

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“Let No One Deceive You” Colossians 2:8-15

I've got something for you this morning. I borrowed this [a rock that looks like gold] from Steve Bentley. If you know Steve, before he learned to be content in whatever circumstances he was in, he did a lot of prospecting in his life and uncovered some things. Now, don't mug me, this isn't real, it just looks real. In fact, he tells me that he would hide it when he would be going mining with some expert miners and they would uncover it and it would fool them, it looks very real.

Now imagine if you were not so content with your circumstances and you were in the market for gold. You not only saw that this looked good but people told you it was real. In fact, suppose we got some gemologist to say, “Yes this is real” and you emptied your bank account?

You would be deceived. You would end up with something that wasn't real but just looked real. Well this morning we are going to look at being deceived and being warned not to be deceived from Colossians, chapter 2. So as you turn there, Colossians 2:8-15.

I will remind you where we have been. We have been in Colossians 1 where it talked about being grounded in truth, **Colossians 1 grounds the church in truth**. And with the prayer for spiritual growth, as we seek to grow spiritually, we need to know who Christ is. He is the creator of everything, He is the sustainer. And what He did, He is the reconciler of men to bring people back to God. And the role of the church, to proclaim Him, admonish every man, teach every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

And then last week we looked at Colossians 2.

We saw that people can be deluded. **Colossians 2 guards the church from error**. Not just grounding in truth but now we are guarding the church from error and that's what we are going to look at this morning. This morning we are going to talk about not being deceived.

Let's read Chapter 2:8-15, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”*

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The focus of Colossians 2:1-7 is a warning to not be deluded. Deluded speaks to our susceptibility to being led astray. The focus of Colossians 2:8-15 is a warning to not be deceived. Deception speaks of the error of the philosophy of men. The philosophy of the world; don't be deluded and be susceptible to this because this is deceptive. It's error, it's not true.

The only command in Colossians 2:8-15 is “see to it” which has the sense of “beware.” Be on guard, be careful, see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception rather than the elementary according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ. So we need to be aware and I'm going to point out seven contrast this morning so that we can learn to be on guard and beware.

1. Our Choice: deception or truth (2:8)

This is our choice. Will we be deceived or will we know the truth? What is the truth, where is the truth found? How do we know what truth is? Well Jesus said this, in John 17:17 he simply put it **God's Word is truth (John 17:17)**. God's word is truth and we can trust it as not being deluding or deceptive.

Now there are many things in the world that are not true. I will pick one. I am not going to pick one to bash on anybody, but just because he has gained such ascendancy in our society that everyone now seems to know who he is. I'd like to contrast Dr. Phil with the Bible. Now I'll admit upfront that I do not watch Dr. Phil. I really don't know a whole lot of what he says but I will make an educated guess based on the channel that he is on, and his popularity, that he is not teaching from the Bible, he's not a biblical teacher.

Now the Bible being truth stands in contrast to Dr. Phil. I will just use him as a representative of many, many people out there. Somebody else tomorrow will be gaining ascendancy just like somebody else was yesterday. They come along.

This is not to say that he is completely in error. He probably has some degree of truth in what he teaches. I really can't say how much it is and I don't think you can either. It may be 50%. 50% of what Dr. Phil teaches may overlap with biblical truth. I don't know, maybe it is only 20%, or maybe it is 80%, who knows. The point is it is not 100%. We can know confidently that Dr. Phil doesn't have 100% of the truth. In fact, he doesn't even pretend to be speaking from biblical truth.

So how can you trust what he is saying? How can you trust if it is 80% or 20 % of which of the things he is saying are true or not true? We don't know!

Now you have the same problem with me, don't you? Or any Bible teacher. And how do you know what I'm saying is true or not true? We can know that it is not 100%. If it was 100% I could stop learning and say I've arrived. I know all the truth. Well, that's not the case. When it's the case, I will let you know. In fact, I don't even know what the part I'm saying is in error because if I knew it was an error I would fix it, but I don't know.

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Here's the big difference between any Bible teacher who is really trying to be faithful to what God's Word says and anyone else who doesn't even pretend that. And that's the difference between truth and falsehood. It's this, that I am at least trying to point you to where the truth is and trying to explain what the Bible says. Other people are not even trying to explain what the Bible says; not even pretending this is what the Bible says.

So I may have some little F's (false) when I say something, I'm sure I do, but the big T (truth) is this, that God's Word is truth and in Him is found truth. Other people, like Dr. Phil, probably have some T's in there, where he is saying truth, no doubt. But the big F is this, he's not pointing you to the Word of God, he's not pointing you to Jesus Christ for truth. And that's a big F, so that's a big difference. We can look to God's Word for truth so we can be on guard and not be deceived by worldly philosophies.

