

# Colossians 2:8-17

## Day 1

### Paul's Warning. Read Colossians 2:8

1. What did Paul warn against next? 2:8a (*There are several warnings in this chapter. You might like to mark them with a "W" by the verse or list them in the chart at the end of this lesson.*)

- What parallel things did Paul warn against in 2 Corinthians 10:5?

**FYI: takes you captive/cheats/spoils** Strong's NT:4812 *sulagogeō*; to lead away as booty, i.e. (figuratively) seduce

"to lead away from the truth and subject to one's sway"

- Thayer's Greek Lexicon

**Philosophy** NT:5385 love (and pursuit) of wisdom; used in the Greek writings of either zeal for or skill in any art or science, any branch of knowledge" - Thayer's Greek Lexicon

"to the Greeks [this word] denoted the highest effort of the intellect"

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

**Deceptive/seductive** Strong's NT:539, *apate*; delusion: "(akin to *apataō*, 'to cheat, deceive, beguile'), that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement or influence." - Vine's Expository Dictionary

"Paul was not putting down **philosophy**. Philosophy simply means 'love of wisdom.' Everything that had to do with theories about God, the world and the meaning of human life was called philosophy, both in the pagan and Jewish schools of the day....What Paul was warning against was a dangerous philosophy made up of both elements of Judaism and Greek Gnosticism. Greek Gnosticism taught that a person must work his or her way up a long series of lesser gods,...before reaching the ultimate god. Here, false Jewish teachers combined Hebrew rites and ascetic regulations with their philosophy, as a better way to move up the spiritual ladder. It was all very mysterious, complicated, astrological, and snooty. But worst of all, it was very deadly because it mixed some of the truth of Hebrew religion with the delectably enticing mysteries of East mysticism and Greek philosophy. This was presented as 'something more' which would elevate the ignorant Colossian Christians from their crude baby-faith to the truly deep things of God. Evidently some succumbed."

- R. Kent Hughes (68,69)

"Christ-centered revelation is the opposite of any humanistic philosophy which begins with man and makes man's reason and intellect the measure of truth. Such philosophy is utterly unconscious of its finite limitations, nor does it realize the human mind has been affected and blinded by sin."

- Stuart Allen (146)

2. What faulty things were these types of arguments or reasonings *dependent on/ according to*? 2:8b

**FYI: "Elementary principles"** *stoicheion*, any first thing...an element, first principle

1. the letters of the alphabet

2. the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe

3. the heavenly bodies, either as parts of the heavens, or (as others think) because in them the elements of man's life and destiny were supposed to reside

4. the elements, primary and fundamental principles...of any art, science, or discipline"

- Thayer's Greek Lexicon

"The third meaning of *stoicheion* is heavenly bodies, the signs of the zodiac and then the elemental spirits which were supposed to control the planets...Modern astrology is a first step towards this sort of conception."

- Stuart Allen (147)

"The overwhelming majority of recent commentators tell us the 'basic principles' should be translated 'elemental spirits,' as the RSV and NEB have it. These demonic spirits were thought to control the planetary spheres and thus men's lives - the world order."

- R. Kent Hughes (71)

3. In what way is *tradition* used in a good sense in scripture? 2 Thessalonians 3:6

- In what way is it used in a bad sense and why? Matthew 15:2-6

4. Read the following verses describing the types of teaching Paul and Peter warned about. Underline the methods and motives (if given) of the false teachers.

- Eph. 5:6-7 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. NIV
- Hebrews 13:9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings NAS
- 1 Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. NIV
- 1 Timothy 6:20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, NIV
- Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. NIV
- 2 Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. NIV

***Digging Deeper***

See how Paul's manner compared to false teachers. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

5. What should our reasoning be "*according to*"? 2:8c (Why? 2:3)

- How does a believer's reasoning differ from the world's?  
1 Corinthians 2:13-16

***Digging Deeper***

How diligently should we seek God's wisdom according to Proverbs 2:1-4? (Note the verbs.)

6. Underline how God's wisdom compares to man's.

- Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. NIV
- Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! NIV
- 1 Corinthians 1:25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. NIV
- 1 Corinthians 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight... NIV

**Applying the Word:** *How do you discern God's wisdom from your own reasoning? Have any philosophies/reasonings ever taken you captive/enslaved you/robbed you?*

## Day 2

The Reality in Christ. Read Colossians 2:9-12

7. Why should our philosophies/reasonings be based on Christ? 2:9

- What point was Paul making about Christ's physical body? What point was He making about His divinity? See John 1:1,14

**FYI:** "Christ "is fully God and He in no way comes short. He is the creator and He knows His creatures. He knows what is best for them, individually and collectively."  
- Michael Penny (23)

