

1. Two major themes

- a. The sufficiency and perfection of Christ
- b. The sanctification and perfection of His saints
 - i. In furtherance of the second, Paul warns of the dangers that will seek to hinder that process

1. Last week we started to examine those dangers

- i. Col 2:8ff. *“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.”*

2. The dangers are philosophies and ideas and traditions that come from outside entities and authorities

- a. They are appealing; persuasive
 - b. They are deceptive
 - c. They are destructive; hindrances to our sanctification
 - d. They are to be opposed and destroyed

2. This week we will continue to look at these dangers so that we can better guard ourselves against them. Next thing we see...

- a. They originate with, and focus on, man, not God
 - i. *“according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world”... “in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?...rather than according to Christ”*

- ii. *“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.”*
- iii. They are opposing ideas and origins.
- iv. We see this as we look at some of the specific things being warned against
 - 1. Traditions of men. What are they? An example...
 - a. Mark 7:1ff. *“The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, 2 and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) 5 The Pharisees and the scribes *asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” 6 And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 7 ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ 8 Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”*
 - i. Seeking righteousness through ritual or practice
 - 1. without substance... godless and meaningless
 - 2. Back in our text vs 17 *“things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”*
 - 2. Elementary principles of the world
 - a. Gal 4:3ff. *“while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son*

into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. 8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain."

- i. Seeking righteousness through works; pagan or "works based" religion
 1. The religion of Hawaiian culture
 2. Mormonism or orthodox Judaism
 - a. A reminder... they can be appealing
3. Unwarranted submission to religious or civil "authorities"
 - a. *"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'..." why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees... in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?"*
 - b. We find Paul's argument against this in vs 9 and 15 *"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... When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*
 - c. He is even more pointed in Gal 1:6ff
 - i. *"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be*

*accursed!*¹⁰ *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

1. Most striking modern day “appeal to authority” may well be the appeals to authority surrounding the pandemic.
4. Asceticism and self abasement
 - a. Vs 18 and 23 *“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement... matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body”*
 - b. An attempt at becoming righteous through penance, self denial, and “excessive humility”; thinking of yourself more lowly than one ought.
 - c. Here, again, Paul presents his argument against this mindset
 - i. Vs 13 ff. *“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.”*
 1. There is nothing left to atone for. We are complete in Christ, completely forgiven. We do not “fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” through self torment and guilt. We do so through participation in His purpose and kingdom.
 2. Most dangerous modern expression of this heretical thought is found in Critical Race Theory and supposed “systemic racism”
 - a. Always in need of atonement; final reconciliation is impossible.
5. Worship of angels and reliance upon or elevation of “visions”
 - a. Vs 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”*

- v. These all stand together as products of a haughty prideful mind
 - 1. I am special because I worship more deeply and broadly
 - 2. I am special because I have visions
 - 3. Even self abasement is fundamentally an expression of pride...I am special because I am so very humble; so aware of my valueless state. (*“delighting in”*)
 - b. They are valueless
 - i. Vs 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.”*
 - 1. They do not work. What they claim to do... make one more righteous... they fail at. In fact, it makes one worse. It is the reality behind Jesus words in Mat 23:15 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”*
 - c. They are perversions of what is true and designed to be a blessing from God.
 - i. Tradition
 - ii. The Law
 - iii. Submission to authority
 - iv. Humility
 - v. Religious experience/fervency (worship and visions)
 - 1. In proper place and understanding, they are a benefit and blessing
 - 2. In an improper place and understanding, they are valueless
3. I will end this series of thoughts and warnings the same way Paul does, with Col 3:1-4
- a. *“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.”* Let us pray