

Love Letters

Lesson 16: Colossians 2

Paul was encouraged to know that the Colossian believers were standing firm in their faith, even though some were attempting to deceive them with enticing talk that promised big but failed to deliver. Concerned for them, he is about to reveal the single greatest truth regarding every Christian's struggle to be holy: "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" (2:9–10). The believer's relationship with Jesus allows that fullness of God; there is no need to look anywhere else for satisfaction.

Read Colossians 2:1–23.

Day One: In Christ's Fullness

1. What do verses 1–2 help you to discern about Paul's inner conflict for the Colossian believers? Why would it make a difference to see Paul face to face?

Paul understood the attractive influence of some of the false teachers and how successful they could be in winning over young believers and those who did not have a strong foundation in their faith.

2. How could they best avoid being deceived (verse 2)?

The words "knit together in love" are the same as *being united in love*. The image Paul portrays here is that of a body being held together by joints and ligaments (verse 19) to ensure a strong, cohesive body. Since false teachers were divisive and destructive, the strength found in unity prevented believers from becoming vulnerable. It also provided the support needed to remain healthy and spiritually sound.

3. Paul understood that possessing a correct understanding about Christ was the best defensive weapon. What simple truth was sufficient (verse 3)?
4. Thought not present with these believers, Paul rejoiced to hear of the steadfastness of their faith. What was key to their spiritual growth (verses 6–7)?

5. Next there is a straightforward warning against anything that is anti-Christ; what things does Paul mention to watch out for (verse 8)?

The words “cheat you” literally mean to *be taken captive, carried away, or kidnapped*. The reference is to someone who is carried away into slavery because they departed from the truth. The argument here is not against all philosophy, but against that which was propagated by false teachers seeking to divide and lead astray those most vulnerable.

6. Driving home the point that believers ought not to look to the world for answers or satisfaction in life, where does Paul say they are to look?
 - a. Verse 9
 - b. Verse 10 (Personalize this verse by inserting your name where you see the pronoun “I”.)

Memory verse: Colossians 2:6 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

Selah ~

Think about it: “The greatest danger regarding cults . . . is complacency; considering ourselves and our children to be immune from their attraction. If Christ is not the center of the Christian’s life, that Christian is ripe for another spirit” (Paul Fox). If Christ is the center of the believer’s life, then the words of verse 7 will carry heavy weight: *rooted; built up; established; and abounding*. If these are present and thriving in *your* life, the result will be thanksgiving. (We will look at these again in Day Four of our study.) Please record your thoughts.

Day Two:

Forgiven in Christ

Reread Colossians 2:11–15.

Since Jesus Christ is fully God and we are complete in Him, what does this spiritual fullness actually mean? In verses 11–15, Paul will use metaphors to show that believers are saved completely through the work of God and not by human intervention.

1. State the spiritual significance of the following . . .
 - a. Circumcision made without hands: (See Deuteronomy 30:6 and Romans 2:29.)

 - b. Buried with Him in baptism: (See Romans 6:1–7 for help: “dead to sin, alive to God.”)

At the moment of salvation the new believer’s old nature is cut away or put off, and Christ’s new nature is put on. It is a work that only God can perform. The baptism Paul describes here is the spiritual baptism where we become united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

2. In your own words, state the fullness of your salvation as Paul explains it in verses 13–15.
 - a. Jesus Christ not only paid the price for sin; He won the victory over the powers of evil. How did He do it?

The victory is won—the battle done—Satan has been defeated and conquered! He is, however, still present in this world, still seeking to rob, kill, and destroy Christians. Once we understand our fullness in Christ, we are able to exercise His power in us to not only combat but conquer the enemy’s evil influence.

Selah ~

Learn to be spiritually strong because of who you are in Christ; don’t allow the enemy’s tactics to intimidate you. What understanding are you gaining through your study this week that will help you to overcome? Star this answer on this page. Come back and reflect on this point throughout the week and notice the difference it will make in your perspective and in your personal application of God’s truth!

