

# A Thinking People

Colossians 2:8-10

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- I. Deceptive Ideas
- II. Incarnate Truth
- III. Complete Provision

[https://youtu.be/m\\_3fD9jufXI](https://youtu.be/m_3fD9jufXI)

Today, my sermon title from the next section of the book of Colossians in the Bible we're studying as a church this year is, "A Thinking People." What I'm hoping we can do together for about the next twenty minutes or so is to think together about thinking.

When we think there is a flood of activity happening in our brains. Synapses are firing left and right, messages are being sent throughout our bodies, data is being collected and collated and we have all kinds of thoughts going on about all kinds of things. When we think our brains are like a city with a bunch of freeways packed with speeding cars running this way and that way.

There are varying degrees of thought ranging from simple processing like telling your hand to scratch an itch or processing words we hear or speak on to deeper more complex thinking having to do with things about life, the future, relationships, meaning, purpose and value. And through it all there is this one common thread when it comes to human thinking and it's really the activity of processing what is really true, what is reality and what is going to be best for us. All thinking springs from those two motivations or desires.

How and what we think matters. And it's into this wild world of human life that God has given us a guide in the Bible for the best kind of thinking. So let's jump into our passage for today and check it out. Would you stand with me in honor of the Bible being a special book with special God given words to love us and help us.

## **Colossians 2:8-10.**

*"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. 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."*

I've got three points for us today, "Deceptive Ideas", "Incarnate Truth" and "Complete Provision." Alright thinking people, let's think together beginning with this first point, "Deceptive Ideas."

## **I. Deceptive Ideas**

I'm taking this first point from verse 8. Let's begin with the first few words here, "See to it that no one..."

This is basically a way of saying, hey listen up, this is really really important, pay attention to this. When you see to something you zero in on it and devote some time effort and energy to it. Thinking is important so take care how you think.

Sometimes I think people think being a Christianity is just a religion for people with weak minds, who are just kind of stupid as though if they really had a brain and used it they'd chuck the whole God thing. This couldn't be farther from the truth. Faith is actually not a blind leap into the dark but rests upon reasonable truths.

One of the things the people of God have always been known for as far back as when most everyone on the planet was into worshipping gods represented by idols made of precious metals or stone was the that the God of the Bible was different because He was not a God you could see but a God you had to use your brain to connect with. The God of the Bible requires us to think about Him. As Isaiah 1:18 says in the Bible, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord."

Now what our passage today from Colossians acknowledges is that the perspective, beliefs and ideas of Christianity are not the only ones out there. It acknowledges that there are lot of ideas out there about God, about who human beings are and what our purpose for existence is and how to find happiness in life.

These are really the questions of philosophy. Some of the most popular philosophers around when Colossians was first written are still some of the most popular philosophies influencing thinking today, like Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism.

Plato's main idea was that we can only get at shadows of truth and reality but can never really discover the real thing, which has given birth to skepticism, pluralism and relativism forcing many to feel as though truth or reality is whatever you want it to be.

Aristotle's main idea was a focus on the physical material world and the elements of wind, water, fire and earth which gave birth to modern science and the belief that the only things that are real and things we can detect with the five senses.

Stoicism's main idea is that feelings are the problem and the more we detach ourselves from them the better we are, which has given birth to nihilism and existentialism saying that says there's no meaning or purpose to anything.

Colossians comes along and says, hold on, these ideas are dangerous and we need to be careful with them because they can deceive us and lead us astray. So let's talk about these two things for a few minutes, being taken "captive" and the "deceit" of certain perspectives or philosophies.

Deceit or deception is simply what happens when we hear something from someone or some place which kinds of makes sense and so we start to buy into it, but the problem we often don't realize is that it's either leaving something out or twisting something that is actually true and the result is we get tricked in our thinking. It's been happening for a very long time and pretty much happened to all of us.

The Bible tells the story of when it first happened. Someone came along and told the first man and woman they didn't need God and could become like God themselves. It was partly true, they did become like God but not in the way they were hoping or expecting. Instead of becoming like Him in getting His power they became like Him in being able to see the depths of evil and how bad a life without Him really was.

I've thought about it like this. Think of some of the different things you can major in while in college, biology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, religion...what each major does is provide a perspective for why we are the way we are, what the purpose and meaning of human life is and how we function best.

