

What Freedom in Christ Looks Like – Part One

Colossians 2:8-15

Scripture Reading

Colossians 2:8-15

8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him

Purpose: Every Christ follower should walk in an attitude of victory because the cross procured our triumph over sin.

Introduction:

- Every human being has a choice to make as to how they will view the world and what they will choose to believe and live out their beliefs.
- We will talk a little this morning about the word philosophy. The word means a love of wisdom and the pursuit of it.
 - Everyone has a worldview so; it follows that everyone have a philosophy of life
 - Everyone I believe is in pursuit of answering three existential questions in life
 - Why Am I Here? What is my Purpose in Life?
 - Where Did I Come From? – Created or a product of evolution
 - Where Am I Going? – Is there an afterlife?

Ecclesiastes 3:11a

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart

- **Man's philosophy is the non-scientific attempt to answer these questions**
- We live in an age of all kinds of alternative realities and if you follow those made by man, you will never find satisfaction

Quote: “Man cannot begin with himself and arrive at ultimate reality.” – Francis Schaeffer

- **Ultimate truth cannot be discerned by our senses alone. Example – Antarctica**

1 Corinthians 2:9

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”

- **Ultimate truth cannot be discovered by rationalism – logic – being able to explain everything. No supernatural, no miracles.**

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death

- British philosopher, David Hume, famous for his naturalistic theory of the world – No supernatural intervention, miracles explained away with science said this

Quote: “I am first affrighted and confounded with that forlorn solitude, in which I am placed in my philosophy.” – David Hume

- Nineteenth century philosopher, Fredrich Nietzsche who famously declared that God is dead said this

Quote: “For Nietzsche to be consistent, he needed to become his own superman, but his views were overwhelming even for himself. As he poised over the abyss, he shivered with the horror of being responsible for everything alive in the impossibility of this situation, madness perhaps becomes his only possible freedom from the overbearing responsibility. He said “Alas, grant me madness.” – Os Guinness in his book ‘The Dust of Death’.

- Tragically, his wish came true and he spent the last eleven years of his life insane.
- Ultimate truth comes from the one who is truth and that is godly wisdom
- So, the choice is up to every human being as to whether they will seek man centered philosophies, worshipping something other than the creator or the creator Himself.
- What do you base your salvation on? How you answer that question defines how you should be living your life?
- If the Gospel is the center of your life and if it is Jesus that you are trusting in for heaven, you should be trusting and living for Him now. The Gospel as I said last week is not a one and done decision but sparks a new way of life that is transforming us and making us act more like Jesus

- Paul is warning us and the church at Colossae to not be snared in the trap of worldly philosophies that in and of themselves are pessimistic and fatalistic if you follow them to their logical conclusion.
- The church has been attempting to maintain doctrinal purity back to the time of the apostles and Paul as the NT was being written. Through councils and other means, the scripture and doctrine have been determined

Transition: Let's first of all look at what Paul's says about discerning truth to live by

Reject the false powers in this world

Colossians 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ

- **Be perceptive**
 - Paul is saying to be constantly watching, be on the lookout for false teachings and worldly philosophies from creeping in to the church and believers' lives.
 - The word 'captive' here means to kidnap, to carry off the spoils of war

2 Timothy 3:6

6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions

- Paul lists three things to avoid
 - Philosophy – worldly views of God, world, meaning of human life. All of these things were being debated in that time period
 - Human Tradition
 - Traditions are beliefs passed down from generation to generation. One man lays down a philosophy and the next philosopher comes along and refines it or draws a new circle to represent his views.
 - Judaism had intertwined their culture and ways of doing things and made them equal with the Word of God. Jesus rebuked them for that in Matthew 7.
 - Gentiles had their traditions as well

1 Peter 1:18

18 Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold

- Today, evolution is taught as a fact and not a theory and it is passed down to the generations as such

- These traditions of men, Paul calls empty deceit – worthless, fraudulent, trickery
- Elementary principles – literally means like the alphabet, things in a row
 - This is regressing from mature ideas and principles of the faith
 - Like going from having a doctorate to kindergarten
 - Moving to a salvation based on works and not the grace of God
- He adds at the end of verse 8, **not according to Christ**
 - Why are you moving away from the glorious majesty of who Christ is as the Son of God and His all sufficiency?

Galatians 1:6 – 10

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble 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 the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. 10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

- Be a critical thinker
 - You and I must be discerning and committed to the truth
 - We must fight and contend for the faith as Jude says because it is the difference between heaven and hell. Is there anything more important to fight for?

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Application: Are you able to perceive the truth from subtle falsehoods

Transition: We must show dignity and respect to those we differ with but we must not accept that other's versions of the truth are equal with ours. But and this is an important but, we must be confident in that if we lay the truth of Christianity out there with all the other views of the world, Christianity will stand out in stark contrast to them all.

