



EVERLASTING JOY

The Book of Colossians

Lesson Two

In Colossians chapter 2, Paul continues his defense of the deity and sufficiency of Christ. In 1:17, Paul told the Colossians that “in Him all things hold together.” This is sometimes known as the “Colossian Law.” This verse tells us that Christ is the binding force of all things. In our lesson today, Paul specifically writes about some of the heresies that were threatening the predominantly Gentile church, not only in the city of Colossae, but also the believers in the surrounding areas of the Lycus Valley. It’s obvious that he has false teachers in mind from his comments in verses 4, 8, and 16. Paul believed that a proper view of Christ was the antidote for heresy. You go, Paul!

As you study, remember that the **key verses** in this chapter, as well as in this book, are **2:9-10**, which tell us that Jesus is sufficient and preeminent in everything. Read all the verses in light of this truth. Colossians is perhaps the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. What a privilege and joy to be studying Christ, the head of the Church and the Savior of our soul. So our **Memory Verse of the Week**, of course, is **Colossians 2:9-10**, “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.”

In our last chapter, Paul exhorts the Colossians to be mature and complete in Christ. Now, in chapter 2, Paul gives them some evidences of spiritual maturity.

1. Read Colossians 2:1-23. Observe and list the facts you find. What does Paul's purpose seem to be? What are some key words or thoughts? Write them on your **Key Word** sheet. Do you see any commands or promises?
2. How would you describe Paul's tone?
3. The church in Colossae was most likely founded by Epaphras, not Paul. Why, then, did Paul love this church so much?
4. How does this chapter relate to chapter one?
5. Can you tell what heresies Paul is coming against?
6. Read Colossians 2:1-3 again. Had Paul ever been to Colossae?
7. What's the purpose of Paul's striving? What was Paul's prayer for them?

The word "encouraged" in verse 2 means to "call alongside" or "to strengthen." Paul wanted their hearts to be strengthened. William Barclay gives this example of how the word "encouraged" is used in this text: "There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to it to such purpose that courage was reborn and a body of dispirited men became fit again for

heroic action. This is what the word “encourage” means here. It is Paul’s prayer that the church may be filled with courage which can cope with any situation.”

- 8.** Name some ways to encourage or strengthen someone’s heart.
(Are you striving to strengthen someone’s heart?)

“Knit together” means to unite, to bring together, or to weld together. Paul’s desire was for their hearts to be welded together in love. A strengthened heart is a heart that’s learned to love. Paul exhorted them to be unified in love. Colossians 3:14 tells us to “put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”

- 9.** How do we show others we love them? Is love an emotion or an action?

- 10.** Paul wants the Colossians to be settled in their understanding. What kind of wealth or riches come with full assurance? Can we truly enjoy the hope and blessings we have in Christ without full assurance?

While knowledge is gained facts, understanding is applying those facts and principles to our daily living. Knowing the truth of the Gospel leads to understanding.

Christ Himself is God’s mystery that has been revealed to us. The Colossians needed to understand and believe that in Jesus alone is all wisdom and knowledge. We can’t look for any source of happiness or holiness outside of Christ. There was much talk about mysteries in Paul’s day, but there was one mystery above all others -- the mystery of God’s loving purpose, disclosed in Christ alone. F.F. Bruce said, “The personal knowledge of Christ is the royal road to appreciation of the divine wisdom.”

11. Read 1 Timothy 3:16. What does this verse tell us about Christ?

12. How is wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ? Why does Paul call them treasures?

Getting to know the Lord is like mining for gold. All you find is like precious jewels. This mystery of Christ was formerly concealed, but now revealed to those who believe in Him. "In Him is enshrined the true knowledge, in contrast to the counterfeit knowledge of the false teachers." (F.F. Bruce)

13. How is wisdom like hidden treasure? Read Proverbs 2. Write your thoughts concerning wisdom.

14. How is living in Christ like living on a Treasure Island? (I love this question!)

15. Do you share the treasures you find or are you hoarding them for yourself?

In our lesson so far, Paul has exhorted the Colossians to be strong in heart, united in love, and settled in their understanding. Now Paul warns them about the heresies flying around their Valley.

16. Why does Paul remind them about the sufficiency of Christ, according to verse 4?

- 17.** How does understanding the nature of Christ enable us to stand against any kind of false teacher?

The phrase “good order” (taxis) and “steadfastness” (stereoma) are both military terms. “Taxis” refers to a line of soldiers drawn up for battle, whereas “stereoma” refers to the solidity of a formation of soldiers. Paul was saying that they were standing firm against the attacks that were coming against them.

- 18.** Is your faith in good order? Do you consider yourself steadfast or unsteady? How can you “firm up” your walk?

In verse 6, Paul says that because they have received Christ, believe in His deity, and are standing firm, they have a certain responsibility.

- 19.** What is his exhortation to them in verse 6? What does that practically mean? Read 1 John 2:6 and 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

- 20.** How does walking in Jesus “root” you in Him?

- 21.** In your own words, explain Paul’s exhortation in verses 8-10. Where was the teaching coming from?

The word “philosophy” comes from two Greek words -- phileo, “to love”; and sophia, “wisdom.” Philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom.

- 22.** Explain some of the philosophies of today’s world.

In verses 1-7, Paul reminds the Colossians to hold on to the truth of Christ's deity and complete sufficiency. In verses 8-23, he goes on to tell them what they should avoid. It was unthinkable to Paul that any of these believers would be taken captive and led astray by any false doctrine.

- 23.** Tradition is that which is given from one to another. How can people miss the mark by relying only on man's tradition?

