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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Col. 2:8-15
Title of sermon: **What's Driving You?**
Series: Against the Tide - #6

Colossians 2:8-15 NIV:

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. **9** For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, **10** and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. **11** In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, **12** having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. **13** When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **14** having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. **15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to the Book of Colossians, and we are going to be in Chapter 2 today. A number of years ago -- it was 1981, I think, was the exact date -- before our state got a little weird -- we had a cult. And we were kind of known. It put us on the map, to be honest with you. So, if you've been around for a while, you remember the Rajneeshees, don't you? They were kind of known for their Rolls-Royces, I think, and -- I was younger at the time. 1981, out of college -- or, in college, and -- so, the Bhagwan Shree had gathered all of these people over in Central Eastern Oregon at Antelope, I think was the name. And I remember reading a lot about it, and it never made sense to me, quite honestly. It was like -- why would these college-educated people give up everything, wear these rather bizarre red jumpers, and then literally turn all of their assets over to this guy? And at the time, I just -- I didn't understand it. And we had, you know, the stories of Jamestown, and a score of other different cults, and I would read about them, but it honestly just never made sense to me.

Until -- when Kari and I moved into the inner city, we exchanged cults for gangs. And we lived in an area where there were certain bandannas and certain colors that you didn't wear -- not if you wanted to live. Not in our neighborhood, anyway. And so, I got to know these folks, and they were my neighbors, and it was a safe neighborhood, to be quite honest with you. My neighborhood was really safe. We hardly even locked our doors. Why? Because my neighbors went to the other neighborhood to steal. Because it was just better stuff. We were in a pretty safe area. But I got to know gang members. We lived around them. They were our neighbors, and -- I'm not going to say friends, but certainly over the years, as we were there 16 years, we -- I began to understand why at 14 does a kid pledge his life through blood to be a member of a gang. Why at 17 does a kid take another life to be accepted into a gang? And I just used the term that I discovered. Why do these people do this? Why do people cash in all of their money and their Social Security cards and their checks that come every month, and put it under the authority of somebody else? Why does a 14-year-old kid give up all freedom to join a gang? Because God put within every person a longing. You know what it is? It's the longing to belong. It's not a weakness, it's not a sickness. It's a reality. God put us there. Why? Because He said, in the beginning, God created us male and female, and He made us in His image, and what image was that? The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And the three, the triune God belonged to each other, and He created us, and He made us for that very purpose -- to belong to each other. And that yearning inside of us is so deep and so strong that it would take college-educated individuals, and they would cash in everything to be accepted by the Bhagwan. 17-year-olds would take a life so that they would have brothers. 21-year-olds would do the unthinkable because they were protecting their brothers. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not

justifying and rationalizing and supporting cults and gangs. I'm suggesting that God created within every one of us the deepest longing to belong. The up side of that is that it makes community something that we seek. The down side of it is that we are vulnerable to the wrong communities.

Paul is writing to the church, and he says to them, "See to it that no one takes you captive" -- I'm in Chapter 2, verse 8. "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." Now, why does he have to write that? Why does Paul have to write that? He's writing to a group of believers, he's writing to a group of people who have been enlightened by Christ, and he said the purpose is to make you perfect in Christ, and then he gives him this warning -- "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than upon Christ." And the reason is, because you and I were made for community, and sometimes it's so strong in us, so strong that we can be lured away by something that sounds good and it delivers death.

