

Sermon or Lesson: Colossians 2:8 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Guard Yourself From Worldly Philosophies About The Things Of God

READ: Colossians 2:8, with vv.4-7 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - There are people in our churches who use "fine-sounding arguments" to effectively persuade undiscerning believers into believing and adopting false doctrines, that are deceptive, contrary to Scriptures, and destructive to their spiritual well-being. (v.2:4)
 - - Believers have the Scriptures to help them thwart the adopting of false doctrines, which can be assisted by them being orderly and being firm in their faith in Christ. (v.2:5)
 - - God instructs believers to comprehensively orient their life in Christ, being tenaciously anchored and spiritually maturing in Him with thanksgiving, which will strengthen them to repel the teaching of false doctrines. (vv.2:6-7,4)
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v.8 - READ

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, and describe why philosophies about the things of God can easily become "hollow, deceptive", and enslaving.]

SECTION POINT: Philosophies about the things of God can easily become "hollow, deceptive", and enslaving because the process that is used to construct them is prone to be in error.

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy,"

- - This phrase is both a directive and a warning for believers to pay attention to, listen to, consider, and follow.
- - God is saying that we believers are to "watch, look for", and "see to it that" we do not fall victim to this danger that someone is trying to convince us into believing. (Strong's #0091)
- - This directive and warning applies both individually and corporately - each of us (as an individual believer) needs to heed this personally, as well as all of us together (as a group of believers or church) need to heed this as a whole or institution.
- - This danger has the capacity to take believers "captive" - to "seduce" them, grab them unwittingly, hold them as prisoner, "rob" them of advantages, and "lead them away" as plunder. (Strong's #4812)
- - In verse 4, this danger is identified as being "fine-sounding deceptive arguments" that are designed to convince the hearers to believe, adopt, and follow the false doctrines that the arguments support or attempt to prove.
- - Here in verse 8, this danger is also identified as being "hollow and deceptive philosophy".

- - Humans naturally use intellectual thinking, reasoning, logic, and processing to draw seemingly wise philosophical conclusions about various aspects of existence, in this particular case those various aspects that pertain to the things of God.
- - In essence, the kind of "philosophy" being referred to here consists of one or more beliefs, principles, opinions, or values that are combined to form conclusions, all of which intentionally or unintentionally generate and exert influence upon other aspects of a person's belief system and upon how the person lives. (AHD)
- - One problem with philosophical reasoning is that technically its conclusions are all theory - conclusions that frequently are presented as proven fact and truth but in reality are assumptions, or a series of assumptions, or a progressive construction in which assumptions are made and inserted at key locations within that construction. And if one assumption is incorrect or in error, then the whole remainder of the construction is incorrect and flawed from that point onward.
- - So, from the nature of how it is created, philosophical reasoning can easily have one or more significant major flaws in it that are especially difficult to identify because they are sandwiched in and blended in with numerous elements that compose that philosophical construction, and meanwhile the whole construction is being presented as comprehensively factual, true, and wise.
- - Thereby, philosophical reasoning and conclusions pose a natural serious threat potential for believers because they are prone to be in error and thereby they are deceptive of actual reality and the truth that believers seek, particularly when these pertain to God (who is invisible), and the things of God (which have been deliberately written about in the Scriptures in veiled form and/or in somewhat cryptic form). (vv.1:26; 2:2-3)
- - For believers who become captive to deceptive philosophy, the benefits that are derived from their deceptive philosophy are "hollow" - being "empty", "fruitless, lacking substance or worth, not yielding the desired outcome". (from Strong's #2756 - "vain" (AHD))
- - Because God declares here that deceptive philosophies are in fact "hollow", therefore they have no value in His sight, produce no positive result for His kingdom, yield no credible contribution or usefulness to the faith of its believer, and in reality are destructive to the faith of its believer.
- - Most of the believers who adopt the deceptive philosophy are seeking to improve their relationship with God, which the deceptive philosophy is claiming to do in some way.
- - But clearly in this verse, God totally rejects every deceptive philosophy and its way of supposedly improving the believer's relationship with God.
- - Even though believers may have good intentions, a deeper and more intimate relationship with God cannot be achieved or enhanced through believing and putting into practice the aspects of any deceptive philosophy.
- - A basic reason why "hollow and deceptive philosophy" is not helpful for the believer is because in its essence, this philosophy is created and perpetuated totally by humans, thus being completely devoid of any direct influences or actions by God.
- - Without any composing involvement by God and because it pertains to the things of God, this "hollow and deceptive philosophy" is thereby antithetical to God, being in direct and "diametrical opposition" to God, to "Christ", and to things of God. (AHD - 'antithetical')

