

I. Introduction

- A. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)
- B. Beware lest anyone cheat you [hijack you] through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men [secularism], according to the basic principles of the world [demonism], and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)
- C. This summer, we've been in a series called Grace Powered Living. The goal is to get God's grace deep down into our souls... so it's more than a concept... it's an actual power and force in our lives. Today is part seven in our series.
- D. The goal is that we would find inner health. That means emotional health, spiritual health, mental health, psychological health, as much as we possibly can through the word of God.
- E. Not much has changed in the 2,000 years since St. Paul wrote these words. God is the same God. People possess the same fallen nature. And this world in which we all live is a giant pain machine.
- F. In this Bible verse we are given a warning. It says beware.
 - 1. The warning is so that no one can cheat you. Actually the Greek word here conveys the idea of being taken captive. Almost like being hijacked. Swept away. No longer your own person.
 - 2. Really think about this. What does it mean to be cheated? What does it mean to be taken captive or hijacked, in this verse? He's not using it literally is if somebody's going to break into your house and kidnap you. He's using it figuratively.
 - 3. He saying that there is a very real possibility in a Christian's life.
 - 4. That possibility is that you will be emotionally or mentally taken captive. That you will emotionally or mentally not really be your own person. You will be captivated, hypnotized, a victim of a kind of mind control.
 - a) You will not know true freedom.
 - b) You will not experience the power of self-determination.
 - c) You will not rise up to your God-given identity and power in Christ.
 - 5. That is exactly what is implied at the beginning of this verse... And this verse is a warning to Christians.
- G. This is the opposite of grace powered living. It is lie-powered living. It is flesh-powered living.
- H. This is the opposite of inner health. This is an outside force seducing the child of God away from the reality and purpose and abundance and joy that is in Christ Jesus.
- I. And what is that outside force? Who is the hijacker?
- J. Paul names the hijacker as "Philosophy and empty deceit."
 - 1. So many people today, so much of our culture, and even some Christians have been held hostage for years – and some for a lifetime – by wrong philosophy, wrong teaching, and false doctrine.
 - 2. This is not only confusing intellectually, it is extremely damaging emotionally.
 - 3. It's positively painful.
- K. So I invite you to think with me today on the topic of...
 - 1. **Seven Toxic Philosophies That will Hijack Your Soul.**
 - a) **Postmodernism | collectivism | relativism | depersonalization | humanism | universalism | pluralism**
 - b) They seem good. They seem kind and caring, the people who teach them usually mean well. But at the end of the day, these philosophies create pain, and hurt, and they damage the human soul.

II. Seven Toxic Philosophies (4 today and 3 next time)

A. **POSTMODERNISM | Truth as a social construct**

- 1. When the Soviet union collapsed under the combined leadership of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II, who hailed from Poland, the first nation to push back against the Soviet bloc was Poland. Half of the people in this room are old enough to remember this history.
- 2. When Poland was pushing back against communism, people made signs and wore **T-shirts that** had powerful statement on them.
- 3. The statement said let Poland be Poland. And then it said 2+2 must always equal four.
- 4. Interesting statement don't you think? I'm sure many of you know where this is coming from. It comes from novel 1984 by George Orwell. A torturer is insisting that two plus two equals five if he says it does.
 - a) "Sometimes, Winston. [Sometimes it is four fingers.] Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once."
- 5. We shake our heads at this, and we say how can any thinking person be so ridiculously divorced from reality. But this is postmodernism. This is the view that makes all truth fluid. This is the view that makes 2+2 equal whatever the tyrants of society wanted to be.
- 6. Truth is a social construct. Truth is what society says it is, and each society can say it is something different. This toxic fruit punch the gigantic victory of postmodernism.
- 7. And don't think this is just an abstract concept.
- 8. There is a movement right now in the state of Oregon to eliminate the teaching of mathematics from public schools. The reason is because in math it's always a matter of right or wrong. The numbers add up or they don't. There are no shades of gray. You got it right or you got it wrong.
- 9. And because it is so binary, mathematics is seen as, and I'm not making this up, an artifact of oppressive, Western imperialism.
- 10. As Christians we see in the Word of God a very different concept of truth. In fact in the Word of God, truth is reality, and reality is true. What was true yesterday is still true today and is going to be true tomorrow. What is true in America is true in Africa and is true in Asia and everywhere else also.

