..... being built up has to do with the continuation of our faith implying sanctification, and being established in the faith is confirming that we will make it to the end through the persevering power of God, so it is related to our glorification..... and for all of our Christian life, it is the truth of God's Word, it is sound teaching, it is apostolic instruction that brings us to faith and keeps us in the faith.

Remember, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And, quite honestly, what we desire to do on Sunday morning should reflect this.....

When we gather, we are to read God's Word, sing God's Word, Pray God's Word, and preach God's word..... and not only should you be fed when you come on Sunday..... but, what we do should create a greater appetite in you for God's Word.....

For those of you who are foodies.....sometimes when you have a really good meal that someone else has cooked at home or in a restaurant..... it gets your wheels turning for how you might be able to cook the same thing at home.... The pleasure you had from the food you ate, makes you think even more about food.....

And, when it comes to being fed in church, when you go home, you will be thinking about some aspect of the service..... you might want to read further into the book of Colossians.....or look up some of the cross references I mentioned so you can look at them more carefully.....or even sing the songs that we have been singing, as you go about your week....

Being here should not only feed you, nourish you, and equip you, it should move you to continue to grow by feeding yourself.....by meditating on the truths that have been proclaimed and by opening your Bible on your own to even be a Berean and check the things I say to see if these things are so.....

we want you to press on, we want you to go on to full maturity, we want you to become more Christ like.... We want you to know Him, love Him, live for Him and glorify Him through obeying His Word.

And part of that maturing process is presented, here in the text that is before us.....because it is very clear that Paul is putting the responsibility on these Colossian believers to be vigilant in protecting themselves from the false teaching that is entering their church.....we see this so clearly in verse 8.... The ESV translates the first word in verse 8 as, "See to it that...." the King James states, "Beware" The word means to "notice carefully," and carries the idea of learning about future dangers, and has the implications of a preparedness to respond appropriately..... in means "Watch out!"

And, the reason you are to watch out is so "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....." **You**, see to it! **You** beware! **You** be on guard.....so that no one takes **you** captive..... this word captive has the idea that "no one takes you prisoner.... no one kidnaps you.....no one carries you off like spoil from a war."

what this means is that **you** have an active role to play in maintaining your faith..... you have an active role to play in knowing the truth and discerning error..... you have an active role in the process of sanctification or becoming more holy and Christlike..... you have got to develop discernment... you have to grow in wisdom and knowledge..... you have to love truth and avoid error....

How do you do that? to discern error, we must first and foremost know the truth..... I am sure you heard the story that one of the ways that bank tellers learn how to detect a counterfeit bill was not by being educated in all the ways of counterfeiting..... it was **not** by studying counterfeit bills.....

.it was actually by handling so much money that was real, that was true, that was authentic, that was not counterfeit..... that when a bill that was not real came into the tellers hands, he or she would immediately recognize it..... something would not feel right.... Something would not be right.... It was kind of true, but not fully true..... so, it was all false.....

So, to determine what is false, you have to really know what is true....

..... and for you to beware..... for you to see to it that no one takes you captive you must know what is true in Scripture..... you must know what you believe..... you must know God.....you must know His Word.... so when error comes across your path, you recognize it, as well

This is at least part of the reason why we added the catechism to our morning service.....we are not having a Sunday night service, or Sunday School for now.... But we want to continue to impart truth..... and if you have taken any time at all to think through our first 6 questions....and, then today's 7th, they will help you know the truth and identify error....

What is our only hope in life and death? That we belong to Christ.

What is God? Creator and sustainer of everyone and everything

How many persons are there in God? 3, Father, Son, and Spirit

How and why did God make us? Male and female, in his own image to know, love, live with and glorify Him

What else did God create? Everything

How can we glorify God? By obeying his will, commands, and law.

What does the law of God require? Personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

We are trying to build a foundation of truth,

Truth will lead us, guide us, and truth will keep us from error.....

So, what in particular is Paul warning the Colossians about? Most commentaries will say that reconstructing exactly what went on here is a bit complex because Paul spoke in a manner that the people in the first century knew exactly what he was saying, so he did not have to explain himself when he wrote the epistle... so, when we read it, the specifics are a bit vague or even opaque to us.....

Along with that, he was not nearly as interested in the error, as he was in expounding the remedy or the cure for the error.... And, of course the cure is a better and more thorough understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ....which we will see in verses 9-15... just like Paul explained Christ in chapter 1, he does it again in chapter 2 with 3 "in Him's" and 4 "with Him's" in those 6 verses..... we will get to that in the next week or two.

