

COLOSSIANS 2

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Colossians chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

In our last study, back in Colossians chapter 1, we saw Paul lay out ***THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST***, and he made three powerful points. We saw,

The preeminence of Christ in Creation – Colossians 1:15-18.

The preeminence of Christ in Redemption – Colossians 1:19-23.

And, finally, ***the preeminence of Christ in the Church – Colossians 1:24-29.***

In other words, Paul lays down the fact that Jesus is God and because He is God He rules and reigns supremely over all!

Why was that important?

Keep in mind that one of the reasons that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae was to correct some problems that had come into the church.

This heresy, for the most part, was Gnosticism. Yes, there was some mixture of Greek philosophy and Jewish legalism, but as you read this letter and you see what Paul is saying, it is very clear that he is speaking against Gnosticism that had crept into this church, maybe only some five years old. And being that young, easy to get false teaching into the church!

And here in Colossians chapter 2 Paul is going to speak on the preeminence of Christ over philosophy, legalism, mysticism and asceticism or self-restraint.

Now how does Paul deal with these false teachings, these heresy's that have come into the church?

He wants them, and us, to know the truth!

Remember what Jesus said in John 8:31-32, **“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”**

Also, Paul wrote in I Timothy 4:16, **“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”**

I can’t stress this enough. The greatest weapon we have against error is truth and it is the truths of God found in the Word of God, opened up to us by the Spirit of God!

Think about it. If you want to dispel darkness you turn on the lights. If you want to expose false doctrine, just turn on the light of God’s Word!

Now we can break down these verses here in Colossians chapter 2 like this.

His preeminence over empty philosophies – Colossians 2:1-10.

His preeminence over religious legalism – Colossians 2:11-17.

His preeminence over man-made spirituality or mysticism – Colossians 2:18-19.

His preeminence over asceticism or a life of denying everything – Colossians 2:20-23.

And as we will see, the bottom line is that we are sufficient in Christ and nothing else. You see, nothing else will draw you closer to the Lord but they will push you farther away from the Lord!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Colossians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

COLOSSIANS 2

VERSES 1-3

Remember that Paul never visited this city there in Colosse, but the church was probably established on Paul's third missionary journey as he spent three years in Ephesus at that time and in Acts 19:10 we are told, “**. . . that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**”

Thus, Paul never met most of the people from this church and yet he loved them dearly.

Listen again to what he wrote here, “**For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and as for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.**” Colossians 2:1.

Interestingly enough, the word “**conflict**” in the Greek is AGON, (ag-one') in which we get our English word “*agonize*” from.

That is the heart of a shepherd, his love for people, his desire to see them grow in the Lord, to mature in the faith.

Now what was Paul concerned about?

He was concerned that they might be *discouraged* and thus, easy prey for the Devil to mess with their emotions and their thoughts.

So Paul prays that they would be *encouraged*!

Paul was concerned that they may allow *disunity* to grow within the body there in Colosse and so he prays for *unity* that is not forced but one that is based in the AGAPE love of Jesus Christ!

Paul was concerned that they *lacked godly understanding* and because of that they did not have full assurance of their salvation and so Paul prays that they would *understand the things of God* having a full assurance of their salvation, and of all that God has for them.

What a great prayer!

Barclay tells us of this word, “encouraged” as he wrote, “The word he uses is *paraklein*. Sometimes that word means to *comfort*, sometimes to *exhort*, but always at the back of it there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and gallantry.”

In other words, Paul wanted these Christians to be fit for heroic action.

Also, Paul speaks of wanting them to have “**full assurance**” and that word literally means, “to be under full sail.”

In other words, he wants them to move along in their relationship with the Lord, to obtain all the riches that God has for them in Christ!

