*Grace Group Study Guide*

 *Greater* ***>*** *Week 12*

*Colossians 2:8-12*

Two years ago Mandy and I took the plunge into the world of minivans. I spent the better part of my life swearing that I’d never drive another one after I spent a year or so driving one as my first car. But, alas, we purchased one and now I will never again be without one. When we purchased our van, it was already ten years old but the particular model we bought was “loaded”, meaning that it has bells and whistles that we are still figuring out two years later.

Our first road trip in that van was about a 5 hour trek to Georgia to see friends, and it was on that particular trip I learned about some of the features the van had. Apparently, it has sensors that work with the cruise control to automatically put on the brakes if it feels that you are too close to another car. The first time my van put the brakes on itself I was shocked and slightly amused. However, I never really had a need for sensors that automatically brake for me because Mandy is always on the alert and does this thing where if she senses trouble (most of the time it’s at least a ¼ mile down the road) she’ll begin to grab for anything she can get hold of to brace herself. That’s my warning – that’s my cue to put on the brakes.

As we arrive at verse 8 I want you to see that Paul writes in a warning for the Colossian church– it’s subtle, but he says **“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.”** The warning (in case you missed it) happens right in the first three words: “See to it…” Other renderings of this same phrase: "Look out!" "Beware!" "Watch out!" "Take heed!" "Take note!”

All of those phrases call for alertness because they acknowledge the fact that there is a tendency for us to drift towards “traditions of men” and “elementary principles.” Just like there is constantly danger around us on the road while we are driving, there is danger around us in life as we are living. 1 Peter 5:9 gives us another perspective on the danger surrounding us – “8 **Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** I guarantee you that if there was a lion or a cougar running around in your house or back yard, you’d be considering every step you took before you took it.

The key to combating this problem that Paul speaks of is not to go about life with a constantly critical spirit, it’s to go about life with a discerning spirit. Perhaps 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 serves as a model for us in that connection: **“21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.”**

The danger that Paul presents in Col. 2:8 is being “taken captive.” That idea of going into captivity implies that we are currently not in captivity, or rather, we are free. This is a wonderful truth to glory in, especially if you consider all that those who were “under the law” had to do – and they still didn’t have what we have in Christ! Paul says that in Him we have been made complete.

**Discuss**- **Understanding that we have all we need in Christ (including freedom), what does it look like to be discerning so that we won’t be led back into captivity, and to rest in what He has done?**

I had one conversation this week and asked a similar question about resting in Christ and the response was that there was a joy and a peace where there had once been a constant fretting and worrying over certain situations. They also went on to say that in Christ there is “Freedom FROM a ‘have-to-do list,’ freedom from being fearful of what is God going to ‘do to me, now because I’ve messed up?’ Freedom from man-made lists about religion and rules. Only trying to live in the Spirit and walking with the Spirit. I fail, but I can TRUST Him to bring me back (Phil 1:6).”

I had to share that response because it embodies what so many of us have been through in our walk with the Lord. He set us free; we live in freedom for a while, until some fear or anxiety creeps in. Then we go into “what do I need to do?” mode. Then ***we*** start working to remedy the situation. Or we have the checklist of spiritual to-do’s and either think that God is going to bless us more if we follow that list or smite us if we fail to. Or there’s the sin problem – “surely God is going to get tired of forgiving me…what will I do then???”

Remember the lion prowling around? He loves to pounce on those things and once he does, he’ll lead you right back into slavery.

**Discuss- In your group, explain how your union with Christ has set you free. Share a testimony with one another of His faithfulness to you. Here are a few verses that speak about our freedom in Christ- Romans 8:1, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:10, Romans 6:14.**