

necessary? Because in sin we were spiritually dead. . .

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (Col. 2:13a).

The soul who sins is separated from God. The soul who is made complete in Christ, Paul explains, **“He has made alive together with Him”** (Col. 2:13b)—the Christians is born anew—**“Having forgiven you all trespasses”** (Col. 2:13c). Unless our sins are forgiven, we are still dead. Sometimes we can be very narrow in our reading of Scripture. We look at one passage and think that text says everything that God wants us to know about a subject. For example, in a parallel passage, Ephesian 2:8-9, salvation is connected with **“faith”** and **“grace”** but nothing is said about baptism. In our text here in Colossians 2, nothing is said about grace! Just as we cannot dismiss the role of grace from Colossians 2, we cannot dismiss baptism because of Ephesians 2.

The wise conclusion is to recognize that both grace and baptism are involved in allowing the forgiveness of trespasses.

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us” (Col. 2:14a).

The debt of sin that is brought on by law without forgiveness is **“contrary”** to man. It teaches what we should do but the spiritual death it brings to the one who violates it is **“contrary”** to us. Yet another thing Christ had done for the Christian is that, **“He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”** (vs. 14b). What we owed He paid. The Law of Moses had a system of sacrifices, but it was ongoing. You needed it again and again—because sin came into one’s life again and again. Jesus offered Himself (Heb. 9:11-14). The contrary aspect of the law and the debt of sin it tallied up was nailed to the cross with Jesus. The soul who refuses to accept Jesus bears his or her own sin and remains spiritually dead because of it. **“Having disarmed principalities and powers”** (Col. 2:15a). The power of death was disarmed, the power of sin was disarmed, and the power of Satan was disarmed. In the victory Christ obtained through the cross, **“He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it”** (Col. 2: 15b). Paul told the Ephesians, **“He led captivity captive”** (Eph. 4:8) In His death, Jesus showed how meaningless and futile Satan, sin, and death are in the face of Christ’s love. His death, His cross made these powers and authorities ineffective. He defeated them in the cross. Obey Christ! Let no one cheat you of this great victory!



Faithful Sayings Issue 22.19 May 10, 2020

4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com



ISSUE

22.19

May 10, 2020

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
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Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

“Beware Lest Anyone Cheat You”

By Kyle Pope

We all have questions: *Why am I here? What is life all about? Does anyone care about me? What happens when we die? Is there a God? How can I find happiness and meaning in life?* In life, people look to themselves to answer these questions, look to others (who have no better insight into these questions than we do), or we look to God. In Colossians 2:8-15, Paul makes the case that the only true source to answer the questions of life is Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that this is true because of two reasons: (1) Who Jesus is and (2) Because of what He can do for us. Let’s consider his argument:

“Beware lest anyone cheat you” (Col. 2:8a). It is possible to be cheated out of what God has for us (and the answers He would give us) by looking in the wrong places for answers. **“Through philosophy and empty deceit”** (Col. 2:8b). The word “philosophy” literally means “love of wisdom.” It is a good thing to love wisdom. The problem comes when we love wisdom from the wrong source. Wisdom from God recognizes the awesome nature of God (Job 28:20-28). We can look everywhere and miss it if we don’t start with God. Earthly wisdom is often “empty deceit.” (KJV and ASV “vain” means meaningless or worthless). These are sources that can let us be “cheated” out of the true answers.

“According to the tradition of men” (Col. 2:8c). Looking to what man does and says for answers is fine if it concerns things man has power over. The Bible won’t tell us how to operate a computer program or repair an engine. We need a manual written by men will for these things, but looking to man for answers in areas outside of his control is (as noted above) “meaningless deception.” We could probably find books written on

all of the questions we posed at the beginning of this study. If they look to the Bible as their source, they may have some value. If they look to men as their source, the best they can offer is a view of someone else's opinions and questioning. If they presume to answer questions outside of what God has revealed, they are deception. Paul warned those in Thessalonica that those who do **"not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved"** will **"perish"** being overtaken **"with all unrighteous deception"** (2 Thess. 2:10). We will only be spared from **"unrighteous deception"** if we have a love for the truth.