This word is used three times in the New Testament, and it is connected to three different concepts. They are,

WE HAVE FULL ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION – and that is done as we rest upon God’s Word. (Hebrews 10:22)

WE HAVE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING – we know and are assured of this. (Colossians 2:2)

And, ***WE HAVE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE*** – we press on with confidence that God will see us through. (Hebrews 6:11)

As one writer put it, “The more they entered into an *understanding* of the Christian faith, the more fully convinced they would be of its truthfulness. And the more firmly grounded the Christians were in the faith; the less would be the danger of their being led away by the false teachings of the day.” How true that is.

Now, here in Colossians 2:3, Paul wrote, “**in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**”

Again, in knowing who Paul is coming against, the Gnostics, those who were holding onto superior knowledge over everyone else, he blows them out of the water!

You see, these religious groups, the Gnostics, the legalists, those who were into mysticism, were looking for wisdom and knowledge in all the wrong places!

Remember that wisdom is the proper application of truth and knowledge is truth. But they had the wrong information which lead them to wrong behavior!

Again, listen to what Barclay wrote regarding this wisdom being hidden in Christ. He uses the ancient Greek word *apokruphos*, and Barclay said, “His very use of that word is a blow aimed at the Gnostics . . . Gnostics believed that a great mass of elaborate knowledge was necessary for salvation. That knowledge they set down in their books which they called *apokruphos* because they were barred to the ordinary man.”

And yet Paul tells them here that real wisdom was not in some secret books, or some secret words, but it is in Christ and all believers can access it!

So Christians don’t need to go looking for spiritual wisdom and understanding anywhere else, they already have it all in Christ and in the knowledge of His Word!

Let me show you what I mean.

Maybe you heard of the story of William Randolph Hearst, a very rich man to say the least.

One day he was looking through a book of famous artwork and one of the paintings caught his eye. He wanted that painting and he told his aides to go and find it and buy it for him.

They made some inquiries and they could not find it anywhere and they reported back to Mr. Hearst that information.

He told them, "If you value your jobs, do whatever it takes to find that treasure, and secure it for me immediately."

Three and a half months later they returned to Mr. Hearst and he said, "Did you find the treasure?"

"Yes," they replied. "After much searching and painstaking research, we found it."

"Did you purchase it?" he asked.

"No," they said.

Hearst, a little bewildered by their statement asked, "Why not?"

They responded back, "Because we found it in your warehouse."

He already possessed that which he wanted, and he didn't even know it!

Folks, we already possess the wisdom and knowledge of God to get through any of life's situations, no matter how difficult they may be. We have the Word of God and the Spirit of God!

All the wisdom and knowledge we need for life is in Christ and is ours so why go looking elsewhere?

Alexander Maclaren made these comments regarding this truth. He wrote,

In Christ, as in a great storehouse, lie all the riches of spiritual wisdom, the massive ingots [blocks] of solid gold which when coined into creeds and doctrines are the wealth of the Church. All which we can know concerning God and man, concerning sin and righteousness and duty, concerning another life, is in Him who is the home and deep mine where truth is stored . . . The central fact of the universe and the perfect encyclopedia of all moral and spiritual truth is Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Lamb slain, the ascended King.

- R. Kent Hughes, Colossians and Philemon – The Supremacy of Christ, p. 55

May we truly understand that and not be taken in by those who say they are more knowledgeable than anyone else.

And let me say this. When someone says that they found the answer, they have some wisdom that no one has heard before, beware! As I have said, if it is new it is not true and if it is true, it is not new! May we not forget that!

Paul is going to warn us as we read on about people who come to you and try to persuade you with their words. Be careful!

VERSE 4

In Colosse, what was going on was these false teachers with their false doctrine told them that they could find wisdom and knowledge apart from the simplicity of Jesus. And make no mistake about it, they used very “**persuasive words**” and the reason they did was to “**deceive**” them!

I have seen this with the Hebrew Roots movement as they get people hooked with the lure of some hidden or deep wisdom and knowledge. It is a strong lure for people, and I have seen this with other false teaching that some are trying to bring into the church, as well as the cults! It appeals to our pride, we know more than anyone else!

You have the Jehovah Witnesses who say God speaks to the Watch Tower and these people relay the message to the common people.

