

Colossians 2:8-15

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; 12 when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, 14 erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

Colossians is a letter written to a Gentile congregation. The problem that it addresses was not a problem of Christians vs. non-Christians, or Gentile Christians vs. Jewish Christians. The problem was internal; it was among Gentile Christians of the church. The letter addresses a contrast of attitudes and teaching. One position was focused on Christ and the other needed outside support, their faith was not as strong so they relied on outside influences like philosophy and developed a celestial theory. The main thrust of Colossians is to focus on Jesus. When we focus on Jesus, we don't need anything else. Colossians emphasizes three important things: the supremacy of Christ, the fullness in Christ, and a new life in Christ.

The supremacy of Christ is demonstrated in Colossians through the principle that Christ is the head of the church. This is a very important concept that is found in several places in both Colossians and Ephesians. It is also a founding principle of the Christian church. It is the Lord that reigns supreme. I remember a long time ago someone kept complaining about something going on in the church. This person was a chronic complainer and I realized that this person's problem was more with the self than with the situation in the life of the church. So, I said "I think you need to talk to the head of the church about this." She said "You're the chairman of the board!" I said "Jesus is the head of the church." The supremacy of Christ means that Jesus is the supreme ruler. Jesus is in charge of everything. Therefore, we are to seek his guidance and follow his instructions. Jesus is the head of the church and Jesus is the one we are to obey.

Fullness in Christ is a wonderful concept. You have a full life in Christ instead of empty life of the world. When you have fullness in Christ, you don't need anything else. You don't need external stimulus. In life there is a material void that is never filled. It needs external stimulus and always wants more. It wants more money to buy more things and these things lose their ability to satisfy. So, the material world always leaves you unsatisfied and wanting more. However, with fullness in Christ you have internal peace and satisfaction that is better than anything that people can get from external stimulus. You also have eternal peace and satisfaction; this lasts forever while outside stimulus fades.

The believer has a new life in Christ. This is really important. Too often a person gets baptized and no one can see any change at all. Baptism is a burial and a resurrection. The old self is dead and raised in a new life. You eliminate the former way of life and embrace a new life of devotion. The Christian faith is more than belief; it is a lifestyle, a motive of operation that guides your life. Since your baptism, Christ is in you and your life is one of thanksgiving and devotion.

The Scripture teaches us “don’t let anyone fool you.” Well, that’s kind of hard to follow if you take it literally. Because you don’t know when someone is fooling you, otherwise you would not be fooled. What the author is teaching is don’t be deceived by ideas and theories of human doctrine. It is a parallel lesson to Mark 7:7-8 where Jesus cautions the self righteous indignant against following human doctrine over God’s commandments. Christ is the fullness of God, head over all rulers, and in charge over human authority. When you became a Christian, your baptism is significant. The old self is dead and buried as you are raised to a new life. The sinful life is gone. The sinful nature is now history. You can now trust in the power of God. It is the power of God that raised Christ. Now you are alive with Christ and all sin is forgiven.

The lesson provides a caution against deception and guidance for the believer. Be on guard from that which is not authentic. Do not go back to the previous life, once you become a Christian you live a changed life and give up the domain of sin. The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary has this section labeled *Do Not Be Captured by Human Tradition*. The Scripture is another call for Christ centered theology. Human doctrine and regulations within the life of the church should be focused on Christ. The letter addresses a question of heresy and corrects erroneous teaching that is opposed to the gospel. How this all relates to us is the classic Christian connection, we all need correct teaching and to live a correct life just as we were taught by Jesus.