- 24.** Are there any traditions that you're passing down that are not Biblical? Are they okay if they aren't "Anti-Biblical"? Thoughts?

- 25.** How does all the fullness of Deity dwell in Christ in bodily form?

- 26.** What does John 1:16 tell us about His fullness?

When we are born again, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and are made complete (Colossians 2:10). One commentator wrote, "Believers are spiritually complete because they have fellowship with God. They are morally complete in that they recognize the authority of God's will. They are mentally complete because they know the truth about ultimate reality." Amen, brother!

In our last section, Paul exhorts the Colossians to be free from vain philosophies and man-made traditions. He continues with the same thought, reminding them that their salvation does not need to be supplemented by any other philosophy or human work.

- 27.** How do verses 11-17 relate to the topic of the sufficiency of Christ?

The false teaching that was infiltrating the Colossian church was basically a combination of Judaism and pagan beliefs, such as oriental mysticism, astrology, and philosophy. We just learned from verse 10 that we are made “complete” in Him. We don’t need to observe any particular rites, dietary restrictions, or traditions to complete our salvation. We are a new creature, the old things passed away, behold, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17). These false teachers were insisting that the believers obey the Old Testament Law in order to be saved.

In the Old Testament, circumcision was a rite practiced by all Jewish boys on the 8th day after their birth (Leviticus 12:2-3). It was a sign he belonged to the nation of Israel (Genesis 17:10-14). Some began to believe that circumcision was enough to save. We know that circumcision was only the outward demonstration that man was born sinful and needed cleansing. John MacArthur writes, “The cutting away of the male’s foreskin on the reproductive organ was a graphic way to demonstrate that man needed cleansing at the deepest level of his being. No other part of the human anatomy so demonstrates that depth of sin, inasmuch as that is the part of man that produces life – and all that he produces is sinful. From the beginning, circumcision was used symbolically to illustrate the desperate need man had to cleansing of the heart. Deuteronomy 30:6 adds, ‘Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, in order that you may live.’ God was always concerned with their heart, not with the physical rite.”

28. Why is the Lord more concerned with the internal than the external?

29. How are we buried with Christ in baptism? How are we raised with Him?

When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood for us, He cancelled our huge debt of sin. Jesus not only took our sins to the cross (1 Peter 2:24), He also took the Law to the cross and nailed it there forever, so that we would no longer be under its dominion (Romans 7:6). (How dare the false teachers try to use it against them!) We are now under the Law of Grace (Romans 6:14).

30. What else did Jesus accomplish on the cross, according to verse 15?

31. How did Jesus:

- a. disarm principalities and powers?
- b. make a public spectacle of them?
- c. triumph over them?

32. What kind of yoke were the legalists trying to impose on the Colossian believers in verse 16? How is legalism a bondage?

33. Is there any ritual, dietary restriction, or other legalistic practice that you have been placing yourself under to make you appear or feel “more holy”?

Verse 17 tells us that the Law is only a shadow, but reality came with Christ. The Law was only pointing to the great things that were coming! Warren Wiersbe said, “People who religiously observe diets and days give an outward semblance of spirituality, but these practices cannot change their hearts. Legalism is a popular thing because you can ‘measure’ your spiritual life – and even brag about it. But this is a far cry from measuring up to Christ! (Ephesians 4:13)”

This section reminds us how blessed we are to have been forgiven. Forgiveness was very important to Paul. He brings up the subject of forgiveness in each of the first three chapters of Colossians (1:13-14; 2:13; 3:12-13). God has forgiven each of us all our trespasses. Forgiveness is a gift, which is bountiful (Ephesians 1:7), and certain (1 John 1:9). I hope that you have confessed your sins to the Lord and asked for forgiveness. He wants to wipe out the handwriting of requirements that are against you!

34. According to verses 18-23, what else can the Colossians be free from?

The word “defraud” means “to declare unworthy of a prize.” It was like the heretics were acting as referees, trying to disqualify the Colossians for not obeying their rules.

35. The heretics were also teaching them that they should worship angels. What does Scripture say about that?

- a. 1 Timothy 2:5
- b. Matthew 4:10
- c. Isaiah 6:1-4
- d. Revelation 19:10, 22:9

The false teachers were also gaining new revelation by visions they were getting. We know that God has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

36. To whom are we supposed to hold fast? Why?

In verses 20-23, Paul comes against the teaching of Asceticism, which is a religion that teaches spirituality through self-denial. These rules didn’t come from God, but from man. There’s no reason we should be intimidated by false human philosophy, legalism, asceticism, or any other “cism.” We are told to “hold fast to Christ,” in whom we are made complete.

- 37.** Are you holding fast to Christ, or are you being brought under the power of worldly philosophies? Are you practicing “self-denial” to be more spiritual?

Now is the time to get specific. We know that Paul is exhorting the Colossians to depend and trust in Christ completely. We don’t need anyone or anything else. He is above all, in all, and through all. His death brought transformation, pardon, victory, and power. Even though we wrestle against the forces of evil, we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. He should be number one in our life.

- 38.** Is Christ preeminent in your life? If you are a mom, do you look to Him for guidance, knowing that He has all the answers?

- 39.** If you are married, are you striving to be the best wife you can be, knowing that with God, all things are possible?

- 40.** As a Christian woman, have you brought your life under the rule of Jesus? Are you finding your joy and fulfillment in Him, or are you looking in other places?

The emphasis in this chapter seems to be warnings. Let’s take heed to those warnings, daily checking our hearts to see if we are finding our sufficiency in Christ alone.

Let’s not add any substitutes for Jesus’ work on the cross, shall we?



**Make a joyful noise
unto the Lord.**