You have those that are saying we are god.

We have new revelations of God.

We have additions to the Word of God.

We have clarifications to what God really meant to say.

You see, these deceptions are not by those that are agnostic or believe that you can't know God, nor is it from Atheists who believe there is no God, but by religious people who use big words, big ideas to justify their position.

Listen to what Peter tells us in II 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. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 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.”**

Peter tells us that there will be many people who will set their sails and be blown away with these false doctrines spoken by these false teachers. They will use **“deceptive words”** and again, it is to deceive people and the reason that they are going to be deceived is given to us farther down in II Peter chapter 2.

Listen to what Peter tells us in II Peter 2:17-18, **“These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.”**

Their deception is empty, there is nothing to it and the reason people are drawn to these things is because of pride! Notice, **“they allure through the lusts of the flesh.”** They are enticing you, telling you if you want to be smart, then listen to what I am saying. That is so wrong, listen to God and not to man!

Back here in Colossians, the word that Paul uses for **“deceive”** in the Greek, literally means, “to come alongside and lead astray by false reasoning.”

So, with these fancy words, persuasive words, they deceive people!

Make no mistake about it, false teachers are like pied pipers who use great swelling words of emptiness to cause people to follow them.

Also, there is always some ***“new thing”*** blowing through the church, some new wind of doctrine that captivates and carries away Christians who are shallow in their faith because they have not taken the time to sink their spiritual roots deep into the Word of God.

And here is the solution. If we have the wisdom and knowledge of God in our lives, then these false prophets won’t sway us!

VERSES 5-7

Remember that Paul never went to Colosse, but he gets word on how they are doing, the steadfastness of their faith and how things are in good order!

But Paul does not want them to become complacent, so he encourages them to continue on, not to let these heresy's get a foothold in their life and mess up their walk with Jesus, and not to let it get into the church!

And here is the problem for some. These believers in Colosse were saved by grace through faith in Jesus, a relationship that began in the Spirit of God working in their lives.

But now, what began in the Spirit they were going to try to perfect in the flesh, which will never happen.

Thus, Paul tells them to get back to where it all started with Jesus, don't complicate the relationship!

And Paul's choice of words is interesting because both the words, "**order**" and "**steadfastness**" are military terms.

First of all, the word "**order**" describes each soldier being in his proper place, arranged in ranks you might say!

Then, the word "**steadfastness**" pictures these soldiers in battle formation, they are ready for any enemy that is going to try and get past them!

So the picture here is that of an army that is solidly united against the enemy!

They were united and ready to fight against these false teachers and teachings that were coming into the church, they were not going to allow it!

And I like the way that Paul puts it in Colossians 2:6, it is so simple, and people make it so complicated. He wrote, "**As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.**"

In other words, you were saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and thus, continue on and walk accordingly!

And that phrase, “**walk in Him**” speaks of our daily lives, that as we move throughout our day, He guides our lives.

He also says that we are “**rooted**” in Him, which speaks of our life source. You see, we receive our spiritual nourishment from Him and as we do, fruit will be seen in our lives.

And lastly, we are “**built up in Him**” or we are maturing in Him each and every day.

Thus, take these truths you have been taught, having a solid foundation, and don’t be led astray by these false teachers. Continue to grow into the image of Christ with a heart of thanksgiving!

Peter put it this way in II Peter 3:17-18, “**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; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

Think of this like this, because these Gnostic teachers wanted to introduce some “*new truths*” so that they could mature in Christ, and yet, Paul condemns that logic and tells them, “*You started with simple faith in Jesus now you need to continue walking with Jesus by faith every day.*”

Again, do you see the simplicity and yet, so many want to make it so complicated that if you don’t have their book, or their specific Bible, or this or that, you can’t be saved, or you will not mature.

We have Jesus, we have His Word and we have the Spirit of God and that is exactly what we need to grow in the Lord!

