

The Supremacy of Christ
03/04/2023 (Week 08)
Resisting Captivity

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

Introduction & Review

- Today we **continue** our study through **Paul's letter to the Colossians**.
- So, turn in your **Bibles** to **chapter 2** where we will be focusing on **verses 8-10**.
- This past week **Christina** and I went to see the movie: **Jesus Revolution**.
- For those who don't know, it's the story of how, in the **late 60s and early 70s**,
- thousands of young people (mostly Hippies in Southern California) came to Christ through the ministry of **Lonnie Frisbee** (a Born-Again Hippie) and **Chuck Smith** (A middle Aged Pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa).
- The story is mainly told through the eyes of **one man** who gave his life to Christ during that time.
- Evangelist and Pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, **Greg Laurie**.
- Now I **did enjoy** the movie and would highly recommend it,
- but I attended **Calvary Chapel Riverside (now Harvest)** from **1976 to 1982**.
- Where I heard **Greg Laurie** tell stories about his conversion and how the church began.
- And as I watched the movie, I felt like either I wasn't remembering events very,
- or the movie had **changed some** of the details to add to the drama or **for the sake of time**.
- Which is **normal** with "**based on true story**" movies.
- **However**, I wanted the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.
- So I went looking for **the book**, I didn't know if there was a book, **but there was**.
- **Jesus Revolution: How God transformed and unlikely Generation and How He Can Do it Again Today**.
- Written by **Greg Laurie** and **Ellen Vaughn**. Published in 2018
- I read (listened to) the book and found that **my memory was sound**.
- The movie had changed **the timeline of some events**, to make the story fit a 2-hour format.
- But the basic **people and events** were true.
- But that's not my point.
- What is your point then?
- Well hold on for a second and I will tell you...

- One of the points in the movie and especially the book was that **people** are searching for something **more. (Love, meaning, purpose, happiness).**
 - In the **60s** the Hippies (young people) were trying to find it through **drugs**,
 - Protesting the **Vietnam war**, (make love not war),
 - **free love** (or as my wife more accurately described it, **free sex**) and **Rock & Roll**.
 - And today people (especially young people) are still searching for something more in these and other ways,
 - **Drug use is on the rise** (we've even legalized one of the main ones).
 - **Free love/sex** has been taken to a whole new level.
 - **Rock and Roll**, well I'm not sure, today's music doesn't seem to stand up to that of the **60s and 70s**.
 - And **antiwar protests** have expanded into **PROTESTS** period.
 - There seems to be a need to **Champion a cause...**
 - saving the planet, ending racism, LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, animal rights **and more**.
 - And my point isn't that every cause is wrong or bad, **although some certainly are**.
 - My point is this, we human beings, created in the image of God, created for **His purposes**.
 - Are **hard wired** to seek something more than **mere existence**.
 - **However**, because the image of God has been **marred by sin**,
 - We are **prone** to look for meaning, purpose, happiness, love in **all the wrong places**.
 - **We're an easily deceived lot**.
 - Believing that this **drug**, this **cause**, this **human relationship**, will supply what we need.
 - But that's just a lie.
 - The Bible teaches that what we truly need can only be found in **relationship with God** through Jesus Christ.
 - In **John 14:6** Jesus said,
- 6 "...I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)***
- And in **Matthew 6:33** he says...
- 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)***
- Our needs will only be met by seeking the kingdom of God,
 - Seeking God, his **purposes, and His Glory**.
 - All of which are found in Jesus Christ, **the way, the truth, the life**.
 - For as we saw in **Chapter 1 of Colossians**,
 - Jesus Christ is fully God, and he created each one of us therefore he alone can provide what we need.

- **And that takes us to our passage for today.**
- Because as in the **60s, the 70s, today, Paul's day, and throughout history,**
- There are always **false teachers** who say they can provide what you need.
- They know the deeper way; they have the secret knowledge that leads to happiness, meaning and purpose.
- But in reality, what they offer is meant to both ***stop people from coming to Christ,***
- and **seduce people away from Christ.**
- To keep **unbelievers in captivity** and **take believers captive by that which is not of Christ.**
- And in **Colossians 2:8-10**, Paul seeks to **equip his readers** to resist these false teachers.
- And he begins with...

1. The Mandate to Resist Captivity

- In **verse 8** Paul writes...

