

## Philosophy, Tradition, Deception and Elementary Principles of the World

The culture in the first century city of Colossae was deep and broad. It was well developed, but not in a good way. Colossae was in Asia Minor, not far from the cities Laodicea, Philadelphia and Aphrodisias (the latter being known for having one of the temples of and a statue of Aphrodite, the goddess of love who was worshipped by visiting temple prostitutes). Yes, you could find anything you wanted in Colossae, good, bad and everything in between.

While most believe that Epaphras actually founded the church at Colossae, Paul's letter to them is deeply personal as he warns them of the dangers of worldly traditions and philosophies. Listen carefully to Paul's warnings in Colossians 2:8:

**See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.**

The Holy Spirit was directing Paul to address some of the major temptations that could easily draw Christians away from Christ. The same is true today. Christians must certainly avoid the physical temptations so common in the pagan religions of the day, but there were, and are, more subtle influences that can wreak just as much havoc on one's spiritual life.

Notice the four categories Paul mentions:

1. Philosophy
2. Empty deception
3. Tradition of men
4. Elementary principles of the world.

These are not as readily recognized as sexual temptations are, but they are just as deadly. Because of the stealthy nature of these things, the careless Christian might accidentally and unknowingly adopt some of the world's beliefs and attitudes without realizing what is happening.

"Philosophy" is a love of wisdom, but very often becomes a love of earthly wisdom rather than godly wisdom. "Empty deception" is just that, deception (that which deceives), thus is not recognized for what it is. "Tradition of men" is not complicated but is very attractive because it both allows us to partake of the forbidden and also brings with it earthly acceptance and approval of those who are not God's children. And "elementary principles of the world" are simply the base elements of society and culture that appeal to those, whether erudite or elementary, who have no desire for the spiritual maturities to which God has called us in Ephesians 4:14-16.

In 1 Peter 5:8 we are warned:

**Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

In today's world, as in Colossae, Satan seeks to devour us through *philosophy, empty deception, tradition of men and elementary principles of the world*. **Stay alert, stay strong. Love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength!**

Ray Wallace