Before we get to the next verse here in Colossians chapter 2, let me share this with you regarding deception and how easily we can be fooled. We are told,

We do not have to live very long to know that it is easy to fool people, and that it is very easy to be fooled ourselves.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, the great preacher and writer, used to illustrate this by telling of a practical joke which he and his teenaged friends played on some unsuspecting passersby in a large city.

His group stood on a busy street corner and stared intently into the air. One of them pointed, while another said (loudly enough to be overheard), “It is not.”

A third friend argued, “It is so!”

At this, one or two people stopped and began to look up in the same direction as Barnhouse and his friends.

As the argument grew more heated, others stopped to gaze fixedly at the point his group discussed. Then, one by one, Barnhouse and his friends quietly slipped out of the crowd and gathered a few yards away to watch the results.

By this time, some fifteen people were looking into the air. The crowd changed as new passersby came along and joined the group and those who had been staring longest left.

Twenty minutes later several people were still looking upward. Several others had gone off to the side and were leaning against a building, looking up for something that was not there and never had been.

About his childhood trick, Barnhouse observed:

That little incident is a good illustration of all the earth-born religions. People talk about having faith; they tell you to look in a direction where there is absolutely nothing. Some people are so desperately in need of seeing something that they will look till they are almost blind, yet they never catch a glimpse of anything real.

His point is so true. Over my years of ministry, I have seen those who were once perfectly healthy Christians set their sight on and their faith in something which was absolutely nothing!

I have seen vibrant Christian young women don floor-length dresses and wear bonnets, all because a “leader” said this was the path to true godliness.

I have seen intelligent, college-age men refuse to wear shirts or trousers made of mixed fibers because the Old Testament forbade Israelites to wear clothing that was part wool and part linen (Deuteronomy 22:11). Eventually some of these were led off into a cult. . . .

It is possible for seemingly healthy believers to be led astray. It happens every day!

- R. Kent Hughes, Colossians and Philemon – The Supremacy of Christ, p. 67-68

That is what Paul is going to warn them about next, be careful!

VERSE 8

Please understand that Paul is not saying to the believers in Colosse, “Here is something you may want to think about, if you really want, but do whatever you want!”

Are you kidding me! This is a very stern warning by Paul to the believers in Colosse to be aware, to pay attention because the world's philosophies are deceptive and they want to take you away from Christ, they will rip you off!

The Greek word for “**philosophy**” is PHILOSOPHIA, (fil-os-of-ee'-ah) and it comes from two Greek words; PHILEO, which means, “to love” and SOPHIA, which means, “wisdom.”

So the word means the love of wisdom! Now there is nothing wrong with wisdom, godly wisdom, but that is not what Paul is warning them here about!

The wisdom that is in view here is the wisdom of man and listen carefully to what James has to say about earthly wisdom, “**This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**” James 3:15-16.

James goes on to speak of a wisdom that is from above, godly wisdom and what that is like, “**But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**” James 3:17-18.

You see, one is earthly and sensual, it is demonic!

The other is pure, peaceable, it is gentle, it is willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, it is without hypocrisy and partiality! It is from God!

And this is what I have seen, really what James has said.

When people get into these things, these false teachings, they isolate themselves from others because they are either told to or they really can't defend what they believe. They become self-seeking and it is about their doctrine that they are now holding on to and they become condemning towards others who don't hold their view! And in the end, they leave a lot of confusion and evil behind!

And let me make this perfectly clear. You cannot find truth regarding life apart from Christ!

And please notice what these false teachers with their false doctrine are doing.

First Paul says that they are trying to "cheat you: or kidnap you, ***"carry you away like the spoils of battle."***

Please understand that they are not trying to win converts from the streets, but they come into the churches to kidnap believers to their side!

Again, this is prevalent today as we see people turn from the simple truths of faith in Christ and they go after things that sound so deep, so profound, and are very exclusive and as they go after these things, they are being kidnapped by these lies!

Not only are they trying to cheat you, but they are giving you **"empty deceit."**

This Greek word is used some nineteen times in the New Testament and it always describes the work of the Devil. His natural language is lies, so why would we expect anything less!