In verse 8, to summarize, Paul is warning us or telling us to beware of worldly, empty, deceitful wisdom that is more concerned about religious tradition, and wrong forms of spirituality than it is about Christ..... That is a simple paraphrase of verse 8

Let me say that again..... Paul is commanding the Colossians and therefore, you and I to beware of becoming a prisoner or being held captive by empty, deceitful worldly philosophies that have forms of religious traditions and spirituality instead of being rooted in Christ and grounded in Scripture.... This applied in the 1st century and you will see how this applies today in the 21st century...

The reason why I interpret this this way is the way I have verse 8 broken down in your bulletin insert..... You can see this by the way I have put phrases with indentations....

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive (what are you being taken captive by?)

by philosophy and empty deceit, (and where does this philosophy and empty deceit come from?) It comes from two sources..... one...

according to human tradition, and 2ndly, the philosophy and empty deceit is **according to the elemental spirits of the world,** and these are **and not according to Christ.**

You see, the philosophy and empty deceit that was being brought into the church was like a two sided coin..... First, it was full of human, or religious tradition..... so it was outward, somewhat legalistic, and works based.....and, 2ndly, it had a spiritual element to it, as well..... I think in modern terms, it may have been a cross between legalistic phariseeism, and a self righteous moralism that sought spiritual manifestations..... I will explain this more in a moment...

But, more than that..... these thoughts, ideas, and teachings were not according to Christ, it was not coming from Scripture.... Instead of looking to God and his word for wisdom, they were adding things from human tradition, and seeking things outside of God's word to help them mature in Christ..... and since they are not according to Christ and His word, Paul describes thees ideas as "empty deceit" the Greek literal translation for empty is that they are foolish and stupid..... and the word deceit means misleading and void of truth.

most commentators include the phrase empty deceit with the word philosophy and they translate the full phrase as: "see to it that no one takes you captive by the empty deceit of philosophy." Or another rendering might be, " by means of the worthless deceit of human

wisdom'² So Paul is saying, "don't be taken captive by the deceitfulness of wisdom that comes from the world and not from Christ and His Word."

Now, to be fair, Paul is not talking about some of the helpful philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and so on..... I don't have time to turn there, but in Acts 17, Paul quoted from more than one Greek philosopher as he gave the gospel at the Areopagus in Athens..... He is not saying we should fear philosophy, or not study philosophy in the right context..... We are talking about an empty, foolish, deceitful, Godless world view that is a direct contradiction of Christ and His Word...

Now, if you jump down to verse 16, I think Paul gives some examples of what he means by human tradition.....we will start there and then go to the elemental spirits of the world, which I think Paul gives in verse 18..... We will start with Verse 16 where he states:

"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath."³

Paul mentions human traditions in verse 8..... then, here in verse 16, he gives some examples.....These human traditions were what they were beginning to believe that they needed to do or to follow in order to mature in Christ.... And, as you can see, they were really similar to some of the traditions that the pharisees had in Jesus day..... they were putting restrictions on food and drink..... festivals, new moons, and the sabbath....

Remember the Scribes and Pharisees were bothered that the disciples did not obey the tradition of the elders by washing their hands after they came from the market place..... nor did they like it when the disciples were hungry on the Sabbath and they picked a few grain kernels in the open field and ate them.....they did not even like it when Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath because they considered that a form of work....

there were over 600 laws that were outside of the Scriptures that the Jews were supposed to obey..... and it was these laws and human traditions that were not just on par with Scripture, they were actually above Scripture..... they did not look to the bible to shed light on their traditions, they looked to their traditions to shed light on the Bible.....

2 Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 384). New York: United Bible Societies.

3 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 2:16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

And, so, in Colossae there were some who were pushing their agenda, teaching their empty philosophies related to food, and drink and following or not following certain holidays in order to be holy or right with God..... And, we have some of these same ideas in our day...

Every so often you hear of Christians who get caught up in eating an OT diet, or or just teaching that health and physical fitness is a key to godliness.....

and some today teach a total abstinence from alcohol, instead of moderation and not causing brothers and sisters in Christ to stumble....we will come back to this when we come to verse 16..... Or, avoiding certain holidays because they have pagan roots.... All of these things create a self righteousness in those who hold to them..... especially when they begin demanding that others obey their set of rules and traditions....and judge them when they don't follow the rules...

Paul is saying, "Beware that you are not taken as a prisoner to those who espouse these unbiblical or extra biblical ideas.... That are part of human or religious tradition..... but not according to Christ."

in the old days, and maybe in some churches it still exist..... that to be a member of some churches you had to avoid card playing, eating in restaurants that had a bar, avoid going to movies and a variety of other things.....and on the surface, they look reasonably harmless.....but Paul is saying, "don't be taken captive to any human traditions....."

