

COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

THE CHASE: OUR DESIRE FOR ENOUGH & JESUS' PURSUIT OF US

SCRIPTURE & SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE — APRIL 05

OPEN

1. The idea or promise of “fullness” is a theme in Colossians that is picked back up directly in this week’s passage. How has studying Colossians shaped your understanding of “fullness” in the midst of all that has transpired in the last month?

Beginning in verse 8 and continuing through the rest of the chapter, Paul addresses the heresy or false teaching that has emerged within the church. Scholars are not entirely sure what this heresy was specifically (over 40 different ideas have been given in the last century!), if anything it was a mash-up of various ideas drawn from the philosophical and religious environment of Colossae at the time (which was shaped by Phrygian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish ideas of the world). Regardless, it seems that Paul is focused less on the *content* of the heresy itself and more on what it misses about the person and work of Jesus. The reasons Paul gives for resisting this heresy all have to do with who Jesus is and who we are in union with him.

READ COLOSSIANS 2:8-15.

DISCUSS

2. Paul connects the work of Christ to various images or symbols (some of which are less familiar to us today). How does Paul specifically use circumcision (verse 11) and baptism (verse 12) to express the significance of Christ’s work?

NOTE: Circumcision (under the old covenant) and baptism (under the new covenant) communicated a person’s entrance into God’s covenant community. These were both external, visible signs pointing to specific covenant promises. For instance, circumcision which marked the male reproductive organ symbolized God’s blessing of “life,” especially descendants (see Abraham’s story in Genesis 12-25). Baptism, among other things, visualizes cleansing from sin.

3. What does this passage tell us about the *necessity* and *sufficiency* of Christ’s death on the cross?
4. Scripture provides us with multiple ways of thinking about what Jesus’ death on the cross accomplishes, or what theologians call “the atonement.” In verses 14-15, Paul links together Jesus paying the penalty for our sins (“penal substitution”) and his victory over Satan and spiritual evil (“Christus Victor”). How do you think these two accomplishments of Jesus are related?
5. Like the Colossians, we are pressured and influenced by various (and competing) visions of the path to spiritual “fullness” or “wholeness.”
 - a. What are some of these “counterfeit gospels” in our culture (and the church) today?
 - b. To which of these do you think you’re more prone to become “captive” (verse 8)?
 - c. How do you distinguish appreciating “common grace,” which includes wisdom from non-believers, with resisting wisdom of the world that sets itself up against the gospel?
 - d. What does it look like for you to guard your mind and heart with the truth of the gospel?

NOTE: In *Disappearing Church*, Mark Sayers compares one ancient heresy (Gnosticism) with its modern form and how the messages of these “currents” compete with the truth of the gospel. See that chart on the next page.

PRAY

Thank Jesus for his work on our behalf and ask the Spirit to deepen you in the truth of the gospel.

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ANCIENT GNOSTICISM	CONTEMPORARY GNOSTICISM	THE GOSPEL
The world is inferior.	Your world is inferior.	Creation is good, although broken by the fall. Yet Christ has won victory, and creation now groans for the day heaven and earth will be reunited.
Matter is the problem.	The mundane is the problem.	Sin and rebellion against God and His created order is the problem.
Escape from your body to perfect-spirit.	Turn your body into a perfect-looking body.	Jesus' gift of grace frees us from sin and death.
Look inward to find truth and the god within.	Look inward to find the real you.	God's revelation opens our eyes to God and the true nature of things.
Escape the world to the perfect spiritual place.	Escape the mundane to the amazing life.	Joy and meaning is found in worshiping and serving God.
Move toward perfection through finding hidden spiritual knowledge.	Move toward the perfect life through tips, tweaks, hacks, and the secrets of success. Self-create.	Pursue Christlikeness.
You are a seeker, pursuing spiritual truths and hidden knowledge.	You are a seeker, pursuing fulfillment through incredible experiences and pleasure.	You are a recipient of Grace. Pursued and loved by God.
Move past the inferior god to find the real God beyond.	Move past organized religion and find spirituality.	God chooses to partner with us in His mission in the world through the church. The church is a foretaste of the coming kingdom. Build up the church.
Move toward fulfillment by breaking past the barriers left by the inferior god.	Move toward fulfillment by breaking past the barriers set by tradition, religion, and others.	Move toward spiritual maturity through battling against the flesh. Gain wisdom.
You are a god.	It's all about you.	It's all about God.

SOURCE: Mark Sayers, *Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience*, 64.