And again, that is what James was saying, that human wisdom, philosophy is ***DEMONIC!***

And the bottom line is this, as Francis Schaeffer said, ***"Any philosophy that starts with man will never get you to God."***

I know, some of you disagree with me, but hear me out.

Look at the philosophies of the world over the years and how they change, how they contradict each other.

Do they sometimes get it right?

Yes, that is possible but why grope for answers to life's problems, to life's questions when God has the answer for you.

Os Guinness put it this way in regard to the futile effort of man and his search for the truths of life.

This is what he wrote,

Contemporary man, with his self-drawn picture of society as the "closed room" with No Exit, is caught metaphysically and sociologically. In the darkness of the room evidently without windows, perhaps without doors, he gropes round and round the edges. Can one hope that someone will dare to wonder whether there is any light other than the feeble sparks of his own making? Or will he stubbornly persist in treading the barren circle of poor premises?

- Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, p. 148

And these traditions of men are just that, traditions and not of God. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and there was a lot of traditions that we just did, and many times, we didn't even know why.

What God has given to us in His Word is what we need to apply, those are the traditions we need to follow and not the traditions of men!

Thus, false teaching is according to the basic principles of the world, elementary knowledge like the ABC's and not according to Christ.

In fact, Paul put it this way in Colossians 2:20, **“Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.”**

Don’t become a prisoner to the basic principles of this world because we have died to those things in Christ!

Over the last twenty plus years we have seen psychology come crashing into the church and the church has embraced this. Again, worldly wisdom, that is not from above, but is sensual, demonic!

Now, here’s the thing. If your car is broken down, you don’t get out your Bible, but you take it to a mechanic, or you get a book on auto repair.

If you hurt your leg, sprained your ankle you may go to the doctor or read up on what you can do for it in a medical book.

That doesn’t mean we can’t pray that God would fix the car or heal the ankle, but most of the time we must get it fixed.

The Bible is not a book on science even though when it speaks of scientific things it is 100% correct.

Now, if you have a problem with your heart and soul, what do you do?

You go to a therapist, a psychologist, you get books on how to overcome and-so-on, right?

Wrong!

Like I have said, that is what the church is doing today but it is not what we should be doing.

When you have a problem with your heart and soul you bring it to Jesus, you get into the Word of God because the Word of God deals with life's issues; with us, with our fellow man, and with God.

The world's philosophies won't help you here, but they will hurt you!

Let me show you what I mean. Listen to what Ray Stedman wrote regarding this.

Human knowledge, then, is a rudimentary, elementary, and basic to the fallen nature of this world. It stays on the periphery of truth, never getting to the real heart of spiritual reality. That is why our nation's university community, its entertainment community, its information and news community, and its political establishment have become so saturated with those who profess the highest levels of human knowledge yet who are filled with vileness, corruption, immorality, lawlessness, drug abuse, suicide, and every evidence of moral decay and spiritual deterioration.

Today, all of these institutions in our society are permeated – if not dominated – by a philosophy called *deconstructionism*, a worldly philosophy that teaches that words have no objective content, and therefore words have no truth.

Today's liberal theology has become deeply infected with the disease of deconstructionism, and it fosters two very destructive beliefs.

First, if truth cannot be assigned to words, then we can make words mean anything we want them to. We no longer have to be concerned with objective truth, with true truth. Each of us can invent our own truth, our own reality. I can lie and call it truth if it gets me what I want.

Second, the Bible – the Word, or Logos of God – can be deconstructed, emptied of all truth. These words of Jesus make no sense to deconstructionists: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). While Jesus says God’s Logos is truth, the wisdom of this world cancels out the Logos of God, portraying the Word of God as empty and meaningless. “You have your truth,” says the wisdom of this world, “and I have my truth - so don’t you dare impose your truth on me!”

Even at its very truest and most pure, human knowledge does not address the heart of reality as the Word of God does. The truth of this world, when it is validated by God’s Word, can complement the truth of Scripture (as when archaeological discoveries verify biblical accounts).

