

## The 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost Colossians 2:6-15

It's always interesting to try to reconstruct from Paul's letters what exactly he was speaking out against. In the Colossians' case there seems to have been a faction of people who had adopted some questionable practices and beliefs that they were trying to incorporate into the life of the church at Colassae. Behaviors that included circumcision, and the observation of some pagan festivals as well as there was also the expectation that these early Christians should follow certain dietary guidelines.

I think I read somewhere that Fat-free and low-Carb diets got their start Colassae.

Perhaps the most questionable behavior that Paul spoke out against in his letter to Colossians had to do with those "being taken captive through philosophy and empty deceit." The "philosophy" that Paul speaks about had to do with a cultural belief that angels or principalities somehow in the cosmos controlled human destiny. In addition, it was believed that these angels or principalities served as intermediaries between God and human beings. Before humans could gain access to God these celestial intermediaries needed in some way to be placated through worship. Therefore attempting to infiltrate the church at Colassae was an almost cult like worship of angels.

St. Paul labeled these beliefs and behaviors as deceitful and "according to human tradition... and not according to Christ."

How many of you have been to a doctor and have had that doctor suggest some sort of lifestyle change? Perhaps the doctor suggests that its time that you quit smoking or maybe you've put on a few extra pounds and the doctor thinks that would be a good idea to lose a little weight. Maybe your cholesterol levels came back a little high and the doctor recommends some sort of regimen that includes a low fat diet and exercise. Or perhaps you've sustained a knee or ankle injury and the doctor tells you that if you would like to be able to walk- pain free you should probably give up running.

St. Paul, like a doctor, suggests to some of the Colossians that they engage in a lifestyle change. St. Paul writes "So live in him." (Him being Christ) "So live in **Him**, rooted and built up in **Him**, and established in the faith just as you were taught."

Paul doesn't finish here either; he doesn't just suggest a lifestyle change, look at his watch, realize that his times up and walk out of the room. Paul tells his patients, the Colossians, the benefits of that a lifestyle change. The benefits of living a life rooted in Christ.

Paul writes, "IN Him, (In Jesus) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily and you have come to fullness of life in him..."

Eugene Peterson in the Message paraphrases it this way "Everything of God is expressed in Him, so you can see him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything."

The Greek word **plhro,w** is the word that is translated into fullness and is the word that St. Paul uses to help develop his thesis that the fullness of life is found only in a life lived rooted in Christ. **plhro,w** also can mean “to fill up,” “to overflow” or “to complete.” So a life lived rooted in Christ then is a life that is complete or is life of overflowing abundance. And a life lived rooted in the world or in the case of some of the Colossians a life lived that was rooted in the worship of angels then is a life that is somehow incomplete.

St. Augustine was a man who knew of this incompleteness, brought up Catholic, Augustine slipped away from the faith as a teenager. At 17, he took a concubine with whom he lived with for the next 15 years and who bore him a son. After leaving her, Augustine would then become betrothed to a twelve year old girl.

Much of Augustine’s early adult life was spent trying to figure it spiritually. As Augustine got older he would try out a few of the popular religions of the day only to find them lacking. At the age of 32, Augustine had a conversion experience.

While sitting in his garden one day he heard the voice of a child playing nearby and singing a song, the child’s song went “Pick it up and read it. Pick it up and read it.” At first, he thought the song a simple child’s game, but then Augustine thought that perhaps it was a command from God to pick up the bible and read it. Quickly Augustine located a bible, opened it and read the first passage he saw. This is what it he read.

*Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.* --Romans 13:13-14

And in that moment, Augustine writes that he felt his heart flooded and he decided to live a life rooted in Christ. Augustine would later become a bishop and prominent theologian from whom we can trace the doctrines of “just war” and “original sin.”

Augustine would later write about his restlessness and the restlessness of all souls saying

“Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is not quiet until it rests in Thee.” Perhaps a modern translation might go like this “You, God have created for us yourself and our heart is not quiet until it rests in you.”

So live in Him and in our lives lived with Christ our hearts will find rest and souls will find the completion that they so desperately desire. Remembering that a life lived in Christ is a lifestyle in which we will be immersed in the grace and glory of God. AMEN