

The Freedom Found in Jesus Christ – Part 1
Colossians 2:6-15

Introduction

1. One of the great themes of the Bible is freedom and we see it repeatedly in various forms:
 - a. We see **FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION** when God rescued Israel from Egypt in the Exodus, when He returned them to the land after their captivity in Babylon, and even in the End Time when God conquers the nations of the earth and brings them into subjection to the reign of Christ
 - b. In John 8, Jesus spoke of the **FREEDOM FROM SIN** available through Him (John 8:34-36):
“...Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”
 - c. There’s another form of freedom we see in the Bible as well, especially in the NT, and it’s the focus of our passage for this week and next; it’s the **FREEDOM FROM THE YOKE OF RELIGION**
 - 1) You may remember, after Gentiles started responding to the Gospel, some of the Jewish believers began to demand and teach that Gentiles had to be circumcised, follow the traditions and customs of Moses, and obey the OT Law in order to be saved
 - 2) But, Peter referred to this as a “**yoke**” that even they themselves could not bear, and they all agreed that no such requirements were necessary (READ Acts 14:26-15)
 - 3) Peter uses yoke metaphorically here to describe the Law as a heavy burden that is not only unbearable but unnecessary
 - 4) Paul addressed something similar in Galatians 3:23-25 (READ)
 - 5) What these passages reveal is that the Christian life is to be lived by faith in Christ, not according to some religious system with its rites, rules and regulations
 - 6) Jesus has freed us from the yoke of religion, but unfortunately not all Christians got the memo and some still attempt to live their lives by such things
2. This is nothing new; in fact, two of Paul’s letters address this very topic, Colossians and Galatians:
 - a. Both groups were struggling with whether faith in Christ alone was enough, or whether more was needed to fully know and experience God
 - b. Unfortunately, the Galatians had already been compelled to place themselves under the burden of the Law, which explains Paul’s harsher tone with them (READ Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1-3; 4:1-11; 5:1-9)
 - c. Fortunately, the Colossians hadn’t fully given into the legalism being preached by some, but they were standing on the cusp with a decision to make
 - d. Would they hold tight to faith in Christ alone, or give up the freedom they had in Christ by placing themselves back under the yoke and captivity of empty philosophy, man-made traditions, legalistic religious rites and regulations, elementary principles of the world, etc.?
3. Many Christians, whether they admit it or not, struggle with this same issue today?
 - a. Some claim that Jesus is sufficient for salvation, but seek God’s grace through liturgical and sacramental systems
 - b. Others believe they can gain God’s favor by living their lives under the strict rules of their religion

- c. Still others seek a deeper, more mystical religious experience through the doctrines and disciplines of Spiritual Formation
 - d. But, as we'll see today and next week, all these things lead us away from the freedom we have in Christ and back into captivity
4. Outline of the passage:
- a. To maintain our freedom in Christ we must continue to walk in Him by faith (2:6-7)
 - b. To maintain our freedom in Christ we must avoid being deceived (2:8-15)
 - c. To maintain our freedom in Christ we must reject legalism (2:16-23) – next week

