

Santa

The year was 1967 and I was a naive 6 year old riding in the back passenger seat of our Town and Country Station Wagon with the woodgrain trim. It was a day like any other and yet a day when my life would dramatically change. Its funny how these moments in your life occur. You don't see them coming but you never forget when they happen.

We had just gone to a nursery to pick up some Poinsettias...it was Christmas Time. Everything was wonderful. My Mom was driving. She pulled out to cross Illinois Street just west of Hampton Road. I remember that intersection and can still see it to this day. This was the place where my innocent world changed.

I remember my Mom was looking out the passenger window to see if cars were coming. Her arm was draped over the middle seat. In a split second my life would not be the same. I was broad sided when my mother turned to me with a smile on her face...and said, "Frank, you know that there really isn't a Santa Clause right?"

I never saw that collision coming. I would never again be the same. From that moment on...I would be a life long skeptic. I remember my first thought.....It had nothing to do with Santa Claus. It actually had to do with Jesus.

I was stunned. My parents had lied to me. I was deeply scarred. No I am not kidding. I went into a tail spin. How could my parents have lied to me? Why did my parents lie to me? I felt so foolish. So ignorant. My older brother of course reminded me of how stupid I was to believe.

My parents lied to me. And within minutes I began wondering what else had they lied to me about?

What about Jesus? Was Jesus real? I think that on that day, I decided that if I could not trust my parents. I would need proof of what I believed. I hated the feeling of being deceived. I still do to this day. That is why I don't believe any of the political scheming on either side of the aisle.

I wish someone had warned me that the Santa Clause bomb was coming. I was totally unprepared. I had believed so hard. I wanted so badly for it to be true. Looking back I had missed all of the obvious warning signs.

Have you ever been deceived and then looked back later and wondered why you didn't realize it. The signs were everywhere. The reason, I believe, is that we want something to be true. We get blinded by our desire and we ignore what is in front of us...

That is where Paul is going to take us today in the book of Colossians. People are going to come...they are going to try to entice our desires...try to get us to forget what we know...and trust them to show us a new truth...a better truth...a new enlightenment...that plays to our ego.

Paul is going to remind the Colossians...that they must stay laser focused on what they know to be true about Jesus...because false teaching is about to assault their desires.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (ESV) 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

False teachers appeal to your passions. What you want to be true. If they can get you focused on what you want instead of what is true...you will believe almost anything.

Jesus said it this way....

Matthew 24:23–25 (ESV) 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

No one had warned me about the deceptive practices of my parents....I took that hit full force....But we can't use that excuse when it comes to God. The entire New Testament is a warning about chasing your desires instead of God's truth.

But before we dive in...I want to go over a few more key things about understanding Scripture.

Basic Principles for Bible Interpretation. Last week we began taking what we see and asking what did it mean to the first audience. We talked about historical, political, economic, geographic, social, and moral context. I want to add a bit to that today and talk about some general rules here.

The goal of Interpretation is to find the meaning that God has already placed in the text for us to discover and apply to our lives. These words have been studied for over 2000 years and the truth never changes....God never changes....what was true to the original audience will be true to us. We are dusting off the original to discover what the truth is...not chiseling it to shape it to mean what we want.

Our prayer should be Holy Spirit show me the truth that God placed in this text when it was first written. What did you God want to say to them...and then to me?

Remember that the text cannot say what it never said. There are no new truths in the Bible. Deeper understanding but no new truths.

So let me run through a few tips to help us as we continue to explore the Context of Scripture...the interpretation.

1) Remember the Context Rules. Never take a scripture out of context to make it say something that you think would be good for it to say. That is an abuse of the Bible. Sometimes with good intentions we use a verse to encourage someone but it doesn't mean what we say. We misinterpret Scripture to try to help their situation, but that does not help people. Every text has a meaning already in it, put there by God. The ultimate author is God and we don't need to add to his meaning. His truth was true long before and long after we had an opinion about it.

2) Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God. We have seen how the more we study scripture the more we will understand the whole picture. And when we face difficult texts, texts that are difficult to interpret, to understand, it is going to help us to have an overall picture so that we don't start twisting scriptures. Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

3) Remember that scripture will never contradict scripture. Compare scripture with scripture. Use cross references. This is a big part of Bible study. God can't be wrong. If we think Scripture contradicts Scripture the problem is with our ability to understand, not a problem with God or the text.

