

July 23, 2006 by Steve Brandon



Don't Be Taken Captive

Colossians 2:8-10

- 1. Because Jesus has all Deity (verse 9).**
- 2. Because Jesus has all Sufficiency (verse 10a).**
- 3. Because Jesus has all Authority (verse 10b).**

If you have been following the political events recently in the Middle East, you know that there has been much turmoil in recent days. In fact, as I speak, Israel is in a war with two fronts. They are fighting in Gaza to the south. They are fighting in Lebanon to the north. In Gaza, the conflict began early Sunday morning, June 25, 2006, when some Palestinian militants crossed the border from the Gaza Strip into Israel via a tunnel. They proceeded to attack three Israeli soldiers. They succeeded in killing two of the soldiers. The third one, Gilad Shalit, who survived the attack, was kidnapped and brought back into Gaza. Three days later, the Israel Defense Force launched an offensive military effort in attempts to rescue Shalit from the hands of his captors. In Lebanon, the conflict began in a similar fashion. On Wednesday, July 12, 2006, Hezbollah guerillas crossed the border into Israel from Lebanon and attacked some Israeli soldiers. In the fighting that ensued, three soldiers were killed and two of them were kidnapped. As a result the Israel Defense Force began a "severe and harsh" retaliation on Lebanon with artillery and air strikes. Such actions have caused several countries, including the United States, to evacuate its citizens living in Lebanon. It's in extremely serious situation for all involved. [\[1\]](#)

In our text this morning, the picture is exactly the same. The situation is just as serious. Paul uses this picture of being kidnapped by an enemy to describe the danger of drifting from the centrality of Christ in all things.

Colossians 2:8-10

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. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.

Paul writes, "See to it that no one takes you captive." In other words, "See to it that no one kidnaps you, and takes you into custody behind enemy lines, and strips you of all your freedom." Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Don't be Taken Captive" It is the governing thought in our text. It is the command to which we need to pay attention. Verse 8 describes the dangers. Verses 9 and 10 give us reasons why we must avoid the enemy.

The enemy here is not a Palestinian militant or a Hezbollah guerilla. The enemy here is false teaching that would attack your mind, and thus, seek to pull you away from trusting in Christ Jesus the Lord. Paul describes the enemy using these words: "philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (verse 8). The enemy here doesn't fight with bullets and with tanks and missiles. Rather, the enemy fights by using persuasive argument (2:4) that will ultimately attempt to brainwash you into believing lies.

Perhaps some of you remember the tragic story of Patty Hearst. She grew up in a wealthy San Francisco suburb in the 1960's. On February 4, 1974, as a 19-year-old, she was kidnapped from an apartment in Berkeley, California, by an urban guerilla group known as the Symbionese Liberation Army. All attempts to free her were in vain. While in captivity, she was brainwashed by her captors and then became sympathetic to their cause and eventually, being committed to their goals. Less than three months after her capture (on April 15, 1974), Patty Hearst helped them rob a bank. A famous picture shot around the world shows her standing guard with an assault rifle as the robbery was taking place. Eventually, she, along with the other members of the Symbionese Liberation Army were arrested, convicted of bank robbery, and thrown in prison. Such is the picture of those who would be led astray by philosophy and empty deception, rather than according to Christ. Ultimately, it is brainwashing that takes place, believing a lie rather than the truth as it is in Christ.

At this point in my message, I thought about breaking verse 8 down into four different dangers that can lead you captive: (1) philosophy, (2) empty deception, (3) tradition of men, and (4) elementary principles of the world. But as I thought and prayed and studied, it became clear to me that these dangers aren't four separate things. Rather, they are all overlapping parts that describe the whole. The philosophy, the traditions and the elementary principles were all deceptive, leading to futility in the end. The traditions of men and the elementary principles of the world, both led to a philosophy of life and theory of salvation. The traditions and elementary principles often had similarities in how they expressed themselves. And so, I found it impossible to separate them into four distinct things and distinctly define them for you. But then, that's what the false teaching in Colossae was like.