11. In other words society does not get to bend or shape or create or define truth. Reality defines truth. And for Christians, that ultimate reality is God himself.
12. One truth never contradicts another truth, because God isn't absurd and he doesn't create absurdities. Truth is a God construct, not a social construct.
13. Your truth, and my truth, are always have to give way to true truth which is God's truth.
14. And what makes my head explode when we have postmodern errors about truth infiltrating the church. When pulpits set aside the Bible and preach opinions, emotion, feelings, encounters, experiences, signs and wonders. Beware. Your soul is being hijacked.
 - a) *"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24)*
15. What is truth? Truth is reality.
 - a) **Biblical View. Truth is reality as God creates it, experiences it, and reveals it.**
16. Some things are true. Some things are false. And nobody gets to vote on it.

B. COLLECTIVISM | Society as a collective

1. I have always been a bit of a Trekkie. Live long and prosper. No I don't have any Star Trek costumes, or Vulcan ears. But I always enjoyed the shows.
2. One of the mottos that comes out of Star Trek says this.
 - a) **"The needs of the many outweighs the needs of the one."**
3. That sounds really good, but it really needs to be evaluated. There's something good here, and there's something actually dangerous here.
4. The good thing is that there is a spirit that is anti-selfish here. We should not be concerned only with ourselves, but with our neighbors and our brothers and or sisters too. So that's the good part.
5. But the bad part is that collectivism always throws the burden of taking care of our neighbors onto the shoulders of government.
 - a) Question: when a government official spends money to help someone, whose money are they spending? Answer your money and mine.
 - b) Second question: if you are spending somebody else's money, does that make you compassionate? Answer no. If you want to be compassionate, open your own wallet and give. Government run collectivism is forced compassion at the point of a gun.
6. Spock's statement is a philosophy called utilitarianism, which is foundational to collectivism, and they both crush the soul. There is only one place where collectivism could ever work, even hypothetically, and it will not happen even there.
7. The one place where collectivism could conceivably work is in a society where no human had any trace of sin in their hearts whatsoever. No greed. No selfishness. No laziness. No jealousy. No sin at all. Absolutely pure and innocent in heart.
 - a) Where does that take place. In heaven. In heaven do we have collectivism? No. We have a monarchy. King Jesus, right?
 - b) But perfected humanity is the only place where Socialism, Marxism, communism, or any collectivism could ever work.
 - c) Why?
 - d) Because for collectivism to work, everybody has to share not only the fruits of labor, but also the act of labor, *equally*.
 - (1) And as long as there is any laziness or selfishness or greed or sneakiness or bullying in any human heart, that will never happen. It is a fools' dream. It is humanly impossible.
 - e) Collectivism — when enforced by people in power — always turns into totalitarianism, which means that a handful of powerful people tell everybody else what to do, AND these powerful people get an unfair share of the fruits of other people's labor. This they do at the point of a gun. There is no other way.
 - f) This is why the framers of the US Constitution fought so hard to never let any person or group concentrate that much power in their own hands. They knew that the only people who could occupy political office were sinners, and they constructed a governmental system to limit their power.
8. If the good of the many really did outweigh the needs of the one, then this verse would never be in the Bible.
 - a) *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? (Luke 15:4)*
9. Jesus thought that the good of the one was important too. And as good as collectivism might sound on paper it is the most murderous and destructive force ever seen in the human race. It's ironic because Star Trek also envisioned the ultimate collective, and they called it **The Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile.**
 - a) We are talking about Grace Powered living, and about God's wisdom for human emotions.
 - b) I visited a communist country before the Soviet Union fell. It was so depressing. I have talked to people who grew up under communism. I know some of them.
 - c) They all say the same thing. Any form of collective power is devastating to the human spirit and soul. It robs people of joy. It robs people of motivation and energy. It destroys families. It breaks hearts. It steals the color out of life and makes everything shades of gray. Collectivism fast tracks demonic infiltration into whole cultures.
 - (1) Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense.

