

Sunday, November 22, 2020—Colossians 2:9-10 Complete in Christ

Introduction

- Last Sunday we finished out study of Colossians 2:8 by looking at the last two categories of thought that have the potential to spoil believers i.e., “the tradition of men,” and “the rudiments of the world.”
- Paul’s warnings in verses 4 and 8 relate to the Colossians and their embracing of Gnostic philosophy. The specific error of doctrine that Paul is addressing in Colossians is characterized by the following components:
 - Colossians 2:8—philosophy
 - Colossians 2:23—it possessed a “show of wisdom” thereby appealing to Gentile propensity to worship wisdom, higher education, and intellectualism (I Cor. 1:22).
 - Colossians 2:8—it paid a high regard to “tradition”
 - Colossians 2:23—it also practiced asceticism false humility thereby giving it the appearance of superior sanctity and piety.
- “This strange mixture of Jewish traditionalism and Greek Philosophy stressed two things: reverence for angelic powers (Col. 2:18), and contempt for the body (Col. 2:20-23).” (Baxter, 200) The names of this egregious error containing a mixture of Greek philosophy, Jewish traditionalism, and Eastern mysticism, asceticism, was Gnosticism.
- Colossians 1:15-18—give a glorious full-length portrait of the real Christ who became our Savior by setting forth seven super-glorious features.
 - Image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)
 - First born of every creature (Col. 1:15)
 - Creator of the universe (Col. 1:16)
 - He IS before the universe (Col. 1:17)
 - In Him the universe consists (Col. 1:17)
 - He is the head of the body the church (Col. 1:18)
 - He is the first born from the dead that he might be the preeminent one in all things (Col. 1:18)

- “This is the real Christ who had been preached to the Colossians. How then could they exchange HIM for any of the fanciful inferior angle-powers of the specious philosophers who were now trying to talk them over? Where are His equals or rivals? Why, all the others were made by Him and for Him. . . He alone, with mysterious obviousness and unassuming ease, unites in Himself God and man, nature and super-nature, eternity and time, heaven and earth, past and future, all worlds and our work, all-transcending sovereignty and all-sufficient saviorhood—“that in all things He might have the pre-eminence!” (Baxter, 204)
- Colossians 2:8—the problem with philosophy, tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world is that they are not “after Christ.”

Colossians 2:9

- **For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.**
- Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. He is the God man. All the fulness of God dwells or resides in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Colossians 1:19—it pleased God the Father that “all fulness dwell” in Christ. This was the good please of God’s will. According to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* the English word “fulness” carries the following relevant meanings:
 - The state of being filled, so as to leave no part vacant.
 - The state of abounding or being in great plenty; abundance.
 - Completeness; the state of a thing in which nothing is wanted; perfection.
- Colossians 2:9—all the “fulness of the Godhead” resides in the person of Jesus Christ and it “pleased the Father” that this should be the case.
- This doctrine of “fulness” comprises the very core of the book of Colossians. Once again, J. Sidlow Baxter points this out in his *Explore the Book* when he states:
 - “There are two sides to this [‘fulness’]: the Divine and the human. The two great truths which the Colossians (and ourselves) were meant to learn are: 1) all the fulness of God is in Christ; 2) all the fulness of Christ is for us.” (Baxter, 206)
- Note how Colossians 1:19 is related to Colossians 1:9. Recall that Paul’s prayer was that the Colossians be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Now in verse 19, Paul instructs the Colossians that “all fulness dwells” in Christ.

- Writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, Paul is dismantling the core of Gnostic philosophy and teaching.
 - “The Gnostic bewitchers at Colosse were insinuating that their own new inner knowledge added completion to the Gospel (the name “Gnostic” is from the Greek *gnosis*, “knowledge”), and affected to give (a) fulness or complete to the truth as it is in Christ; (b) a complete inner knowledge of Divine realities; c) a superior “wisdom” or “spiritual understanding.” Paul is using the favorite words when he prays that the Colossian believers “might be FILLED with the “*epignosis*’ of His will in all “wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (Baxter, 206)
- How can the “fulness” of Christ become real in our experience as believers?
 - Colossians 1:19—we find: “it was the good pleasure [i.e. of God the Father] that in Him all fulness should dwell.”
 - Colossians 2:3— we read: “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
 - Colossians 2:9—“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”
 - “The undivided pleroma [fulness] of chapter 1:19 is here unmistakably defined as the fulness of the “the Godhead.” The very nature and attributes of God in all their plentitude reside in Christ. Moreover, whereas in chapter 1:19 the dwelling of the “fulness” in Christ is seen rather as the *economic* “good pleasure” of the Father in relation to the stupendous Divine scheme of reconciliation, here in chapter 2:9 it is seen as an abiding fact. Still further, all the fulness now and forever dwells in him “bodily”—a clear reference to Him as the incarnate One, our own Lord and Savior JESUS!

In the first of these statements [Col. 1:19] the fulness “dwells” in Him; in the second [Col. 2:3] it is “hidden” in Him; in the third [Col. 2:9] it abides in Him “bodily.” In the first it “dwells” in Him as the qualification for all-sufficient Saviorhood. In the second it is “hidden” in Him that we may have the intellectual pleasure of ever-growing search and new discovery. In the third it resides in Him “bodily” that it may come to us spiritually through the Divine-human love and Spirit of One whom we can see and know and trust and lay hold of as JESUS.” (Baxter, 206-207)

Colossians 2:10

- **And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:**

- The expression “ye are complete” is in the present tense and the indicative mood. In other words, Paul is expressing a present tense factual reality that is true of all believers. All believers are complete in Christ.
 - “That is the one, straight, final reply which is needed. If He is the very fulness of the Godhead bodily, then nothing can be added to Him; and if the believer is “in Him,” what can be added which the believer does not already possess in Him?” (Baxter, 207)
- Spiritually speaking, we earthlings in these earth suits are complete in the one who is the head of all principalities and power.
- The idea conveyed in these two verses is that “Christ is the completion of the fulness of Deity, and in Him the believer is complete. The argument of the passage is that Christ is God, and therefore supreme over all angels (vs. 10 and 18); and that in Him the believer is complete.” (Williams, 938)
- Read from Campbell pages 97-98.