

1. Study in Colossians we see two major themes

a. The sufficiency and perfection of Christ

i. Col 1 15ff. *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”*

ii. In the passage we are going to be looking at this morning; Col 2:9ff. *“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”*

1. Paul is so affected by these truths that they overwhelm his thoughts

a. Col 2:4 he starts a new thought and topic... *“I say this so that no one will delude (deceive) you with persuasive argument.”* ... but he is brought back to the glory of Christ and the riches of His calling in vs 5-7

b. He starts again in vs 8, where he writes, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”* But again, as he sees Christ lifted up above worldly philosophy and belief, He is again drawn to speak of His majesty and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

- c. As an aside, before we move on to the second great theme of Colossians, wouldn't it be wonderful to have Paul's heart for his Lord? A heart that is constantly amazed and in awe? In his life and writing we see:
 - i. A consuming passion for God's kingdom that captures his heart and mind
 - ii. A constant awareness of Jesus majesty, sufficiency, and sacrifice
 - iii. A continuous heart of thanksgiving and reverence for God's perfecting work in our lives
- d. We see these everywhere in his writing. Just a few examples:
 - i. Phlp 1:21 *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*
 - ii. 1 Cor 9:22 *"To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some."*
 - iii. Phlp 3:7ff. *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."*
- b. That leads us to our second great theme. Again, the first theme is the sufficiency and perfection of Christ. The second is the sanctification and perfection of His saints... His elect.
 - i. Col 1:9ff. *"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”

- ii. Col 1:21ff. *“although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach”*
 - iii. Col 2:2ff. *“that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”*
 - iv. Col 3:1ff. *“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*
- c. So Paul opens chapter 2 with the purpose of giving them warning about those things which hinder our sanctification... our transformation into the image of Christ...
- i. *“I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument... See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ... Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in*

accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

- ii. He starts with dangers from outside sources and systems... worldly philosophies and arguments. And he describes them in great detail.
 1. They are persuasive ,having the “appearance of wisdom”
 - a. They are not easily dismissed as valueless or fraudulent
 - b. They are appealing and seem reasonable and wise
 - c. 2 Tim 4:3ff. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”
 - i. Beloved, let us not think we are immune. We are to be on guard against these things. They appeal to our fallen intellect and fleshly desires
 2. They are deceptive
 - a. Deception is an attempt to draw away from truth to accept a lie; that which is false.
 - i. John Macarthur has recently described the lack of discernment... the inability to determine truth from error... as the greatest danger to the church today. I would agree, and Paul would agree as well. Deception comes in different forms...
 - b. A deceptive appeal to greed. Mk 4:19 *“but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*
 - i. In social media and entertainment; Constant commercials or advertisements; these things will make you happy; inadequate if you don’t have it.
 - ii. In philosophy and thought; Modern materialism; These things determine success
 - iii. In the church; Prosperity gospel; God wants you to live in abundance

- c. A deceptive appeal to lustful passion. Eph 4:22 *“the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit”*
 - i. The appeal and normalization of “extramarital” sex.
 - ii. The acceptance and normalization of homosexual behavior and practice
 - iii. The “you only live once” philosophy... the pursuit of sensual and “supercharged” experience
 - 1. Extreme sports... adrenalin rush
 - 2. Extreme dining
 - 3. Extreme hedonism (Burning Man or Mardi Gras)
- d. A deceptive appeal to wickedness and sin. Heb 3:13 *“encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”* This includes and expands upon the former appeals adding the deceptive appeal of sin itself. Peter expands upon this in 2 Pet 2:12ff. *“But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, 13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; 15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness”*
 - i. While this, as just stated, includes those “ungodly” lust based and greed based deceits, their deceitful desires deepen and move beyond it to an “antigodly” deceit.
 - 1. Not merely apart from God but actively against God
 - a. *reviling where they have no knowledge*
 - b. *enticing unstable souls*
 - c. *forsaking the right way*

2. Satan is the author of what is likely the first example of this deceit. “Indeed, has God said?” Satan’s deceit did not stem from his greed or passions; it stemmed from his desire to destroy what God had done... to eliminate the “good” from his design... to disrupt and oppose His plan... To do Him and those He loves injury.
- ii. We see this same thing in modern philosophies, scientific thought and religions
 1. Most start with a godless universe; with a stubborn refusal to acknowledge even the possibility of a transcendent God
 2. Where God is acknowledged at all, it is either a man-made God designed to satisfy us... or a false God designed to supplant the true.
3. They are the things that war against us and seek to make us ineffective.
 - a. Eph 4:14ff. *“we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ”*
4. They are the things we are to oppose; to war against. 2 Cor 10:3ff. *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”*
 - a. Beloved, let me close with this.
 - i. Our fundamental calling is not to war against sinful behavior and oppression
 1. Not to eliminate acts of sin and strife
 2. Not to counter alcoholism and addiction
 3. Not to end poverty
 4. Not to eliminate racism and sexism

- b. We do these things as we express God's love to the hurting and seek to give aid. But our true war... our true battleground... is in the arena of ideas. *"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ"*

We are in a war to transform hearts and minds... whether externally against ungodly philosophies, traditions, and speculations... or internally against those ideas and thoughts that can take root and draw us away from simple obedience and trust in Christ.

Prov 23:7 echoes this basic truth; *"as a man thinks in his heart, so is he"*

Let us pray.