"In this verse Paul clearly proclaims the incarnation, the fact that God became a man bodily. This contradicts the Gnostic idea of the inherent evil of physical bodies and the claim that Jesus is merely a spirit. The Gnostics thought the fullness of God had been divided among a number of angelic beings, the last creating the material world. In contrast, Paul says that the fullness of God exists in Christ."  
- The Nelson Study Bible (2014)

8. What did Christ accomplish for us? 2:10 (Mark the occurrences of "*in or with Christ*" in 2:10-13.) Compare Ephesians 2:4-6

**FYI: Made complete/full** *pleroo* NT:4137, "to fill" - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"There is nothing that the Christian needs to add to what was received in Christ at the time of conversion. Paul emphasized the sufficiency of Christ in order to refute the Gnostics and the Judaizers who respectively believed that special knowledge or works were necessary to make a Christian complete." - The Nelson Study Bible (2014)

"Made full does not mean that the perfection of Christ is transfused into us, but that there are in him resources from which we may be filled.' (Calvin) Thus, in union with Christ our every spiritual need is fully met. Possessing him, we possess all."  
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary

9. What authority does Christ have to do this? 2:10b (Cross-ref. 1:16)

- How does Ephesians 1:20-23 describe Christ's position?

10. From Colossian 1, review the ways that Christ has made us complete.

- 1:12
- 1:13
- 1:14
- 1:22
- 1:27

11. Since we have all these things in Christ, what should be our response? Ephesians 5:1,2

12. From 2:11, record the phrases that describe the circumcision of a believer:

- What kind of circumcision was this?
- What was removed? (Compare Romans 6:6)
- How was it removed? (Compare Romans 8:3)

**FYI: Circumcision** "The rite had a moral significance, Ex 6:12,30, where it is metaphorically applied to the lips; so to the ear, Jer 6:10, and the heart, Deut 30:6; Jer 4:4...It is used metaphorically and spiritually of believers."  
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

13. What kind of circumcision is talked about in:

- Romans 2:28,29
- Philippians 3:3

14. How closely are we identified with Christ's burial and resurrection? 2:12

- Whose work was this? (Compare Ephesians 2:5-9)

**Applying the Word:** How would you respond to someone who says that they'll start to serve Christ when they've got their life straightened out or when they've become a better person?

## Day 3

### Christ's Victory. Read Colossians 2:13-15

15. What state were we in when God saved us? 2:13a

- In what sense were we “dead” in our transgressions? Ephesians 2:1-3

16. What great reversal did God accomplish for us? 2:13b (*Note the tense of the verbs in 3:11. When were you made alive, when were you raised? What do you think this means?*)

17. What two words in 2:14 describe what the law “certificate of debt/  
written code/ordinances” was to us?

***Digging Deeper***  
See Paul's struggle  
in his own life.  
Romans 7:7-11

***FYI: Handwriting/written code*** “*cheirographon*, was a statement of debt signed by the debtor, setting forth his ‘indebtedness’. The law of God with its ordinances stands as a Divine statement of our indebtedness as sinners. This has been cancelled and removed by the death of Christ, because not only did He perfectly fulfill that law, but He stood in the sinner’s place and accepted in His Own Person the penalty due to the lawbreakers. Thus the law as an instrument of condemnation has been dealt with by God and cancelled. It has been satisfied completely by the offering of the Son of God and now has no power to accuse or condemn and it is in this sense that it been removed as far as the believer is concerned.”  
- Stuart Allen (149,150)

18. Although the law was a good thing (Romans 7:12), how was it *against* us (2:14)?  
Galatians 3:10,11

19. Underline the words/phrases that describe the limitations or inability of the law.

- Hebrews 7:18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. NIV
- Hebrews 9:9 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. NIV
- Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. NIV
- Hebrews 10:11-12 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. NIV
- Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

20. What is the problem with adding in even one law into the equation for salvation? James 2:10

- Why can't works and grace be combined? Romans 11:6

21. Underline what Paul said the Galatians did when they added circumcision or other requirements of the law as a necessary part of salvation.

- Galatians 5:2-4 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. NAS
- Galatians 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." NAS

22. What would God have done if we had been able to keep the law perfectly? Galatians 3:21-22

23. List the three phrases in 2:14 that describe what Christ did to the law ("certificate of debt")? 1:14

- What does that say about any power that guilt or shame should have over us? 2 Peter 1:9

**FYI:** "When a person was executed under Roman law, the sentence was attached to the accused's cross (see John 19:19). But Jesus took *our* sentence away, effectively **nailing** our certificates of debt to *his* cross. He paid our penalty, He died for our guilt...(2 Cor. 5:21)." - The Tony Evans Study Bible (1416)

24. Underline how or why we are saved and become righteous.

- Titus 3:5-6 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, NIV
- 2 Timothy 1:9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. NIV
- Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. NIV
- Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. NIV
- Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. NIV

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. NIV
- Galatians 2:16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. NIV
- Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. NAS
- Philippians 3:9 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, NAS

25. How are believers led/empowered/motivated?

- Romans 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. NAS
- Galatians 2:19-20 "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. NAS
- Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. NASU
- 2 Corinthians 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, NIV
- 1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us. NAS
- Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, NAS

26. What other victory took place at the cross? 2:15 List the verbs describing what God did to these powers. (See Ephesians 6:12 for a description of these powers.)