How do you resist the temptation of false community? How do you resist the temptation of destructive community? Paul says, "I want you to be careful of a life that is void of Christ." It has a number of characteristics. Number one, he says, "It's deceptive. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy." What's deceptive? It's pretty simple. It offers something different than what it delivers. It's a lie. Oh, it promotes something really good. It's like, you come, and you're gonna belong, and you come, and you're gonna be accepted. But that's not what it delivers -- it's hollow. It doesn't follow through on it. It's not something that you can count on. It's an empty deceit, it's an empty lie. And Paul's writing to this group -- and we've talked about it before -- called the Gnostics. And they had this idea of inflating the mind. And it would make people feel good about themselves, like they had received some special power, some unique, amazing ability to overcome struggles in their life. But it didn't live up to it. It wasn't something that sounded horrific. In fact, oftentimes they would use about 98 percent truth to float two percent lie, but that two percent lie was dangerous. Because it altered Christ. It removed Christ. It made them dependent not upon Christ, he says, but upon the hollow traditions of people. Deceptive. Why? Because it offers something that it never delivers. What's it offer? Acceptance, belonging, power, and eternal life. It doesn't deliver that. He says, not only is it deceptive, but it's built upon human traditions. Paul's not against human traditions, my friend. He's not. Except for when they're used to rationalize or justify something that is anti-God. In our day, you just listen to discussions of the constitution. Discussions of pretty much anything. There's a sense of which anything of antiquity is so old-fashioned. Needs to be discarded, reworked, reinterpreted. So there's a sense of which in our culture today, anything of ancient is passe. It's something to be removed. And yet -- do you notice, how many philosophies, even today -- and I'll give you one in just a minute. How many philosophies today utilize the words "banked upon" or "from the long-held practice" or "from the ancient ways"? Paul says whenever they're trying to root something in Orthodox history apart from Christ, beware. Whenever they're trying to root something in the ancient ways apart from Christ, whenever they're trying to go back and root something with words like, "from the ancient ways" or "from the teaching" or "from long-held practice" what are they trying to do? They're trying to legitimize it. And what they're trying to do is to bake something that's new and something that is twisted and something that is altered of Christ and convince you that it's from something of centuries-old wisdom.

What's this life that is void of Christ? It's deceptive, it's built upon human traditions, and Paul says, interestingly enough, it's demonically empowered. That's what he says. "And the basic principles of this world rather than upon Christ." I normally love NIV -- NIV, I'm gonna tell you from that perspective, on that one -- that's probably not a great translation. I don't think the translation kind of picks up on where Paul's going. He's talking about principles that come from human tradition but rely upon demonic power. That's a dangerous combination, my friends. Why? Because demonic

power is real. Other scriptures talk about the basic principles or the elemental spirits. What happens is you can create supernatural events. What happens is they can fabricate things that look like supernatural things that come from God. What happens is that there are certain individuals in a variety of things, be it in cults or be it in philosophies, be it in teachings, that actually are now under the influence of the enemy and have not knowledge of the future -- only God has that. But they actually have supernatural power. And they can fabricate things, and they can do things that make individuals think that for a moment, surely this must be God because the supernatural is happening. Healings are happening. Or, manifestations are happening that somehow capture our attention. And Paul says, "My friends, be careful. The longing to be accepted, the longing to fit in, the longing to have someone like you, is so strong that it can overcome something that is deceptive, something that is built upon tradition, not Christ, and something that is demonically empowered."

Finally, he says, "What does it lead to? Enslavement." That's what he leads with, actually. He says, "See to it that no one takes you captive." What does that mean? It means that it is something that carries you off as a prisoner and leads you with a death grip on your soul. What does it look like? I was scouring through an article from a well-known mystic teacher. She happens to be an international Yoga teacher. Sally Kempton is her name. She's an internationally-known teacher. She makes a statement in one of her articles that she was writing -- "Sin -- most of us long ago have rejected the authoritarian religion with insistence on a darker force that is within us. We are beyond that." Okay? History. Remember the ancient traditions Paul talks about? Listen to her statement -- "Open your lives to the ancient Hindu Warrior Goddess Durga. Open your lives to something that has been helping people for thousands of years." Wow! It's almost like she went to Paul and said, "Hey - help me figure out how to write this!" Yeah. Let us deny the nature of depravity -- and by the way, if one is not a sinner, then surely you don't need a Savior, do you? Oh, but the problem is -- it's duplicit in the way she thinks, because on the one hand she denies sin completely, and yet she suggests that you turn to Durga to overcome those things in your life that are destructive. Those things that entrap you. She finishes this article with this suggestion -- "I plead with you to offer your salutations to her" -- Durga, that is -- "to surrender to her, to worship her, for she will deliver you."

