**Colossians 6**

Colossians 2:8-23

8/31/25 AM

Meme.

**Today, we continue our sermon series in Colossians.**

* The apostle Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest in Rome.
* As far as we know, he never visited this church personally, but he felt responsible for these young believers.
* **False teachers were threatening this young church by encouraging the Colossians to look away from what they had in Christ.**
  + To divert their gaze, to turn to inferior options that could not save and ultimately would lead them away from what they had in Christ.

If you have your Bibles, let’s pick up where we left off last week…

***Colossians 2:8-15 NLT*** *Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.* ***9****For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.* ***10****So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.* ***11****When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.* ***12****For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.* ***13****You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.* ***14****He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.* ***15****In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

In previous weeks, we’ve talked about how the book of Colossians aims at answering a couple of important questions for Christ followers in any age: why we should stick with Jesus (in a world full of options) and how we can stick with Jesus.

**Last week, as Paul began answering the how question, he reminded us that we stick with Jesus by sticking with Jesus.**

* At first, it almost sounds like a gimmick.
  + But in 2:6-7, Paul gives us some helpful word:
    - We stick with Jesus by walking with Him as Lord, growing in our faith, and overflowing with thankfulness.

**In our passage today, as Paul continues to answer the how question, he says we stick with Jesus by keeping our eyes on Jesus.**

* Once again, this almost sounds like a gimmicky answer.
* But if we chew on these verses a bit, I think Paul provides some more word pictures to bring his instruction to life.
  + Beware, identify, and fix.

Let’s tease these out. For starters…

1. **Beware of deceptive influences**

You can stick with Jesus by staying focused upon him, but you need to be aware of deceptive influences.

***Colossians 2:8-23 NLT*** *Don’t let anyone capture you…*

***ESV*** *See to it that no one takes you captive…*

***KJV*** *Beware lest any man spoil you…*

This is Paul’s way of throwing down a warning*.*[[1]](#footnote-1)

* The Greek verb literally means ‘to look, scan the horizon, see clearly.’[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Paul tells the Colossians, and us, to be on the lookout.
  + **And specifically, we’re to be on the lookout for those who would take us captive.**
  + The word captive means “to carry away” or “kidnap.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
  + So, we are to be aware of those who would snatch us away as prey, those who would make us their spoil.[[4]](#footnote-4)

And according to Paul, this wasn’t just an unlikely possibility.

* Liability waiver.

**Paul’s warning is not a fine print kind of warning. The apostle said believers face the very real threat of being captivated by false teaching and lured away from the truth into the slavery of error.[[5]](#footnote-5)**

Whatever was going on in Colossae, Paul saw as a planned, organized attack against the gospel.

* The situation was real. The approach was both deceitful and ensnaring. The issue wasn’t with a misguided Christian teacher who was sincere but just didn’t have all the facts. This was a purposeful attempt to draw Christians away from their moorings.[[6]](#footnote-6)

And so, Paul tells the Colossians, *“Hey, spiritual warfare is real, and the battle is raging in your own backyard. It’s not out there somewhere in some distant land, it’s happening now, and you are in the crosshairs. So, be alert, be on guard, and keep your head on a swivel.”*

PAUSE

**Church, I think Paul warns us “to be aware, to be on guard” because it’s easy to forget that we are in a battle.**

PAUSE

Football season.

* *“They forgot to show up.”*

**Spiritually speaking, I wonder if that commentary fits us. It’s easy to become so busy with life and our routines that we forget that we are in a spiritual war.**

* It’s gameday and the game clock has started, and the devil is attacking us from the left and right and we’re just oblivious. We’re not warmed up, suited up, or putting up any fight.

But church, how can we ever expect to win a battle that we do not acknowledge? How can we guard against being taken captive if we have forgotten that there is a spiritual war raging for our soul?

Scripture is perfectly clear about our enemy and the war he wages against us.

***John 10:10 NLT*** *The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy…*

***1 Peter 5:8 NLT*** *Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.*

***Ephesians 6:10-12 NLT*** *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.****11****Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.* ***12*** *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

WWII books.

**In his letters, Paul pictures himself as being involved in a war effort.**

* And here in Colossians, the apostle tells the Colossians, and us, to be aware, to be alert, to be on the lookout.

I know that this kind of talk gets labelled as old-fashioned and simple minded in our culture today.

**It’s been said that the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he doesn’t exist.**

* Because the devil knows that if we ignore him, if we downplay the battle, if we tell ourselves that it’s peacetime when it’s wartime, he can deceive with impunity.[[7]](#footnote-7)

So, it’s simple. One of the ways we stick with Jesus is by recognizing that we’re in a battle.

* We have an enemy who seeks to destroy and carry us off as plunder.
* We need to be alert. We need to be ready. We need to be on the lookout.
* Because I guarantee you this, if we ignore the battle, we lose the battle.

