

Don't Get Caught! Watch Out!

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[0:00] Colossians 2, 6-15. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with a circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us.

[1:21] He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Well, the United States State Department frequently issues travel warnings to particular countries. They don't outright ban travel necessarily, but they say watch out, be careful.

If you're going there, keep your eyes open. Right now there's a travel warning for some particular areas in Mexico. On the State Department website, it says U.S. citizens have been the target of violent crimes such as kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery by organized criminal groups in various Mexican states.

So be careful. Don't get caught. That's the word. That's the message. And that's God's word to us in Colossians 2, in verse 8.

Be careful. Don't get caught. There is a difference, though, between those warnings, people traveling to Mexico, and us.

[2:37] I don't have to travel to Mexico. There's no reason for me to go there necessarily, so I'm not going to be there. But to live the Christian life is to live and to travel in dangerous places.

The first person Christian meets in the book of Pilgrim's Progress on the road to the celestial city is Mr. Worldly Wise Man.

And he's very much a character that has very much to do with what we're going to see tonight. And Mr. Worldly Wise Man tricks Christian into leaving the path, and he sends him off to a dreadful mountain that's burning with smoke and fire.

And Christian is caught and trapped in fear and slavery. And so to live the Christian life is to walk, is to live in dangerous places.

And if you think you're safe, you're being naive, I think Paul would say. You're joyriding in cartel country.

[3:44] It's dangerous. So be careful. Don't get caught. So my initial question this evening is, are your eyes open?

Or do you think this is for someone else? Someone else's problem, but not you? Are you looking? Well, all of God's word is profitable for all of God's people.

This is here for our good. And so tonight we are going to see six features of false religion, six features of these philosophies that Paul warns us of in verse 8.

But before we get there, and before we see those six features, I do want to just make a note about something about these philosophies. Paul isn't necessarily talking about Aristotle and Plato.

probably most of you couldn't tell me even the difference between those two. He's not talking about those things. And so just staying away from a college philosophy class is not being careful and watching out for hollow and deceptive philosophies.

[4:54] Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, uses that word philosophies, and it was used very commonly for all sorts of things. He described the Pharisees as a philosophy.

He described the Sadducees as a philosophy. And all kinds of religious groups, all kinds of thinkers, all kinds of different ways of living, religious, secular, moral, immoral, all sorts of different groups and viewpoints were called philosophies.

So just staying away from a college philosophy lesson and class is not watching out and being careful. The direction is much broader than that.

So watching out for Pinterest, ladies, and all the pretty pictures is seeing to it that no one takes you captive.

So when you click on those things and when you're looking at all that stuff, not that it's wrong, but when you're looking at it, watching out because it is presenting a certain sort of worldview and life and philosophy of how to live.

[6:06] Watching out for CrossFit, Beachbody, and all their six-pack abs and as if I had one, six-packed and tan, slim bodies.

Watching out when you see those things. That is seeing, too, that no one takes you captive.

Watching out for when that catalog from that Christian group comes into your mailbox and it's very colorful, it's very pretty, it's very professionally done.

And there it is, that cute little white girl and that cute little white boy and she's dressed up very nicely and he's dressed up as a sailor and it says, women and children first.

And inside, what are they selling? Because they are selling something. What are they selling? It's a white, nostalgic, southern view of Christian culture.

And so for them, being a Christian, being a Christian family, being a Christian mom means you have ten children or as many as you can and your boys wear polo shirts and your daughters wear prairie dresses and you have to homeschool or you're handing your children off to the devil and saying, this is the answer to our society's problems, this is the answer to the church's problems, it's not Christ, it's my family, it's what we do, it's our homeschooling, it's family worship, it's getting back to when the family was first.

[7:48] Hollow and deceptive philosophies with a measure of truth in all of them. But they come in different shapes and colors and if they were easy and they were obvious, then no one would fall for them.

But they aren't easy and they are obvious. The assassin isn't wearing a clown outfit with a sign that says, I'm the assassin. Death and capture doesn't come so obviously in our world.

So what do these philosophies look like? What are we to watch out for? What are we to be on the guard against? Well, six features. Six features.

The first is, they are enslaving. They are enslaving. See to it that no one takes you captive.

So you've heard of the Boko Haram. I think this is how you pronounce it in Nigeria. And they've gone into these schools and they've kidnapped children and they've hauled them away. That's the idea.

[8:54] Kidnapped. Captured. There's an invasion and you've been snatched away from your family. You're let off as a slave. So false teaching is enslaving. It enslaves your conscience.