Nobody knows for sure what exactly was taught in Colossae. Scholars have come up with dozens of theories about the exact teaching that was taking place in Colossae. Though we don't know the exact teaching, from the clues that we can pick up in the rest of chapter 2, we can get a feel for what was going on at the church. Verse 16 tells us that there was an emphasis upon Judaism, which placed faith in certain ceremonies and rituals found in the Old Testament. People were lifting up the dietary laws and telling others that eating is the key to Godliness. They were lifting up the festivals and teaching of the importance of keeping these days. Those who weren't keeping these

festivals were held in contempt.

In verse 18, we see that there was an emphasis upon mysticism, which emphasized the spiritual experiences that people have. Those who had some type of religious experience were boasting of how important they were because of their experience. As a result, there were others, then, who felt that they were inadequate as they were led to believe that they were not fully experiencing the Christian life.

In verses 20-21, we see an emphasis upon Gnosticism, which focused upon having a "higher knowledge" of spiritual things. It led to an exclusivity in thinking. Some were "in the know," while others were outside. Gnosticism also believed that the material world was evil, but the spirit was good. Thus, they told others not to taste or touch or handle certain things, because they were evil. In verse 23, we discover an emphasis upon asceticism, which taught the importance of self-discipline. To keep yourself unstained by the world, you need to punish and abuse your body and beat it into submission.

When you put all of these things together, you get this assortment of religious teaching which is multifaceted and complex. Some of these teachings were simple reflections of the religious traditions of men, rather than from God. Paul was probably talking about the tendency to follow Old Testament laws and customs. Tradition was huge in the synagogues in the days of Jesus. Perhaps you remember when Jesus and His disciples weren't washing their hands according to the ceremonial traditions, and so, the Pharisees and scribes questioned Him about it. They asked him, "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?" (Matt. 15:1-2). Jesus responded with an even better question, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3). Later, Jesus would call these men hypocrites, ... "teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:9). The flavor of Judaism that was floating around was creeping into the church, with their strict traditions, of how to live and how to act and what to eat and what not to touch.

Some of these teachings came from the religious teachings of the ancient Greek world as well. See, it's not merely the Jews who had their laws and regulations of how to live and act. The godless surrounding them also had their religious rules and regulations as well. All you need to do is think about what you know of the ancient Greek mythology. They had temples built for their gods and goddesses. Certain ones of them would have their own standard of conduct. When this thing called the church started in Colossae, where people began to live morally, those moralists brought their own theological bent into the church.

Certainly, those who were teaching these things looked wise in the things that they were saying. They were sophisticated and philosophical and learned. But in the end, all of their talk lead to emptiness, which ultimately made their teaching deceptive. Keeping Jewish feasts and festivals and Sabbath days ultimately get you nowhere. Seeking mystical, spiritual experiences is as transitory as the wind. Ultimately, severe treatment of your body "has the appearance of wisdom," but in the end, it has "no value against fleshly indulgence" (Col. 2:23) -- it won't keep you from sin. No amount of worldly knowledge and philosophy will justify you before God.

Paul's warning in verse 8 is wonderfully comprehensive against all of these false teachings. As Paul warns about the dangers of philosophy and empty deception and the tradition of men and the elementary principles of the world, he was addressing all of the error of what was being taught, using the most general of terms. Whether the philosophy was according to the traditions of men, or whether the philosophy was pulling in elemental principles from other religions, it was all vain. It was to be avoided at all costs.

I need to add here that this verse isn't denying the validity of *all* philosophy. By definition, "philosophy" is the love of wisdom, which ought to be the pursuit of every believer in Christ. Solomon instructed his son, "Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; Love her and she will watch over you" (Prov. 4:5-6). So, as believers in Christ, we ought to "love wisdom." Wisdom will be our protection in this life. The love of wisdom will help us to obtain that protection. So, in the fullest sense of the word, we ought to be "philosophers." We ought to "love wisdom."