Second observation…

1. **Identify deceptive influences.**

Looking for deer…

***Colossians 2:8 NLT*** *Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.*

**The false teaching in Colossae made inroads through what Paul called empty philosophies.[[8]](#footnote-8)**

* The word philosophy means “love of wisdom” and Paul had nothing against the “love of wisdom.” He isn’t criticizing wisdom.
* The grammar suggests that Paul had a particular kind of philosophy/wisdom in mind.
* And that’s the kind of wisdom that gets promoted as gospel truth (as leading to liberation and freedom) but in reality, is spiritually useless.[[9]](#footnote-9)
  + Paul is addressing a worldview that promised life, freedom, and fulfillment but in the end, delivered nothing.
  + It promised much but had no substance. Following it led to nothingness. It was devoid of truth and, therefore, unable to deliver.[[10]](#footnote-10)

And Paul provides us with some specific characteristics to help us identify the kind of false wisdom he’s talking about. For starters…

1. **The empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense come from human thinking.**

Commentator William Barclay said, *“This ‘wisdom’ being offered in Colossae was a product of the human mind; and not a message of the Word of God.”*

This phrase reminds us of Jesus’ critique of the Pharisees and teachers of the law for following their own “tradition” rather than the word of God.[[11]](#footnote-11)

***Matthew 15:1-9 NLT*** *Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him,****2****“Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”* ***3****Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God?****4****For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’* ***5****But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’****6****In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition.****7****You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote,* ***8****‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* ***9****Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’”*

* By insisting on their tradition and thinking, the Pharisees were in effect setting aside the Word of God.

**The false teachers in Colossae were doing the same thing.**

* They attempted to arrive at the truth, to solve ultimate questions of life, apart from the Lord and His Word.[[12]](#footnote-12)

PAUSE

If we listen to the spiritual talk in our culture today, we hear a lot of “I think” and “I feel” statements.

* Well, I think God is this or like that.
* I feel like God is like this or like that.

**And I know this will sound insensitive, but who cares?**

* Uninformed by Scripture, who cares what I think?
* Uninformed by Scripture, who cares what I can dream up in my mind?

Paul reminds us that the important thing about any teaching is its origin: Did it come from God, His revelation of himself, or did it come from human thinking?[[13]](#footnote-13)

* Human thinking can sound good, can’t it?
* Facebook reels YouTube clips.

Second…

1. **The empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense are elementary.**

***Colossians 2:8 ESV*** *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…*

* The word meant “basic components.”He used the same word in…

***Galatians 4:9 NLT*** *So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?*

The false teachers in Galatia urged Christians to worship elementary things. Paul opposed them as “fake gods,” mere superstitions that were undeserving of worship. [[14]](#footnote-14)

**It’s the same warning here in Colossians.**

Paul warns us not to be kidnapped superstitions and false gods (spiritual systems of thinking) that are perceived as having authority over the world but in reality, are weak and powerless.

* Paul says, *“Hey, the false teachers tell you they’re taking you a step ahead, but they’re actually taking you back to where you were when Christ rescued you.”*

PAUSE

Goreschel’s book.

* Pg. 162
* ***“There’s a big difference between being spiritual and knowing Christ.”***

Don’t be taken back to elementary ideas.

1. **The empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense are non-Christian.**

**Perhaps more than the other evaluations, this one points to the heart of the danger.**

* The philosophy, the so-called wisdom, was not “according to Christ.” It was incompatible with Christ and his teaching and contrary to the work he did on the cross.[[15]](#footnote-15)
* It didn’t sound like Jesus!

Mamaw scam.

The false teachers were proclaiming a doctrine and demanding practices that did not come from or depend on Christ.

**Once again, the dominant theological teaching of the letter is brought to bear.**

Christ is the one in whom God exclusively is to be found, the one through whom the world was created and through whom it is redeemed, and the one who has decisively defeated all the hostile powers.

**And any teaching that in any way detracts from Christ’s exclusive role is by definition both wrong and ineffective.**

* And church, I’ve pointed this out, but I’ll say it again because it’s the same in our culture today.
* The false teachers in Colossae did not ask anyone to forget Jesus altogether. They simply asked Christians to loosen their loyalty to Christ, lighten up, be a little more tolerant, to tweak the gospel message.
* But, for Paul, addition means subtraction: one cannot “add” to Christ without, in effect, subtracting from his exclusive place in creation and in salvation history.[[16]](#footnote-16)

PAUSE

**You know, chances are, we aren’t going to be tempted in the same exact ways that Paul’s original readers were tempted.**

* But we still face our own temptations. There are things in every age that threaten to take us captive.

So, Paul reminds us, *“Hey, I know these ideas sound really attractive. And you’re going to be tempted to buy into them because they sound so good. But they aren’t from Jesus. They’re from human thinking, they’re basic, and they don’t lead to freedom—they lead to captivity.”*

What deceptive influences do we need to identify?