It enslaves your life. And so the Pharisees were both kidnappers and kidnapped. They put burdens on the backs of men.

Burdens that men weren't meant to carry. And they themselves lived enslaved to all kinds of man-made rules. They were kidnapped and kidnappers. And so now you can only take so many steps on the Sabbath.

God never measured out how far. But now you can only take so many. And now you can't pick a few heads of grain on the Sabbath. Or that's harvesting. And they even said you can't spit on the Sabbath because that might cause a plant to germinate and that would be kind of farming.

Enslaved to man-made rules. Enslaved to man's ideas of how to be holy, how to have transformation. The Pharisees were a cultural transformation group.

[10:02] They thought if we just keep these rules and everyone does this then Israel will be revived. Man's ideas on how to be holy, how to be good, how to be fulfilled, how to be successful,

how to get God's blessing on your life.

And so there's the Pinterest page. We're not, and the reason I'm going to these sorts of things is because we are not so much tempted by Pharisees and Sadducees.

None of you are going to go out and start washing your hands and washing your cups and all sorts of religious ceremonies like they did. But these hollow and deceptive philosophies come to us in a very secular form.

And so there's the Pinterest page. And all the ideas of how to decorate your house and how people have done it and what looks good and what other people have done and what your friends have done on Facebook and all that sort of thing.

Now is there anything wrong with all of that? Of course not. It can be a great tool. It can be a wonderful thing. But our hearts can make it into a hollow and deceptive philosophy, an enslaving philosophy.

[11:11] And so now your status is not determined by who you are before God and what Jesus Christ has done for you. Now your status is determined by how well you live up to what everyone else is doing.

Looking and feeling like my house isn't good enough. I'm not creative enough. I wish I could do that but I don't have enough money. And you start feeling like a bad wife, a bad homemaker, someone uncreative.

You feel poor. You feel boring. You feel useless. Then you're a slave. It's gone from something good to something enslaving. And our culture is obsessed with youth and vitality and strength and physical beauty.

And after looking at so many young, healthy bodies in perfect condition, and you start to feel like now I have to work out or I'm not any good or that this exercise will make me into somebody, then it's gone from something useful to something enslaving where now you're getting your status and your emotional well-being not from Jesus Christ but from something you've done.

and if now you and everyone else has to homeschool and you and everyone else has to have as many children as naturally possible, then you've at least gone past the clear word of Scripture.

[12:43] Now obviously you have to obey your conscience. I'm not telling anyone to violate their conscience. But if that becomes the difference between a good Christian and a bad Christian, a good believer or a believer or an unbeliever, where it's me and my performance and what we've chosen and what we've decided and it's no longer about Jesus Christ and it's no longer about me boasting in the cross.

And the cross doesn't have anything to do with me except I'm the one who's needy and it was my sin that put him there. But if I get away from that and I'm starting to boast about my performance and I'm resting in that, then I've been caught, enslaved, ensnared.

So my conscience becomes ensnared, my life becomes ensnaring and the one other thing is these are very difficult to get out of when you get into them. They so change your life that you find it difficult to find freedom in Jesus Christ anymore.

Now we can do all of these things as free people and we can do all of these things as slaves and it's not the doing or the not doing of them. The question is, where is your heart?

Is Jesus Christ first and foremost in your heart? Is his righteousness your freedom or has your righteousness become your slavery?

[14:10] Galatians, Paul writes, it's for freedom that Christ set us free. Stand firm and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. There's something here about we should be wanting and yearning for our freedom and eager to keep it now that we have it.

Jesus died to set us free. Jesus died to get us away from this kind of way of living. He's given us something totally different not only to be free but to experience that freedom.

So Paul says, stand guard. You are free. Christ has set you free, brothers and sisters. He has set you free and so don't be caught again. That's the first feature of false teaching.

It always enslaves. It steals your freedom away from you. The second feature, it's hollow. It's hollow. It's vain. It's empty.

Proverbs 25, 14, I think, sums it up very well. Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts about gifts that he does not give.

[15:13] So have you ever known someone like that who's boasting that he's going to do something for you but he doesn't do it? Well, it's like clouds without rain. So it gets cloudy and

windy. Now to us, this doesn't feel so important but in Israel, rain was important.

They needed this rain if they were going to get their crops in. And so you can imagine how exciting it was when the clouds started to come in and the wind started to blow and you're thinking the rain is going to come.