But, I don't think this mindset is just from the religious community.... There is a secular mindset of human philosophy that has crept into the church, as well.....

There is a Worldly and deceitful, philosophical mindset that puts man first that the church has embraced and we must not be taken captive by it.....what I am referring to is the idea or mindset that You need to love yourself before you can love others....

This may not have been part of the 1st century worldly, philosophical mindset, but it certainly is part of the 21st century church....

In fact, some have altered the interpretation of what Jesus called the two greatest commandments in order to support this idea of worldly wisdom and self love with Scripture.....Remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment in the law was? he answered in Matthew 22:37,

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." ⁴

The new interpretation of the 2nd commandment in light of the philosophy that self love is an important part of your spiritual health.....the new interpretation is "you should love your neighbor as you love yourself,"so before you love your neighbor you have to love yourself..... in fact, you cannot love your neighbor if you do not love yourself..... so take care of you.....minister to yourself, love yourself, be good to yourself..... the way for you to love and serve others is to serve yourself first.....become a better you,.....

Do you have any answers going through your mind right now that would refute this? Or does it sound plausible? Will this take you captive? and pull you away from Christ?

James rebukes this self centered, self seeking, self promoting idea when he describes worldly wisdom in James 3:13, go ahead and turn there... he writes...

"Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and **selfish ambition** in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ⁵

Scripture condemns love of self and shows that it causes bitter jealousy..... and it is not from above....it is unspiritual and demonic....

I don't know if you have ever heard the Toby Keith Song titled, "I want to talk about me." but it is worth googling and listening to it..... he starts by saying he likes listen to you talk about your interests, your friends, the places you visit..... until the chorus comes and he says,

"But every once in a while.....

I wanna talk about me
Wanna talk about I
Wanna talk about number one
Oh my me my

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Mt 22:37–40). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Jas 3:13–15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

What I think, what I like, what I know, what I want, what I see

I like talking about you, you, you, usually, but occasionally

I wanna talk about me

I wanna talk about me

Beloved, this is not just in the country music industry..... it is in the church....

Self promotion, self love, self seeking, is the absolute antithesis of what comes from Christ and His word.....the Lord Jesus who is true wisdom demonstrated the ultimate love by denying himself, by emptying himself, by offering himself for us..... He who was rich became poor for us, so that we through his poverty might become rich..... he is our example..... in word and deed..... we are to deny self, die to self, and not live for ourselves..... but live for Him..... don't be taken captive by the deceitfulness of worldly wisdom that tells you that the world should revolve around you.

Love Christ.... Die to self..... Love others..... Paul wants us to not be taken captive by these traditions that come from phariseeical legalism, or from a worldly mindset that comes from secular society....both are void of Christ....

Then he adds in verse 8, "according to the elemental spirits of the world." The NASB calls this the elementary principles..... the King James calls them the rudiments of the world..... the word rudiments mean the basics or the fundamentals.....We should not be taken captive by these either.....

I have defined this earlier as, "a self righteous moralism seeking spiritual manifestations."of all the phrases in this text, this is the one that is the most misunderstood and the most difficult to interpret.....

But, just like verse 16 tells us some of the human traditions that Paul has in mind, I think in verse 18, Paul lets us know what he means by these elemental spirits or elemental principals that are coming into the church that He is exposing....Verse 16 stated, "Let no one pass judgment on you...." and verse 18 states,

"Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,⁶"

6 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 2:18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Asceticism is living a life of voluntary self denial..... not the kind of dying to self that we need to do to follow Christ..... rather the kind of self denial that gives you the self righteous feeling that by laying on a bed of nails or wearing a hair shirt or taking a vow of celibacy or poverty makes you more spiritual.....

That may sound bizarre to you, but look at verse 23..

“These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. ⁷”

Severity to the body..... a hyper self denial, a regiment of fasting, prayers and living a monk life existence was being promoted by these false teachers, and they were making the point that this is true spirituality.... This was true maturity..... this was true righteousness.....and it seems that some of the Colossians were buying in...

The worship of angels is self explanatory..... it kind of carries the idea that we do not go directly to God, but we can go through an intermediary....we worship angels, they are in God's presence, they will go to Him on our behalf.....and of course seeking visions or direct revelation from God would be outside the boundaries of Scripture..... we do not need to hear from God audibly or in visions because he has spoken to us through His Word, yet believers are always looking for something more than the basics..... we want something spectacular....

Now, those of you with a Catholic background are probably thinking I am describing some of the main tenants of Roman Catholicism.... Worship of angels, similar to the worship of Mary.....the life of self denial..... the priesthood and celibacy.....