Now, it's Mother's Day, Happy Mother's Day, by the way. And we normally have a parenting message on Mother's Day and I didn't want to disappoint you so I will include that in Colossians 2. By the way, there can be lots of truths and lots of errors in the midst of what different ones are teaching.

Here's the point: **Parents must lead their children to Christ's truth instead of the world's errors.** Parents must lead their children to Christ's truth because that's where truth, we can be sure, is found. The world may have some truth in there but there is a lot of error and the point is, how do you know? You don't know, you're guessing. You're hoping that what Dr. Phil says is true, but you don't know. It might sound good, but don't guess. Lead your children to the truth that is found in Christ, not to the error that comes from the world.

2. Our Choice: Captivity or freedom (2:8)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception. Captivity comes from the world. Freedom comes from Christ.

True freedom comes from abiding in Christ word. (John 8:31-32)

Jesus put it very succinctly this way. In John 8:31-32, He said saying to those Jews who believed in Him, Jesus said "**if you abide in My word then you are truly disciples of mine and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free**"

So how do we know the truth? We abide in His word. Abide, we live there. If we are living in the world's philosophies we will be taken captive. If we abide in God's Word we will know the truth and the truth has this result: it will make us free. The world system takes us captive and we become in bondage, a slave to sin and worldly ideas. I don't know how many people you have talked to who are in bondage to worldly ideas but when you talk to them you then appreciate this statement. They are indeed held captive. Some of them are professing Christians. But they are captive to the world's ideas because their underlying philosophy of life is not built on God's Word, is not trusting that what God says is true, but on everything else, or something else. And they become very much confused and it is very hard to have communication with them because they have been held captive.

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Parents must lead their children to Christ's way instead of living according to their own way. Sometimes, we as parents can hold our kids captive. And I can sympathize with this now that I am a parent and not just looking at other people who are parents and what they do. There is this tendency that we can have. We have aspirations, we have goals, we have desires for our children and we have established a relationship with them, and we wired them to respond in different ways. It's a powerful thing we have as parents and if we are not careful we will seek to mold them into our image because of our desires and our aspirations for them.

Well what we should do is to mold them to want God's desires for their lives rather than our desires for their lives. Free them to live according to God's will, however they may choose their path of life, rather than what we desire for them. That's our choice, captivity or freedom. Freedom comes from the Word of God.

3. Our Choice: emptiness or fullness (2:8-10)

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete.”

Your choice is emptiness or fullness. There are some versions that put it “hollow deception.” This word Deity in verse 9 is interesting and I would like to look at it. *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.* A clear statement of Christ's Godhood.

The word “Deity” (THEOTETOS) is a Greek word specially crafted by Paul to communicate that Christ is the very complete essence of God. Christ is the very essence of God.

This word to the best of our knowledge was never even used before Paul used it. He crafted a special word because this concept is so deep that words can hardly describe it. He took a word that he used in Romans 1:20 that says through the creation God displays His invisible attributes. Well this just isn't the attributes of God, it just isn't the quality of God dwelling in Christ. Or the attributes of God dwells in Christ. It's the very essence of God dwells in bodily form in Jesus Christ, a powerful concept. And then as this word gets used by the early church fathers and afterwards that's the concept that it means, complete essence of God.

An important powerful concept. It's important because of this, God in Christ is full. **Because He is the fullness of God, He is able to make us full. John 1:16 echos this.** We can be made complete in Him because He is the fullness of God. Because He is the fullness of God, He is fully able to make us complete. We are not deficient.

I want to show you my Greek textbook for a moment. I studied this when I was in college. I went to a secular university and had come to find out that we (the three people in my class who were interested in New Testament Greek in my university) were using the very same text book as others used in Bible colleges and seminaries to learn elementary Greek, the beginnings of Greek. Now it's not a very big book but it's even worse than a math book, every word means something in here, if you miss a sentence you're in trouble. Its author was J. Gresham Machen.

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He authored this and it's copyrighted in 1923. A long time ago, New Testament Greek hasn't changed much.

J. Gresham Machen taught at Princeton Seminary, which is connected to Princeton University. At the time he was teaching there became a controversy at this school, this institution. There were people that were saying that the Word of God was true but not entirely true, that there were errors in it. Machen opposed this and said that was wrong, the Word of God is completely true, not in error. So this became a bigger and bigger controversy because people like Machen saw this as very important. Princeton after all was a Presbyterian school. And Princeton Seminary was the flagship Presbyterian seminary.

So, what ended up happening? It became such a big deal that the school needed to make a decision on this and what they decided was that God's Word was not completely true, without error. Machen and others left this institution. And then what happened? As the years went on we can see that Princeton University is far from representing God's Word in any way, shape or form today, because of that turn of events. And that played itself out with other denominations. The Baptists went through this, the Lutherans went through this and now at our time there has been something of a division here between the people who will uphold the inerrancy of God's Word and say God's Word is true and those who don't.