And so, the danger of being taken captive isn't the danger of "philosophy" per se. When Paul uses the word, "philosophy" in this passage, he's describing the worldly efforts of the intellect to explain the world in such a way that would contradict the work of Christ on the cross. This is clear when you see how Paul describes these things in the last phrase of verse 8. He says, ... "rather than according to Christ." This little phrase is the key to understand where a philosophy will go wrong.

In other words, all of our philosophy must take Jesus Christ and his work into account. Any philosophy that takes you away from Christ is to be avoided at all costs. In this way, this phrase, "rather than according to Christ" is our governor regarding that philosophy which is helpful and that philosophy which is dangerous.

Afterall, where is wisdom to be found? It's to be found in Jesus Christ? Look back in verse 3, "in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." To love Christ is to love the wisdom that flows from knowing Him. Let us be "philosophers," who love to search out the wisdom that is found in Christ Jesus. Your search will never be exhausted. You can spend all of your waking moments searching and studying and thinking upon Christ and you will never exhaust His wisdom.

Perhaps you have noticed that Paul's point here is essentially the flip side of his counsel to us in verses 6-7. A few weeks ago, we looked at these verses in our exposition of Colossians. I trust that you remember the exhortation that came in verse 6: we are to walk in Him. We are to walk as began. Verse 6 says, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." In other words, "As you have received Jesus Christ by faith in His atoning sacrifice, continue to walk by faith in His atoning sacrifice." You never move on from the cross of Christ.

We are to walk like a tree. We are to be firm and established and grounded in these things. Our roots need to go deep, like a giant oak tree. We are to walk like a building. Our foundation needs to be secure. We need to build up, upon the foundation of Christ. We are to walk like a rock. Our faith needs to be established, and not shaken or moved away from how we were instructed at the very beginning. The way that we began our Christian walk is the way that we need to continue our Christian walk. We must not move away from the simple message of the gospel that has saved us from our sins. We need to continue on in the faith, "just as we were instructed" (Col. 2:7).

"Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2) must be the melody that we play, always coming back to it. "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2) must be the focus of our thoughts. We need to "remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead" (2 Tim. 2:8). Jesus established the Lord's Supper so that it would picture His work on the cross. He told us to continue to celebrate it in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). We who received the Spirit by hearing with faith (Gal. 3:2), should continue to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). We ought not to leave our first love (Rev. 2:4). Or, as Paul says here in a warning to us, "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" (Col. 2:8).

There are plenty of philosophies that can take you away from Christ: atheism, agnosticism, pantheism, animism, polytheism, deism, materialism, hedonism, humanism, naturalism, rationalism, relativism, modernism, secularism, mysticism, pragmatism, Darwinianism, only to name a few. All of these philosophies will deny Jesus Christ. Each of these philosophies have the potential of kidnapping you and taking you hostage. There are religious philosophies as well: Arianism, Pelagianism, Mormonism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, only to name a few. The good news is that you don't need to be an expert in these things. The good news is that you only need to know one philosophy: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is great comfort in these words. The comfort is in the simplicity of our faith. We don't need to have a Ph. D. and understand all of the intricate details of a complex religion. In fact, our faith is quite simple. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." "My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness." There is only one philosophy that you ultimately need to know. You need to know Christ. You need to trust in Christ. You need to know how His death upon the cross is sufficient for your sins. When you begin to stray from the truth found in Him, you will find yourself in danger of being taken captive to something else. The results are tragic.

I read this week of the tragic deaths of Kristian Menchaca of Houston, Texas, and Thomas Tucker of Madras, Oregon. They were serving our country in Iraq. On Friday, June 16, 2006, they were out on one of their routine missions, patrolling traffic. They were in a convoy with other vehicles. However, at one point, their Humvee was separated from the rest of the convoy. They were isolated and alone. It's at that point that they came under attack by Iraqi militants. Their partner, David Babineau, of Springfield, Massachusetts, was killed in the attack. But, Menchaca and Tucker were kidnapped. Five days later, their bodies were discovered in an area booby trapped with homemade bombs. It took 12 hours to remove the bombs from the road to finally reach the bodies. When U. S. soldiers retrieved the bodies, they were beyond recognition, as they had been desecrated. At least one of the bodies had been decapitated. It's a tragic story that illustrates this text very well. They came under attack because they were separated from the rest of their convoy. Had they stayed close, there would have been safety in numbers. This is Paul's point. Stay close to the truth of Christ. Should you stray, tragic results will occur: "you will be taken captive."