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.
(Colossians 2:8)

- This is a **command**, a **mandate**, written to the church, **to Christians.**
- Telling us to resist the **forces** that are seeking to **take us captive.**
- But I want us to also realize that **these same forces** are at work in the **unbelieving world.**
- Seeking to keep people in their **unbelief**, keeping people **in captivity**, away from Christ.
- And so, as we study this passage, I want us to see **two perspectives.**
- **First**, with regards to **ourselves** and our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- This is a **mandate** to resist those who are seeking to take us away from Christ.
- **This is Paul's main point...**
- **And this will be my main point,**
- **to strengthen us** in our ability to **Resist Captivity** and hold firm to Christ.
- But **second**, I want us to also see this passage from the perspective of those who don't believe.
- We're not going to focus on that because that is not Paul's focus,
- But we'll reflect on it at the end of the **message.**
- So, as we look at this **text**, keep in mind that **what we are commanded to resist,**
- what we have (through Christ) already escaped,
- ***those in the world are currently captive to.***
- I want our hearts to grow in compassion for **those in captivity.**
- Those who (like the hippies of **Chuck Smith's Day**) are often very different from us.
- I want us to grow in our desire to reach out beyond **our comfort zone**, to those who are currently living by **deceitful, Christless Philosophies. OKAY**

- Now we'll look at these **deceptive philosophies** in our next point.
- But first I want us to **focus** on Paul's **mandate for us to resist...**

See to it that no one takes you captive...

- The word captive means to **seduce, to spoil, to lead away from the truth.**
- And when we look at the phrase, **"takes you captive"** it means to carry off,
- as prisoners were led away by victorious armies.
- ***Like Daniel was taken Captive by Nebuchadnezzar.***
- Paul is saying, if you value your **life your freedom in Christ,**
- don't be seduced by false teaching.
- See to it that no one leads you astray, away from the **life-giving truth of the gospel.**
- See to it that no false teacher captives you.
- **And you say, well how do I do that?**
- **Well,** first I think Paul has already given us the main way to avoid being taken captive in the preceding verses (**verses 6-7**) that we looked at last week.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive... (Colossians 2:6-8)

- Prior to telling the Colossians to avoid **being taken captive,**
- **Paul** gave them instruction and encouragement to walk in Christ, to live for Christ.
- Remember and live based on the fact that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior.
- Walk in dependence on him, rooted and built up in him.
- Knowing that he provides you with life and stability, growth, and a firm foundation.
- Walk in **the Faith** about Christ, live based on the gospel of Jesus Christ that you were taught,
- And finally walk in thanksgiving for Christ.
- Abound in giving thanks for all Christ has done and will do for you.
- So, I would say that **Walking in Christ** is the most important way to avoid being taken captive by the deceptive philosophies or false teachers.
- But along with that Paul wants to make clear just what it is that these false teachers are offering.
- He wants to pull back the curtain, revealing to the Colossians and us exactly what's at the heart of their **captivating** message.

- So, he gives them and us...

2. The Message of Captivity

- And why do we need to know this message.
- Well let me illustrate then explain why.
- Recently, I've been re-watching the old **Mission-Impossible** series.
- I know some young people (including Brian Drummod) didn't know that before Tom Cruise made the movies there was an awesome TV series.
- But that's not my point.
- My point is that in the Awesome Mission Impossible TV Series,
- each week **when** Jim Phelps receives his mission, he's equipped with two things.
- **First**, he has himself and his team of highly trained agents.
- This to me is like what we saw last week,
- Paul equipped us with what we needed to accomplish our mission of not be taken captive by evil forces.
- We have received **the training to Walk in Christ**.
- So that's **the first thing**.
- But to accomplish each mission Jim is also given a message,
- A message that self-destructs in 5-Seconds.
- But before it goes up in smoke, this message provides the **necessary information** to accomplish the mission,
- specifically, who the enemy is and what they are trying to do, their tactics.
- And that's very similar to what Paul does for us.
- He has trained us to walk in Christ,
- and now he describes for us the enemy and their tactics.
- **Verse 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.
(Colossians 2:8)

- We're going to look at each element of this philosophy and empty deceit.
- But before we do I want to point out that even though Paul is addressing the church in Colosse regarding the **specific philosophy** and **empty deceit** they are facing,
- He does so in **Universal terms**.
- What I mean by that is **in this message** Paul doesn't give specifics about the philosophy that the false teachers are peddling in **Colossae**.
- **Instead**, he uses **general terms** that apply to all schemes that seek to **seduce people away** from Christ.