But human knowledge can never supersede, contradict, or invalidate God’s Word. The wisdom of God always stands above any so-called knowledge of this world.

- Ray Stedman, *Adventuring Through, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, pp. 34-35

May we not forget that and allow people to cheat us through their empty philosophy, their empty deceit, their traditions of men, the basic principles of the world.

And Paul goes on to speak of where our completeness comes from and it is not the world!

VERSES 9-10

Think about that for a minute. If the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, then Jesus can’t be “a god” or a “junior god” or “almost god” but He is fully God; always has been and always will be!

Now let me ask you this question. Is Paul saying that those outside of Christ are not complete?

You bet he is!

You see, ever since the fall of man, we are born into this world in a state of incompleteness:

Spiritually speaking because our fellowship with God is broken.

Morally speaking because we do our own thing, we don't follow the will of God.

Mentally speaking because we don't know the ultimate truth of God.

But once we are saved, we are complete:

Spiritually, our fellowship with God has been restored.

Morally in the sense that we have God's will to guide us.

Mentally because we have the truths of God in our lives. We have the mind of Christ.

Peter put it his way in II Peter 1:2-4, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”**

Thus, may we enjoy that fact knowing we are complete in Him!

Paul concludes by telling us Jesus has the authority over all the spirit beings because He not only created them, but He is God!

Again, keep in mind that Paul's focus here is the empty philosophies of the world and Gnosticism was big. Thus, Paul is saying, ***“You don't need all this esoteric nonsense to know God for in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him.”***

Thus, don't fall prey to the empty philosophies of the world, the traditions of men, but look to the Lord to guide you in all your ways.

Now, in Colossians 2:11-17 Paul speaks of the restrictive nature of religious legalism, how it truly chokes the life out of a relationship with God!

VERSES 11-12

Most of the Colossian believers were Gentiles and thus, as the Judaizers came in, they tried to get these Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved, to keep the Law of Moses along with Christ.

Paul puts that idea to an end by telling them they have already been circumcised by Christ, the circumcision of the flesh or that sinful nature that has been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

It is not an outward ritual but an inward reality!

It is as Paul said in Romans 6:6, **“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”**

Today many will tell you that you must be baptized to be saved and some go as far as saying that if you are not baptized in their church and in this manner, then you are not saved!

If baptism were necessary for salvation then Paul would not have said, **“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”** I Corinthians 1:17.

Baptism is a visual picture to people of what God has done in your life, that you have given your life to Him. It identifies us with Christ's death as we go under the waters, and His burial as we remain under the water, and then with His resurrection, the resurrection life as we are brought up out of the water, the new life we have in Christ.

VERSES 13-15

We were all spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins before we came to Christ!

Think of it like this. We were not sick in need of a doctor, but we were dead in need of a Savior, in need of Jesus – we needed resurrection!

And thus, God stepped in; paying in full the penalty for our sins and brought our spirits back to life so we could have fellowship with God once again!

In Isaiah 1:18 we are told, **“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”**

The Living Bible puts it this way, **“‘Come, let’s talk this over!’ says the Lord; ‘no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!’”**

This is a rational choice on our part. Once we see ourselves as sinners separated from God, our only hope, our only answer is Jesus, the Savior of the world. And it doesn't matter how bad you were, you are cleansed by Him, washed as white as snow!

Not only that, but God forgave us of all our transgressions, all our sins.

Paul uses the Greek word CHARIZOMAI, (khar-id'-zo-ah-ee) and it is the verb form of the ancient Greek word **CHARIS** or grace!

Thus, we are forgiven or saved by grace through faith!

Also, this “**handwriting of requirements**” was the debt a person owed, and the debt of sin condemned us to Hell, it “**was against us.**”

And God has come, taken all our sins, nailed them to the cross, and they are completely taken away, and the paper which contained all our debts has written on it ***TETELESTAI*** or paid in full!