Many traditions are **"according to the basic principles of the world"** (vs. 8d). Many try to find wholly naturalistic explanations of the origins of the universe. Trying to explain the origins of the universe by what can be seen is like trying to write a biography of Alexander Graham Bell by looking at a telephone. *What is the problem?* (1) Telephones are different than when first created. (2) Observing how something functions doesn't answer all the questions about how it was put together. Looking to the **"basic principles of the world"** will not answer the

questions we need answered about life. Because, we can't look at the universe and from it determine: *Why am I here? What is life all about? Does anyone care about me? What happens when we die? Is there a God? How can I find happiness and meaning in life?*

What can we learn from it? Paul told the Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (NKJV)

Paul tells us in this text that **"may be known"** about God (apart from revelation) is demonstrated in **"what has been made."** *What does this reveal? "His invisible attributes" What are they? "His eternal power"* (i.e. the Power great enough to begin the universe had to precede a beginning, and is thus **"eternal"**) and His **"godhead"** (i.e. such force is not impersonal but an intelligent deity.). Now these are important truths, but if that is all we can know about God apart from what He has revealed about Himself, we allow ourselves to be cheated if we rely on traditions based on the **"basic principles of the world"**—traditions **"not according to Christ"** (Col. 2:8e). Looking anywhere that does not look to Christ will cheat us of what God has for us. *Why?* Because of who He is and because of what He can do for us. *Who is He?*

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Jesus is God. Why is it such a big deal for religious groups to say, *"We like Jesus—He is a good teacher, a good prophet, a good man, a wise leader, but not God!"*? It is a big deal because it nullifies everything that He has to offer if He is not everything the Bible presents Him to be. For example, the Bible says He made us. The Hebrew writer wrote:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

He is our creator, so He knows how we function. Only if this is true can He be a source for answers that are beyond our understanding. Only then can He do for us what we truly need. *What can He do for us?* Paul continues. . .

"And you are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10a). **"Complete"** in the Greek is the word *pleroō* meaning "to make full, to fill up" (Thayer). A number of years ago there was a line in a popular movie where the leading man was trying to win the leading lady and told her passionately "you complete me!" That's a moving sentiment and a touching claim. All of us have something missing in us. But it can't be filled up by things or people or by accomplishments. It can only be filled by Jesus! *Why?* Paul tells us something more about who Jesus is. He **"is the head of all principality and power"** (Col. 2:10b). The **"head"** of all **"rule and authority"** (NASB). If Jesus is head over every dominion and every power, He can offer solutions to those things over which we are powerless.

We live in an age where we can count DNA sequences, calculate the distance to stars, split atoms, create microprocessors that can hold entire libraries in the palm of our hand—but we can do nothing to conquer death! Yet the Bible says of Jesus, **"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"** (Heb. 2:14-15). *Who should I listen to when it comes to questions about death?* Jesus! *How does He make one "complete"?* He illustrates this by considering what *has* happened to the Christian. . .

"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands" (Col. 2:11a). Circumcision was part of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants that involved cutting off the foreskin of a male child (Gen. 17:10). It was done with hands. Paul speaks here of a change that happens that effects man on the inside. **"By putting off the body of the sins of the flesh"** (Col. 2:11b). There is a means which God offers that doesn't cut off the foreskin of the flesh, but *puts off* the sins of the flesh. It is here called **"the circumcision of Christ"** (vs. 11c), which He explains fur-

ther occurred when they were **"buried with Him in baptism"** (Col. 2:12a). *Is this teaching that baptism is the "circumcision of Christ"?* It is either speaking of baptism as the circumcision or the whole process of conversion as the circumcision. What is clear is that baptism is considered a part of this circumcision. Paul was told, **"arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"** (Acts 22:16).

Someone might say "Baptism is done with hands!" Yes, but what God does *for* us in baptism, is not done by our hands but by what God does *to us* when we put our faith in Christ and obey His command. Peter wrote that, **"baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"** (1 Pet. 3:21, NASB). Paul explains further, **"In which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God"** (Col. 2:12b). In baptism a person is buried with Christ and raised with Christ. He continues, **"Who raised Him from the dead"** (Col. 2:12c). The resurrection of Christ is the sign of Christ's victory over death. Our faith in what God did for us in Christ, binds us to the hope which we have for our own resurrection and salvation. *Why was such a spiritual resurrection*