- What was Paul indicating about worshipping angels?

**FYI: Disarmed** "Against the believer, what weapons do demonic spirits therefore now have? They are **disarmed**, except for their ability to *deceive* and to create *fear*. These are effective 'weapons' that are not tangible weapons at all. Demonic spirits only have power towards us that we grant them by believing their lies. The weapons are in *our* hands, not *theirs*. We will one-day see how afraid they were of *us*."

**Triumphing over them:** Paul used similar phrasing in 2 Corinthians 2:14, where he had in mind the Roman victory parade where a conquering general led his defeated captives through the streets in triumph."

- David Guzik

**Applying the Word:** What makes you the most grateful or feel the most liberated by the gospel of grace?

## Day 4

### Warnings against Legalism. Read Colossians 2:16,17

27. What warnings did Paul give in 2:16?

- What does the “*therefore*” in 2:16 refer back to?

28. Why would food be a problem for those coming from a Jewish background? (For example see Leviticus 11)

- What would have made food a stumbling block to others? 1 Corinthians 8:7,8

29. From Romans 14:1-6, what guidelines did Paul give for dealing with another person about these types of issues? (What conclusions did he make in 14:13,19,20?)

- What instruction does Hebrews 10:25 give?

**FYI:** “There is a great liberty in what we Christians can do: we can keep days and diets, or forget them. But Paul rejects the right of anyone to judge and/or compel another to comply with his own preferences. We are not to judge others by these things, and we are not to allow others to judge us.” - R. Kent Hughes (83)

“Our Sunday is not the Sabbath of the Old Testament; it is always designated ‘the first day of the week’ in the New Testament and there is no Divine command in the New Testament to observe it as the Old Testament Sabbath. This does not mean that we do not appreciate having this day as one of rest and the opportunity to worship together and witness. Nor should we use our freedom to upset weaker brethren.” - Stuart Allen (151)

30. What purpose did these legalistic requirements about food and special observances serve? 2:17

- Why were they no longer binding? See John 1:17

**“shadow”** (2:17) – Strong’s NT:4639 *skia*; “an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object: opposed to (substance/reality) the thing itself, Col 2:17.” - Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

“Metaphorically... a foreshadowing... also of Jewish rites...as prefiguring things future and more perfect (Col. 2:17; Hebrews 8:5, 10:1)” - The Complete Word Study Dictionary

“Each member of the Body has everything in Christ that is precious, worthwhile and eternal. ..Who wants to try and grasp ‘shadows’ when they have this incomparable fullness.” - Stuart Allen (148)

“There were excellent physical reasons for the Old Testament law, which Dr. S Macmillen has catalogued in his interesting book, *None of These Diseases*. There were also spiritual reasons, for the distinctions between foods were meant to familiarize God’s people with the fact of purity and impurity, and thus to stimulate the conscience in everyday life. But when Jesus came, those dietary laws were abolished.” - R. Kent Hughes (82)

31. What does Hebrews 10:1,2 say about shadows?

- What purposes did the sacrifices serve? 10:3,4 (See Exodus 30:10)
- How was the need for sacrifices met? 10:10-12
- Why is the sacrificial system no longer needed? 10:18
- How closely can we approach God now? 10:19

32. What did Jesus say about food? Mark 7:15-19

33. What problem did Paul warn Timothy about? 1 Timothy 4:3-5

**Food for Thought:** "The idea that spirituality can be quantified provides an unfortunate basis for pride and judgmentalism. The flesh finds doing truly spiritual things difficult, as the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Matthew 26:41) But the flesh has no trouble with religious rules and regulations. There is an authentic lure to legalism."  
- R. Kent Hughes (83)

**Applying the Word:** *Have you ever been in a position where you felt what you ate or drank, or what you did or didn't observe might be a stumbling block to others? How did you handle it?*

## *Warnings in Colossians 2*

	Warning	Reason for this warning or right focus/understanding
2:4	<i>Do not be deceived by fine-sounding, persuasive arguments</i>	<i>Focus on Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.</i>
2:8		
2:16,17		
2:18		
2:20-23		