- - This "hollow and deceptive philosophy" may seem and appear to have a basis in God, but here in this verse God totally rejects that He has any participation in it and furthermore He outright condemns it comprehensively.
 - - Therefore, Scriptures and Bible doctrines are being twisted and/or perverted and/or overwritten and/or violated by humans during the process that generates "hollow and deceptive philosophy" about the things of God.
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[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, and describe why "human tradition" and "the basic principles of this world" make philosophies about the things of God unacceptable to God.]

SECTION POINT: The humanistic source of "human tradition" and "the basic principles of this world" automatically makes philosophies about the things of God false, and/or deficient, and/or distorted, and/or in error.

"which depends on human tradition"

- - Another reason why this kind of philosophy is "hollow and deceptive" is because it "depends on" or is formulated "according" to "human tradition", meaning it is derived from, it aligns with, it possesses the characteristics of, and it collaborates with "human tradition". (Strong's #2596)
- - "Tradition" can be defined as "a mode of thought, or behavior, or custom that is followed or practiced, and passed on continuously from generation to generation". (AHD)
- - "Human tradition" that supports "hollow and deceptive philosophy" is automatically deficient because it is generated by humans, who are all born with a nature that is corrupted by sin and a perspective that is limited by a nature that is finite.
- - So this inherent sin-corruption and inherent limited perspective adversely distort our thinking, understanding, view of reality, interpretation of reality, ability to generate ideas, ability to process information, and etc., especially in regard to the perfect and infinite God.
- - Another problem with human tradition is that it can conflict with God's commands and His Word.
- - The practice of human tradition is a problem when it in effect "breaks the commands of God" - Matthew 15:3, or "nullifies the word of God" - Matthew 15:6, or "sets aside the commands of God" - Mark 7:9, or causes a person to "let go of the commands of God and [instead] hold on to the traditions of men" - Mark 7:8.

"and the basic principles of this world"

- - Philosophy about the things of God can become "hollow and deceptive" also when it is derived according to "the basic principles of this world".
- - Again, natural humanistic thinking, logic, reasoning, and wisdom fall short or fail to arrive at the truth and the reality and the righteousness of God - in all that He is, all that He says, all that He does, and etc.
- - Societies and humankind formulate principles that are popular or widely accepted, but these principles cannot and do not constitute a proper foundation for philosophies about the things of God.
- - Collectively and individually, we humans do not have the capacity in and of ourselves to formulate correct philosophies about the things of God beyond sensing that there is

an intelligent living divine God, that He is the all-powerful Creator, that He is hidden from us, and that He holds humans accountable for engaging in "godlessness, wickedness", deception ("suppressing the truth"), and etc. (Romans 1:18-20)

- - Formulating other correct philosophies about the things of God requires proceeding beyond sensing realities derived from general revelation that can be observed in creation and from an internal sense of knowing good and evil. (Romans 1:21-22)

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, and describe why philosophies about the things of God must be based on Christ in order to be correct and acceptable to God.]

SECTION POINT: Philosophies about the things of God that are based on humanistic sources are not acceptable to God because they are not properly based on "Christ" - the key to understanding God.

"rather than on Christ."

- - A main point in verse 8 is that formulating correct philosophies about the things of God requires that every element of the philosophy be based on Christ, who is exact revelation about God because He is God - in fullness (Colossians 2:9) and in supremacy (v.1:18).

- - Any philosophy about the things of God that fails to adequately and properly contain applicable elements about Christ is deficient, in error, and thereby deceptive.