A. To maintain our freedom in Christ we must continue to walk in Him by faith (READ 2:6-7)

1. Paul called on the Colossians to continue to walk in Christ in the same way in which they had received Him (READ 2:6):
 - a. What did Paul mean by “**as [just as] you have received Christ Jesus the Lord**”?
 - 1) He is referring to how they came to know and accept Christ
 - 2) Paul already gave us a picture of this back in 1:3-8 (READ):
 - a) They had received Christ by faith, and this was being expressed through their love for other believers and the hope that they now had in Christ
 - b) They had accepted the Gospel as taught to them by Epaphras and it was bearing fruit and multiplying among them
 - c) They had come to understand the grace of God in truth—meaning that they understood that salvation is only available by God's grace through faith in Christ alone
 - 3) They had received Christ simply by accepting the truth of the Gospel and placing their faith in Jesus Christ; it was that simple
2. As a result of their faith in Christ, four things were now true about the Colossians, and they were to continue walking in Christ in light of these things (READ 2:7):
 - a. They had been “**firmly rooted...in Him**”:
 - 1) This is a horticultural metaphor; strong healthy roots provide a plant with stability and the means to receive all it needs to thrive, and the same is true of us
 - 2) To be firmly rooted in Christ means that our stability and everything we need to thrive comes from Him
 - 3) Paul's use of the perfect tense here implies a settled state (e.g. “we were and continue to be firmly rooted in Him”)
 - b. They were “**being built up in Him**”: Paul uses an architectural metaphor here like he does elsewhere to refer to the ongoing work of God in building up believers individually and corporately into a temple for the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-21)
 - c. They were “**[being] established in your faith, just as you were instructed**” (e.g. just as Epaphras had taught them):
 - 1) The word “**established**” here was used in a legal sense to confirm or verify something
 - 2) Paul uses it here as a metaphor to speak of the Colossians being confirmed or verified as part of “**the faith**” (lit.)

- 3) This bring to mind something Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 13:5: **“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”**
- 4) The test of whether or not we are in the faith is not the religious things we believe or practice; it’s whether or not we are in Christ and He in us
- d. Finally, they were **“overflowing with gratitude”**:
 - 1) Each of the first three participles were in the passive mode indicating that they were acts of God: God had rooted them in Christ; God was building them up; God had established and confirmed them in the faith
 - 2) This last participle is in the active voice because it is something the Colossians had been doing as a response the previous three: they were overflowing with gratitude
3. Takeaway (two things):
 - a. First, to walk **“in Him”** means that we continue to walk by faith, just as we received Him:
 - a) We came to Him by faith, and we must therefore continue to walk in Him by faith
 - b) The rules don’t change after we get saved; we don’t come to Him in faith and then change to some works-based system of trying to please the Him
 - b. Second, to walk **“in Him”** means that we continue to walk in the full conviction and assurance of the four realities Paul just described:
 - a) We are firmly rooted in Him
 - b) We are being build up in Him
 - c) We are being established in Him
 - d) And we should be overflowing with gratitude in Him for these things

B. To maintain our freedom in Christ we must avoid being deceived (2:8-15)

1. Paul now warns the Colossians about losing their freedom by being taken captive **“through philosophy and empty deception”** (READ 2:8):
 - a. The grammar here indicates that Paul is not talking about two things—philosophy and empty deception—but rather philosophy that is empty and deceitful
 - b. Philosophy in and of itself is not bad; it’s merely the study of knowledge; what determines whether it’s empty and deceitful is the source
 - c. Here Paul warns the Colossians not to be taken captive by philosophy that is based in **“the traditions of men, the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”**
 - 1) **“traditions of men”**:
 - a) Paul doesn’t state what these traditions were, but in Matthew 7:8 the same phrase is used to refer to the teachings and practices espouse by the Pharisees
 - b) Similar language was used in Greek philosophy to refer to the philosophical teachings passed down from teacher to student
 - 2) **“elementary principles of the world”**: This phrase is a bit more challenging because there’s no agreement over what the word translated **“elementary principles”** means and this is evident in the different ways it’s translated:
 - a) The translators of the NASB, LSB, KJV, NKJV believed it refers to the basic or elementary principles of the world that can be learned through human observation

