

The Fullness of Christ
January 22, 2017

We have been bombarded in the last two years with competing ideas, values, and visions for America. Such ideas play into who we choose to vote for.

We are also being bombarded with competing ideas, values, and theologies. These play into what we choose to believe about life. With the rise of the internet and computer technologies, there are more ideas, values, and theologies competing for our hearts than ever before. Therefore it is more crucial than ever that we be firmly grounded in the truth God has given to us. Otherwise we may be led into false teaching.

The first century Christians were in danger of being led astray. So the missionary Paul warned the Christians in Colossae...

Colossians 2:8 (NIV) See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

He warns them against being taken captive, kidnapped, and enslaved by hollow and deceptive philosophies. That danger faces us today.

There is nothing wrong with philosophy itself; the word simply means "the love of wisdom." Philosophy tries to answer questions about life, such as "How did we get here?" and "What is the purpose of life?" To do that, to answer such questions, any attempt must be based on correct assumptions. If you start with the wrong assumptions, you will end up with the wrong conclusions.

For example, if there is a God, a supernatural being who created the heavens and the earth, and I believe there is, then you have to start with Him. Otherwise your answers to the questions of life will not reflect truth. Your conclusions will come out wrong.

We see this in the New Testament when many non-Jews would not accept Jesus because He did not fit into their beliefs about the world. Part of the Greek philosophy was the belief that the body was evil and the spirit was good. So, this belief caused many to reject Jesus as God because He was human. However, their assumption about the flesh was wrong. The flesh is not evil. Humans were made by God and He declared His creation of mankind to be very good. Since their assumption about the flesh was wrong, their conclusion about Jesus was wrong.

For us to develop a correct philosophy of life we must start with all the truth that God has given to us. The Bible is God's revelation of truth to us. It is our starting place.

Yet there are many in today's world who do not start there. There are many who do not accept that there is a God at all. How, then, do they explain life? What do they use as evidence for their philosophies? They use what Paul describes. They base their philosophies **"on human tradition and the basic principles of this world."** They base their ideas about life on human tradition, not on the truth revealed by God.

Many human traditions are based on superstition. For example, why do people throw rice at weddings? For most people today, it is just a tradition. Practicing a tradition is all the meaning it carries. But it was originally based on a superstition. Rice kernels are seeds. As such they carry life. We plant seeds to produce new life, more rice, or wheat, or whatever. It was believed that by throwing rice on the couple they would be bestowed with fertility and have many children. So this practice, at its best, could mean nothing, and at its worst, it might be practiced like a magical incantation.

There are many such things in our world today that are based on superstitions, either ancient or current. You can find some sports figures who engage in superstitions. Michael Jordan wore a particular article of clothing at every game, believing it was lucky. Other sports figures do similar things.

Many people believe in such superstitions even today. And these superstitions play into their view of the world. Such things are based on luck, or fate, or magic instead of an all-powerful, all-wise God who loves us and is involved in our lives.

There is more to the story of godless philosophies. Paul writes that their philosophies are based on "**the basic principles of this world.**" This one Greek word, translated as "basic principles" means something that is orderly. Here Paul is using it to refer to the basic elements of nature, the light and heat from the sun, fire, water, minerals, and organic materials like plants and animals. Such things are the basic elements of the world. It is what we can hear, see, and feel of creation. People who do not believe in God, have nothing but human traditions and these kinds of elements to base their philosophy on.

However, this leaves out a lot of life. For example, love. Love is not made of matter. It has no weight, takes up no volume, cannot be seen, smelled, heard, or touched. Yet, love is one of the most powerful truths of our existence.

And while there is good reason to pay attention to the basic elements of this world, there is something beyond them that they point to. When we see the orderliness of nature, a creator is presented. When we look at the elements, and how they all work together, it points to a creator.

It is like this house of Legos. I have here a pile of blocks. I could make a house of blocks, but they would fall down as I carried them and held them up. So I used Legos. Legos have to be manually snapped together. Blocks do not. Now, raise your hand if you believe that if I threw this pile of blocks into the air, they might come down stacked into the shape of a house? How about if I tossed them up a hundred times? How about a billion times?

We know that houses don't come about on their own. Anything so orderly means someone thought up, designed, planned, and put together a house. Planet earth is much more complicated, and still is orderly. How can we look at it and think there is no God? No, we see it as evidence for a designer. Someone really smart and really powerful thought it up, designed it, planned it, and made it.

Yet, there are many philosophies around that start with the assumption that there is no God. Some years ago, someone mentioned to me a show on the History Channel that he watched regularly. I watched part of one episode. The show's authors took on the

task of trying to find something in the Sinai peninsula that could have been the basis for the manna spoken of in the Bible. They refused to believe that God is real and created a special food for the Israelites to eat while they were in the wilderness. So they had to find something current in the desert to explain the basis of that event in the Bible.

But if God is real, there is no problem for Him to provide a new food for the Israelites to eat. And if He can do that once he can do it for 40 years.

While some do not believe in God, others believe in an uninvolved God. They believe He created the planet, but that He is not currently involved in history or the lives of people. This means they do not believe God has given mankind any special revelation of Himself. They do not accept the Bible, angel messengers, prophets, or Jesus. Since their assumptions about revelation are wrong, their conclusions are wrong.