Lest you think that I'm being a bit to drastic in my illustrations, I want for you to consider Deuteronomy 13 for you. This chapter is a great parallel to our text. It describes the tragic results of straying from the LORD. In Deuteronomy 13, Moses is calling the people to trust in the LORD and to follow His ways. Should one seek to lead others astray, Moses instructs the people of Israel to kill that individual. Moses writes,

...

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk So you shall purge the evil from among you.

In effect, Moses is saying, "I don't care how believable this prophet or dreamer is. I don't care how great a sign he gives to demonstrate his power. If he is urging you to stray away from the LORD your God, ... put him to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD." Paul might easily be instructing us, "I don't care how believable this teacher is. I don't care how smart he sounds. I don't care how smooth he speaks. I don't care how convincing his arguments are. If he is urging you to believe something that is contrary to the teachings of Christ, don't believe him. He is counseling rebellion against the LORD." Moses continues in verse 6, ...

Deuteronomy 13:6-11

If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

In other words, Moses is saying, "I don't care how near to you and dear to you a person may be. I don't care if it is your precious wife who you love. I don't care if it is your closest friend on the earth. If anyone urges you to go and serve other gods, ... you shall not entertain his thoughts for even a moment. You shall not pity him one iota. You shall surely kill him, because he is seeking to seduce you from the LORD, who is your true God!" I can easily hear Paul say, "I don't care who these teachers of yours are. I don't care if it is your wife. I don't care if it is your closest childhood friend. I don't care if it is your beloved son, who just came back from Harvard with a Ph. D. in philosophy. If anyone urges you to believe something contrary to Christ, ... don't believe him. Don't yield to him. Don't listen to him. Don't worry at all of the broken relationship that might result, because he is seeking to pull you away from Christ." Moses continues ...

Deuteronomy 13:12-18

"If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Moses is saying, "If you hear of an entire city being seduced in the error of one man, ... Destroy he who lives in the city. Destroy all who live in the city. Destroy all of the livestock. Destroy all remembrances of that city, because they have followed after the influence of this rebellious man." I can hear Paul say, "I don't care how many people are believing those things. I don't care what the church across the city is doing. I don't care how fast they are growing. If they are advocating a doctrine that isn't according to Christ, ... let them be. Leave them alone. Don't give them another thought, because they may pull you away into their own deception."

To our modern ears, such a description might sound a bit harsh. But, it is how God views defection from Him. It is a serious crime. My illustrations this morning of soldiers being kidnapped, or people being brainwashed are intended to bring out the seriousness of being led astray by any philosophy that betrays the cross of Christ. It is only the kindness and patience of God that withholds his instant judgment upon those who are being held captive (Rom. 2:4).

This is constant danger of the church and those who are in it. We are under constant temptation to lose the centrality of the cross of Christ. From all sides, we will always be pulled away from the simple, saving message of the gospel of Christ. Other things will threaten to unseat the primacy of Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our church. Satan is alive and well and will use any means at his disposal to seduce us away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, ...

2 Corinthians 11:2-4

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully."

There is a simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ that we must maintain. We need to stay focused upon Jesus, the God man, who lived among us, and died as a substitution for our sin. This is of first importance, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). This is of greatest importance, "that Christ died for our sins." Our hearts and our lives ought to reflect a simple minded trust in that saving message.

My sins, O the bliss of this glorious thought,
My sins, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul. [\[2\]](#)

Satan will do everything in his power to move us away from this simplicity. And if you are ever led astray, Paul tells us that it is as if you were kidnapped. I love the way in which D. A. Carson puts forth the danger and brings it into a modern day context. In his excellent book entitled, "The Cross and Christian Ministry," he writes, ...