C. RELATIVISM | Morality as a matter of preference

1. Sometimes, I feel caught in a doubly schizoid culture. We're sharply split over moral values: I have some friends who tag gay marriage evil and others who tag opposition to gay marriage evil. Some say abortion is evil; others say opposition to it is evil. Our culture is divided over moral issues ranging from woke-ism, to global warming, to eating meat, with passionate advocates and detractors on both sides. We are morally polarized. That's the first part of our schizoid culture.

2. But it gets worse.
3. Many of my same friends, who get so ticked off at opponents to their moral causes, also deny the existence of moral absolutes. "It's wrong to judge people," they say. "There are no absolutes. There is no objective basis that helps us determine right and wrong." Don't cast stones.
4. But that raises a question: If you don't believe in absolutes, on what basis can you judge me for judging your disbelief of absolutes?
5. Once we divorce morality from God—or some other Ultimate Authority—all we can do is shout at each other. If you played pick-up sports as a kid, you understand what I mean. You kick the ball past an invisible line, and your friend calls you out of bounds. But, since you and your friend never agreed where the invisible line was to begin with, you get into a shouting match. "No way! The line is by the trash cans, not the bushes!"
 - a) Witness: the ongoing debates over abortion, embryonic stem cell research, Covid vaccines, and sexuality, with both sides shouting at each other because they never agreed where the lines were drawn to begin with.
6. Relativism adopts an "anything goes" approach to morality. "It's not my place to judge."
 - a) *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.* (Judges 21:25)
7. Maintaining this approach, however, is tougher than it sounds. Because as soon as some kleptomaniac heists your laptop from the coffee shop, you're going to cry "Foul!" And that will land you right back in the moral absolutist camp.
8. It's like shouting, "There are no lines!" and "You crossed a line!" in the same breath.
9. If you're going to argue that "evil is just a point of view" don't come crying to the authorities when a bully steals your lunch money.
10. Once you fire God from his job as Moral Linesman, you're going to have a hard time replacing him. Everyone wants to draw his or her own lines.
11. That's what's happening in Western Civilization today. Our moral playing field looks like it was drawn by a class of blindfolded six year olds, hopped up on sugar cubes. When postmodernism erased intellectual absolutes, it erased moral absolutes too. When we shoved biblical values out the back door, good and evil sauntered through the front door and got married.
 - a) Woe to those who call good evil and evil good.
12. No Christian who believes the Bible can possibly believe in moral relativism. Because the Bible clearly communicates an absolute standard for morality, for right and wrong, and for righteousness.
13. This standard is God himself. He is infinite holiness. Infinite righteousness. Infinite goodness. And an infinite judge of every deviation from his moral purity.
14. God's laws are not arbitrary. God's laws flow from God's nature. God's laws are God's laws because God's heart is God's heart.
 - a) The core is the Ten Commandments.
 - b) The restatement is the Sermon on the Mount.
 - c) The summary is the Golden Rule:
 - (1) *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Galatians 5:14)
15. And what this means for us today, is that any philosophy that denies God's moral boundaries, can only produce pain. Any transgression of God's moral boundaries is by definition a violation of love.
 - a) Do you want love in your marriage? Obey God's laws. Do you want love for your children as a parent? Obey God's laws. Do you want to harm relationships? Disobey God's laws. It's that simple.
 - b) I have to add that Jesus and Scripture are very clear that we cannot obey God's laws in our own power. You must be born again, and you must live a life in which Christ himself, by his own power, lives through you.
 - c) This alone is Grace powered living. And this alone is grace powered holiness.
16. No one can break God's laws. We can only break ourselves against God's laws. And this is exactly what we see playing out in our culture today.
17. It's heartbreaking levels of... Brokenness. Desperation. Despair. And Fear.