I believe God HAS given us special revelation in the Bible and in His Son, Jesus. All true Christians believe this too. This is where we start in forming our view of life and the world.

We must guard ourselves from false teaching. We do this by being strong in the truth God has revealed to us. In his letter, Paul reminds his readers of some of this truth.

Read Colossians 2:9-15

These are some truths of our faith:

> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. 2:9

Jesus is 100% God in human flesh. We call this The Incarnation. Incarnate means "to be made flesh". God became flesh for us, to provide us a Savior. Jesus said to His followers, "If you've seen me you've seen the Father." As we learn of Jesus in the Bible, we are learning of God, the Father. All the perfect character of God is in Jesus too. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> You have been given fullness in Christ. 2:10

We have been given to share in Christ's character. The Holy Spirit is producing this change in us. Living correctly the Christian life, the Holy Spirit will change your character more and more to match the character of Jesus. We are becoming like Him. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> Jesus is the head over every power and authority. 2:10

We say that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is. He was made Lord by God after He was raised from the dead. We have been informed of that truth in the Gospel. We have turned our lives over to Jesus as Lord, as our highest authority.

And He is lord over everyone on the planet, even if they do not believe in Him or submit to Him. What you believe about Jesus doesn't change who Jesus is. You can be under authority and not know it.

To illustrate, let me tell you of my time as a janitor. When I was in seminary I worked part time as a janitor in the seminary library. The library had four floors, each being

cleaned by a different janitor. Each of the janitors were students or the spouse of a student.

My last year in school my boss made me the lead janitor for the library. We had not had a lead janitor before. And my boss didn't tell the other janitors in the library. It was now my job to inspect the other floors and if something wasn't getting done, I was supposed to tell my boss. She would make her own inspection and then speak to the janitor for that floor.

So I had some authority to inspect the library, to inspect the work of the other three janitors, even though they were not aware I had this authority. You can be under authority and not know it.

Jesus is now THE authority over all the earth, even if many do not know of this. Jesus has all authority over every authority on earth. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the Boss of bosses. He is the President of presidents and the Judge of judges. Jesus has authority over everyone on planet earth. His followers look to Him and serve Him. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> In Him we were circumcised, not of the flesh but of the spirit. 2:11

A spiritual change took place in you when you put your faith in Jesus. You did not see it or hear it. You may have felt it as you first experienced a wave of joy, though not all have that experience. But God changed your heart and put the Holy Spirit in you. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

Paul uses a metaphor here. The Jews practiced a ritual form of circumcision. It symbolized their covenant relationship to God. By it they were saying that they belonged to God. Paul uses this picture to describe the spiritual change in us when we put our faith in Jesus. God performed a spiritual circumcision to say that we belong to Him. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> You were buried, and raised in Christ. 2:13

This is another picture, symbolized in your baptism, of what God has done in you, to you, and for you in Jesus Christ. The person you used to be is gone. You are a new person in Jesus. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> You were dead, but God made you alive. 2:13

You were spiritually dead. You were awaiting judgment and condemnation. It was as if you were living in jail awaiting trial. You have been pardoned by God in your faith. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> He forgave you all your sins. 2:13

It would never do for God to only forgive you some sins. Even one sin would condemn you. Even if it were possible to work off some sin debt, our sin debt is too large to get rid of all of it. But there is no need to try because ALL of your sins have been forgiven. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> He removed, from over you, the written code. 2:14

As far as you are concerned it has been nailed to the cross of Jesus. The Law of Moses is good. God gave it to make us aware of our sin. Because of our sin, the Law

condemns us. The only solution is that you die. And indeed, you did die with Christ. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

> He disarmed all the spiritual forces. 2:15

The phrase "powers and authorities" refers to the evil spiritual beings in our world. These are demons, like the devil. Some people do not believe in demons, but might believe in angels. The demons are simply angels that have rebelled against God. If you believe that God has the power to create human life forms, like us, why not believe that God has the power to create spiritual life forms, like angels? Just because we do not see them does not mean they do not exist.

The devil is called the prince of this world. He is doing much mischief in the world. But do not fear him. Jesus won the devil's ultimate defeat by dying on the cross. The devil's time is limited. It will run out. You can read of his end in the Bible.

The devil wants to keep you from understanding these blessing that you can have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil wants you to say, "That's absurd." He does not want you to put your faith in the existence of God, the Bible as God's word, or in Jesus His Son.

Don't allow yourself to be taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophies which depend on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. I urge you to rejoice in this truth.

Rejoice in the revealed truth from God. Focus on a different one each day and pray it to God. For example, the second one says, You have been given fullness in Christ. Pray it for yourself back to God. Robin has been given fullness in Christ. Thank you Jesus that I have been given fullness in Christ. Affirm your belief in these truths. Become firm in the truth as revealed by God so you will recognize the untruths being thrown at you by others.

Invitation

Jesus is the truth we need in order to be forgiven of our sins. Jesus is the truth we need in order to receive a right relationship with God. Jesus is the truth we need in order to inherit eternal life.

God has revealed Himself through nature. God has revealed further truth in the Bible and in Jesus, His Son.

Today, won't you put your faith in Jesus? Won't you receive Him as your Savior and Lord?