4) The best interpreter of scripture is scripture. So when you are struggling, let other parts of scripture help you understand that. We realize there is tension and mystery to the Word of God. That doesn't mean that they contradict. We have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Some things are yet to be revealed to anyone....or to each of us. I have studied these words a lot, been to Seminary, and have a Masters Degree and I can't explain the whole Bible to you. I hope that is not discouraging to you, but someone with a finite mind would not be able to understand an infinite mind. Let's not get too down hearted about that. And it leads to this next thing.

Avoid Basing your Doctrine on an Obscure Passage of Scripture. There are some texts that we come to and they just don't seem to add up. They don't seem to make sense and we can't figure it out. We can get tied up in knots. . I find encouragement that Peter had a hard time with some of the things that Paul wrote. So find encouragement in that. It is OK. Don't twist them, but no some of them are hard to understand. Find confidence though in the fact that the things that God wants us to understand most, he has made more than clear. The things that God wants us to understand most, he has made very clear.

Ok so we are ready to dig into our text today...remember that the goal is to discover the truth that is already in the text....the gold...the nugget...that God wants us to apply in our lives.

So we have our Bible, Notepad, Bookmark in hand....with the Holy Spirit in our hearts....and no where else to be....Before we do anything else...we need to bookend our study time with prayer.

Prayer for Bible Study..."God I know that my mind already wants to argue and disagree with the truth that you have placed in this Text. In the Battle of My Mind, I know that I want to resist it. There is still a part of me, some of my thoughts, that wants to do what I want to do. The areas of the Bible where you have me...the truth I need to embrace... are those areas where I have not yet matured and surrendered. I know that the lessons that you have for me are those where I need to change something that I am doing. They are areas where I need to submit, surrender and grow. As a result God, there are areas where thus far I have resisted your truth and have not fully applied it. Please help my mind submit to your Spirit. Help me God to remember that I have an audience of one. To not care what others think...and to only be concerned with You.

While my mind resists, I know that my heart desperately wants to pursue you...to discover you...and to experience you. It is in the midst of your Word that I hear you speak the most clearly. God I want to meet you in the text...I want to experience you as I read your words....God Hold my hand and walk me through your truth. Help me to obey...even in the areas that I don't agree or understand. I will surrender and obeying your truth no matter what you reveal to me, even if I don't agree. I will do anything, anytime, and anywhere no matter what your require of me. God please show me the truth that is in your words. Give me the humility to agree with you...Give me the courage to trust you....and give me the power to surrender to you...and give me the heart to worship you. I am so thankful that you meet me here each day. So blessed to have these holy words to guide my life. God help me to set aside everything else going on in this world and focus on this moment. I enter into your presence through the blood of Jesus. I am a sinful man covered in His righteousness, soaking in His love, and being transformed into His likeness. Please God don't let me read these words and stay the same. It is in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

So it is time to see what we see.

We are going to be looking at Colossians 2:6-16

WALK THROUGH THE SLIDES

First we look at content...What do we see? Remember we read this at least seven times....Then we evaluate our emotions....Then we start working through our list....What Repeats in this passage? Are there transitions? What about metaphors to meditate on? See any commands? What about Lists?

Next we move to Context. How does this passage fit into the text? That which comes with the text...Paul is continuing to remind those at Colossae to remember who Jesus is.... Who they are....and what that means in the way they live.

Colossians 2:6–7 (ESV) 6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Paul reminds them and tells us....Do you remember back when you received Jesus Christ as your Savior? Do you remember that? How you were broken, unworthy, surrendered, obedient.... trusting Him because you could no longer trust yourself.... do you remember how thankful you were that Jesus never gave up on you? Do you remember how you just gave in to the faith that you had...and discovered that it was enough? Do you remember those early moments of surrender to Jesus?

Like that...just like that....as you received....so your should walk....in Him. You life....you everyday actions... all that you do...should be done just like that...Using the faith that you have....knowing that you are unworthy, broken, surrendered, thankful, obedient and trusting Jesus because you can't trust yourself....As you received so shall you walk....

1 John 2:5–6 (ESV) 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

You are in relationship with Christ....Walk in it....Walk in Him...it is in that relationship...in spending time with Jesus that you become rooted and built up....established....full of faith...and overflowing with Thanksgiving. Does that describe you today?

Paul tells you and me from the very beginning....this is the goal. You are in relationship with your creator. He gifted you...created you....loves you...has great plans for you....specifically put you here for a purpose....He is thrilled with you. He sees and lives in your potential not your present...He is singing over you...doting over you....watching over you.