Now I think we are at another day and age where people are faced with the same decision. They may say that we've got lots of evangelical Christians and churches that will say that God's Word is true, it's all true, but will they believe it? If they really believed it, they would act accordingly. And if they really believed it they would treat it as if it was the place where truth was found. But because they may not believe it, it may be more lip service than anything else, they are looking for other things to be true.

When I say "true" I don't mean two plus two is true, I mean in terms of how man's problems are solved, the human condition. How do we deal with the human condition? Does it come from God's Word as truth or does it come from the ideas of men? Well, I think the ideas of men might look good but they may not be delivering the goods. So be careful. Just because people may give adherence to the Bible being true doesn't mean they necessarily believe it. If they really believed it as being truth they would be focused and grounded on it as being the means by which life is complete.

Parents must lead their children to the fullness of Christ instead of to the emptiness of the world. Because in Christ is fullness. In Him we are made complete. All the other philosophies are empty. There's a contrast.

4. Our choice: Elementary or Wise (2:8-10)

Are you going to be elementary or wise? It is written, ***"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."***

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“Elementary principles” (2:8) are the “ABC’s.” These elementary principles can be translated the ABC’s, they are rudimentary things. And it is interesting because so much of the worldly ideas of how problems are solved will look upon what we are saying and say “oh how simplistic! You think that through this book that people’s problems are going to be solved?” Well, God spoke His Word, His revelation, and gave His Spirit to making us complete.

God’s Word is wise (Psalm 19:7; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 3:18-17). And it may sound simple to the wise but in God’s view it is wisdom because that’s what Psalm 19:7 says, it says the Word is wise. And 1 Corinthians actually contrasts it with saying “God has chosen the foolish things in the world to shame the wise,” because wise people who make things so deep and sophisticated will look at us as being foolish. But indeed God’s Word is wisdom and in Christ wisdom is found.

There is an example I would like to give you. I could give you many examples but I tried to choose something that is really maybe the pinnacle of man’s wisdom of how to solve human problems. The American Psychiatric Association has a manual that explains what the problems man has, what these human problems are. It catalogs them. This manual is called the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and it has gone through several editions because they haven’t quite got it all there yet and so they are developing it. It started in the 50’s and the latest edition was in 1994. This manual has grown to now over 300 different types of problems. Not like broken bones types of things; these are mental illness, mental health type of problems.

Now you can probably look at the American Psychiatric Association and say “They must know what they are talking about, they have lots of doctors there that have studied and learned.” Well, certainly they know a lot of stuff. But how do you know what they are saying is true? I say the same thing with Dr. Phil, you don’t know! You’re hoping. You’re guessing.

And I’ll give you one example to show that they don’t know. The one example was in the third edition, 1980, when this manual was revised. And like they do, they added different problems because how are you going to know what problems to treat if you don’t list them out? So they added more and more problems that people have. And they also took some out. They took one out in particular. They took out homosexuality. Prior to 1980, homosexuality was considered a problem that needed to be treated and solved. Subsequent to 1980, according to the American Psychiatric Association it no longer was a problem that needed to be solved.

Now that’s something I thought I could give as an example that we could all agree on (at least if we believe in God’s Word) because not just the Old Testament describes homosexuality as being a sinful behavior, an unhealthy lifestyle, but the New Testament as well describes this as such, in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6. In fact, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 describes people who were that and now had been changed. So it could even be a past behavior.

I’m sure they have other things that they changed. I’m not just picking on this one. But I thought this was one we could gain some common ground on this morning to say the American Psychiatric Association is not 100% right on all of what they conclude.

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And what's even more interesting to you and to me is how they went about deciding this. Do you know how they came about deciding to take it out? They took a vote! They took a vote and it was a 60/40 split. 40% of the people thought it should be left in, 60% of the people thought it should be taken out, so they removed it. I think if they took a vote today it would be an even wider split.

So how do you know? You don't know about the things in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual or anything else that the world comes up with. I'm sure there are some things in there that are true. I'm sure there are some things in there that are false. But my point is this: How do you know? You don't know. You're guessing. You're hoping.

But what we can know is God's Word. If we believe in Christ, that what He said, that His word is true and in it comes freedom, then we can know that Christ's Word is true, all of it. And if it's true we can then look to it for our help, to guide us through life, to bring the change that we need to bring because it tells us that's what it is for. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 explicitly tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for several things, correction, reproof, training in righteousness, for this purpose, so that every man can be adequate and we can be equipped for every good work. In other words, so that we can be what God designed us to be like and do the things that God designed us to do. That's what He designed His word to be like and we should function in that capacity.