Paul says be careful. Why? The passion to fit in to your mom's group can be so strong that you go to a class and the next thing you know, you've put into your heart and your mind for 15 weeks the teaching of Satan. Be careful, because the passion to fit in, to belong, can be so strong that the book that your neighborhood book club is reading might have walked you down a path not to the enlightenment of Christ, but to the enlightenment of demonic spirits. And oh, they are powerful, and they're destructive. And they can get a grip on you and lead you into prison, and it's a prison that you might never get out of. Paul says be careful. Why? Because the yearning in all of us to belong is so strong that it can make us susceptible.

And so -- what do I counter that with, Paul? Read on. He says, "For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ." What does he say? He says, I want you to thrive. Oh, I do. And he recognizes the deep sense of longing for us to belong, but he gives you that which is real. Number one -- find your acceptance in Christ. That's what he comes back to. What is circumcision? It was the mark of the Jewish male to say "You belong to this tribe. You belong to the Nation of Israel." What does that mean? "You come under the authority of God, you come under the authority of the Nation of Israel. You come into the promises of God. You come into the fulfillment of God." There was so much around circumcision that when you would be circumcised, there would be a rite over that, and they would celebrate that. Because what they were doing is, they were bringing you in to the story of God, that you would enter, and it would not be some individualized story of which God was just solely looking at you. No, quite the contrary. It was you coming into the story of God, His work, His promise for the nation of

Israel. Now, imagine that, my friend, when a parent would circumcise her son. It was like she was baptizing him into the promises and the hope of God. Son, you are forever a Jew. You are forever a child of God. You forever belong. You see, that's what Paul is saying, my friends -- "In Him, you were circumcised, and having been buried with him in baptism, you raised with him through faith and the power of God who raised him from the dead." See, I think one of the deepest things that we as Christians must wrestle with is the fact that we are accepted. What does the enemy want to accuse you every day of? You're rejected by God. You don't measure up. You weren't good enough today. I know what you did last night. You've never told your wife about 19-whatever the year. You've never told your husband, and if you did, he wouldn't -- and all of the accusations that the enemy just keeps reaping and running through your head. What are they all trying to do? Get you to doubt the love and the acceptance of God.

The enemy has one desire, and that is to throw doubt into your heart and mind that God may not in the end love you. Everything that circumcision promised -- acceptance, embrace, inclusion, faith in God's promises, the assurance of God's love, Paul says can be found through faith in Christ that He died. See, Paul says, be careful because if you aren't convinced of your acceptance in Christ you become vulnerable to the acceptance of hollow philosophies. If your listening to the voice of the enemy causes doubt of the Father's love for you, it's in that moment that your heart is susceptible. Why? Because God created you to belong. It's one of your deepest needs. Not sins, needs -- that God delighted in creating. We thrive in the fullness of Christ when we understand and embrace His acceptance. We thrive in the fullness of Christ, Paul says, when we embrace and walk in His forgiveness. Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised to walk in the faith and the power who's raised us from the dead, when you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive, and He forgave us all our sins. Wow.

One of the problems for you who have been in the church all your life, you've heard that over and over and over again, and can I just pause for a moment and ask you -- do you believe that? Do you believe that? Do you believe that Christ has cleansed you and washed away and forgiven all of your past, present and future sins? Do you believe He's released the code? What code? Read on. "Having canceled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it away and nailed it to the cross." He wrote all of your sins, every one of them. And God knows them. And He matched them up against the code and He nailed it to the cross. And written across my name with my sins is "Forgiven." And it was written with the blood of Christ. But can I ask you a question? Do you believe it? Has it touched you?