But what about this sin or that sin?

TETELESTAI!

Jesus completed the work for us and all we must do is receive the free gift by faith!

And then Paul tells us that Jesus has “**. . . disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**” Colossians 2:15.

What is Paul speaking of here?

Think of it like this. Satan and his demonic forces as Wiley Coyote! He is always after the Roadrunner and he has great plans to catch him but, in the end, it is Wiley Coyote that falls off the cliff, gets smashed or blown up, he always fails!

Satan thought he won when Cain slew Able, but not so!

Satan thought he won when he thought Haman would wipe out all the Jews, but he lost!

Satan thought he had the world against Jesus, so much so that they put Him to death and at that point there must have been celebrations in the world of darkness.

But, “***Beep-beep!***”

Jesus conquered death and by paying the penalty for our sins, He gave us new life in Him, and the victory of the Devil was over, he did not win!

His ***ACME*** product of destruction didn’t work again!

Thus, Jesus stripped them of their power over us; the sting of death is gone because Christ has given to us the victory!

Don't fall prey to the defeated enemy; give your life to the ultimate King, Jesus Christ!

VERSES 16-17

Jesus won the victory on the cross of Calvary and thus, Paul is saying don't go back to the pictures, the shadow, but take hold of the substance, take hold of Jesus.

You see, the tabernacle, the Jewish religious feasts were just a shadow of what was to come, they pointed to Jesus.

Thus, food, drink, Jewish feast days, new moons, Sabbath days are not binding because they are a shadow and the shadow is gone for the substance is here, Jesus!

That is what the Hebrew Roots movement does and any religious system that goes back to some kind of Law to live by to save you and it won't work, that is what Paul is saying. They hold on to these religious feasts, these holy days, the law instead of Jesus!

Paul made that point very clear when he wrote in Galatians 2:16, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”**

As we read on, we will see in Colossians 2:18-19 that Paul will speak against mysticism or a man-made spirituality.

In other words, people who are trying to reach a higher spiritual plain by feelings, by intuition and they come to these conclusions based on the authority of self and thus it is self-authenticated! Which means it is worthless! There is nothing to substantiate it but self!

VERSES 18-19

Let's face it, all the religions of the world, not Christianity, but religions of the world have come into being based solely upon man-made ideas. They make god or their goddess into what they want them to be.

Several years' back there was this angel craze with television shows, books, and pins. Everyone was talking about his or her guardian angels and how sad when the creator of angels was not even mentioned, Jesus was out of the picture!

We are not to make anyone or anything more important than Jesus! And yet, even today that is done.

Christian mysticism is a growing trend in Christianity and let me say this, it is just New Age and thus, it is demonic in nature.

Listen to what Amazon had to say about this book on Christian mysticism, called, ***The Big Book of Christian Mysticism: The Essential Guide to Contemplative Spirituality***.

In popular usage, "mysticism" typically refers to New Age or Eastern forms of spirituality. However, the mystical tradition is also an important component of the Christian tradition. At its heart - and much like its expression in other faith traditions - Christian mysticism is an ancient practice that incorporates meditation, contemplation, worship, philosophy, the quest for personal enlightenment, and the experience of Divine presence.

This volume is a comprehensive introduction and guide to Christian mysticism. It is a big book about a big possibility: the hope of achieving real, blissful, experiential union with God. Among the topics covered here are a general introduction to mysticism, the Bible and mysticism, the history and types of Christian mysticism, biographical sketches of leading Christian mystics, and practical instructions about practicing mysticism today.

This is a breathtaking work that explores a form of spirituality that has changed lives over the course of 2,000 years. Learning about Christian mysticism and how it has been articulated through the centuries will prove inspirational for today's seekers, regardless of the faith tradition.

"The mystic is not a special kind of person; every person is a special kind of mystic."

William McNamara.

- <https://amzn.to/2BVGQEJ>

Does that sound Christian? Does that come from the Bible? And let's face it, as you read that there are so many red flags here but notice that this is for everyone, not just Christians! Why are you going to indulge in pagan practices when we are complete in Christ?