- I think Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, does this for the sake of all believers, throughout history.
- We may not have the same philosophies and empty deceit as the Colossians.
- But **what always seeks to captivate us is...**

philosophy and empty deceit (or vain lies)

- Now just to be clear, Paul was not putting down all philosophy.
- Philosophy is the Greek compound word **philos** which means to love and **sophia** which means wisdom.
- Philosophy simply means **"love of wisdom."**
- In Paul's day everything that had to do with **theories** about **God, the world, and the meaning of life** was called **philosophy**,
- This was true of both **pagans** (the Greeks, the Gentiles) and **Jews**.
- Basically, **a philosophy** was and remains a way of looking at the world, both natural and supernatural.
- So again, Paul is not down on **philosophy in general**.
- However, he does have a major problem with **any false philosophy** that's seeking to **captivate the believer**.
- Paul goes on to describe the nature of this **false philosophy and empty deceit**.
- He says **it is...**

according to human tradition

- This **philosophy** comes out of **the traditions of man**.
- What this means is that the **false teachers** presented their philosophy as having **been handed down over time**.
- It's not new; **it has a solid foundation** in human history.
- It stood the test of time, many brilliant people have held to it, therefore it must be true.
- Anyway, that's the argument.
- But there are **several major problems** with this philosophy,
- **first**, it's coupled with **empty deceit. It's filled with lies**. It cannot be trusted.
- Just because something has been around for a while,
- Just because something is traditional, and many people follow it.
- Does not make it true.
- The world is filled with things that many people have believed in for a long time but are **empty deceit**.
- **Ghosts, Reincarnation, Aliens, Astrology, Psychic Phenomenon, Karma,**
- Just to name a few.
- So first, **human tradition** cannot be trusted because we are so easily **deceived**.

- Then second, **If you know anything about history and humanity,**
- **you know that we have not only been deceived but we have just been flat out wrong about many things.**
- **Such as,** the universe had no beginning, it has always existed.
- the earth is the center of the universe,
- People with lighter skin are superior to people with darker skin.
- Bloodletting is a proper medical cure.
- Smoking is a healthy appetite suppressant.
- You must wait an hour after you eat to go swimming.
- Pluto is a planet.
- And so much more, history is filled with human error.
- I remember two specific things that I was very wrong about.
- Being a Star Trek Guy, in **1977** I believed that The Star Wars Movie was going to bomb big time.
- **Before I saw it.**
- And in **1986** I believed nobody needed a computer in their house, **what's the point.**
- Maybe I was right about that.
- Now what I find troubling is that even though we humans know that our ancestors (and even ourselves) were wrong again and again,
- In our Pride, we believe that we now have it right.
- They got it wrong, but we've finally figured it all out.
- We seem to have no humility when it comes to understanding our own place in history.
- What will future generations think about the things we believed is not a question we often ponder.
- So, my point is, relying on human tradition (which is filled with lies and error) for your philosophy of life.
- To give you meaning, purpose, happiness, love is not a sound approach.
- **But it gets worse...**
- These human traditions, Paul writes, are in turn...

according to the elemental spirits of the world

- There is some debate about what exactly these elemental spirits refer to.
- The **ESV Study Bible** explains it this way...

The elemental Spirits (Greek Stoicheia Stoy-Kay-Own) is sometimes translated “the basic principles” of the world and then interpreted to be something like the fundamental principles of pagan religion. In the ancient world, however, the term stoicheia was widely used for spirits in Persian religious texts, magical papyri, astrological documents, and some Jewish texts. Paul is likely using it here to refer to demonic spirits; it is the equivalent of “rulers and authorities”.

