

Colossians 2:6-15. Believers in Colossae had a solid faith in Christ, hope for Heaven, and love for others. Having been well-taught and established, Paul encouraged them to stay the course. His charge was to keep walking with Christ and to remember there's nothing to see apart from Him.

Philosophy is a quest with no end. Thales' quest was to grasp the cause or first principle behind all that exists. Parmenides said all that exists is ever-changing, while Heraclitus believed all is fixed, never-changing. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle continued the quest, and new philosophers arose who pursued it elsewhere. Yet, even after twenty-five hundred years, the same age-old quest remains and with no end in sight.

Bertrand Russell devoted his long life to philosophy. Dying at age 90, he said that "philosophy has proved a wash out for me." Centuries prior to him David Hume lamented at the end of life, "I am about to take a leap into the dark. I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of this world." Such is the result of reason without God, man trying to make sense of a world he didn't create.

When Paul visited Athens, he saw how "all the Athenians... would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new" (Acts 17:21). They loved to entertain the traveler able to stimulate their minds. They wanted deep thoughts, great chains of reasoning. What did Paul present? Christ. Salvation isn't a matter of intellectual curiosity, nor the gospel an abstract theory for debate. Jesus isn't one of many stops on the philosopher's quest for truth. He's the quest's beginning and its end. As Paul said to the Colossians, "For in [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (v. 2:9).

The believers in Colossae knew Christ. They had been well-taught and had established a church in the city. Having so much that's good, Paul tells them to hold onto it. Don't become captivated by the latest trend in philosophy; you're already complete in Christ. Stay the course.

CHRIST THE LORD

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

We're looking at a letter written to one of the first churches in the world. We get the chance to eavesdrop, and we're able to learn a bit about early Christianity. As you read any of the letters in the New Testament, it's apparent that Christianity meant something. It had definition, certain doctrinal beliefs and creeds that one generation

passed down to the next. Paul says the Colossians heard that Jesus is Lord. And what did they do with this nugget of doctrine? They received it (v. 2:6).

Colossians 2:6—"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

We live in a time when more than 1/2 of the world is some form of a Republic. We vote for leaders today. Few leaders than ever before reign as sovereigns with absolute power and authority over their subjects. But that's some of the idea bound up in lordship—Jesus the Lord, the King. And that's why when Christians received Christ Jesus the Lord, Rome took notice. No one ridiculed Jesus' followers for imitating Him but for worshipping Him as God. Rome scorned Christians for believing a man rose from the dead and then charged with treason. "Jesus the Lord" meant Caesar wasn't.

Some in the city of Colossae had come to believe Jesus is Lord. Despite the danger, they received this teaching while "abounding in thanksgiving" (v. 2:7). The Colossians had heard of and likely lived as people who feared offending the "elementary spirits" (v. 2:8). Spirits were thought to control the world, and they demanded offerings. A good harvest, healthy children, or peace were thought to depend upon pleasing a host of unseen beings. Imagine the tyranny!

And then imagine the freedom of hearing about Jesus Christ for the first time. Jesus is greater than any alleged spirit. He is God, the Lord of all things seen and unseen, the creator of heaven and earth who's able to save you. The Colossians received it as truth and thanked God.

Having been "rooted and built up," this church was doing so well (v. 2:7). The report Paul had heard encouraged him. These believers were growing in the things they had been taught. The Word had produced a church with a solid faith in Christ, hope for heaven, and much love among its members (v. 1:4-5).

Christ is all His people ever need in life. Though the Colossians had embraced this at first, were they now beginning to veer? The faith had been passed from Jesus and to Paul before Epaphras heard and evangelized Colossae. As new teachers challenged this, Paul hoped the Colossians wouldn't gradually embrace a new understanding of Jesus. It wouldn't further build up the church, but lead those in it back to the tyranny of religion they had escaped.

Stay the Course

CAPTIVATED BY CHRIST PLUS...

COLOSSIANS 2:8-15

Colossians 2:8—“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

“I think, therefore I am.” Rene Descartes was a religious man who tried to prove the existence of God apart from God’s own Word. He reasoned that because he thinks, he must exist. And if he exists and can conceive of a perfect being, existence must be part of perfection. Therefore, God exists.

Hume dismantled Descartes assertions. We can’t sense God, miracles aren’t possible, religion isn’t rational but dangerous. Kant followed in part trying to save God from atheism, and Nietzsche followed after him trying to erode Kant.

Back and forth the philosophers go, where they’ll end no one knows. This is the kind of philosophy Paul warned against, the kind that’s “according to human tradition.” Study it if you want to understand the consequences of ideas, but it can’t help you live joyfully or die well. Philosophy apart from God doesn’t offer peace in this life or a home in the next. If you want answers, study Jesus Christ “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (v. 2:3).

The Colossians had received Christ the Lord, but some in the church found other ideas attractive. They hadn’t rejected Jesus but wanted more, Jesus plus something. Paul says they added a whole system of rules, such as “Don’t handle *this*. Do eat *that*. Don’t touch *these*” (v. 2:21). Some boasted of visions, abstained from foods, and kept special holidays all for the sake of appearing more spiritual (v. 2:16-18). Bits of philosophy and mysticism mingled with the Christian faith. The end product wasn’t anything Jesus ever taught.

Paul warned the Colossians not to be “taken captive” by philosophy (v. 2:8). It speaks of being carried off as plunder, taken as a prisoner of war, or kidnapped. The Christians in Colossae weren’t in danger of being physically abducted. The danger lay in being seduced or led away from the truth. We want to think that could never happen to us—we’re too smart to be deceived, right? Well, pride comes before

the fall (Prov 16:18). Error is prolific and persuasive. If you want to know God rightly, study His Word regularly. There’s no other guard.

What’s so bad about adding a few ideas from other religions to your belief in Christ? It’s the same as trying to improve the purity of a 24k gold ring. Add anything and you’ll decrease its value. Paul explains...

- 1) Christ is the fullness of deity (v. 2:9).
- 2) Christ is in you as a Christian (v. 2:10).
- 3) Christ has united you to Himself (v. 2:11-12).
- 4) Christ has reconciled you to God (v. 2:13-14).
- 5) Christ is greater than all (v. 2:15).

The question that hangs over this section is if you have Christ, why look for something more? He is God. He’s in you. You’ve been united to Him by faith, made alive, and reconciled to God. To the Colossians Paul said that whatever spiritual forces exist, Christ is greater still. To summarize, there isn’t anything more or greater in life outside of knowing and walking with Jesus Christ.

“JESUS DEMANDS EVERYTHING, NOT JUST SO WE WOULD SUBMIT TO HIS CONTROL, BUT TO FREE US FROM THE CONTROL OF THINGS THAT WERE NEVER DESIGNED TO CONTROL US.”

— PAUL TRIPP.

Paul told the Galatians, “Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). The Galatian churches believed Christ plus the old Law of Moses would please God. The Colossians believed Christ plus philosophy and mysticism would help. Christ plus... something. It’s hard to renounce all other things and believe by faith that Jesus is all.

Is Jesus enough? According to the Scripture, He’s life and sustenance. He’s hope and righteousness. He’s a refuge to the weak, peace to the afflicted, joy, wisdom, and the only way to heaven. The grass isn’t greener elsewhere. Follow and submit to Christ, worship Him as He’s revealed Himself in Scripture. He demands much, but Jesus the Lord means true freedom for His people now and evermore.