- b) The translators of the NET, ESV and NIV believed it refers to the demonic spirits or forces of the world
 - c) Both of these translations are probably but more modern scholarship tends to favor the latter (or second) view, that Paul was referring to philosophy rooted in demonic forces, must like Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:1 when he referred to **“paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”**
- 3) When philosophy is based on these things—traditions of men, human observation, or demonic spirits—and not **“according to Christ”**, it is empty deception and leads to captivity
- 2. To counteract this empty and deceptive philosophy challenging the Colossians, Paul focused on the all sufficiency of Christ (2:9-15):
 - a. These seven verses are JAM PACKED with theology and we could practically spend a week on each verse, and even parts of each verse
 - b. However, we’re going to stick with the high points because Paul’s point in providing the theology is that we shouldn’t be deceived into thinking we need more than Christ; faith in Christ is sufficient because He is sufficient
 - c. Look at what he says in regard to Christ and our relationship to Him (2:9-15; pay attention to the number of times we see **“in Him”**, **“in whom”**, and **“with Him”**; 11 of them?):
 - 1) We have been made complete in Christ (READ 2:9-10):
 - a) For **“all the fullness of Deity”** to dwell bodily in Jesus means that Jesus is fully God and fully man
 - b) John 1:1 says, **“In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God and the Word was God”**, and then in v. 14 it says, **“and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”**
 - c) And, since we are **“in Him [we] have been made complete”**, or as some translations say, **“in Him we have been filled”** (did you catch the word play there?)
 - d) We have been made complete, made full, because we have become partakers of God’s nature (READ Hebrews 3:14; 6:4; 2 Peter 1:4)
 - 2) We have been circumcised in and crucified with Christ (READ 2:11):
 - a) God promised Israel in the OT that a time would come when He would circumcise their hearts so that they could love him with their heart and soul (Deuteronomy 30:6)
 - b) Paul alludes to that here by referring to our circumcision in Christ being a **“circumcision made without hands”** and a **“removal of the body of flesh”**; In Romans 2:29 he refers to this as a **“circumcision which is of the heart”**
 - c) To circumcise the heart means to metaphorically cut away our once hard and callous hearts and the flesh with all its lustful desires
 - d) Paul links this with our crucifixion with Christ (READ Romans 6:4-6)
 - 3) We have been baptized and made alive with Christ (READ 1:12-14):
 - a) Baptism in the NT symbolizes the new life we have in Christ; when Peter said at Pentecost, **“Repent and be baptized”** he was calling on the Jews to turn from their old lives through repentance and turn to a new life in Christ through the symbolic washing of baptism

- b) Here Paul reminds us that we have not only been buried with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but also raised up with Him from the dead
 - c) When we were dead in our sin and possessed an uncircumcised heart, Christ made us alive together with Him by forgiving all of our sin
 - d) He has cancelled the certificate of debt that was hostile toward us, taken it out of the way and nailed it to the cross
- 4) Finally, Jesus disarmed and put to shame the spiritual forces of darkness (READ 2:15):
 - a) This last verse is a bit different because rather than speaking of what we have in or with Christ, it speaks of Jesus “**disarming**” and “**triumphing**” over the “**rulers and authorities**” (a reference to the spiritual forces of this world)
 - b) Some translations say He “**triumphed over them through [or in] Him**” but the KJV, NET, and NIV are probably more accurate with “triumphed over them through it” or “the cross” (since the last word is simply the third person masculine singular pronoun and the immediately preceding noun is the cross)
- 3. Takeaway: to maintain the freedom we have in Christ we must avoid being deceived and hold tightly to the conviction that Jesus is all-sufficient!
 - a. The Colossians were being deceived into thinking they needed more than Jesus for whatever reason:
 - 1) Maybe they were beginning to think that faith in Him wasn’t quite enough to be saved
 - 2) Maybe they thought He was, but that He wasn’t enough to help them overcome temptation or sin
 - 3) Maybe they thought there was more to know about God, or a deeper plain of spiritual existence they could attain
 - 4) By abandoning their believe in the all-sufficiency of Christ they were giving up the freedom they had in Christ leading themselves back into the bondage of religion
 - b. However, Jesus is all sufficient, not just for salvation but for everything we need
 - 1) We have been made complete in Him and have become partakers of God’s nature
 - 2) We have been circumcised in and crucified with Him and our body of sin has been done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin
 - 3) We have been buried with Him in baptism, raised up with Him, and made alive in Him
 - 4) We have been forgiven of our sins in Him, and He has disarmed our Enemy
 - c. He is truly ALL-SUFFICIENT and in order to maintain the freedom we have in Christ is to hold on tightly to that conviction