And there's value in all of them, these intersecting points or elements of truth but none by themselves tells us the whole story. And what Colossians is telling us is that what we need is not a compound of all of them but the perspective of Christ which uniquely enables us to see into the light of God's truth and meaning in all things.

The earliest Christian theologians in the pre-modern era, like the first several hundred years after Christ explained that there's two different ways to think, that you can either think from the top down or the bottom up.

If you start at the bottom you start by looking down at yourself and what's around you, so you start with yourself and what you can know for sure as a human being. Descartes called this to cogito, expressed in the statement, "I think therefore I am." So you start with yourself and what we can discover as human beings and then try to work your way up to God, it's called inductive reasoning.

The early Christians said that's foolish because if there's is a God then He's by definition infinite in every regard with an infinite mind and there's no way a finite little human mind could ever fully wrap their brains around an infinite mind. So they said it's better to start with God and then work our way down to earth and what He says about our world and human beings, that's called deductive reasoning.

Our passage from Colossians today references this when it says it's not smart to try determine what is true by basing it on human tradition beginning with ourselves. And if you pause to think about it, we have to ask what how has piddly theories and reasoning really helped us as human race? With all our knowledge and what we've discovered are we really better off?

Not really. Biology? We're still getting sick and dying. Sociology? Government is a mess, there's still wars and we can figure out how to get along with other people and other countries. Psychology? Americans are now statistically reported as the most depressed and medicated people in the world by far. Philosophy? We just throw up our hands in the air and say, "who knows"? Religion? Spiritual rules to try and curb our moral problems really don't help at all, we either get frustrated at repeated failure or get really prideful thinking we're better than everyone else because of how supposedly good we are at following the rules.

It's because of this that Ambrose Bierce, a well known American journalist of the 19th century surmised that all our human efforts to become wise are "...the route of many roads leading from nowhere to nothing."

I think what it often boils down to is the false confidence we put into human reasoning, as though reason itself and our ability to reason is somehow pure and not effected, damaged or tainted by something tragic as the biblical story explains. One thing about human nature we discover sooner or later is that we are easily fooled.

Did you guys have a fun April fools day this last week? I kind of felt bad about it but my kids have been wanting a cat, so on April fools day I told them mom and I had been talking about it and that there was a surprise in the garage for them. They immediately went running out there to go see. I felt just a little bad once they returned with these sad long faces and I gleefully cried out, "April Fools!"

We can so easily get fooled by what other people say and do. One guy attempting to prove this went out downtown and grabbed a person on a street corner and began pointing in the sky and saying, "Do you see that?" Within minutes a crowd formed with everyone looking up in the sky, some pointing and saying, "I see it" and others saying, "I don't see anything" when all along there was nothing there.

I like how the NIV version of the Bible translates verse 8 of our passage, it says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy." When it comes to purely human ideas and reasoning it makes me think of the story of The Emperors New Clothes. Do you guys know it?

It's a short tale about a couple of guys who promise an emperor a new suit of clothes they say is invisible to those who are unfit for their positions, stupid, or incompetent – while in reality, they make no clothes at all, making everyone believe the clothes are invisible to them. When the emperor parades before his subjects in his new "clothes", no one dares to say that they do not see any suit of clothes on him for fear that they will be seen as stupid. Finally a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

This is what ideas that don't begin with God do, because they only give us part of the picture or a twisted version of it, the result is we are left naked believing in something that is hollow and empty and doesn't really do anything for us. When we buy into it Colossians says we're taken captive. That's an apology or a picture of something like kidnapping or slavery, taking someone prisoner or of a wolf that's sneaks into a flock and drags a sheep away to devour it. If we reject God we end up losing our lives and destroying our futures...and that's real.

Our passage says it's sinister. That's what that line about "elemental spirits" is about. Back then they didn't distinguish between science and pseudo science. Those who were into studying the physical elements and the world and looking for hope in them were typical the same people who were into astrology and other forms of what today we'd call new age thinking or even things having to do with the occult and witchcraft.

What Colossians is really getting at with that line is that deception and being taken captive is the same old problem of Satan that goes all the way back to that garden of Eden episode we talked about. Which means that any view of life that doesn't begin and end with God is fueled by a dark and demonic force.

What we think matters. It matters a lot. And here's the thing. None of us are perfect. We've all fallen prey. It's not easy. We are susceptible creatures who don't think right all the time.

