

Paul calls for us to walk in Christ. And that means that we think like him. That means that we act like him. That means that we talk like him. It means that we're like him in everything. And the way that that happens, Christians, is by applying the things that we have learned, the things that we have been taught. As Paul himself says here: "As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." So when we focus on what we've been taught, what we've learned about God's Word, and put that into action in our lives, then we will walk in the Lord.

But Christians, when we have other things that come into our minds, other teachings, other thoughts that are not from God, that can lead us astray. That can lead us to walk down the wrong paths. Paul calls it being "deluded by plausible arguments," listening to things which sound good, which sound reasonable, which you probably even think are right, but ultimately lead us away from God, because they lead us down a path that God does not want us to go.

And that's exactly what the Colossians are struggling with here in our reading. As we've heard several times going through this series, the Colossians have been listening to false teachers. Men who were telling them things which sound good, which sound probably even Christian, but are ultimately leading them down the wrong way, because they are not from God. And you can tell that because of the way that they are acting towards one another. They're beginning to look down on one another. They're beginning to fight and to squabble with each other. And that's the fruits of this way of thinking. Because when our thoughts are not shaped by Christ, when we are not following after the things that we have been taught, then we're going to go a different way, a way that leads us away from God. And so Paul calls for the Colossians, then, to pay attention, to listen to what Jesus has taught them. Because then they will know the way of life and the way of truth.

And Christians, we too can become ensnared by these plausible arguments, by things which come from the world and lead us away from God. Even if they sound right, even if they sound good, even if they sound Christian, because they don't come from God, they can lead us to turn away from him. And that can happen in a couple of different ways. That could happen by someone making an argument, coming up to us as a false teacher and trying to convince us of the truth of something. And if we listen to them, if we listen to that false teaching and get that false idea in our minds, that we will be led away from God.

But Christians, I think it's much more common for us to have these things happen almost subtly, almost without our noticing it. Because we live in a time and a culture that is absolutely saturated with the media, the media which comes to us in lots of different ways. It comes to us through television, for example. Maybe you're watching TV, and you'll hear however many commercials during an hour. It comes to us through our smart phones, by which we can access the Internet wherever we go to find out information that we might want. It comes to us through our computers, when we try to find anything from the Internet in that way. It comes to us through the radio. It comes to us through any number of means of the media. And all of these different things are bringing to us messages, arguments if you will. In fact, it's so common, and we can't get away from it so much, that it's even at the gas station. When you go to fill up your gas, there's that little TV that plays on the gas pump, right? And if you wanted it to be quiet, you aren't going

to get it, because it's got to keep giving you that message over and over and over again. We can't get away from it. It's around us in every single place.

And so because it's surrounding us, and because we can't get away from it, these messages might begin to influence us in ways that we may not even be aware of. Let me use a personal example, so that you see what I mean here. I was on YouTube the other day looking for a video to watch. I don't remember what it was. That's not really the important thing. But as I was getting ready to watch this video, I clicked on it, and the way that YouTube always does, it brings up a couple of ads to play before the video that you want to watch. That's just the way it goes. You can't get away from it. In fact it was one of those videos that I couldn't even skip, so I was forced to just watch it at least for a few seconds. But this one caught my eye, because the first thing that it did was that it played this very sentimental, kind of emotional, kind of music, the kind of music that makes you think that it's sad, that something serious is about to be said. Because music can influence us in that way. And then the people who began to talk on this advertisement were talking about all of the things that they were suffering, all the rejection they had gone through, all the hatred they had endured. It was all a very emotional kind of argument, like you should feel bad for us because of the things that we've had to endure. This ad, of course, since it is June, was talking about homosexuality and transgenderism and all of those things that the media wants to push especially during this month. And the basic message that it wanted to present us--to present me, at least--was that we should accept these things because haven't these people suffered so much? Isn't this actually something we should just accept and say that it is right, because that would be a very fulfilling kind of thing to do? That's the kind of argument that it was making, this very emotional kind of appeal to not listen to what God has to say about these things, but to accept them because that's what the world thinks is right.

