

## Principles for Studying the Epistles: Week Four

Colossians 2:8-23

### Introduction

1. Hack or Fact
2. Envisioning for studying Scripture: Is. 55:1-2

Isaiah 55:1,2

55 "Come, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

2 why do you spend your money for that which is not bread  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

From Morning and Evening December 16th

"Come unto me."

Matthew 11:28

The cry of the Christian religion is the gentle word, "Come." The Jewish law harshly said, "Go, take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; keep them, and thou shalt live." The law was a dispensation of terror, which drove men before it as with a scourge; the gospel draws with bands of love. Jesus is the good Shepherd going before his sheep, bidding them follow him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, "Come." The law repels, the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance which there is between God and man; the gospel bridges that awful chasm and brings the sinner across it.

From the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the language of Christ to you will be, "Come, come unto me." As a mother puts out her finger to her little child and woos it to walk by saying, "Come," even so does Jesus. He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow him as the soldier follows his captain. He will always go before you to pave your way, and clear your path, and you shall hear his animating voice calling you after him all through life; while in the solemn hour of death, his sweet words with which he shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be--"Come, ye blessed of my Father."

3. Pray the text in Isaiah

55 "Come, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

2 why do you spend your money for that which is not bread

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

#### 4. Review

- a. "In Christ" chart/exercise.

TRANSITION - What does society say we need to be fulfilled? And what do we mean by fulfilled?

### **SECTION ONE: The Way of Safety (Colossians 2:8-10)**

READ - Col. 2:8 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.

1. Features of this dangerous philosophy (Gnosticism and ascetic Judaism hybrid)
  - a. Deceptive - sounded good but was actually empty. They were sincere. Morality and sincerity. Tailored to capture the Colossians.
    - i. example?
  - b. Human tradition - ancient and primal. It was presented as a tradition from ages past, giving it credibility.
  - c. Demonic - Elemental spirits are still active today.
  - d. Enslaving - kidnappers, soldiers taking people away by chains like in a chain gang.

\*Can you think of any current philosophies that are creeping into the church that have these types of origins? Manifesting?

#### 2. How do we resist being sucked into dangerous philosophies?

- a. The Fullness of Christ
  - i. The Fullness of His being. In Him, the whole fullness of Deity dwells bodily.
  - ii. We have been filled in Him. We are full of His fullness.
  - iii. Ocean illustration
  - iv. We are elastic, so our experience of His fullness can grow!
  - v. His fullness meets our individual needs: wisdom, strength, love, and patience
  - vi. Elizabeth Elliot Quote from *The Path of Loneliness*: "With what misgivings we turn over our lives to God, imagining somehow that we are about to

lose everything that matters. Our hesitancy is like that of a tiny shell on the seashore, afraid to give up the teaspoonful of water it holds lest there not be enough in the ocean to fill it up again. Can the shell imagine the depth and plenitude of the ocean? Can you and I fathom the riches, the fullness, of God's love?"

- vii. He is all we need. We do not need other supplemental teachings to become like God.
- b. His fullness brings deep satisfaction to our souls
- c. The fountain of living water keeps us from drinking from the broken cisterns of demonic, deceptive philosophy.

## **SECTION TWO: The Fullness in Christ (Colossians 2:11-15)**

READ TEXT: Colossians 2:11 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.

1. In Christ: His death, burial, and resurrection (2:11-12)
  - a. Circumcision image
    - i. Removing the flesh without hands could mean removing the bondage to our fleshly appetites.
    - ii. "We no longer live in the sphere of the flesh and its influence." ESV study Bible
  - b. Baptism image
    - i. Another illustration of Jesus' work on the cross
    - ii. Romans 6:3-6 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.
2. In Christ: Delivered from bondage (2:13-15)
  - a. Of death (2:13b) You were dead, and now you are alive!
  - b. Of the guilt of sin (2:14) Your sin deserved the wrath of God
    - i. Financial image - canceled your debt
    - ii. Legal image - declared innocent

- iii. The sign above the cross image - Nailed to the cross
    - iv. Burden of guilt lifted. Such a heavy burden DON'T RUSH PAST THIS
  - c. Of the rulers and authorities - meaning demonic forces.
    - i. They are real. Paul doesn't downplay this
    - ii. They are disarmed. They can't do eternal damage. We are safe in Him.

### **SECTION THREE: Guard Your Treasure (Colossians 2:16-23)**

READ: Colossians 2:16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

What can rob us of experiencing the fullness of Christ?

1. The Lies of Legalism (2:16, 17)
  - a. Diet: if you return to the Old Testament dietary laws, you will experience greater spiritual fullness.
    - i. Jesus with the Pharisees (Mark 7:18-20; Matthew 15:1-20)
    - ii. Peter's dream Acts 10:13-16
    - iii. Food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do (1 Cor. 8:8)
  - b. Days
    - i. New Moon Celebration
    - ii. Leviticus 25
    - iii. Isaiah 1:13
  - c. Truth: Shadows, but The Substance belongs to Christ
    - i. Points to Christ
    - ii. Is fulfilled in Christ

#### **2. The pride of Mysticism**

18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,

- a. Worship of the angels - one commentator said that the people were more than likely coming across as humble... like they were unworthy to go to Jesus directly, so they went to the angels first.

- b. Levels of spiritual experience. Going into great detail about their spiritual experiences, but they were detached from the head - Jesus Christ.

### 3. The deception of Asceticism

21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

- a. This isn't the spiritual disciplines
- b. This is a way to get to God or get something from God on our terms, not on His.
- c. “Promoting self-made religion”

EXAMPLES: What are some modern-day examples of legalism, mysticism, asceticism

“The reality is this: in Christ, all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in him we have been made full. But we can lose the benefits of that fullness very easily.” - R. Kent Hughes from his commentary on Colossians

- We can fall to legalism, and it's attendant self-righteousness, joylessness, and judgmentalism.
- We can succumb to mysticism and develop a proud, elitist spirit which contributes nothing to true worship.
- We can get into asceticism, thinking it will make us more holy when actually it will feed our flesh.”

### 4. What's the answer?

- a. To Legalism - continual realization of the grace of God.
- b. To Mysticism - understanding more deeply the mystical union we have with Christ
- c. To Asceticism - Jesus suffered on our behalf. We have died, been buried, and are raised to life in Him.
- d. Stay near to Christ, the head

## **CLOSING POEM**

“He is a Path If Any Be Mised” by anonymous

He Is a Path if Any Be Mised;

He is a robe if any naked be.

If any chance to hunger, He is bread;

If any be a bondman, He is free.

If any be but weak, how strong is He!

To dead men, life is He. To sick men, health.

To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth.

A pleasure without loss,

A treasure without stealth!