The rain is here. It's on its way and you wait and you wait and they blow right on by. So disappointing, so vain, so pointless was the whole exercise.

Jude 12 says, false teachers are clouds without rain. There's no point to them. They promise a lot but they don't deliver. They're hollow. They're all on the outside.

They're all on the outside. It's all show. It's all, you know, that game where you're moving the pee around in the cuffs. It's all just deceit. It's hollow. They don't offer anything of real lasting value.

[16:20] They don't. They're soap bubbles. Pretty on the outside. Just empty on the inside. And that's why, thirdly, they're so deceptive.

Because they do put on a good show. They do have an outside. But that's what makes them so deceptive. Hollow and deceptive go together.

They even go together in the original Greek. The idea is that because it is hollow, it is deceptive. The fact that they are hollow makes them deceptive.

So, at this point, we won't talk about Pinterest or exercise or homeschooling or anything like that. The Bible says that wealth is deceptive. And how many people live according to the philosophy of wealth? Things never change. Jesus said, watch out.

[17:21] Watch out. Same idea, same words. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions. See, wealth is deceptive.

Because it seems and it feels like to us that the more things I have, the more things I enjoy, the more money I have, the better my life will be. But Jesus said, no, that's not the way it is.

It's deceptive. Life doesn't consist in the abundance of possessions. So, can you get caught in the money cult, the money religion, where all you care and think about is how much you have and how much you're investing and how much you're saving or how much you're spending and what you're doing and what you can buy with it?

It seems like, you know, there's this two big wings of this money religion, sort of like Catholic and Protestant, except in this one, it's the church of money has the saving side and the spending side. And you have the spenders, thinking that the more I spend, what I can buy, that will make me happy, that will fulfill me, that will make me a good person.

[18:29] And so we get our status then from what we have instead of what we are, who we are in Jesus Christ. I watched a very interesting document from ESPN called Broke a couple weeks ago.

And it was about football players who, according to the statistics, 70% of all NFL players are broke after five years. Absolutely broke after retiring.

Well, why? They make millions of dollars, most of them. Why? How can they spend? Well, they spent it all. And it was interesting, really what was powering it and motivating it was competition and pride.

So one person had a certain set of gold chains. And now in order to have a status, have a place, and to feel like you're successful in the NFL locker room, now I have to have that.

And so they bought their gold chains and they bought their Hummers and it was all competitive. And they thought it would make them happy and of course they end up broke. But we could love money and never spend it.

[19:44] We can carefully save it and invest it and be so smart about it and put our hope in it. That's what the rich man did and God said, tonight you die.

And now who's going to get what you've saved? What does Proverbs say? Take a glance and they're gone. It's gone. See, money is deceptive.

The rich man thought he had something that when he didn't, money promised something it couldn't give. So the pretty house ladies, it promises something it can't give. And the fitness promises something that it can't give.

And the shiny Christian catalog promises something it can't give. The false teachers were promising fullness. And yet they themselves were empty. It was all on the outside.

There was no depth. There was no truth. There was no lasting value. And that's why Paul is saying get away from it. You don't have anything to do with it. Watch out for it. It does no good. It's deceitful.

[20:44] It's just going to get you going in a direction that's going to end up hurting you. It's useless, deceitful, enslaving. And Paul tells us why it's so useful or useless.

So useless. And that's our fourth feature. Why are human philosophies enslaving, hollow, and deceptive? It's because they depend on human tradition.

They depend on human tradition. They depend on what other people say. It's all other people talking. It's humans trying to solve this great human problem.

It's sick people trying to cure themselves. And so, you know, it's the blind leading the blind and they both fall into a ditch. It's people, it's broke people telling other broke people how to deal with money. It's people drowning. Telling other people how to swim. So there we are. We're all drowning in our condition. We're all drowning in the swimming pool.

[21:49] And so, some guy finally says, I figured it out. I figured it out. You've got to do this. You've got to quack like a duck. Because ducks swim and they quack.

So if you want to swim, you've got to, if you want to not drown, you've got to quack. And then someone else says, well, ducks have wings and they flap their wings and so, so you've got to quack and you've got to flap your wings and if you do that often enough, well, you won't drown.

And pretty soon, you know what happens? You get enough people quacking and flapping and that becomes normal. It becomes normal. That's what normal people do. That's normal.

That's wisdom. It doesn't save anyone, but it's common wisdom. And so, what is foolish? Has the appearance of wisdom. And what is wrong seems true and it's just humans trying to solve the human problem.