You and I are exactly who He created us to be. Yes we have sinned...yes our relationship with Him needed to be restored....but Paul is talking to those who are on the other side of restoration. He reminds us that we have received Christ...we are rooted in Him....established....and then Paul says without saying....WHY DON'T YOU LIVE LIKE IT? Why are we imprisoned by the spoken and unspoken expectation of others....if we have a relationship with God?

Too many believers fail to live in the joy, peace, and promise of their new life in Christ because they have not spent enough time with Jesus to recognize their relationship. If you are still listening to the opinions and expectations of others...You haven't rooted yourself in your relationship with your Creator.

You and I as followers of Jesus...have a relationship of One. We seek the approval of only One. We accept the truth of One and we have an audience of One. We don't hear the critical condemning voice of others, because we are tuned in only the voice of our Savior. It is only in that reality that we truly experience the freedom that Jesus wanted us to have through His death and resurrection.

Many of us identify with the death of Jesus on the cross...but we don't walk out of the tomb that is the expectations of others...Jesus tells us that we are free and to come on....and yet we stay imprisoned...and to Satan's great joy.....ineffective for Jesus. Paul tells them and us....Just as you received so shall you walk.

What does that walk look like? Well we have a list.

1) Rooted..... we must know where and why we are planted. We must know where our nourishment comes from....If we are going to survive the dry hard times....our roots need to be deep....and not just deep...but deep in Him.

2) Built up...our roots..our connection...allows us to Grow. We can't connect to Him....truly connect to Him and not be built up...It is something that He does...not us.

3) Established in the faith...When we grow...when we abide....we become established....we are long term....we are not here one moment and gone the next. We are here for the duration. As we grow our faith grows. As our faith grows we become mature and established in Christ. Note that this is not just something that happens to us...this step requires that we are taught.

You can't be established in the faith....mature...without solid biblical teaching. We must be established in the faith as we were taught.

then 4) Abound in Thanksgiving....this is the result of the first three...if you have roots, if you are built up, if you are established under solid teaching, you will find not only thankfulness but it will abound in you.

So Paul reminds all of us...we need to walk in the same manner that we first came to Jesus. Our walk should always reflect the surrender of our first steps with Jesus....The end result of that kind of walk...rooted, built, established, thankful. Does that describe you today?

Then Paul tells us....think about that...because of that...as a result...here is a command for you....

Colossians 2:8 (ESV) 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.

See to it...Make sure it happens...You have total control of this...and the outcome is your responsibility....This is your command....Your issue....Your next step. Attend to this.....

Don't miss the obvious point here. See to it that no one takes you captive....Only you can allow yourself to become captive to the thoughts, opinions, and expectations of others. We do this to yourself. We elevate the opinion of others above the truth of our Lord. Paul says...see to it...make sure...this is your choice. It only happens if you and I allow it.

The Greek Word that is translated "Takes your captive" carries with it the idea of being cheated from something that you deserve....It literally means to "lead you away as prey." It also had the ideas of robbing and plundering.

The Philosophy, deceit of human tradition.....According to the elemental spirits...not according to Christ.

From the dawn of recorded history, man has pondered the questions of ultimate reality. He has sought an explanation for the universe around him and the meaning of his own existence. The questions "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", and "Where am I going?" are universal in the human race. Worldly philosophies ineptly try to answer those queries. The word philosophy comes from two Greek words, *phileō*, "to love," and *sophia*, "wisdom." Philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom. Because everyone has a worldview, in one sense everyone is a philosopher.

I like to take classes online through the Greatest Lecture Series. There are philosophers and educated people teaching all kinds of classes. Most of the philosophers we studied and the teachers who told of them, either denied the existence of God or held an unbiblical view of Him, such as deism or pantheism. It was a frustrating experience, studying the musings of lost men and women without hope...without the Holy Spirit.....desperately trying to determine ultimate truth apart from God. But as Francis Schaeffer in our own generation emphasized, man cannot begin with himself and arrive at ultimate reality

By eliminating God and His revelation from the picture, modern philosophy has plunged man into the abyss of ignorant darkness and hopeless despair. The city of Colossae also had its philosophers. The church there faced the danger of being infiltrated by false teaching, just as we do today.

The studied **Gnosticism** in our Series on Second Peter....Some of the ideas of Gnosticism were at play here in Colossae, but the teaching here was much broader.

So Gnosticism was clearly at play here...But unlike 2nd Peter...there were other ideas being mixed in. During the first century, the early church faced three real threats....Gnosticism....Jewish Mysticism...and the Elements of the World.