- - Of course, in our time currently in history, the information available to us humans about Christ and God's corresponding program is contained in the Scriptures - the Holy Bible, and especially in its New Testament.

- - Christ is the key to understanding God, and thereby He is the key to formulating correct philosophies about the things of God.

- - Here in verse 8 is contained another declaration that supports the theme of the Book of Colossians - 'The Supremacy of Christ', that Christ has supremacy even in understanding God.

- - So, God says that holding a "hollow and deceptive philosophy" is completely useless and even counterproductive to one's faith because the philosophy is in reality opposed to Christ.

- - The person may think or assume the philosophy aligns with the Scriptures and that he or she is experientially progressing in godliness and righteousness by following the philosophy, but God says the person is being deceived and the philosophy furthermore is causing enslavement (v.8) and straying from a firm faith (v.5).

-- An important dynamic to note here is that "hollow and deceptive philosophies" that are based on "human tradition and the basic principles of this world" are main components of very effective strategies that are used by the Kingdom of Darkness to divert believers away from exercising their faith in a manner that is empowered by God. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

- - - These believers are neutralized in their effectiveness for God's kingdom,

- - - and they can even be easily converted into functioning as unwitting workers or agents of the Kingdom of Darkness,

- - - and they are stationed within the church!
 - - - and they are deceptively convinced that they are doing the work of God!
 - - Thus, in the delusions generated from humanistic philosophies, there is great power to convert believers into unwitting undercover agents for the Kingdom of Darkness.
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BIG IDEA: Believers are warned not to believe philosophies about the things of God that are based on humanistic sources because they lack truth and reality that can only be found in Christ, as recorded in the Scriptures.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Are you doing what God is commanding you to do in this verse 8?
 - - Are you actively and continuously guarding that your doctrines and philosophies about the things of God are completely true and accurate according to proper interpretation of the Scriptures, with Christ as the key?
 - - When situations occur in which doctrines or philosophies about the things of God are presented, do you critique what you are hearing while simultaneously critiquing what you believe, to ensure that you are holding what correctly aligns with the Scriptures and Christ?
 - - Have mature believers warned you that you have wandered into errant doctrines or philosophies about the things of God, but you dismiss their warnings as being baseless?
 - - Are you vulnerable to falling into errant doctrines or philosophies about the things of God because you do not know the Scriptures adequately?
 - - Are you vulnerable to falling into errant doctrines or philosophies about the things of God because you are open to hearing new doctrines and new philosophies, particularly from speakers who are eloquent or help you to feel good about your life?
 - - Are you being deceived into believing that a questionable doctrine or philosophy about God is making you more spiritually mature because you experience a manifestation that supposedly comes from the Spirit of God?
 - - Make a firm decision right now to henceforth always be testing that your doctrines and philosophies about the things of God are based on Christ and proper interpretation of the Scriptures.
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

-- As a preview, what are some examples of this kind of philosophy that the Colossian believers were being exposed to? Hint: Skim ahead in Colossians chapter 2.

- - - - about the nature of Christ; (vv.9-10)
- - - - about the role of circumcision; (vv.11-13)
- - - - about what Christ's death on the cross accomplished; (vv.13-15)
- - - - about restrictions on food and drink; (v.16)
- - - - about requirements to observe festivals, holidays, and the Sabbath; (vv.16-17)
- - - - about superior godliness; (vv.18-19)
- - - - about the worship of angels; (v.18)
- - - - about maintaining spiritual cleanliness. (vv.20-23)

- - What are some examples of philosophies that have successfully implanted in churches in our modern times? And how has each philosophy taken church people captive?
 - - Who in this church is "seeing to it that no one takes [the church] captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy"? And how are they doing that? Cite specifics and not generalities.
 - - The proliferation of media and communications in our modern times has created a perpetual bombardment of humanistic philosophies. What precautions are you taking and what safeguards are you implementing to protect yourself and your family from this substantial threat of "hollow and deceptive philosophy"? Cite specifics and not generalities.
 - - What is God saying in verse 8 about religions in the world that base a large amount of their doctrines on church traditions that have accumulated for hundreds of years or more?]
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