We need to be aware of deceptive influences, identify deceptive influences, and one more word picture…

1. **Fix our eyes on Jesus**

**In verses 9-15, Paul returns to two core convictions found in his opening confession of the Lord Christ (1:15–20).**

* Jesus is the personal and complete revelation of God within history (2:9–10; compare 1:19).
* Jesus rules over every other power within God’s created order (2:10–15; compare 1:18).[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Why follow empty philosophy when we have all fullness in Christ?**

It would be like turning away from a satisfying river to drink from a dirty cistern (Jer. 2:13).

In verses 9-10, Paul gives the true and lasting antidote to all false teaching…

***Colossians 2:9-10 NLT*** *For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202&version=NLT#fen-NLT-29464b)*]****10****So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.*

**We’ve seen the word “fullness” (*pleroma*) before (Col. 1:19). *It means “the sum total of all that God is, all of His being and attributes.”***

The gulf between heaven and earth was bridged in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He is “Emmanuel, God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Jesus is the fullness of God, and that fullness dwells continually and permanently in Him.

* **But the remarkable thing is that every believer shares that fullness!**

**When a person is born again into the family of God, they are born complete in Christ.**

* Nothing needs to be added to Christ because He already is the very fullness of God. As believers draw on His fullness, they are “filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19).

**So, what more do we need? What more could we want?**

One commentator said, the fundamental test of any religious teaching is, *“Where does it put Jesus Christ—His person and His work?”*

* Does it rob Him of His fullness? Does it deny either His deity or His humanity? Does it affirm that the believer must have some “new experience” to supplement his experience with Christ? If so, that teaching is wrong and dangerous.[[18]](#footnote-18)

PAUSE

**So, church, Paul tells us to keep our focus on Jesus. To keep walking in him. Stay close to him. Keep adoring him. Make our lives a relentless pursuit of Him.**

Author Dane Ortlund put it this way…

*“If you look to him, everything else is footnotes. All else will fall into place. If you do not look to Jesus, no amount of techniques or strategies will finally help you; all will be for nothing. Peel back every layer of distraction and look to Christ. Simplify your heart and all its cares. Look to Christ and his overflowing heart.”*

PAUSE

We stick with Jesus by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

* It sounds like a gimmick, but it’s not.

As pastor Darryl Dash put it, *“Jesus is not just how we begin the Christian life, He is how we continue the Christian life and how we finish the Christian life. We don’t move on from him. We don’t need anything more than him, because there’s no one and nothing better than him.”*

**So, church, let us be on guard against anything that would cause us to look away from Jesus and let us keep your focus on Him, because he’s everything we need.**

1. Robert W. Wall, [*Colossians & Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntccol?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=272&ctx=t+way+(see+2%3a4).+He+~begins+with+the+warn), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Col 2:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Henry George Liddell et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lsj?ref=Page.p+318&off=4190&ctx=.%EF%BB%BF%3a+Dor.%EF%BB%BF+%CE%B3%CE%BB%CE%B5%CC%81%CF%80%CF%89+in+~%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%B3%CE%BB%CE%B5%CC%81%CF%80%CF%89+(v.%EF%BB%BF+%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Max Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=235&ctx=+takes+you+captive.+~Captive+means+%E2%80%9Cto+ca), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/jfbcomm?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=3&ctx=+whole+blessing.%0a8.+~Translate%2c+%E2%80%9CBeware+(), vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=5&ctx=been+missing.%E2%80%9D%0a2%3a8.+~Believers+face+the+v), 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Richard R. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=35&ctx=he+Threat+(2%3a8)%0a2%3a8+~Paul+saw+this+influx), vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Groeschel, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=749&ctx=nd+its+measurement.%0a~The+false+teaching+m), 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Wall, [*Colossians & Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntccol?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=2041&ctx=l+systems+of+truth.+~Paul+himself+has+not), Col 2:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=1798&ctx=ceitful+philosophy.+~It+had+no+substance.), 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Douglas J. Moo, [*The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntccolphm?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=4881&ctx=on+human+tradition.+~This+phrase+reminds+), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 186–187. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=2503&ctx=rrive+at+the+truth.+~It+was%2c+therefore%2c+a), 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col2.8-10&off=1256&ctx=%3b+3%3a6%3b+2+Tim.+2%3a2).+~The+important+thing+), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=1295&ctx=parts+of+a+series.%E2%80%9D+~It+sometimes+refers+), 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=4441&ctx=+was+non-Christian.+~Perhaps+more+than+th), 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Moo, [*The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntccolphm?ref=Bible.Col2.8&off=17121&ctx=cording+to+Christ.%E2%80%9D+~The+false+teachers+a), 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Wall, [*Colossians & Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntccol?ref=Bible.Col2.9-15&off=48&ctx=ilosopher%E2%80%9D+(2%3a9%E2%80%9315)%0a~In+responding+to+a+p), Col 2:9–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ntbec?ref=Bible.Col2.8-10&off=3452&ctx=asking+for+trouble.%0a~Why+follow+empty+phi), 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)