This philosophy that threatened the Colossian Christians was a strange eclectic mix of early Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, Humanism, local mystery religions, and Jewish mysticism. The philosophy threatening the Colossian Christians was so dangerous because it was not obviously sinful and licentious. It was high-sounding and seemed highly intelligent.

The connection to early Gnosticism is clear from the way Paul brings forth his points.

Gnosticism taught that God (as a Perfect Spirit) could not come into direct contact with the material world. Paul took care to point out that Jesus is God, and He came in the body of His flesh (Colossians 1:19–22).

Gnosticism taught that since God could not have direct contact with the material world, that God Himself did not create the world, but He worked through lesser spirits or angels. Paul took care to show that Jesus was the creator of the world (Colossians 1:15–16).

Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) taught that God did not deal directly with man and the material world, but that He dealt with the world through a series of mediators. Paul took care to show that Jesus did the work of reconciliation Himself (Colossians 1:19–20).

Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) greatly esteemed these supposed mediators, and considered them angelic beings of a sort. Paul was careful to warn the Colossians that angels should not be worshipped (Colossians 2:18).

The connection to Jewish mysticism is clear from the way Paul brings forth a few more points.

Remember that at this point in history, the orthodox Jews had rejected the Christians...Those who considered themselves pure we persecuting those of the early movement of Jesus. To them, He was a false Messiah and believers in Him were like the hated Samaritans.

But the less orthodox Jews....they accepted all kinds of ideas, beliefs and religions....they were not in the synagogues....they too were on the fringe of Jewish belief. They didn't believe in Jesus as the Messiah but they did believe in Jewish Mysticism. They treated the Jewish feasts, traditions, observances as Mystic....magical....works based experiences.

Jewish Mystics emphasized dietary laws. They taught that following strict Jewish diets manipulated God to release His magical powers. Paul took care to say that Christians were not under Jewish dietary laws (Colossians 2:16).

Jewish Mystics emphasized the observance of particular days as the key to unlocking the magical powers of God. Paul took care to say that Christians were not under these obligations (Colossians 2:16).

Jewish Mystics emphasized the work of angels and other beings...who could be called to magically intervene by human actions.

Subtopic

Paul speaks of human traditions handed down from generation to generation. Just because something is handed down and adopted, doesn't make it true. Generations have believed a lot of untrue things over the years and taught them to their children.

The perils of going swimming after eating comes to mind....swallowed gum taking 7 years to digest....Terrible things come in threes....and if your ears are ringing someone is talking about you....I must be a topic of chronic and intense conversation

Paul calls some human traditions.....philosophy and empty deceit.

Then Paul addresses the false religion of what we would today call Humanism.

The fastest growing cult in the World today...particularly in the US. It is the worship of Man. Elevating human wisdom, Science, human achievement, over all else...and most importantly God. We talked about Humanism in detail during the Revelation Series and you can listen to that series on my Podcast.

But Greek Philosophy worshiped and elevated Man. Man could be enlightened. Human Wisdom was all one needed. There was no need for a Supernatural God because you and I are our own gods....They worship the achievement and understanding of man. Dependence upon God is a sign of personal failure....It is the Human Mind that holds all the potential necessary. You just have to unlock human wisdom and you can solve everything.

Paul calls this form of heresy....wisdom of man and stoiceia a Greek word meaning the basic elements of the world....Earth, water, air and fire....

Common to both Jews and pagans was the basic idea of cause and effect and in a sense it rules nature and the minds of men. We live under the idea that we get what we deserve; when we are good, we deserve to receive good; when we are bad, we deserve to receive bad. Paul warned the Colossians to not subject themselves to this grace-eliminating kind of thinking, and to consider themselves dead to it.

And finally in Colossae some were including other religious ideas.

Many ancient mystery religions thought of the world as a dangerous place, threatened by spirits or spiritual forces they called elements or elemental forces. They thought one was protected from these dangerous spiritual forces by either worshipping them or by finding protection under a greater deity or spiritual power that was superior to these elements.

Do you remember in week 1 how we asked the question and said we would eventually explore the answer. Why did Paul find it urgent to write to a group of believers whom he had never met?

They were about to be hit with a Tsunami of false teachings.....One wave after another....each one with enough power to rip the roots of anyone that was not well established in the foundations of Christ.