I wonder today what things you've bought into that you know deep down are lies and not the truth? What philosophies of life or the world have you perhaps embraced, maybe without even realizing it that have taken you captive and led you away from God?

The good news is there is hope for us because God has sent His light in the person of Christ to shine a spotlight on the only truth that actually accounts for all things and more than that offers us the promise of life and eternal life, the thing we all really desire that no human philosophy has ever been able to offer us. So let's transition and talk about that in our next point, "Incarnate Truth."

## II. Incarnate Truth

In this point we're looking at the last part of verse 8 and the first part of verse 9 where Colossians tells us why Christ and Christ alone has all the answers. Another reason I like the NIV translation with this verse is how it qualifies the word, "philosophy" as "hollow philosophy" because Christianity is not against philosophy carte blanc, just bad philosophy that gets rid of God.

The word philosophy simply means "the love of wisdom" and the Bible is all about wisdom, it simply believes that true wisdom comes from God. As 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 in the Bible says it, "Among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

In reality what Christianity really is, is the supreme philosophy because it claims to provide a worldview or an answer for everything, not just one aspect of human life. It's a pretty audacious claim. I like how John Frame explains it in his book, "Apologetics To The Glory of God." He says this,

*"By 'Christianity as a philosophy' I mean that Christianity provides a comprehensive view of the world (a worldview). It gives us an account not only of God, but also of the world that God made, the relation of the world to God, and the place of human beings in the world in relation to nature and God. It discusses metaphysics (the theory of the fundamental nature of reality), epistemology (the theory of knowledge), and values (ethics, aesthetics, economics, etc.).*

*Christianity therefore competes with Platonism, Aristotelianism, empiricism, rationalism, skepticism, materialism, monism, pluralism, process thought, secular humanism, New Age thought, Marxism, and whatever other philosophies there may be—as well as other religions, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism."*

I called this point, "Incarnate Truth" because our verse in Colossians says the key to seeing life and the world correctly is to see it according to Christ and the reason it says we can trust what Christ says is because "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." Christianity says that in Jesus Christ, the eternal, all powerful, all knowing, all good, everywhere present God took on human flesh in Jesus, that

in Jesus God came to earth to tell us and show us what is true and real. It's what Christians have called the "incarnation." That in Jesus God incarnated.

Here's why that's important. One time I was having a conversation with a friend of mine, who like many of us was lost in the sea of ideas out there and he said this, "Duane, I just wish that if there was a God He'd come right out and just make it clear." I said, that's exactly what He did in Jesus bro. And he said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah...but that was a long time ago. If I could've seen Jesus myself and heard Him talk then maybe I'd believe." In response I said two things to Him. First, I said, "I'm not so sure man. A lot of people saw Him, saw His miracles, heard His teaching and still didn't believe." And then second, I said, "And if God had to come down every generation, like every 50-100 years or something to show Himself don't you think it would devalue the significance of Him coming to earth?" He said, "I guess so."

You see, if there actually is a God and if He is actually the only one who knows everything and if we are actually not God and finite and even more than that have diseased reason, then our only hope really is for God to tell us what's true. So if Jesus really was God in the flesh in whom the fullness of deity truly dwells, then He can actually tell us what is true about life, our existence and our future. And if that's true then Jesus is the one person we should listen to and pay attention to the most more than anyone else.

Here's how 1 Corinthians 1:20-24 in the Bible explains it, "20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe....but we preach Christ...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

What I love about this is the simplicity to it. One of the things that comes along with a lot of other ideas and philosophies is that they are often complicated, hard to understand and the people who are all about them are often snooty about it thinking they are smarter than you because of it. It's what C.S. Lewis called, "chronological snobbery", that somehow because these ideas are new, fresh and fancy that they are somehow better or more true.

On the contrary Christianity has always been a very simple thing. It says God is the only one who knows everything, so for us to know anything we need to know Him and He sent Jesus to tell us. So then, all we really need in life is Jesus. And the amazing thing is that the simplicity of God coming into the world in Christ to tell us of life and give us life actually answer the most complicated and sophisticated questions the smartest people who have ever lived have asked.

Who Jesus is, is simply astounding. So far Colossians has told us He's the Lord of all, the Son of God, the victor over Satan, the Redeemer of all things, the ruler of all things, the forgiver of sins, the image of the invisible God, the Creator, the sustainer, the peacemaker, defeater of death, the hope of glory and now in our passage the head of all rule and authority! You cannot conceive of anyone better or more majestic than Christ!