- So, this **philosophy** and **empty deceit** come from **human tradition**,
- Which is bad enough, but this **human tradition** is ultimately based on

elemental spirits of the world (or demonic spirits)

- So, I want us to see what this means, and what it doesn't mean.
- Paul is saying that there are **philosophies masquerading as human tradition**,
- but in reality, are from the pit of hell.
- And not only that but these elemental spirits are in our world and are seeking to have influence over our lives.
- **Do you believe that? Really?**
- Because our **21st century culture**, a culture based on the **current human tradition of naturalism**.
- That is the **absence of the supernatural**, would say believing in **demonic forces** of any kind is the stuff of **superstitious fools**.
- And that's another thing humans are wrong about.
- But unfortunately, we're all too often influenced by our current culture.
- And so, it seems that we modern day Christians (even us evangelical bible believing Christians) downplay the demonic/satanic forces at work in our world.
- We'd never say we don't believe they exist, because they are certainly in the page so the Bible.
- But ask yourself, do I live as if they exist in our world today?
- For example, do my prayers reflect the existence of **elemental spirits** seeking to seduce (tempt) me away from Christ.
- Do I ask God, as Jesus did in the Lord's Prayer...

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6:13)

- **Or the evil one.**
- Jesus also prayed that people would be released from **demonic influence**, possession.
- The disciples had tried to cast out a demon but couldn't and they asked Jesus why.

²⁹ And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." (Mark 9:29)

- My point is, according to the NT, Jesus, Paul **and others** did not dismiss these demonic powers as things of superstitious fools.
- They knew they existed and could have an influence over people's lives.

- Now, Paul also knew that Christ has triumphed over them,
- In **verse 15** he writes...

15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:15)

- Yes, these **elemental spirits, these rulers and authorities** seek to captivate Christians.
- But ultimately, they've been defeated by Christ.
- Therefore, those who walk in Christ do not need to fear them.
- We do not need to fall for their **false philosophies and empty deceit** that are based on Human traditions and ultimately come from demonic forces.
- And that brings us to the final and most fundamental problem with these **false philosophies**.
- They are...

and not according to Christ.

- This is the most devastating condemnation of all.
- They are Christless Philosophies.
- However, as I did last week, let me warn you again.
- These philosophies are very deceptive.
- You must be aware of them; you must know they're seeking to captivate you.
- Because although they're not according to Christ,
- they may (and often do) use the name of "**Christ**,"
- They may even worship a "**Christ**."
- However, they do not mean **the Christ who is taught in Scripture**,
- but a Christ that is according to human tradition and "**elemental spirits**" demonic forces.
- All Christ-less teaching, no matter how "**rational, reasonable, logical, traditional**" it might seem is empty at its core.
- You can see how this is true based on **what Paul has already said about the Supremacy of Christ**.
- And that's where Paul goes next...
- He, has **mandated that we resisted being taken captive...**
- And he's given us the **heart of the message that seeks to captivate**.
- A **Christless message**.

- Then he concludes by returning to the Supremacy of Christ as...

3. The Motivation to Resist Captivity

- See to it that no one takes to captive to these Christ-Less Demonic Empty Deceitful Philosophies.
- **Verse 9...**

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (Colossians 2:9)

- This is a repetition of what Paul wrote in **Chapter 1 verse 19...**

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (Colossians 1:19)

- So why does he repeat it in this context.
- Well certainly because it's a **crucial doctrine** to hold onto.
- But I think Paul wants us to remind us of **Christ's Supremacy over all things**.
- He is saying that in Christ's Supremacy we find motivation to resist captivity.
- Christ is more than **merely God-like**.
- He's more than simply overflowing with the character of God.
- He's the essence of God, God fully dwells in Christ.
- This statement that "***For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily***" does away with any Christless philosophy
- Any philosophy that seeks to downplay or add to Christ's role in our salvation and eternal life.
- We can see the fullness of **God** in his work in the heavens and **creation** around us.
- But in Christ we see the face of God.
- Why would we turn to anyone or anything else to meet our needs.
- Often the **Apostle Peter** gets a bad rap for being impetuous and speaking out of turn.
- But sometimes he really got it...
- Jesus had just preached a difficult to understand and accept message to a group of people.
- And many of his disciples (not the 12 others) walked away from him.
- And in **John 6:67** we read...

⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:66-71)

- Peter understood that **only in** Jesus Christ (the holy one of God) can be found eternal life.
- Christ is the source of eternal life, eternal meaning, and purpose.
- It would be utter foolishness to walk away from him.
- To go anywhere else but to him?
- To seek meaning, purpose, happiness in anything, anyone, but HIM!