Paul tells these believers in Jesus that they are about to be assaulted by a world of false teachings....a combination of all kinds of heresies....all kinds of man made ideas....all kinds of fanciful ideologies. Their world...much like ours...had gone mad with man's worship of himself instead of Jesus.

This command tells us something else....If we are established in the faith...rooted, built up, and maturing....we are responsible if we allow ourselves to be misled by false teachers....

You see we think that we will not be responsible if we fall under false teaching. We think that all the punishment will be on the teacher....But Paul makes it clear....You and I must make sure that we are not taken captive....If we end up as captives...it is our fault too. Mature believers taken captive by deceptive teachings are not victims....we have failed to remember what we have been taught. If you are a mature believer, not an infant or child in the faith, you are responsible for what you choose to believe.

These false teachers....sound intelligent but are fools...Paul says you DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE TAKEN CAPTIVE BY THEM.....INSTEAD PAUL SAYS....How do you avoid being deceived? How do you avoid that which is counterfeit? You make sure you know the real deal....in this case...The more time you spend with Christ...the more you understand His heart....The more you are rooted in that relationship....the harder it will be for anyone to fool you. So Paul once again reminds us.

Colossians 2:9–15 (ESV) 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.

Do you remember the Passage in Colossians 1 where Paul told us...This is who Jesus is....and this is who you were.....

Do you remember that? He is the image of the invisible God...the first born of all creation....For by Him all things were created...He is before all things....created all things...holds all things together.....That is who He is.

Do you remember who we were? 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. And then who we would become.... in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. Paul tells them and us...the key to avoiding false doctrine is to know whose you are and to walk in it. Do you remember Paul's warning at the end of that incredible passage that we studied for two weeks?

Colossians 1:22–23 (ESV) 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Also Paul reminds us again of who Jesus is....The Godhead....

This is one of the most blessed passages in all of Scripture. It presents the glorious majesty of Christ's Person and His complete sufficiency. Verse 9 is perhaps the most definitive statement of Christ's deity in the epistles. It is the rock upon which all attempts to disprove Christ's deity are shattered.

This is a dramatic, airtight declaration of the full Deity of Jesus. Since all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus, He cannot be a halfway God or a junior god.

The false teaching among the Colossian Christians was something like an early form of the Gnostic heresies that would come later. These Gnostic heresies made a radical separation between the spiritual and the material. That is why Paul needed to make it clear that all the fullness of the Godhead was in Jesus bodily, not in some strange, mystical sense

You have been filled in Him....you have become complete in Him...

This can only be true because Jesus is truly God. If He were not God, we couldn't be complete in Him. Anything that says we are not complete in Him also takes away from the deity of Jesus.

If all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus, and as believers we are united to Him in a faith-relationship, then we are also complete in Him. Therefore there was no need to go to the false promises and attractions presented by the false teachers among the Colossians. Paul says that this is a fact to be enjoyed, not a status to be achieved.

Colossians 2:9–15 (ESV) 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.

As already noted, the Colossian heresy was a mixture of pagan philosophy with Jewish legalism. Not surprisingly, the Colossian false teachers, like the Judaizers Paul confronted in Galatia, were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Lev. 12:2–3). It was the sign that he belonged to the covenant nation (Gen. 17:10–14). The second view recognized that circumcision was only the outward demonstration that man was born sinful and needed cleansing. The cutting away of the male foreskin on the reproductive organ was a graphic way to demonstrate that man needed cleansing at the deepest level of his being. No other part of the human anatomy so demonstrates that depth of sin, inasmuch as that is the part of man that produces life—and all that he produces is sinful. That is the biblical view.

Deuteronomy 10:15–16 (ESV) 15 Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. 16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

The New Testament also emphasizes circumcising the heart. Stephen the first martyr

Acts 7:51 (ESV) 51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.

Paul....to the Romans

Romans 2:28–29 (ESV) 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Most of the Colossian Christians were Gentiles who had never been physically circumcised. Paul assures them that they were indeed circumcised in a spiritual sense, which is even more important than physical circumcision. They had to deal with a whole variety of false teaching. Not only did they have wrong ideas about Jesus, but they also had wrong ideas about things like circumcision. Apparently, they were being taught that they had to be circumcised to be right with God. Paul makes it clear that they were circumcised, by putting off the sins of the flesh.

Paul says these Gentile Christians find their true circumcision in their baptism. Christians don't need to be circumcised, they need to be baptized. They are both rituals that reflect our adoption as children of God, but God is always more concerned about the heart. Baptism today, identifies us with the death, resurrection and life of Jesus. The new covenant made through faith in Him.

