

Growing in Christ

Colossians 1:2:6-23

August 6, 2017

DAY 1: The way ahead: rooted and built up

Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

1. The Colossians were being “promised the moon” of spiritual growth by the false teachers in Colossae. What Christian doesn’t want an easier spirituality? A deeper “experience” of God? To be freer of the frustrating battles against temptation? A keener devotion and freedom from the complacency and half-heartedness we battle? Of course we wish all these were true.

2. There is nothing so attractive as “the easy way” that leads to “the fulfilling way!”

3. To Paul, “the easy way” and “the fulfilling way” set up new Christians for “the demoralized way,” “the discouraged way,” and “the I give up” way!

4. Notice two fundamental principles in Col. 2:6.

a. Receiving Christ is not the “end of the journey,” but just the beginning step. Receiving Christ is the foundation, upon which the life of the Christian can be built. (It just doesn’t magically happen!) A foundation is useless (and ugly) if something isn’t built upon it!

b. Real growth in the Christian life must be consistent with how it began—centered around Christ.

5. Here are his principles to show the Colossians the way ahead:

a. As you received ... so live. (Col. 2:6)

b. As you were rooted ... be built up. (Col. 2:7)

c. As you were taught ... be established in the truth. (Col. 2:7)

6. Have you been looking for the “Magic Button of Christian Growth?” (You can tell you have every time you get demoralized with the slow progress of your growth in Christ)

7. Which of the principles above resonates most with you? Why?

DAY 2: Fullness in Christ; Fellowship with Christ.

*Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through **hollow** and **deceptive** philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

1. Paul gives the young Christians a warning. Watch out or you will be “kidnapped!” (In a spiritual sense, away from your loyalty and allegiance to Christ).
2. The Greek word for “captive” was a word used for slave-trading. Paul is warning the young believers at Colossae that the false teachers, though sounding as if they have the magical, deeper knowledge that can “free” them from the daily temptations of sin will actually do the opposite! If they follow the way of the false teachers, they will find themselves more captive to sin.
3. **FULLNESS IN CHRIST**: Instead of the false teachers’ way of human thinking (v. 8), Paul takes the Colossians back to the basics: Christ!

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

4. He reminds them to think about God, and the godly traits that make up the divine nature. Perhaps your minds go to God’s sovereignty, our Creator, the King of Kings, or His omniscience. Then Paul says, all of that, and more is in Christ! And then Paul says, the fullness of Christ is now in you!
5. Let’s lay this out a phrase at a time:
 - a. “*You have been given...*” – what you need has already been secured!
 - b. “*Fullness*” (of life) – You have been given the storehouse and the key to the storehouse of spiritual treasure.
 - c. “*In Christ*” – Christ is the root of all blessing, all that we need.
6. **FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST**:

Colossians 2:11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

- a. The false teachers were claiming that the way to mortify the fleshly nature was through a physical act of circumcision, an act whereby the Christian would commit to the cutting away of sin in his life. This physical act would be a representative of that commitment. Paul says that is nonsense! (Oh, that putting away sinful temptations was that easy!)
 - b. Paul reminds them that they share a union with Christ, a fellowship with Christ through His death and resurrection, *already* symbolized in their baptism.
 - c. What are we freed from? We are freed from the condemnation of sin, but we are not freed from the temptation to sin.
7. Instead of chasing after every new wind of spiritual/philosophical teaching, Paul says to chase after Christ!

DAY 3: Freedom through Christ

1. Paul continues to counter the false teachers' arguments that Christ can do something more than what He has already done for them, and what is available to them at all times.

2. He reminds them of the enormity of what God has already done for them. There are two great actions which we must always remember and which form the foundation upon which we move forward with Christ.

3. The **first great action God did** was to take us **from spiritual death to spiritual life**.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.