- This truth is great in itself.
- It ought to motivate us in our mission to avoid being taken captive by deceitful, empty Christless philosophies.
- But there is something else which is amazing,
- Let's read **verses 9 and 10 together...**

⁹ 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. (Colossians 2:9-10)

- Christ, full of Deity, **fills us.**
- Christ can hold all the fullness of Deity; **we cannot.**
- But we are full of his fullness.
- We are filled by and with Christ.
- **Sounds kind of mysterious and wonderful.**
- Paul again asserts Christ's Supremacy.
- God has definitively revealed himself in Christ.
- Christ is the all-sufficient fullness of life and salvation for Christians,
- and the only way we can find fulfillment (meaning and purpose) is in Christ.
- Paul counters the deceptive philosophy:
- Since Christ is "the head over every power and authority," why should anyone imagine fullness could be provided by anyone anything but Christ?
- The more we receive of his fullness, the more we can receive.
- Christ is an infinite source of everything we need!
- He provides us with the big things like meaning and purpose and happiness and love.
- But he is also there providing what we need in the moment: **wisdom, strength, courage.**
- As we continue to walk in Christ, we experience the satisfaction of his fullness,
- a continual stream filling and overflowing our lives.
- **In his book "In Him the Fullness" R. E. O. White writes of Christ...**

***He is a path, if any be misled;
He is a robe, if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger, he is bread;
If any be a bondman, he is free;
If any be but weak, how strong is he!
To dead men, life he is, to sick men health,
To blind men sight, and to the needy, wealth.***

- If you are full of Christ, and growing in that fullness, if you are overflowing with Christ,
- the false teacher's appeal of the empty philosophies of our age will not appeal to you.
- If you are full of him, **how can you want anything else?**

- So let us seek our fullness (our joy) in Christ.
- Let us seek more of Christ,
- Let us seek out our happiness, meaning, and purpose not in the **Christless Philosophies** of this world but in Christ himself...
- That's how we Resist Captivity.
- **Amen.**
- Now before Brian leads us in Communion.
- I want to conclude with a

Final Reflection and Application

- This goes back to thinking about those who are currently in captivity.
- I want us to remember that we were, at one time, before we came to know Christ also captivated by some Christ-less philosophy and empty deceit.
- But, through Christ's death and resurrection, and by God's grace through faith in Christ,
- we have been rescued from captivity.
- We have been delivered into the Kingdom of God.
- However, the world is filled **with current captives**.
- They were born into captivity, and they continue to live in captivity.
- They are living by some false philosophy and empty deception according to human traditions and elemental spirits.
- But just as you and I were released from our captivity, there is hope for them as well.
- Jesus quoting **Isaiah 61** says...

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives... (Luke 4:18)

- When Jesus walked this earth, he proclaimed liberty (freedom) to the captives.
- And by his death on the cross, he provided liberty for the captives.
- **Now we** cannot provide liberty, but we can **proclaim it**.
- That's our mission as representatives of Christ in this world.
- As Paul **instructed Timothy** in ministry, he wrote...

24 And the Lord's servant (THAT's TIMOTHY and US) must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

- This is a whole sermon's worth of material but let me summarize quickly.
- Paul is saying to Timothy and to us...
- There are people all around you who are being **held captive by the devil**.
- Which clearly means they are believing and even espousing false Christ-less philosophies and empty deficit.
- As captives of the evil one their lives and words are filled with evil.
- But our response to them is clear, it's not revulsion, it's not avoidance, it's not slander, it's not mocking, it's certainly not condemnation.
- It is kindness, teaching, patience, endurance, correcting with gentleness.
- And with this approach to those who the devil has captive, there's the possibility of repentance and escape into the arms of Jesus Christ.
- If you've seen the Jesus Revolution movie, or know the history of Chuck Smith, this is what he did.
- Instead of so many Christians at the time who were avoiding, slandering, mocking and condemning, the hippie culture and those who were held captive by the enemy.
- He opened the doors of his church to them.
- **And the rest is history.**
- And I pray that we as individuals and as a church not only Resist being Taken Captive Ourselves.
- But we open our hearts and our doors to those who are being held captive,
- So that God might perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.
- The truth of Jesus Christ, where true happiness, meaning, purpose, love and life eternal can be found.
- **Would you pray with me to that end.**