**Sermon Title: The Priority of Christ Over Persuasive Speech**

**Sermon Text: Colossians 2:4-7**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to build up a barrier of protection against teaching against Christ.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 4 priorities Christians must practice in order to be discerning in light of persuasive speech.**

**Introduction:** Imagine Paul in prison in Ephesus. He is probably malnourished and short of sleep. He may well have suffered horrible illness; he will certainly have been beaten up by guards and perhaps by other prisoners. He feels helpless and alone in the dark and damp, with the smell of rot, excrement, and death all around him. Picture him either scribbling away on a small sheet of papyrus, squinting for lack of light, or else, hearing at least someone whispering through a slot in the door, talking to a visiting colleague and telling him what to put in a letter to one or more of the central Asian churches.

[**N.T. Wright & Michael F. Bird, “The New Testament in Its World.” Pp. 450-451**]

 These letters (which includes Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians) all emphasize the universal sovereignty of Jesus and the call for the churches to model, in their communities, the cosmic reconciliation achieved by God through Jesus Christ.

[**Ibid. p.451**]

 The religious cults of Zeus and Apollos were prominent in the region; evidence from coins shows the continuance of older Phygian religions such as the cult of men Karou.

 Almost one third of the coins found in first-century Colossae feature Artemis. Colosssae’s gods were mostly those associated with human needs related to food, health, pleasure, and nature, so that Colossae was replete with gods that promised to satisfy such needs.

[**Ibid. p.457**]

 Emperor worship (government) was also very prominent. The region exhibits a fusion of Greek culture and Anatolian traditions as well as those of various migrant populations, including Italians and Jews.

[**Ibid. p.457**]

**I. The necessity of the deliberate exhortation. V.4**

**II. The necessity of the delightful endorsement. V.5**

**III. The necessity of the distinct example. V.6**

**IV. The necessity of the dutiful exercise. V.7**

**I. The necessity of the deliberate exhortation. V.4**

 Only full assurance in the knowledge and wisdom of Christ, can help keep a believer from being deceived by find sounding arguments. (Pithanologia) occurs only here in the New Testament, it literally means “persuasive speech” that may use plausible but false arguments. Quote Charles Spurgeon “Discernment is not the ability to discern right from wrong, but right from almost right.”

 Truth and persuasion do not always correlate or match. Error can just as easily be communicated and believed.

 The difference (or question) should be whether one has the full truth, and a complete commitment to the truth. (**1 Corinthians 2:1-6**)

 **Ephesians 4:14-15** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **15** but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ--

 **2 Peter 2:1-3** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. **2** And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. **3** By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

 **2 Peter 3:16-17** as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. **17** You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

**II. The necessity of the delightful endorsement. V.5**

 Because he was a prisoner in Ephesus, Paul was unable to be physically present with the church. This does not mean however, that his love and concern for them was any less.

 **1 Corinthians 5:3-4** For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. **4** In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

 **1 Thessalonians 2:17** But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

 A. He was delighted by how **orderly** the saints were. V.5a

 Paul’s description of the Colossian church pictures a company of well-disciplined soldiers standing at attention in straight lines.

 B. He was delighted in the steadfastness of their **faith** in Jesus Christ. V.5b

 So far under the attack of the false teachers and their teaching with persuasive arguments, the saints were holding their position in Christ, but Paul was concerned that their conduct and commitment might change.

**III. The necessity of the distinct example. V.6**

 Verses 6-7 conclude and refer back to the teaching Paul began in Chapter 1:15.

 A. The divine **exaltation** belongs to Christ. (**1:15-20**)

 B. The divine reconciliation is found in Christ. (**1:21-23**)

 C. The divine **revelation** is found in Christ. (**1:24-27**)

 D. The divine perfection is found in Christ. (**1:28-29**)

 E. The divine knowledge and wisdom is found in Christ. (**2:1-5**)

 F. The divine **walk** is found in Christ. V.6

**IV. The necessity of the dutiful exercise. V.7**

 As a result of the previous 3 points, the saints should continue to live in Him and for Him. The Christian life continues as it began.

 **2 Corinthians 11:4** For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted-- you may well put up with it!

 **Galatians 1:6** I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

 **1 John 1:6-7** If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

 **1 John 2:6** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

 **Philippians 3:16-18** Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. **17** Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. **18** For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

 A. The dutiful exercise of being **rooted** in Christ. V.7a

 The saint stands firmly rooted as a tree.

 B. The dutiful exercise of being **built** up in Christ. V.7b

 The Christian is being built like a building.

 C. The dutiful exercise of being **established**. V.7c

 The believer is becoming increasingly stable in the faith.

 **Ephesians 4:14** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

 D. The dutiful exercise of being **taught**. V.7d

 **Philippians 4:7-9** and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things. **9** The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

 E. The dutiful exercise of being **thankful**. V.7e

 **Philippians 4:4-6** Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. **6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;