God made us to be thinkers. He gave us brains. And listen, thinking of Christ, who He is and what He has done for us is of first order, He is the highest and best thing we can ever think of. When we are

thinking well, we think according to and through the lens of Christ. There is no one better, stronger or wiser than Jesus Christ.

Each of us are dealing with different things today, stirring thoughts beneath the surface in our minds and hearts. The amazing and incredible thing is no matter how different each of our stories and needs are there is truth and an answer for us in Jesus.

I wonder today, what you need from Him? What are the questions you have? What are you wrestling with? Whatever it is, I am here today to tell you there are answers in Jesus Christ you will find nowhere else.

In Jeremiah 29:13 in the Bible God said, “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” That means we can bring our questions to God and He will give us answers and when do that Jesus said this in John 8:32 “(then)...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Well, I’ve got one last short point for us today from our passage in Colossians where tells us what we get when instead of being taken captive we are captivated by Christ.

### **III. Complete Provision**

This point, “Complete Provision” is purely from the few words at the beginning of verse 10 which says, “you have been filled in him” referring to Jesus Christ.

Now sometimes when the Bible talks about being filled with Jesus or His Spirit it’s referring to the feelings or experiences of peace, love and joy that come from believing in and walking with Jesus. However, here the context is Jesus’ incarnation and what He accomplished in it. If we follow the logic the passage doing good thinking or reasoning as we’re reading the order is God dwelt in Jesus so He could dwell with in and in us.

The main problem between human beings and God is that we’re down here and He is way up and out there and on top of that all of us have rejected God at points in our lives preferring really to be our own gods running our own lives. To overcome all that distance God came down to us in Jesus and then Jesus died on the cross giving up His life to pay the price for our offense against God.

When we realize that and believe that what God does is He begins to fill us and our lives with all of His goodness. Jesus takes all the sin and junk of our lives onto His shoulders and then He pours all of His perfection and goodness into us. In Jesus God fully gives Himself to us. Through Jesus God has provided what we actually need, in Him is complete provision.

One Bible commentator said the real danger of all other philosophies or worldviews is that none, other than Christianity offers forgiveness. I think that’s true because when it comes down to it all of reality and all of truth is relational. Life is about relationships so it makes sense that the hope for the human race would not be found in an idea but in a person.

In all relationships there are two main things going on, what I think about you and what I think you think about me. If God is the core of reality then our core need is to know Him, to address our relationship with Him.

If we think God is a mean, cruel, controlling dictator or non-existent, then that's going to have a big effect on our lives. But if we think God is a kind, gracious, loving, giving, forgiving God then it makes all the difference in the world. And when we think on Christ, His life, death and resurrection then we see who God really is and we are filled with life everlasting.

Today do you feel empty and hollow? Perhaps it's because you've been feeding off the table of the world's ideas for too long and you're starving. I want you to know today there is a feast you can fill yourself up on in Christ. How do you need Him to fill you today? There is complete provision in His name.

## **Conclusion**

Well, we started out today talking about the human brain and what it is to think. We end today talking about Christ Jesus, who He is and what He has done for us to win us back from the people, ideas and things that have taken us captive.

We want to enter into a time of response now. One of the ways we do that is with these little response cards. So let's pull them out and take a few minutes to fill them out, which our staff reads and prays over and responds to anything you're needing some help or guidance on. We won't spam you and it'd be great if everyone filled one out and turned them in either in the giving boxes or the kiosk at the back.

I'd encourage you to really seek the Lord. Ask yourself what you need and how you resolve to respond to God and His Word this week. And if you can't come up with anyone we call all you this one, "This week I am resolved to think of God and His goodness toward me in Christ."

Now, we're going to respond with our whole bodies by getting up out of our seats and coming forward to one of these tables where we take a piece of bread as Jesus perfect life and dip in the wine or the juice as His blood. The reason we do this each week is to think, to think of how great it is that God came to us in Jesus Christ to love us, die for us and fill us.

Earlier, we sang a song that had the line, "I cast my mind to Calvary, where Jesus bled and died for me." When we come today let's think the highest of thoughts we can ever think by casting our minds to the cross where God poured out His love for us.