Western evangelicalism tends to run through cycles of fads. At the moment [in 1993, when the book was written], books are pouring off the presses telling us how to plan for success, how 'vision' consists in clearly articulated "ministry goals," how the knowledge of detailed profiles of our communities constitutes the key to successful outreach. I am not for a moment suggesting that there is nothing to be learned from such studies. But after a while one may perhaps be excused for marveling how many churches were planted by Paul and Whitefield and Wesley and Stanway and Judson without enjoying these advantages. Of course all of us need to understand the people to whom we minister, and all of us can benefit from small doses of such literature. But massive doses sooner or later dilute the gospel. Ever so subtly, we start to think that success more critically depends on thoughtful sociological analysis than on the gospel; Barna becomes more important than the Bible. We depend on plans, programs, vision statements—but somewhere along the way we have succumbed to the temptation to displace the foolishness of the cross with the wisdom of strategic planning. Again, I insist, my position is not a thinly veiled plea for obscurantism, for seat-of-the-pants ministry that plans nothing. Rather, I fear that the cross, without ever being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight. Whenever the periphery is in danger of displacing the center, we are not far removed from idolatry. [\[3\]](#)

Whenever the cross of Christ is displaced from the center of our lives, trouble is brewing. This was Paul's point: "Don't be Taken Captive" to anything that will displace Christ from the center of your life and thoughts and theology. All of our life and theology needs to be "according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

In verses 9 and 10, Paul will give us three reasons why we ought not to be taken captive by any teaching that is contrary to Christ. These are so simple and so straight forward that we can breeze through them in our final moments this morning.

Why should I not be taken captive?

1. Because Jesus has all Deity (verse 9).

Notice the very first word of verse 9. It begins with the word, "For." It's an indication of the purpose of verse 9. Verse 9 is an explanation to verse 8. Why should we not be taken captive? Because "in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

This has reference to the incarnation, when "the word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). When Jesus walked upon the earth, He was full Deity. He was "Immanuel." He was "God with us." We know much about this, because we celebrate this fact every December at Christmas time. Paul already mentioned this in chapter 1, verse 19, "it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him."

At this point, we don't need to plunge ourselves into the glorious mysteries of the incarnation. Rather, we ought to think about Paul's logic. He said that the reason why we shouldn't be taken captive to empty philosophies is because Jesus is fully God. It might take you a moment to think about how this follows. How is it that the Deity of Jesus Christ relates to being seduced away by another philosophy? I believe that Paul is simply getting at the point that nobody can top Jesus. To have the fullness of Deity dwelling in Him means that He is the best of the best. There is nothing more to seek. There is no creature that can top Jesus. There is no deed that can top what Jesus has done. There is no angel that has the power of Jesus. Jesus is the greatest. You don't need to seek anything else.

Let me attempt to illustrate this. Suppose that somebody give you an authentic Cellini Rolex watch, valued at \$7,000. It is hand crafted and plated in pure gold. You love the way it looks and the way it functions. It keeps excellent time. It's practically indestructible. It's a gorgeous piece of jewelry. And now, imagine that you happen to be walking in the Cherry Valley Mall. As you walk by a jewelry store, the guy behind the counter shouts out to you, "Hey, buddy, come here." Startled, you stop and enter the store to see what he wants. He says, "Can I interest you with a new watch today?" Then, he pulls out a watch to show you. He says, "This is a custom-printed Timex watch. It's valued at \$200. But, today, for you, I give it to you for \$75 with a trade-in of the one on your wrist."

What kind of reaction might you have? I suspect that you would tell him, "Are you crazy?" The watch on your wrist is worth far more than what he is seeking to sell you. Furthermore, you are well-satisfied with your watch. The deal doesn't make sense. You would quickly ignore the jeweler as crazy and leave his store.

This is Paul's logic. Since Jesus is fully God in the flesh, there is no other substitute for Him that will ever compare or be worth your while. I don't care what any other philosophy or philosopher might have to offer, it's always going to be less than what you have in Christ. He is the Sovereign Creator of the universe. I believe that this is why Paul described Jesus as he did in chapter 1:15-20. It was to help them understand that there is nobody and nothing greater than Him.