It is as if Paul wrote: "Circumcision is not important; what is important is the spiritual cutting away of the flesh that Jesus performs in the life and heart of every believer. If you want a ceremony to mark this spiritual transformation in your life, look to your baptism and not to circumcision."

Through faith in the working of God: This demonstrates that Paul understood that the power of regeneration was not in baptism or received by the act of baptism, but received through faith in the working of God.

Colossians 2:9–15 (ESV) 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.

As a result of the Fall, man is in a sad state of incompleteness. He is spiritually incomplete because He is totally out of fellowship with God. He is morally incomplete because he lives outside of God's will. He is mentally incomplete because he does not know ultimate truth.

You who were Dead.....Before we have new life, we are dead. Before a person comes to new life in Jesus, he is not a sick man who needs a doctor; he is a dead person who needs a Savior. You and I and everyone at Colossae were dead in their sins...

We can't make ourselves alive, but God can make us alive together with Jesus. We can never be made alive apart from Jesus.

Now in chapter 2 after warning them of all these false teachings....Paul essentially picks up where he left off....and gives us two lists....The list of what has happened to us...and the list of what Jesus has done for us.

What happened to us....You have been 1) Filled with Him 2) Were Circumcised in Him 3) Baptized with Him 4) Made alive with Him 5) Forgiven by Him 6) Our debts canceled by Him....and 7) made alive together with Him.

Then another list...the List of What Jesus did for us.1) took our sins and allowed them to be nailed to the cross with Him. 2) Disarmed rulers and authorities 3) Put them to shame 4) Triumphed over them.

"It might even be said that he took the document, ordinances and all, and nailed it to his cross as an act of triumphant defiance in the face of those blackmailing powers that were holding it over men and women in order to command their allegiance." (Bruce)

We remember that the accusations of Jesus' crime were nailed to the cross and hung above His head. Since we are identified with Jesus in His death on the cross, it is as if the handwriting of requirements that was against us was also nailed to the cross, just like the accusation against Jesus.

The greatest powers of the earth at that time—Rome, the greatest governmental power and Judaism, the greatest religious power—conspired together to put the Son of God on the cross. "These powers, angry at his challenge to their sovereignty, stripped him naked, held him up to public contempt, and celebrated a triumph over him." Here Paul shows us again the paradox of the cross; that the victorious Jesus took the spiritual powers animating these earthly powers and stripped them, held them up to contempt, and publicly triumphed over them.

Paul wrote in another place that if the rulers of this age—by which he meant both the spiritual powers of darkness and their earthly representatives—had known what would happen on the cross, they would have never crucified Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:8 (ESV) 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

They were defeating themselves and they didn't even know it.

Against the believer, what weapons do demonic spirits therefore now have? They are disarmed, except for their ability to deceive and to create fear. These are effective "weapons" that are not tangible weapons at all. Demonic spirits only have power towards us that we grant them by believing their lies. The weapons are in our hands, not theirs. We will one-day see how afraid they were of us.

So Paul has reminded us of what we know to be true. He has warned us about our desires that lead us to believe what we hope is true. Next week we will unpack the second reason we are so willing to believe anything. We believe what others want us to believe for two reasons. First, as we discussed today, we don't stay focused on what we know to be true. And then second, next week, we care more about what others think of us than what God thinks of us. We get deceived because we listen to the voice of others rather than God.

I can't really blame my parents for the entire Santa Claus deception plot. Apparently the whole world was in on it. Who knew? Turns out the deception was broader than I first realized....Tooth Fairy....Easter Bunny....Wonder Bread building strong bodies 8 ways...Popeye's Spinach...and yes the hardest of all....Superman.

But I know one thing that is true. One thing that I know will never let me down. One thing that I can place all of my faith in without hesitation and without reservation. The more I know God's Word...the more I experience Him in the text...The more I abide in Him...The harder it will be for someone to deceive me. I want to become an expert witness in the Word. I want to devote my life to knowing it inside and out. I want to help others wake up from their deception and discover the only truth in this world.

My parents lied to me. They straight out lied. They had excuses and reasons...but it didn't change what they did. However, they never lied to me about Jesus. I lied to me about Him but they never did.

We are bombarded with false teaching about Jesus...in fact, it is hard to find true teaching even in the church. You are responsible for what you believe about Jesus. Deception is everywhere....but you... and only you....allow yourself to be carried away and held captive by philosophy and empty deceit. You must know the truth and the truth will set you free. Let's Pray.