One of my favorite stories of forgiveness comes from Azusa Pacific. Three students, they were headed to India. And they were at a graduation -- they'd graduated and they were going through the graduation process. And it was such a delightful evening. There were about 50 of them that were being noticed at this gathering together. And these three students, who were leaving Azusa and they were going to India, they got called up, and they had no idea what this was about. They'd just been told that there's going to be a presentation, and they thought it was in relation to their trip, and they were going to India for a year to serve. And they came up, and the first one was read her name, "\$106,000 paid for. You're free from all of your debt of Azusa Pacific." She crumbled in tears. She had no idea it was coming, and she just wept and wept and wept, and the other two, right behind her, they started crying, because they started putting something together! The second one got up, and they read their name, "\$77,000, your debt has been paid. You are free from all obligations to Azusa Pacific." And he began to weep and weep and weep. The third one stood up, and they read her name. And they said, "\$130,000 forgiven." My friends, there were probably 70 people in the room, and there was not one person that was not crying. And when I read the story, I thought, "God, why is it that \$130,000 can bring me to tears when I read that story, and the fact that you have cleansed my sin and made me ready for Heaven sometimes is a yawn?" And I've got to say -- how about you, Oh God, would you please help me understand the glory and the depth of

this gift. And how critical it is that I wake up every morning to the arms of Jesus, not to His scorn, not to His angry face, not to His disappointment, but to His delight and His love and His embrace. "You are my son, I love you, let's have a great day." "But Jesus, what about --" "I don't remember yesterday! I love you. You're forgiven." And in Christ in the fullness of Christ He offers us victory over evil. Verse 15 -- "And having disarmed the powers and the authorities he made a public spectacle of them, and he triumphed over them by the cross."

There's a number of battles that have occurred in the history of humankind. I'm not talking about World War I or World War II, I'm not talking about the Korean War. I'm talking about the first war -- it happened in Heaven. Satan rose up, and he wanted to take God on because he was sick of leading worship in Heaven, and he wanted worship of himself. And he was defeated, and he was sent to Hell. But he wasn't done, because there was going to be another battle. And this battle was in a garden and had two players, and their names were Adam and Eve. But they were really, in some ways, if you will, two pawns to the greater battle that continued between God and Satan. God took a hit that day. He did. Because the prize of His creation defected. And Satan won. There would be another battle. This battle was in a desert. It's almost like what happens to a garden when sin enters into it? It turns to a desert. And this battle was between Jesus and Satan. And he tempted Him, and he offered Him the world -- he did. He offered Him shortcut after shortcut after shortcut, but Christ endured and He overcame, and He won that battle, and He walked out 40 days later. And God won a victory.

And there was another battle. Oh, a lot of skirmishes along the way. There was another huge battle, and it too was in a garden. It lasted all night. It was in prayer as Jesus was facing the cross. And His body was giving way, and His emotions were giving way, and the Father ministered to Him, and they won. And then they went to the cross, and it was the battle of all battles. And it says that the sins of the world -- all of them, yours and mine -- were imparted, placed into, became one with Jesus. And it was so devastating that the Father turned away from Him. Heaven grieved. There was no laughter in Heaven that day. And Hell looked like Mardi Gras. And Satan thought to himself, "I've won." And then Sunday morning, somebody went to the chambers of Hell and told Satan, "You need to get in to the office. Something disastrous has happened." And Satan went and got a first-person look. He couldn't believe it himself. The tomb was empty. And he searched all over and he found Jesus. And Heaven became alive, and Hell -- well, it had a hangover.

Be careful. Because the philosophies of this world apart from Christ -- they sound good, but they deliver enslavement. And in the moment, in a particular battle, it may seem like evil is winning. If you were to go over on the wrong day on the Rajneesh farm, if you were to go over on the wrong day in the gangs where I used to live, if you went there on the wrong day, you would think -- "Evil is winning, and it looks like they've won! What's wrong with this, God?" And on a particular day, it was a Saturday, if you would've looked at the tomb, you wouldn't thought -- "Mardi Gras in Hell is going to last forever." But it doesn't. It didn't. And the only way that you and I experience true acceptance and true forgiveness and true victory is through the fullness of Christ. You were created for that. I was created for that. Don't build your life on anything other than Jesus, because that's the only place that you'll win.

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