That's all this is. And that's what Paul is saying. So ask yourself, where are they getting this? Where is this coming from? On the basis of what are they telling me to do this?

[22:48] Why are they saying this? So brothers and sisters, search the scriptures. Search the scriptures for yourself. Don't depend solely and completely on the pastors, but search the scriptures for yourself.

So much of what passes for Christianity and holiness and religion and it has the appearance of being good and righteous and all of that, it comes from people saying, well, that's what the pastor said.

Or that's what this great teacher said. It's just, it's what they said and we haven't thought through those things on our own. And that's how the Pharisees lived.

The Pharisees were always washing something. They were. Washing their hands. They go to the marketplace, they're washing their hands. They come back, they're washing cups and pitchers and glasses.

Or in glasses. They even talked about washing sofas. Now, were they just like clean freaks? Obviously not. They were, they went through all this rigmarole because they held to the tradition of the elders.

[23:55] That's what the elders told us to do. That's what such and such rabbi told us to do and so that's what we're going to do. They held to the traditions of men and Jesus said they let go of the word of God.

And so by your traditions you nullify the word of God. You can't have both. You can't hold and believe the traditions of men and then hold the word of God.

God. So how do you watch out? How do you make sure that you don't get caught by one of these things? Well, you have to know your word.

Know the word. Is the word being filtered through your minds regularly? So that when you see those things and when you're on Facebook and when you're on Pinterest and when you're looking at the exercise stuff and when that catalog comes in is your mind being renewed?

so that now you're seeing things clearly and you're asking okay, what does this have to do with Jesus? Where does the cross fit in? Is the cross a footnote at the bottom?

[24:59] Is Jesus a footnote to this? I read this I went online and I looked at this one Christian so-called Christian website and I'm sure lots of these people are Christians not speaking against them but it was all about family and that sort of thing and they had their mission statement and Jesus was not mentioned one time in the whole thing and I don't I can't pretend to judge their hearts but it seems like when we want to say something about what's the mission of our organization that Jesus Christ should play into it Peter says Jesus died to save us from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers he died so that we could escape that that emptiness well that's what

my father taught me and that's what those forefathers taught us he didn't die so that we could go on living our thoughtless empty human lives and a few verses after saying

Jesus redeemed us from our empty way of life he says like newborn babes crave spiritual milk so that by it you may grow in your salvation how do you escape that practically how do you escape the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers you grow in your knowledge of the scriptures you grow in your appreciation for Jesus Christ so are you reading God's word more than just a cursory just doing it but are you reading it are you studying it is your mind engaged are you thinking about it we just looked at one of those things that Paul prayed for earlier in Colossians so that you might grow in the knowledge of God that's what we need to be growing up into so read your word we have a great library use it use it if you want to avoid getting lost you have to know the map so get to know your map so that's fourth it's human fifth it's worldly it depends upon the basic principles of this world so what does all this false teaching have in common well it just depends on the basic principles of this world now this is the most difficult bit to understand there's questions of how to translate some of the words here and I don't ever like to get into these sorts of things because they can bog a sermon down but I do want to mention something for the sake of you who are using the ESV and other translations they translate it other translations translate it many modern translations translate instead of basic principles it says evil spirits or elemental spirits so he's talking about demons and things like that so with that way of thinking well this hollow and deceptive philosophy it depends on human tradition and it comes from demons and while that's obviously somewhat true

I think the NIV is correct and it should probably be basic principles it's not talking about elemental spirits the word came to mean spirits 200 years after Paul wrote but there isn't any proof that in the first century when Paul was writing that that's what it meant but it clearly did mean basic principles often and so that fits very well with how Paul uses it in other places and if you have more questions please ask but what is Paul talking about when he says it depends on the basic principles of this world what does he mean well I think if you look how Paul uses that word elsewhere he uses it a couple times in the book of Galatians he uses it again here in Colossians it becomes clear that he is talking about the rules the regulations the laws the ordinances by which the Jews and the Gentiles used to earn their salvation it was about doing certain things in order to earn my salvation and whether you were a

Jew the Jew had one way they turned the law into saying now this is the way that I'm going to earn my salvation the Gentiles had other ways but it was the same basic principle it was the same heart behind it saying salvation is not something that I freely receive from God salvation is something that I earn so if I keep the law if I keep this or this day or that day if I work out hard enough if I decorate my house just right and if I homeschool and I raise my children just this way and if I save my money just right and invest it just the right way I'll get it I'll be saved I'll be a good worthy person I'll be okay I'll accomplish something I'll be able to look at myself and say yes I did it so the key to my life the key to my joy the key to my salvation is my performance that's the way the world works whether you're secular or whether you're religious whatever philosophies that we set up if we aren't relying upon