4. To be "dead in our sins" meant that there was a time when we could not have cared less about God, that is unless we wanted to "use" Him to get something we wanted. We had no "live" interest in loving Him, learning about Him, fellowshiping with Him, or anything else to do with Him. Moreover, we often doubted Him, cursed Him, ridiculed Him, minimized Him, etc.

5. The great change that took place was entirely of God's doing! It "began" long before you and I were born, by voluntarily giving up His own son, to die in our place, or as Paul said ...

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrated His love for us in this way: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

6. The **second great action God did** was to take us **slavery to freedom**.

Colossians 2:13b ... He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

a. The "written code" was the bond we owed due to our sin. It was a debt we could not pay, even if we had wanted to. (v. 14)

b. That bond of debt was not only cancelled, but it was nailed to the cross, symbolically dying along with our sin debt. (v. 14)

c. The "powers and authorities" are Satan and his demons. These creatures are like terrorists from hell, who have been sent to tempt you, condemn you, whisper lies to you, deceive you, and rob you of the truth of God and life in Christ. Christ "disarmed" them on the cross. Though they come to tempt you and me, they come "empty-handed" rather than "at gunpoint." (v. 15)

7. What strikes you most from today's verses?

DAY 4: False spirituality

1. It seems that in every generation there are “teachers” who come along to the church with some “new” teaching or revelation that somehow the normal church leaders and church members have missed, causing them to be shallow in their “experience” with God and their “spirituality.”

2. This begs two questions.

a. What is our real experience of God to be?

b. What are the marks of spirituality?

3. Typically, there is some religious deed or spiritual discipline that the average church member has missed that has crippled his spirituality. Their unfulfilling experience with God is “due” to a hollow “spirituality” usually equated with some lack of spiritual discipline(s).

Colossians 2:16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

4. Paul’s warning is simple: “Don’t let these false teachers condemn you.”

5. Old Testament practices had their place, but they are mere “shadows,” hinting or foreshadowing the reality of what was to come. The reality is Christ.

6. Paul’s second warning: “Don’t let anyone disqualify you.” (v. 18)

*Colossians 2:18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels **disqualify you for the prize**. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. ¹⁹ He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

7. Paul uses an analogy from the sports world. “Disqualification” was done by an umpire or referee. The umpire perceived that a player or runner did not do something correctly and so was “thrown out” of the competition.

8. What Paul exposes in these two verses is the reality of the lives of these false teachers:

a. They claim a superior level at which to look down on anyone they feel is missing the mark.

b. They boast about their own experience.

c. Their mind is “puffed up,” imagining they have come up with “just the right” notion or discipline.

d. In reality, they have “lost connection with Christ, all the while thinking they are spiritual superiors.

9. A false spirituality and a passion to feel superior are their hallmarks.

10. What strikes you from today’s verses?

DAY 5: Talking a “good game” vs. restraining sensual indulgence

1. The false teachers have been exposed in this chapter. No matter what kind of experience they “claim” for themselves, no matter how “free” from temptation and sin they may “claim,” the reality of their self-deception and their deceptive words are laid bare in today’s verses!

2. Their very teaching exposes that their claims are not only false but fruitless in what matters most!

Colossians 2:20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

²¹ *“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”?*

²² *These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.*

Colossians 2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

3. Paul summarizes the futility of their teaching in three ways.

a. The teachers cannot give freedom from the world, for they are enslaved to it. (v. 20)

b. The teachers cannot give freedom from the Old Testament law, for they are enslaved to it. (v. 21-22)

c. The teachers cannot give freedom from temptation of the flesh, for they are enslaved to it. (v. 23)

4. The false teachers talk a “good game,” they imagine themselves stars in the game, they “look the part,” “play the role,” and their words and outward appearance lift them to imagined lofty heights of false humility. It’s a sham!

5. My mother used to tell me, “Seth, the proof of the pudding is in the tasting.” Paul would say, “no matter how ‘spiritual’ a game these teachers talk or look, how are they at ‘restraining sensual indulgence’?”

6. What strikes you most from today’s verses?