Now, I know you also have seen this happen, at least during this past month especially. Because how many of the major corporations, for example, changed their logos to represent their celebration of this month? So it's not even a verbal argument that they're making. They're just presenting this to you as if it was the most normal, natural thing in the world. And if we're not paying attention to that, it can catch us off guard. We even see it happening with something more subtle. Perhaps the ad that they're presenting to us just shows these things without even talking about it, without even drawing attention to it. And in that way, they say, "This is normal. This is natural. You should just accept this for what it is." That's how these things work, Christians. By presenting these kinds of arguments over and over and over and over again, incessantly, without end, they want us to simply accept it as being something quite normal.

But the danger of this kind of argument is not in any one particular thing. It's not in that one particular ad that we see this problem. It's not in any one particular ad. Rather, the danger comes from the fact that it is constant, the fact that it is always there, that it is something that you can't get away from. And that's by design. That's intentional. That's what they're trying to do. After all, that's how advertisements work, isn't it? Advertisements don't work by presenting something to you once, and that convinces you to say, "Okay, I guess that was right." An advertisement works by coming to you again and again and again. If you're watching television, for example, you might see the same commercial six times in an hour. That's intentional. Because by putting it before you over and over and over again, you just sort of start to accept it for what it is. It becomes something normal, something natural, so you don't even have to think about it. You get

it ingrained into your memory just by the fact that you've seen it so much. You could call it a kind of catechesis. By showing you this again and again, they're telling you, "This is what is right. This is what is true."

But maybe you would say, "But ads don't work on me! I can resist their influence. I don't have to think about it, because I can just skip it. I can just ignore it. And then they won't have any change on the way that I think about something." But Christians, let me ask you this. If I were to say "Just Do It," what would you think of? Of course, you think of Nike. That's become ingrained into your memory. Or if I were to say, "It melts in your mouth, but not in your hand," what would you think of? M&Ms, of course. That's also been ingrained into your memory. Or even something like, "I'm loving it," which, of course, is McDonald's slogan. All of these things have become part of our memory, so that we don't even have to think about them to make the association. But I guarantee you that you didn't study them. You didn't sit down at your breakfast table one morning and say, "I guess I'm going to study all of these slogans so that I know what goes to what." It's the fact that you've been exposed to them over and over and over again that has put them into your memory, so you think of them just like that. And Christians, if they can do that with slogans, do you really think that all of these other things are not going to influence us either? If they can use those simple things to stick into our heads, what makes you think that we're always going to be able to resist those other messages, those other arguments that they're trying to present? That's what makes these things dangerous, Christians, to have them before us day in and day out, so that when we're not paying attention, when we're not listening, they become ingrained into our minds.

So what do we do, then? How do we resist this kind of influence? How do we resist being "deluded by plausible arguments?" Christians, you do it, first of all, by thinking biblically about everything. Thinking what it is that this is trying to say, and then asking yourself, "What does God have to say about this? What does God have to say about this situation or this thing which the media is trying to present to me?" Because when we think of it in that way, we can resist the influence which these things have over us. And to do that, of course, we should also be in God's Word, because only then will we know what it is that God actually says to us. And we should also spend time in prayer and spend time in worship, just as we're doing this evening. Because all of these things teach us and show us what is the will of God. Maybe we also should just spend some time away from these other things. Turn off the TV for a while or put down the smart phone for a little bit, and spend more time in the Word. Because then we can resist the influence of the world around us.

But above all Christians, we should listen to Jesus, listen to our Good Shepherd who speaks to us, who brings us his mighty, living Word. Because Jesus is the one in whom is all truth. Jesus is the one in whom is all life. Jesus is the one in whom is all knowledge and wisdom, because Jesus is our Savior. And when we listen to his voice in everything, then we will not be deluded by plausible arguments. We will not be influenced by the world. But we will follow after our Lord in everything. So listen to him, Christians. Listen to his voice, because he is the one who speaks the words of truth and life.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have given us your Son, Jesus Christ, to bring to us the words of truth and life. We pray that you would teach us always to trust in him, knowing that he will guide us into all truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.