

“...walking out the gift.”

Colossians 2

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at Believers City Church
in Menomonie, Wis
on July 16th, 2023

Colossians 2 - *1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden*

all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 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. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.



Having come to Christ with childlike simplicity, why is it that we feel like we have to now complicate things? Do we somehow think that the more complicated we make things the more spiritual we are? Paul tells the Colossians in our text this week - “...as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so now walk in Him...” The same simplicity of faith we exercised in coming to Christ, is the very same kind of faith with which we are to move forward in Him...the same we are to live out daily.

Indeed, the verses 6-7 of our text seems to be the heartbeat of the chapter as a whole.

*“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk in Him**, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”*

Paul is calling upon the believers in Colossi, *as well as all the Believers in Menomonie Wisconsin*, to “walk out the gift” of salvation that we have so graciously been given. To “follow through.” To live it. To experience it to the fullest. To “walk the walk.”

We spoke previously in this letter discussion, concerning the fact that Jesus is by design...*or should be for all believers*, sufficient for our lives. That His presence and involvement in our lives innately makes us whole. Now in verse 10 of this chapter we are again hit with that principle where we are told that we are “COMPLETE.” The language means “having everything that is necessary; perfect and whole.” Paul is not alone in this sentiment, nor is this the only scriptural occurrence. The apostle Peter wrote “*By his divine power, **God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.***” 2 Peter 1:3

Thus repeatedly, *both here and elsewhere*, we are told that Jesus is everything we need for eternal life and our daily walk. The question is, “Do we believe it?” and more importantly, *are we actually living in the light of such?*

If we find ourselves coming up short, what can we do about it? First, such living is found though the clear and

growing understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Who He is, how He works, and the power and authority in which He operates. We have to actually *know* the source of such life. Secondly, there must be a daily, even moment by moment, *growing* relationship with Him. It is not enough to know *about* Him or even to know Him from afar. We must gain “Gnosko” knowledge. The knowledge that comes through the experience of His truth played out in our lives. It is here that He *proves* that His Word is true. We acquire all that He promised by coming to know Him! This is where our effort is to be applied.

2:1

Paul was concerned about the believers in Colossi because he had heard that false teachers had come in amongst them and had begun to draw people away from the simple truths. Today of course, we have the same thing occurring. People who claim to be on the “inside” spiritually, yet bring to the church a lifestyle mandate based upon man-made rules, formulas, pet theories, and extra-biblical doctrines. (Note 2Cor 11:13-15)

2:2

Paul mentions here his desire to see the believers in Colossae “*comforted*,” or “*encouraged and strengthened*.” This was accomplished through (1) *the unity of LOVE in their midst*, and (2) *the life confidence that comes through actually having clarity as to our “wholeness”...our “completeness*.” However, that assurance is so often missing in confessing Christian lives today.

Indeed, with the believer’s standing in Christ comes “*riches*.” That is not some sort of prosperity doctrine, because these riches are most often the spiritual “intangibles.” Those illusive prizes like peace, joy, and life fulfillment!

2:3

Like today, those bringing false teachings into the church are often purveyors of “higher” wisdom and knowledge. But the problem is that there *is* nothing higher. For in Christ lay “*ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...*” Oh, they will try to sell it just the same, but they will never bring anything that surpasses what Christ *already* brought us.

The descriptive term “treasures” is enticing...what are these “treasures?” They are things like...*where we came from, why we are here, our purpose and design, the intricacies of our purpose, and the mystery of the stars, the details of creation*. Often it is the “*why*” to supplement the commonly understood “*what*.” It’s like being blind all your life and suddenly being given sight.

2:4

I don’t know if you fully realize this, but Satan and the world are trying their best to deceive you! They want to convince you that this peace and joy can be found in other things and other paths; material possessions, earthly pleasures, worldly wisdom, meditations, chants, and other temporal elements. They will often even throw into the mix some new religious rituals, non-biblical doctrines, works-oriented practices, and other “mediators” between God and us besides Christ Himself.

Sometimes these things sound so inviting and even reasonable to our flesh! But God has given us the foolproof means of knowing His truth. For He has fully revealed Himself in His Word, and it is there we will find the facts without the spin.

The ESV renders this verse “I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.” Note the word “plausible.” Because indeed this is where we get into trouble. We tend to think that we are too smart for such implied delusions, yet Paul isn’t really speaking about the tall tails of those residing in crazy land. We have met them of course...those who come round claiming to be one of the 2 prophets of Revelation or some sort of Christian “oracle.” We are quick to put such in the loony file. But what about the stuff that *could* have legitimacy? Because some stuff we tend to *want* to believe.

This issue is a remarkable thing to see here in rural Wisconsin. The stuff that gets believed is remarkable, especially the negative “dirty laundry” stuff. We have had innumerable folks come ‘round...excited and embracing who we are, but before the seed could find maturity, the thorns and the weeds strangled the life out of it. In this case, someone who had a beef caught them in Walmart and told them we were trouble or much worse. Instead of finding out for themselves or basing what they were seeing and hearing on scripture and fruit, they swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. Its just so easy to believe hearsay and slander.