Back to parents. **Parents must lead their children to the wisdom of God instead of to the foolishness of man.**

Because men will be very eager to bring foolishness to you and to get you to believe in it, and even package it in ways that will make it attractive. But God's word is wisdom and it should be desired even more than gold as Psalm 19 puts it, even more than gold.

5. Our Choice: external tradition or internal transformation(2:8-12)

Now we read verse 10 *“and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”* So circumcision is inward not just outward, even the Old Testament knew that, and spoke to that.

Circumcision of the heart is also an Old Testament concept (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6).

Circumcision wasn't simply designed to be just a physical identification but was representative of a spiritual transformation in the heart and the same thing is true in baptism here. There is some debate about whether this means water baptism or spirit baptism but one thing is for sure, it's not saying just get baptized, just have that activity happen to you, and that produces anything. It's symbolic, it's representative, just like circumcision of an inward spiritual transformation, it's a picture.

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So, are we going to be concerned about the external changes, the external traditions of men that we can be held captive to or are we going to be more concerned about the transformation of our heart? I hope that each of us will not be held captive to the traditions of men that says “this is important” or “do that thing” and bring changes that are only external because that’s the best that the world can hope to do is to bring external change, change that behavior, change this behavior. But only the Lord can bring a circumcision of the heart, to change our heart, to transform us inwardly. And when we are transformed inwardly we will be transformed outwardly, that inward change will bring outward change. God does that.

Parents must lead their children to a change of heart instead of simply a change in behavior.

Now I know that you need to bring some change in behavior or your child is going to be attacking the other children. There is some need to change behavior but we must be most concerned about the change of heart and be praying that God would be at work in their life and using the Word to bring the change that we so long for to the heart not just the behavior.

6. Our Choice: Death or life (2:12-14)

“having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

These decrees refer to the Mosaic Law and the Law held captive its people. But Christ cancelled out the debt and forgave sin by His death. What’s interesting here is that Paul is writing to a church. He believes that these people are Christians, he says in verse 10 in Him you have been made complete. He assumes that these people believe already. But yet again he is going over the gospel, that transgressions have been forgiven.

So we can say this, an **understanding and appreciation of the gospel is fundamental to life and ministry**. If we are going to see change, internal change, occur in people’s lives, it comes by a deeper and deeper appreciation of the gospel. So that we can be so thankful for what God has done for us in forgiving our transgressions and we can then respond to Him in thankfulness. And in that the Spirit works through us to bring change.

Do you think Dr. Phil is going to explain that? I don’t think so. Do you think the American Psychiatric Association is going to say that? I don’t think so. And this is so fundamental that Paul repeats it to people who already know it but he says it again because they need to be reminded of it.

And the same thing with our children, **parents must lead their children to know the gospel instead of just becoming a Christian**.

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Before people are Christians we need to explain the gospel so they understand it and appreciate it and can embrace it and believe it and follow it. And after people believe in Christ we need to explain the gospel so they can appreciate and understand it and be thankful for what they receive. So our children need to grow in their appreciation of the gospel so transformation can continue in their life. Not just “well we told them that, they said they believed it, their now a Christian, its done, don’t need to cover that again.” No that’s not it, we need to continue to emphasize the gospel and that’s what we try to do, that’s what the Word of God does, he keeps coming back to it because it is so fundamental and it’s so set apart from all the world’s ideas.

7. Our Choice: victory or defeat (2:15)

“When He (Christ) had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

When did He do this? He did this on the cross. It just isn’t fully manifested right now. It is to those people who have spiritual eyes to see but to the world it has not been revealed yet, this triumph on the cross. He triumphed over sin. He secured the victory. Now we have a choice, either to follow His securing of the victory or the defeat that comes from the world. We have a choice to follow the way of death or to follow the way of life, the truth of the gospel. We have a choice. Are we going to be concerned about external traditions of man or are we going to be concerned about the internal transformation of the heart? We have a choice to put our hope in the wisdom of Christ or in the foolishness of man. We have a choice whether we are going to listen to what’s empty and hollow or what’s the fullness of Christ and makes us complete. We have a choice, are we going to be held captive by the ways of this world or are we going to be freed by the Word that sets us free. Are we going to be deluded and deceived by the empty philosophies of men or are we going to be grounded in the truth of Christ.

Lets pray. Lord we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for allowing us to have a heart that receives Your truth. We pray that we can be able to understand the foolishness that surrounds us in the world and not be held captive by it. We pray, Lord, that we can be indeed see the wisdom that You have and we can embrace that and we can be full and we can be overcoming sin and pursuing Your righteousness. Lord, we pray that we would avoid the errors that surround our lives, that tempt us to be taken captive. Amen.