But, let me assure you that these thoughts and false ideas circulate around protestant evangelical churches, as well....

There was a time in an earlier era of my life where I thought power came from fasting..... So I would fast so God would see my self denial, and therefore he would bless my preaching or my praying or whatever it was I wanted..... it did not even have to be preaching.....In college, I could have been studying to try to get an "A" on a test, and I would fast in order to be sure that God would help me get an A.

Now, fasting is not wrong..... there is a purpose for fasting, this is why this is so subtle.....but the purpose for fasting is not to be self-serving.....As a young Christian, I was drawn to these kinds of things...

And, being from the great state of California, where the Charismatic movement started in the 70's.... I got caught up into seeking supernatural spiritual gifts.... Similar to what Paul refers to here as seeking visions.....

I did not think these ideas up out of my own head..... they came from pastors and teachers..... who were wrong in promoting these false ideas

is easy to be taken captive by worldly philosophy, human tradition, and the instruction on living in self denial or seeking something more spiritually.....and it is up to you to know the truth, so you can avoid error.....and not be pulled away from the Lord Jesus into a religious system of belief that does not even need Him....

now, as usual, paul does not stop with just what we should not do..... he also tells us what we should do..... he does not just point out the problem without giving the solution.....and, do you see the solution at the end of verse 8? these thoughts, ideas, that you are allowing to take you captive are not according to Christ.....in fact they are Christ less..... that list of human traditions that you are trying to live up to in order for you to appear more righteous or holy is not according to Christ..... and the self denial, worship of angels, and seeking things outside of God's Word is not according to Christ.....

The admonition here is that instead of seeking the deceitfulness of worldly wisdom, seek Christ..... instead of subjecting yourself to man made human tradition, subject yourself to Christ..... and instead of being held captive by these worldly and spiritual principles be held captive by Christ.....

The reason why you are not to be taken captive by these unbiblical mindsets is right in the text, I am sure you have already seen it..... Number 1.....because Jesus Christ is God; number 2 because He rules everything and everyone, and number 3 because you are filled in Him.....

Verse 9 and 10 states,

“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.⁸”

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Col 2:9–10). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

The Greek Scholars tell us that this is one of the most definitive statements about Christ being fully God in the entire Bible.....the whole fullness, everything about God, all of his person, attributes, character dwells in the physical body of Christ.....The implication of this is that Christ was fully God in his pre-incarnate state.....And, he was fully God while in his flesh, when he had a human body..... and he continues to be fully God post resurrection when he is his glorified humanity in heaven.....

And, according to verse 10, you have been filled in him..... you have been filled and continue to be filled in Him.....beloved God lives in you..... we can't just gloss over this....beloved, this is what keeps you from being held captive by all of the wrong teaching, wrong philosophies, bad theology, human traditions, and worldly, spiritual mindset..... He is in you..... and we know he resides in you through the 3rd person of the Trinity, the holy Spirit.....

In fact, if He is not in you, then you are not a Christian..... Romans 8 tells us that if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.... Can you say, "Christ is in me.... And I am in Him?"

So, you don't need any wisdom that this world can offer, you have true wisdom residing inside of you..... you do not need to subject yourself to any human tradition because you have the author of life residing in you..... you don't need to be held captive by any of these worldly, elemental basic spiritual principles, you have the eternal spirit residing in you..... He is sufficient.... Christ is sufficient.....

and when the verse goes on to say that Christ is the head of all rule and authority, it is a reminder that He is above angels.... Angels along with all creation bow before Him.....you are not to not be taken captive by any of these false ideas because He is your Lord, he is your master, He is your savior, He is the one who reconciled you.....He is the one you bow to, he is the one you obey.....

With Him in you and you in Him then you have everything you need for life and godliness.....and since He is your Lord, you are not held captive by these false ideas, you are held captive by the Lord Jesus and all your marching orders come from Him through His Word.....

There is a battle taking place..... there is false teaching all around you..... there are counterfeit bills that come at you every day..... can you detect them? When you hear something, or you read an article, or you watch a TV preacher, can you discern truth from error?

The truth of God's Word has all the treasure and hidden wisdom of Christ running through it.....Read it..... sing it..... Pray it..... listen to it preached..... it will guard and keep and protect you from the false ideas that are swirling around us.....and more than all else, it will point you again and again to the person and work of Christ

The One who saves
The One who sanctifies
And the One who glorifies

I hope you are able to sing our final song as a prayer...

My Jesus I love Thee.... Is he your Jesus.... Is He yours..... do you love Him....