We live in age where the faith continues to be compromised and watered down, because there is a lot of folks with a religious angle that will spin an ideal that *sounds* reasonable. They will tell you that God is Love, so He wants you to be happy and thus He is ok with the crazy stuff that is being embraced out there. And any attempt to reject such voices is labeled as hateful and bigoted, despite the fact that such responses are usually about a behavior or viewpoint, not about the value and worth of the individual and no such personally denigrating view is in play whatsoever.

Because a vast multitude of folks have no “baseline”...no foundation, anything is considered and many accepted because some of these talking heads sound fairly reasonable and in our flesh what they are saying holds water. Like Satan speaking to Eve...*did God REALLY* say? Then the need to pacify, express compassion and a gentle interaction transcends what is the truth and what is right in God’s sight. “Being loving” becomes being accepting of any and all views no matter how dangerous or contrary to God’s will. The irony is that *our* position is virulently attacked along with our very person, thus they literally and actively practice the very thing they are accusing others of! This is no different than what was going on in Colossi and thankfully Paul was having none of it.

This is one of the reasons we personally need to be in a strong spiritual community. When we fly solo, we start to acquire a “private interpretation” of scripture because there is no one around to say “yo...hold up a minute...you have a problem there.” 2 Peter 1:20-21 says “*First of all, you should know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*”

2:5-6

“...*I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.*” I wonder if Paul would say the same about each one of us? Certainly we are without excuse ...for Scripture again and again emphasizes that our Lord provides for a life of order, consistency, and steadfastness. (Note 1Cor 15:58, Acts 2:42)

Gal 3:3 says “How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?” How *did* you start your life with Him? How would you describe it? Was it not in childlike simplicity...one merely lived by faith, by scripture, and by His grace, and one full of joy? Paul is telling us now to “walk it out.” To actually live our lives now in that same state of simple grace...where we travel our days in that same simple joy, not entangled in the new “higher knowledge” that has no place in scripture!

Perhaps the “steadfastness” that is called for in verse 5 is not present in your life because you received Christ Jesus as *Savior*, but not Christ Jesus as *LORD*. For “Lord” means “*master*” and refers to his supreme control over everything. Colossians tells us He HAS it already, and this verse calls us now to let Him *exercise it* in our lives!

2:7

When He is *Lord* of our lives...when He has actually filled me with the Holy Spirit and strengthens me daily by His Word, I am *rooted*, or “firm in one place”. And then, after being *rooted*, after the foundation has been put in place...*for that must come first*, we are then *built up*...we become stronger and stronger. And through it all we are *established* in the faith, enabling us to *walk the gift out* and not get lost out there. I must ask you today...where are *your* roots? Do you have them, and do they yet go deep or is your faith still just “on the

surface” and you are ripe to be blown away in the next life storm?

And finally, when we have indeed been *established in the faith*, ...when our roots are deep and we are unmoving in our beliefs and in our practices, when our roots are deep in a spiritual community like this one, we then *abound*. We abound in the richness of life as a child of the king...we abound in thankfulness. Such copious thankfulness is a sure sign of your spiritual health, just as the lack of such is a sure sign that you are not well at all.

Is your life in Him *abounding* today? Are you abounding in thankfulness concerning your blessings, this community you are a part of? If not, perhaps it's because you are not *rooted in Him and not established in the faith*. Or perhaps it's because while you have received Him as *Savior*, you have not actually received him as *LORD and MASTER!*

“*as you have been taught.*” Well, what HAVE you been taught? What, and to whom have you been listening? For as in Colossi, there are those false teachers and false prophets that are out there drawing men and women away from the truth. Spiritual growth is impossible without spiritual truth. And spiritual truth is impossible without the Word of God. And will you hear the Word of God without a spiritual community? Romans 10:14 says “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*”

2:8

“*Beware...*”

Paul warns them of those who would attempt to lead them astray into all sorts of “Jesus-takes-the-back-seat” teachings...into man's attempts to super-impose their so-called sciences, higher philosophies, and “new” gospel interpretations. The intellectual constructs that inevitably eclipse the scriptural positions and biblical answers and minimizes them as overtly simplistic and too rudimentary to have any real effect.

Man has always inherently tried to add to the perfect, complete salvation of Christ through the adding of their own two cents. They will attempt to add to a spiritual life a little ‘world’ here...a little flesh there...some psychology, some high education and some “expert opinions” all in order to make one's life *actually* operate. In the church we add a little legalism, a little denominational control, some ritual, some political correctness, and some social protocol; all mixed together to concoct what is inevitably a recipe for disaster.

2:9-10

Note the specifics of the language: “*all the fullness.*” I find such incredible when the world is universally striving for even a scrap of fulfillment and purpose...and in Christ lies the literal *fullness* of our Creator...and if we are *IN* Christ...we too are “full”...we are *whole*...we are *complete*. Not just part, or a little, and therefore we have to go out and seek a professional so that we might “complete the healing.” “*Fullness*” means “*completeness!*” The *completeness* of God! The “finished product” as the artist intended it to be! All that God is, you will find in Christ. (John 14:8-9) All that Christ has and is, is given to us in our state of union with Him. Perhaps that explains to John 14:12 “*I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works...*”

“*In Him*” we are “complete”... meaning “having all that is necessary, perfect, and whole.” The world will offer you... *on various levels*... to “fix you up” in one manner or another...on one level of another...to one degree or another. But only Jesus says “I will make you *whole*...” Only the artist can do that.

Are you “*complete*” today? Well, are you “*in Him*” today?