Receive the full power that is eternal

Colossians 2:9 - 10

9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

- Many scholars believe that this is the most definitive statement among all of Paul's writings.
 - Jesus alone is the only person in the universe able to save us from our sin and ourselves. He is the only one who can adequately answer the three questions correctly for every human being of all time
 - All of the essence of God, all of the time. Not part as some of the Gnostics were claiming like pieces of deity broken up and emanating from God.
 - Dwell means to settle down and be at home. Christ at home being equal to the Father
 - Look at verse 10. Because of who Jesus is, you and I are filled with His fullness.
 - This has eternal results – heaven, a glorified body, seeing God in all of His majesty and power
 - This has current results. We were given the divine nature that gives us all the resources to live the Spirit filled life
 - When we are tempted men to lust, there are resources available in the Word to help us overcome lust
 - When we are tempted to gossip, there are guiding principles in God's Word to help us stop doing that
 - When we are tempted to envy others because they have things we wish we had, God teaches us to learn to be content and gives us the way to develop an attitude of contentment.
 - It is because Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. As good as some presidents and leaders of other countries are or have been, Jesus is heads above them all.
 - We are being restored to what He created us to be and to become complete in Him
 - Paul uses two symbols here to amplify his thoughts. The first one is;
 - The symbol of circumcision

Colossians 2:11

11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ

- What was circumcision to begin with in the Bible?

- It was to be an outward sign for the male population that they identify as a Jew.
- In the NT sense, circumcision was God changing our hearts to become a believer in Him. You don't belong to God by doing outward works but the circumcision today is that of a heart that has been changed.

Romans 2:28

28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

- According to Ephesians 2:11, the Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised in order to follow Christ.
- There were two schools of thought in Paul's day among the Jews
 - **First, the act of circumcision made the Jewish male a guaranteed member of the covenant nation – Israel**
 - Romans 9:6 debunks that view

Romans 9:6

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel

- Paul is saying, you are not saved because of circumcision
- No more than sleeping in a garage makes you a car.
- **The second view** and correct view is that man is born with a sinful nature and needs cleansing. The act of circumcision was given to prevent disease and keep that area of the body pure as a symbol of the washing away of sin.
- This is a picture of salvation. **I wish we had more time to look at verses to fully understand this picture.**
- It is God putting a new heart in us with the capacity to dominate over sin by faith. The picture of circumcision is that of taking out a stony, sinful heart, hardened to God and the Gospel and putting in a new heart that is powered by the resurrection power of Christ and led by the Holy Spirit of God.
- This is the putting off in verse 11 Paul is talking about

Ezekiel 36:26

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh

- Paul gives us another picture that is pretty familiar to us.
 - The symbol of **baptism**

Colossians 2:12-13a

12 Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh

- We are not literally killed, buried and brought back to life. This is the spiritual aspect as I shared two weeks ago. Christ became our substitute and so baptism is not part of salvation but is the outward display of the change of heart through salvation
- Explain baptism
 - Before salvation, we were lost and unable to come to God
 - But God came and raises us to new life

Ephesians 2:1-6

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

- So, the next time you and I are tempted to sin, we should stop and visualize that in us is the fullness of Christ and that by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive in us and gives us the power and ability to say no to the temptation
- Another deterrent to sin is to remember how greatly loved you are. This is the only place that Paul uses this wonderful phrase “great love,” It is better than an angel’s voice. If you have seen Jesus as true and received him as your most precious treasure of all, you are greatly loved. Think of it, you are greatly loved by the Creator of the universe!! What a deterrent to our temptation to sin.
- Can you see yourself on the cross with Jesus in a spiritual sense and that coming out of the grave, we have the power to overcome, fill in the blank _____; this particular sin. Every time you are tempted to give in to a reoccurring sin, remember the picture of you on the cross and dying with Him, being buried and now have the divine nature in the form of the Holy Spirit able to dominate sin in your life.
 - Romans 6 – **Know, Reckon, Yield** to the resurrection power of Christ.
- When you surrender to Christ fully, is He Lord of all because as Drew Webb said last week at the end of his sermon, He is not Lord at all.

- Paul was called by Jesus to serve Him and part of that calling was to suffer for Christ and he willingly accepted that.
- This is a radical call for us to look hard at our present lives to see if they are shaped by the hope of the resurrection. Do we make decisions on the basis of gain in this world, or gain in the next? Do we take risks for love's sake that can only be explained as wise if there is a resurrection?

Application: Are you able to visualize the overcoming power of the resurrection in your life?

Transition: If those pictures are not enough, Paul goes on in the last couple of verses we will look at today.