Jesus Christ we are going to be relying upon ourselves so use that paradigm to examine your life where am I what am I boasting in where am I getting my glory what am I taking joy in is it Jesus Christ or is it in my performance it's either one or the other and that's what Paul says and here's the sixth feature they aren't based on Christ they're according to human tradition they're according to the basic principles of this world they're not according to Jesus Christ so none of these things have anything to do with Jesus and so let people paint them however they like let the greatest teachers and the best philosophers and the best people the wisest people of the world say whatever they want they aren't Christ their method isn't Jesus Christ they're alternatives to him and so dear Christian if they aren't Christ they aren't depending on

[31:40] Christ then why have anything to do with them and so be careful if you don't have Christ dear Christian what do you have what do you have if you don't have the image of God how will you know God and if you don't have the firstborn from the dead and how will you gain eternal life and if you don't have Christ who died for sins how will you ever be forgiven so he's life he's salvation he's hope he's God in the flesh and we have fullness in him and if we lose him Paul is saying if you lose him you lose everything you can't have both so watch out that you don't lose Christ watch out that you don't give your faith to something less than Jesus Christ and that could be traditional religious

sorts of things and it could be a very secular way of putting your faith in something else and the only reason we go to those things the only reason we fall back on them we start to rely upon them and live in them is we aren't seeing

Christ for who he is we get enraptured by what we're up to and all of our ideas and physical fitness and our look and the look of our house and the method of education and how much we're worth we get enraptured by those things because we're not enraptured by him and we only do that because we're not seeing the glory of Christ that's the whole point of Colossians that's the whole point Paul says you have Christ you don't need anything else and so how ugly and stupid and useless the world's philosophies and the world's ideas and the world's methods appear when you compare them to Jesus so if your heart is tied up and enslaved and caught in something like this go back to Colossians 1:15 where Paul begins that wonderful expression of how glorious

Jesus is and you live there you live in that passage until Jesus frees you he's the image of the invisible God he's the king he's the one greater than Moses he's the firstborn over all creation and rank after rank after rank of angels worship him and so did any of those things those other things did any of them love you like he loved you who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped that means something to hold on to but he made himself nothing why did Jesus make himself nothing well it's for you for you and so who humbled himself even to death for you and how he loves you now how he loves you now dear believer your relationship the church's relationship and your relationship with Jesus

Christ was the whole point of creating marriage to show us something of how a husband how Christ loves us and he says I am hers she is mine he loves you with love stronger than death stronger than death so when you die and your life ceases his love goes right on loving you and he loves with a jealousy as unyielding as the grave it burns like a blazing fire and many waters cannot quench it rivers of waters cannot quench it and the years will not destroy it and the years will not make it fade and so bring the world's teachings bring all that stuff that we get so tied up into and their human traditions and their ideas of what it means to be great and their ideas of what it means to be accomplished bring those rules and the schemes and bring the prettiest pictures and the strongest bodies and bring them to the cross and watch them wilt in the light of

Jesus' love for you bring them to the cross and say what do you have to offer that compares to him so watch out don't be taken those things have nothing to do with Christ don't let anything steal away your love for Christ don't let anything steal away your love for him and so where's the danger in your life where's the danger in your life maybe ask your spouse honey what do you see in my life where I'm falling away falling into these sorts of things where's the danger in your life are your eyes open are you awake or are you joy riding in cartel country let's pray our Lord Jesus we do come before you and we want to say you are magnificent and wonderful you are the first among ten thousand and you are the joy of heaven you are the joy of every angel's heart and you are the joy of our hearts and yet

[37:39] Lord we know how slow we are to love you and how easy we fall away will you please cure us of our wandering hearts set your love upon us help us to know and feel and experience that love again and again and again teach us to preach the gospel to ourselves teach us to take to go into the word of God and to hear you and see you and experience your love for us oh will you teach us will you continue to work with us and in us thank you that when nothing that we could do could save us you saved us and when everything we had come up with and all of our plans and all of our schemes had fallen away and we were stuck and left in our sin and guilty before you and we knew it thank you that when we called out even as a last resort you were still humble and loving enough to receive us would you please teach us to lean then upon

Jesus and it's in his name I pray amen amen