Day Three:

Freedom in Christ

Reread Colossians 2:16–23.

We are beginning to understand and appreciate that as believers we are complete in Christ. Paul wants us to know that we are also free in Christ—free from sin’s power, free to live lives that are pleasing to God.

1. From what attitude in others does Paul say the believer is free (verses 16–17)?

This is a difficult area for many believers. The word *judge* means to pronounce *unfavorable judgment* upon, to *find fault* with or to *criticize*. Apparently the Colossian believers were being swayed by those who were judging them on what they ate or drank and on the religious days they celebrated. The basis for this criticism is called *legalism*—measuring one’s own or another’s spirituality by adhering to man-made rules, regulations, and rituals. God has set the believer free from this type of belief. Paul states that keeping man’s rules is just a shadow of things to come, but the substance—reality—is found in Christ.

2. What are the other areas being targeted for criticism? (Look at these verses in more than one translation.)
 - a. Verse 18
 - b. Verse 19
 - c. What do you think happens when a believer loses connection with the Head?

Paul’s final word of caution is found in verse 20–23, where he warns of asceticism, or the deprivation of the body’s normal desires in order to achieve God’s favor and approval.

3. What is wrong with the perspective found in verses 20–23?
 - a. Can you think of some everyday examples of this kind of false humility?

Selah ~

Self-denial has an appearance of wisdom—it looks good—but it has no value. Why (verse 23)?

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 (2:8).

Day Four:

Steadfast in Christ

Paul rejoiced at the steadfastness of many Colossian believers, and he warned those susceptible to individuals that might lead them astray. He strongly exhorted them to remember the foundation of their faith: they had not merely received the teachings and doctrines about Christ, rather they had received *Christ Himself!* His desire for them was that they would remain safe from spiritual seduction by walking in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Returning now to take a closer look at verses 6–7 of our study: “As you therefore have 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.” Herein lies the key to steadfastness; we will look at several metaphors that illustrate Paul’s point.

Rooted in Christ . . .

In the same way that trees become rooted in the ground, drawing nourishment from the soil, so believers are to draw spiritual nourishment and strength from Christ. Perhaps Paul had Psalm 1 on his mind when he penned these words. Carefully read Psalm 1:1–3 and consider whether or not *you* have a tendency to *walk . . . stand . . . or sit* for prolonged periods of time in the presence of ungodliness? Let’s put it another way: are *you* compromising your Christian walk in order to hang out with people you know you shouldn’t? Do you find yourself in situations where you don’t belong? On a scale of 1–10 (10 being best), how would you rate the frequency of being in God’s Word: *daily; weekly; occasionally; only in desperate times*? How much depth is there to your spiritual roots? Have you grown to “tree status” in terms of your strength and steadfastness? How much fruit is in evidence to others? Could *you* be called a “tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3)?

Built up in Him and established . . .

Not only are Christians grounded firmly like trees of God’s planting, we are also likened to a building that has a solid foundation in Christ. He places on us the responsibility to “build by code”—based on the solid truths of Scripture. Don’t be inclined to take shortcuts or cut corners; make your building as sure as your foundation. Look at 2 Peter 1:2–8 in terms of building materials. Are you lacking in any of these virtues? Take a moment now to pray.

Abounding . . . with thanksgiving . . .

Overflowing should be the word that describes you when you can answer in the affirmative to being rooted and built up in Christ. As God lays the foundation and you build, one precept upon another, you will become a geyser overflowing with thanksgiving for all God has done! Your gratitude will be the supernatural outflow of a heart in passionate pursuit of a loving, gracious, and merciful heavenly Father who relentlessly pursued you! Jesus said, “The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life” (John 4:14). When you’re in love there is never a lack; you need only ask, “More please!” How thankful are you to be completely His?

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in our walk of faith this week?

Prayer Requests ~