Respond by faith to the power of the cross that brings freedom

Colossians 2:13

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

- Paul is saying that we are not saved by following religious traditions or works as the worldly philosophies teach but through the power of the cross appropriated / applied to our human condition
- Look at the effects of the power of the cross on us as believers. Paul lists three here.
 - **The forgiveness of sin**
 - Forgiveness for our sins is a gift from God. It is not something we have the power to do in our own ability. In verse 13, Paul says we are dead in our trespasses and in God's eyes separated from Him because we were uncircumcised.

Psalm 130:3 – 4

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared

Isaiah 55:7

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

- God loves to forgive people. Repeat
- For someone out there this morning who thinks they have done something or things that God would never forgive, claim these and other promises with confidence that if you come with a heart of genuine sorrow and repentance, no one will be denied forgiveness

- For us as believers, God gives us the capacity to forgive through the power of the Holy Spirit. Picture the father in the story of the prodigal son.

- The **cancelling** of our debt with God

Colossians 2:14

14 By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

- This description is so powerful
- In the times Paul wrote this, people who had debt with someone else would get a handwritten certificate of what the person owed and if by a certain specified time, if the debt was not paid, they would become an indentured servant, a slave until the debt was paid
- They would write it on a piece of papyrus made from animal hide and use ink without acid so that when the debt was paid, the certificate could be wiped clean, erased like a whiteboard or a blackboard. That was the idea of setting aside or cancelling our debt of sin before God by the blood of Jesus Christ. He wrote it is finished over our certificate of debt.
- The picture is that of taking that certificate and nailing it to the cross. Not to hold that debt against us anymore!! **PPT picture**
- One more picture to leave with you and this is the best way to apply these truths.

- The **triumph** over Satan

Colossians 2:15

15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

- Disarmed Satan literally means that Christ stripped Him of the power over those who believe in Christ. He defanged Satan!!
 - The rulers and authorities include Satan and the fallen angels
 - Some fallen angels are already chained in the great abyss known as hell. Hell was created for Satan and his crew of angels who rebelled against God.
 - Satan and his minions of hell thought they had stopped God's redemptive plan at the cross but Jesus was letting them know that that did not happen. He put them to open shame by rising again from the dead.
 - Lastly, He triumphed over death

Hebrews 2:14

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil

2 Corinthians 2:14 – 16

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

- Paul is using a picture that all of his listener's had seen with their own eyes.
- When the Roman army would go out and win a battle or a major conquest of some kind, they would bring home the prisoners who were in chains to either become slaves, be imprisoned or executed.
- There would be a parade through the streets when the victorious army came home. The army would be in front and at the back of the parade would be the chained prisoners and the army would also display some of the spoils of the battle.
- Because some people could not come to the parade due to work or other circumstances, fragrances, like incense, would be placed in large bowls around the city and the fragrance lit on fire and the aroma would waft over the city. People would recognize from the fragrances wherever they may be that the Roman army was marching in triumphal procession to display to the world their victory over the enemy.
- What Paul is saying in Colossians and in I Corinthians 2 is that we are triumphant over sin and we should walk in dominance over it remembering that through the fullness of Christ in us and His ability to provide for all we need, we can declare victory in this world over sin.

Application: Are you going to the cross for the source of power over sin?

Key Thought: The first step to gaining victory over an area of sin is to see it crucified and dead on the cross.

Quote: "There are no victories at discount prices." - General Dwight Eisenhower.

Illustration: Walking through a park, I passed a massive oak tree. A vine had grown up along its trunk. The vine started small--nothing to bother about. But over the years the vine had gotten taller and taller. By the time I passed, the entire lower half of the tree was covered by the vine's creepers. The mass of tiny feelers was so thick that the tree looked as though it had innumerable birds' nests in it.

Now the tree was in danger. This huge, solid oak was quite literally being taken over; the life was being squeezed from it. But the gardeners in that park had seen

the danger. They had taken a saw and severed the trunk of the vine--one neat cut across the middle. The tangled mass of the vine's branches still clung to the oak, but the vine was now dead. That would gradually become plain as weeks passed and the creepers began to die and fall away from the tree. How easy it is for sin, which begins so small and seemingly insignificant, to grow until it has a strangling grip on our lives. And yet, Christ's death has cut the power of sin. Yes, the "creepers" of sin still cling and have some effect. But sin's power is severed by Christ, and gradually, sin's grip dries up and falls away. - J. Alistair Brown

Questions to Ponder This Week

- 1. How well do we know the truth so we are well able to spot false teaching?**
- 2. Will you meditate this week on the concepts of receiving a new heart (circumcision) and obtaining power over sin (baptism) because of your identity in Christ?**
- 3. Ask yourself, where will you go or what will you do to avoid giving in to the temptation to sin?**