D. DEPERSONALIZATION | Sexuality as divorced from biology, but not really...

1. In one of his parables, Jesus compares his people to a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:46). He gave up everything he had to purchase you, by his blood, for himself.
2. To God you are precious. To God you are priceless. God cherishes you and he values you far beyond your wildest dreams.
3. God looks far beyond all the surface stuff of your life, and he sees the real you. He sees the authentic, genuine, glorious, person that he made you to be.
4. In the parable, the pearl was buried on a piece of property. The pearl was buried in dirt. And Jesus bought the property, and he bought the dirt, to dig you out of it, to clean you up, and to make you shine.
5. Of all of the aspects of your personality, and identity, and emotional health... the one that is the most sensitive to your sense of worth and to your sense of personal integrity and safety is sexuality.
6. The Bible has a lot to say about sexual behavior because God cares a lot for your value and worth. You are his pearl of great price, and you are not meant to hold your personhood cheaply.
7. Every sexual act that the Bible rules out of bounds, is out of bounds because God knows that action is depersonalizing.
 - a) It turns you from a person into an it.
 - b) It turns you from a person into an object for someone's pleasure.
8. Follow the logic:
 - a) People are sinners, and therefore people will hurt each other.
 - b) This applies sexually, so some kinds of sexual energy can be dangerous to your emotional health.

- c) Therefore God limits sexual activity to one single and hopefully safe marital relationship that grows deeper over time because of an its unbreakable commitment.
- 9. Does it always work this way? No. We're sinners. So we do stuff that God calls out of bounds.
- 10. And one hundred percent of the time, the result is always the same:
 - a) A wound.
- 11. And the result of that is a soul-less sex life, and an ever deepening wound of the human spirit.
- 12. Our kids are being taught a philosophy that says sex means having a physical relationship without emotional attachment.
 - a) So it is biological in that sense.
- 13. But it's impossible to enter into a physical relationship without an emotional attachment. Well, actually, it is possible, but only if you numb your emotions.
- 14. That's not just some preacher saying this.
 - a) Researcher Donna Freitas, after interviewing hundreds of students, concluded that the hookup culture "creates a drastic divide between physical intimacy and emotional intimacy." It teaches young people not to "reckon with someone's personhood." [Pearcey, Nancy. Love Thy Body (p. 118)]
- 15. Depersonalization.
 - a) It is depersonalizing to give your body to a stranger.
 - b) It is depersonalizing to divorce your emotions from your sexuality.
 - c) It is depersonalizing to consider "getting to know a person" a burden, so we'll just rush straight to sex.
 - d) It is depersonalizing to separate biology from sexuality.
 - e) It is depersonalizing to separate emotions from sexuality.
 - f) It is depersonalizing to turn a boy into a girl or a girl into a boy. Your personhood is male, or your personhood is female.
 - g) It is depersonalizing for an adult to exploit a child.
 - h) It is depersonalizing to wire your brain and body for porn.
 - i) It is depersonalizing to insist that a person with same sex preferences is frozen that way.
 - (1) These are all expressions of a soul that has been wounded. A trauma that has been inflicted. A wound that needs to be healed, and can be healed by the redemptive power of Jesus Christ and his grace.
 - (2) But our culture is normalizing brokenness, and trapping people in their pain.
 - (3) I don't call that love, and I don't call that freedom.
- 16. *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.* (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- 17. Sex involves our bodies down the level of biochemistry, and sex involves our soul right down the core of our being.
- 18. Today's sexual revolution tears apart the body from the person, and the person from our own value, preciousness, and truth.
- 19. Sexual sin is such a big thing because it is such a powerful way of hijacking a person's spirit.
- 20. The good news is that there can be recovery. There is redemption and sexual healing through the cross of Christ.
- 21. There are steps toward wholeness.
- 22. There is a God who loves you and forgives you and cleanses you and heals your deepest wounds.
- 23. You can be delivered. You can be set free. You can rise above the lies our culture is spewing at us.
- E. *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.* (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)

III. Next Time

- A. HUMANISM | Religion as a cultural preference
- B. UNIVERSALISM | Hell as a relic of the past
- C. PLURALISM | Christ as one option among many