Why should I not be taken captive?

2. Because Jesus has all Sufficiency (verse 10a)

Look at the first half of verse 10, "and in Him you have been made complete." Some of your translations may read differently here. The NIV reads, "you have been given fullness in Christ." The ESV reads, "you have been filled in him." These translations are more literal than the New American Standard (and King James Versions), which interpret this to mean that, "In Him you have been made complete."

The idea here is that in Christ, you have been filled up. In fact, you have been filled up so high that you can't be filled up any higher. In this way, "you have been made complete in Him." Paul's point is one of sufficiency. "Jesus has all Sufficiency" And this is a reason why you shouldn't be taken captive. Because in Jesus, you have everything that you need. You don't need anything more.

Picture yourself in a restaurant. You have your glass of water sitting on the table. Along comes your waiter and fills up your glass. You know how high they fill it. Sometimes, they fill it to overflowing, and spills over onto your table. Sometimes, it seems as if the water level is so high that it might spill out, over the glass, as only the surface tension of the water is keeping it in the glass. Now, suppose that your waiter has been gone for a few minutes and comes back with another pitcher of water. Furthermore, suppose that you haven't touched your glass of water, but he says to you, "Would you like some more water?" You look at your cup and it's full. You look back at your waiter as if he's crazy. Of course you don't want any water. Your cup is full. You don't need any more. In fact, you can't have any more water, because your glass is already overflowing. That's the picture that Paul is giving us here.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, He fills you up with everything that you need. There is nothing more that can fit into your glass, not even a drop. You are complete in Him. Do you need anything else?

But sadly, people will come around and seek to offer you something other than Christ. They have some religious experience for you, that will make you a "full Christian." They have some book for you to read that will unlock for you the secrets to the Bible and spirituality. They have some new technique of praying that will help you pray the right words to help you. In so doing, they are seeking to take you captive to their own philosophy to some other tradition, "rather than according to Christ."

What you need is not some new experience or extra knowledge or special technique. What you need is a fresh reminder that you are entirely sufficient in Christ. Your cup is full to overflowing. Believe it and live! Believe the song we love to sing!

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there

Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me. [4]

We love to sing it because it gives us a great reminder of the reality that we are complete in Christ. We need nothing else. We simply need to believe it. So don't be taken captive to anything else.

Why should I not be taken captive?
3. Because Jesus has all Authority (verse 10b)

I get this from the last half of verse 10. "And He is the head over all rule and authority." You name a ruler or a king or an angelic warrior, and I'll tell you whose authority is higher than their authority. Whether it is Alexander the Great, who ruled the entire known world, or whether it is the president of the United States of America; whether it is Michael the arch-angel, or whether it is the highest ranking demon, Jesus Christ has authority over them all.

Imagine with me (if you will), that you took a plane trip this afternoon, headed for Washington D. C. You spent the night in a hotel and early Monday morning, you arrived at the White House and called upon Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. And now imagine that you began to tell her what she should do in her role as Secretary of State when she travels next week to Lebanon to seek to seek the peace in the Middle East. Imagine that you tell her who to talk to and what deals she ought to make and what threats to make. What would she be thinking? She would think that you are crazy. She doesn't work for you. She works for the President of the United States. She takes her marching orders from the President and from his advisors. She doesn't take any orders from you. You are a nobody.

That's the same argument that Paul uses here. Don't be taken captive by any other philosophy or teaching, because Jesus has authority over any other teacher or authority or spiritual being. Nobody's authority can compare with the authority of Jesus Christ. Why would you be led captive by any other philosophy?

And so, I ask you, church body, will anything dethrone the all-sufficient centrality of Jesus Christ in your life? He has all Deity. He has all Sufficiency. He has all Authority. My exhortation comes straight to you: Don't Be Taken Captive!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 23, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] David's cry in Psalm 122:6 is very appropriate for us at this time: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you."

[2] Horatio Spafford, "It Is Well with My Soul."

[3] D. A. Carson, The Cross and Christian Ministry, pp. 25-26.

[4] Charitie Bancroft, "Before the Throne of God Above."