In the Herald Times Reporter, March 4, 2005, in the obituary section, was this Memorare or a prayer for help from the Blessed Mother or Mary. This is what it said,

MEMORARE

Remember O most gracious
 Virgin Mary that never was it
 Known that anyone who fled to
 Thy protection, implored Thy help,
 And sought Thy intercession was
 Left unaided, Inspired with this
 Confidence, I fly unto Thee, O
 Virgin of virgins, My Mother! To
 Thee I come; before Thee I stand,
 Sinful and sorrowful. Oh Mother
 of the Word incarnate! Despise
 not my petitions, but, in Thy
 mercy, hear and answer me.
 Amen.

Folks, we are not to worship anyone or anything except for Jesus.

According to the Scriptures, Mary said that she was a sinner in need of a Savior and Mary is not our intercessor, Jesus is!

Paul put it this way in I Timothy 2:3-6, **“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”** May we not forget that!

And if you hold onto these things it is like holding onto a chicken with his head cut off. There may be a lot of running around, but the chicken is dead and will eventually fall over!

Our head is Christ and we are to stay focused upon Him because we are complete in Him! He needs to be the One who guides us and directs us. He is the head!

Now, in Colossians 2:20-23 Paul speaks of asceticism or someone who lives a life of self-denial and thinking that will earn them righteousness before God. As we will see, it won't!

VERSES 20-23

Paul opens up with the word, **“Therefore”** and the reason it is *there for* is that Paul will now make an application based on what he has just gotten done saying, which can be summed up for us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

And, as I have said, the focus here is self-imposed religion or man reaching up to God, trying to justify himself by keeping a list of rules and regulations.

On the other end of the spectrum is Christianity where God is reaching down to man and pulling him out of the mire of sin that he is in!

And think about the focus of self-imposed religious people. Their whole life is “Do not do! Do not do! Do not do!” and they are miserable!

You see, by their actions or what they don’t do they think they can reach up to God, work their way into a relationship with God, and that won’t happen!

The nineteenth century Scottish preacher, Alexander Maclaren said this regarding the futility of asceticism. He wrote,

Any asceticism is a great deal more to men’s taste than abandoning self. They will rather stick hooks in their backs and do the ‘swinging poojah’ than give up their sins and yield up their wills. There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us and that is the power of the indwelling Christ. Ascetic religion is godless, for its practitioners essentially worship themselves. As such, we are not to be intimidated by it.

- Alexander Maclaren

Now does God call some people to live a life of self-denial, much more than He calls others.

Yes, He does and that is not wrong.

You see, their action is not to gain spirituality or to get some points with God, it is done out of love, it is done out of obedience!

As I begin to close this evening may we leave here understanding that the world’s philosophies, religious legalism, mysticism, and asceticism are nothing more than a broken cistern that can’t hold any water.

In Jeremiah 2:13 the Lord rebukes Israel for this very thing as He says, **“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.”** Don’t forsake the Lord, He is the giver and the sustainer of life, He is the substance we need, He is the one who makes us complete and thus, may we draw close to Him as this story illustrates for us:

During the days of the Roman Empire there is a story of a very wealthy senator who had become estranged from his son. When the senator died unexpectedly, his will was opened, and it was read.

It said, “Because my son does not appreciate what I’ve done, I leave all of my worldly possessions to my loyal slave, Marcellus. However, because I am a man of grace, I bequeath to my son one of my possessions of his choosing.”

“Sorry,” said the testator to the son, “You can only take one of your dad’s possessions. Which will it be?”

He replied back, “I take Marcellus!”

May that be our hearts desire, to take Jesus with us wherever we go, we need nothing more because we are complete in Him, not will be, we are!

Don’t go after the basic principles of this world just receive Jesus, He is all you will ever need!

You see, change will never happen through religion and religious works (from the outside in). It can only happen from the inside out through the new birth and the preeminence of Christ over our lives.