**Progressive Theology Three things:**

Progressive political ideas/Progressive ideology

Progressive thinking

Progressive theology

**Progressive politics:**

The politics of the left wing in the United States (and Europe and Canada)

This is the political wing that favors unions, minorities, the poor, and also intellectual liberals.

They support social programs, minority rights, immigrants, and liberal attitudes on social issues such as sexual freedom, abortion, gender issues and more.

**Progressive thinking/philosophy**

This relates all the way back to secular humanism.

The idea that people are getting better and better.

Anything which is older is, almost by definition, worse. Accepts new technologies easily, opposes old-fashioned ideas such as monarchy or “conservative” morality. Especially opposes the idea of authority, which includes religious authority.

Strongly aligns itself with postmodern thinking which denies the existence of absolute moral truth.

Very individualistic. “Spiritual,” but not tied down to any authority.

These are things out there in the world which will certainly influence us—especially our young people, but to some extent, the “bad” parts of this can be kept outside of the church. But what about progressive theology?

**Progressive theology:**

This is the idea that Christianity needs to make progress.

It is the idea, in Christianity, that the Bible just possibly might be outdated.

For example, things the apostles said to the church in the first century is entirely context-based and needs to be reinterpreted in a modern context.

Progressive theology, in general, undermines the authority of the Bible and even, to some extent undermines the authority of God, as it assumes that humans are getting better and better.

It reads “discoveries” by humans back into the Scripture.

Some have called Paul a misogynist and a supporter of “the patriarchy.”

Some have completely denied the biblical idea of gender roles, and even of gender entirely!

God is not a misogynist and neither is the Bible!!!

Progressive theology says that the Bible is ambiguous, and is very skeptical of absolute, propositional truth.

First of all, let us please not turn progressive into a negative word. Progress is good. Progress is something that all of us want to be part of.

But “progress” in Christianity is a bit of a fraught word.

I, the Lord do not change. Malachi 3:6

God does not make progress.

When he made humans male and female he did not make a mistake, to be corrected in the future.

But some kinds of “progress” are good, including in Christianity.

Even as Christians we have progressed in ending slavery, providing for greater personal rights and freedoms, including for the economically disadvantaged.

We have promoted the rights and dignity of women.

This is by comparison to the Christian church of several centuries ago, and even of several decades ago.

In the age of postmodernism, “progressive” has become associated with a few concepts, some of which are good and others of which are not.

1. Humanism mixed with postmodernism tells us that humans have made so much progress that we do not need such ancient and outdated documents as the Bible.

Either that, or the Bible needs to be seriously reinterpreted—deconstructed.

Progressive theology:

Postmodernism has combined with New Age religion to produce the idea that progress means moving away from such outdated ideas as Authoritative, absolute truth and moral absolutes

There is no truth, but only a narrative. Truth must be deconstructed.

This is a huge topic. 30 minutes???!!!!

Let’s talk about Colossians

Theme of Colossians: The supremacy of Christ. The all-sufficiency of Christ.

It is about Christ vs the philosophies of the world.

The Colossians have been captured by a philosophy which involves the stoichaea – ABCs—the fundamental ways of the world in 2:20-23.

In our day, this might include a political philosophy or a cause other than that of the kingdom.

It might also include progressive thinking and its influence on progressive theology.

Colossians 2:6-15

In Colossians Paul is talking about the great value of being in Christ. Our value comes from being in Christ, not from anything the world can give to us.

Col 1:14 We have redemption and forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Col 2:7-8 We live our lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him

Col 2:10 In Christ you have been brought to fullness.

Col 2:11 In him you were also circumcised… having been buried with him in baptism

v. 8 Let no one take you captive to hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental forces (stoicheia) of this world rather than Christ.

Elemental forces - στοιχεῖα - stoicheia –

stoixeíon– properly, fundamentals, like with the basic components of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) "first principles," like the basic fundamentals of Christianity. ABCs

What would make this philosophy that Paul was concerned about so deceptive? It combined elements of different ideas that were prevalent and accepted in the ancient culture: asceticism, mysticism, mystery religion, Jewish tradition, Gnosticism.

What would be our stoicheia today?

1. Prosperity gospel

2. American dream

3. Comfort/materialism/entertainment/leisure

4. Personal security

5. Being a good person

6. Universal salvation

7. Moral relativism

8. Postmodernism—the death of absolute truth

9. Republicanism/social conservative politics.

10. Democratism/progressive politics.

These philosophies can kidnap our faith and drag us away.

The Colossians were being warned against the smooth talking spiritual tricksters. They used many fine sounding arguments, combining philosophy, self-discipline and religious practices. These theories about God were being discussed and taught constantly at the pagan and Jewish school in the Greek cities of the time.

This is why we have to be students of God’s Word and be watchful or we too will fall prey to the deceitful philosophies, moral relativism and worldly ideas of “progress” that pervade our culture. Our faith must be focused on Christ. He is the fullness of God in bodily form.

All these alternate teaching are hollow and useless. Would you go back to learning and reciting your ABCs after you are already a fluent reader?

V10 You do not need anything else but Christ. Since you are in Christ, you have the fullness of God in you! (John 1:16, Gal 3:27)

V11-12 How do you come to be in Christ? Baptism (Rom 6:1-4, Gal 3:26-27, Acts 2:36-38, 1 Pet 3:21)

v. 11 We are circumcised in Christ, not in physical circumcision.

We are moral beings in Christ, not through moral actions.

We become moral by cutting off the flesh in and through baptism, not by acting morally. This is why Christians enforcing our moral ideals on the world through political action is a questionable use of our time and energy.

We are socially just people in Christ, not through social justice causes.

We help God to bring social justice to the world primarily (but definitely not only) by bring people to Christ. It is in Christ that real social justice is found.

V13-15 “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness”

canceled - ἐξαλείψας - exaleipsas

Jesus covered, blotted out our sin, and then cancelled the debt by nailing it to the cross. (Bruce, p. 109)

V15 Jesus publicly nailed that blotted out debt certificate to the cross to show all the hostile powers (whether human or spiritual beings) that they were vanquished and no longer had power over God’s ransomed people.

Jesus made a spectacle of the worldly powers—showing them to be powerless against him, and, therefore, powerless against us as well. They are “powerless tyrants.”

The stoichaea are disarmed and powerless in light of the kingdom of God.

So we, as disciples, do not turn to or rely on any such worldly powers.

We do not accept worldly ideas about gender roles, who is saved, etc.

There is not, nor can there be a “Christian” political party or partisan effort of any kind. We can ally with certain causes, but we cannot give our loyalty to any group, and that includes our country.

That includes both conservative and progressive political ideas.

As disciples, we obviously value all human life, but our means toward that is through bringing people into the kingdom and bringing the kingdom to the lost, not through political action or through the courts. The same for homosexuality or other immoral behaviors. We do not defeat the demons of darkness through changing laws, but through allowing God to change hearts one at a time.

Our weapons are not the weapons of the world.

We do not use the politics of power.

Michael Burns Escaping the Beast: “When we yoke ourselves with one of the philosophies of the present age, we lose the ability to distinguish ourselves from the world, and the prophetic voice is silenced, as we are shouted down by those within our own ranks who accuse us of being what they actually are, which is partisan and beholden to the world.”

Those who rely on the stoichaea and not Christ have lost connection with Christ, who is all-sufficient for the growth of the church.

Our righteousness is in Christ, not any earthly political or other cause.

I want to recommend to you Michael Burns’ book Escaping the Beast from IPI

And

Daren Overstreat’s Wildfire: How Progressive Theology is Impacting the Church