

A STUDY OF THE PRISON EPISTLES

RADARGOLF

Are you terrible at golf? Do you constantly lose balls? No joke, for \$500 (not including shipping) you can buy a system that includes microchipped golf balls and a device that allows you to home-in on your lost balls. Personally, before I spent \$500, I would consider the age-old proverb, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Then quit. There's no point in being a darn fool about it."

I don't want to slam RADARGOLF too hard, I've spent lots of time bashing weeds looking for lost balls. However, this system fits into a class of sports-gadgetry that seems completely useless. There's nothing like the sense of accomplishment like finding the ball that ricocheted off a tree, landed about 30 yards from anything you could have anticipated, and rolled into an abandoned gopher hole.

The Colossian church dealt with far worse than unnecessary sports gadgets. False teachers arose and started leading church-men and women away from the truth of the gospel. Like any good infomercial, this "new" teaching solved problems of their own inventions. Paul wanted to warn them and us, "Don't fall for it. It ain't worth it."

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

⁶Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸Be careful not to allow anyone to captivate you through an empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority. ¹¹In him you also were circumcised—not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but by the removal of the fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ. ¹²Having been buried with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead. ¹³And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he nevertheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions. ¹⁴He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Who is Jesus and what has he done for us? Paul's letters from prison spend a lot of time answering that question. It's like the closer to death he came, the more important it was that Christ be magnified. Very little matters outside of helping people understand the answer to that question.

Sometime this week, scan the QR code, and hear from Dr. Tim Keller as he dives into what it means to be "born again." When we understand this, we are free indeed.



DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you felt completely unhindered or free.

1. How did Paul want the Colossian believers to continue? (6-7)

2. What truths about Christ did Paul emphasize? (9-11)

3. What did Jesus do for believers and against the opposition? (13-15)

4. How might a believer be taken "captive" as described? (8)

5. What evidence would support the idea that you live your life relying...

On God's power?

On your own power?

In what ways do I live inconsistent to the gospel? This is a hard question because we may not like the answer. If you want to grow, however, ask someone this question who knows you really well. We all have room to grow. Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER
OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

STUDY NOTES

INVISIBLE CHAINS

As soon as a baby elephant can walk, trainers clamp a metal clasp to its ankle. That clasp connects by a heavy chain to a stake driven deep into the ground. The elephant knows there's more to life than their tiny circle of confinement. It fights, cries, and struggles to break free. For two weeks this baby elephant will bloody its ankle trying to escape. Finally, frustrated and defeated, the elephant gives up knowing it can *never* break free.

10 years later that baby elephant has grown into a 6,000+ pound monster designed to uproot trees. It could easily break almost any chain or confinement. Yet, unbelievably, a small rope around its ankle, tied just tight enough to feel, holds the elephant still. The massive adult beast continues submitting to the limitations it knew as a baby.

When Christians return to sin, we return to the limitations we knew before a relationship with Christ. In today's passage, Paul addresses the invisible chain that often holds us back.

UNITY WITH GOD SETS BELIEVERS FREE

Many people describe the first feeling after salvation as being set free. However, it doesn't take long to give in to the lure of sin. Paul warns, ***just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.*** The Colossians were disciples— ***rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.***

Although the Colossians began on the journey the right way, things soon changed. False teachers arrived and lead some astray. That's why Paul warned, ***Be careful not to allow anyone to captivate you through an empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*** Consider Paul's warning to flee the captivity of philosophy rooted in human tradition and the world. Every single word is a term packed with meaning. It all boils down to the fact that if it's of this world, it's not of Christ.

You will face this if you haven't already. False teachers aren't dark-robed old men with crooked noses and warts. False teachers are friends and family. They're celebrities and the news. They're all-over social media, in movies and books, and on the radio. Empty philosophy isn't just found in textbooks. It's found in the advice we receive from people who aren't pushing to be like Christ. Many of the false

teachers around us love us. They want what they think is best for us, but outside of Christ their opinions and advice have no eternal significance. It sounds good and feels good, but it's not according to Christ. God does not ask us to leave our brain at the door—we aren't afraid of questions because truth is on our side.

GOD SETS BELIEVERS FREE FROM MAN'S WISDOM

Anything not according to Christ only leads to bondage. Paul described that ***the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.*** This line is important because it refutes a special brand of false teaching. However, consider that in Christ is the "fullness." Those false teachers taught that the Colossians were missing something—there was something they didn't know to be saved. Paul says, "Huh-uh." The fullness is in Christ.

Do we really believe that? Do we really trust that we ***have been filled in him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.*** Any time we seek fullness in anything apart from Christ—sexual gratification, alcohol or drugs, prideful recognition, etc.—our actions tell us the truth, that Christ isn't enough for us.

Christ ***has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness.*** This certificate was a legal form used in the ancient world held by slave-owners. It showed a person as "indebted" to them and held until the slave was set free. Christ has done that for us. Our certificates have been ***taken away by nailing it to the cross.***

What lies are you tempted to believe? Constantly, we hear lies about identity, biblical manhood & womanhood, marriage & family, and material success. If you watch late night infomercials, they will show you problems you didn't even know you had. They say their product will either make you sexier, wealthier, or happier in some way. Don't believe it!

All the lies we hear and believe restrain us like the invisible chain. We're beat down and berated by these messages of health, wealth, and happiness as the goal of life. Every person chasing these things has a bruised and bloodied ankle from a clasp they can't see. They feel a weight on their shoulders and an emptiness inside. They seek a fullness they don't even understand because they're a slave to their master, sin.

Do not be deceived. ***Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*** In Christ, you're a 6,000-pound chain-breaker. It's time to kick the rope loose.