

# COLOSSIANS

## ALIVE IN CHRIST

H

### (3) "Remaining Strong in What We Have Been Given in Christ" HIGHLIGHT: Colossians 2:1-23 NLT

*Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.*

#### Colossians 2 (NLT)

##### vv. 1-23

**1** I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. **2** I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. **3** In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**4** I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. **5** For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong.

**6** And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. **7** Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

**8** Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. **9** For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. **10** So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

**11** When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. **12** For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

**13** You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. **14** He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. **15** In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

**16** So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. **17** For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. **18** Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, **19** and

they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

**20** You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, **21** “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? **22** Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. **23** These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

## EXPLAIN

E

*The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone’s understanding of the Word.*

It showed up on my email early this morning: “Don’t fall for this Prime Day scam.” Fast-talkers and the internet have robbed many people of their hard-earned assets. It may be a savings account. It may be the deed to your house. And it’s not new. In a sense, Paul was warning the Christians in Colossae to not fall for the scam of the false teachers. They may or may not lose their worldly wealth, but if they fall for the “well-crafted arguments” of these false teachers who say *Christ is not enough* they could lose some (or all) the benefits they received from living in Christ. ‘It’s a scam; don’t fall for it,’ says Paul.

### Colossians 2:1-23

**vv.1-3** Paul knew well what it was like to be “outside of Christ”—even though he was very religious at the time. The possibility of going back to his old life was unthinkable. He **agonized** (like an athlete playing through the pain) for the Colossians, **the church at Laodicea, and many other believers**. It broke his heart that these young Christians could be so easily scammed into giving up their **confidence in Christ** (the One who gave them the gift of mercy and grace by His work on the cross [see 1:15-20]) and returning to the slavery of following a system of rules and regulations that would help them work their way to God. Later Paul reminds them “they are complete through their union with Christ” (2:10). These false teachers did not rob the jewelry store, they simply came in changed all the price tags. Costume jewelry appears to be more valuable than diamonds. Bad deal! Paul’s first note of **encouragement** was **knitting together strong ties of love** (see *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12*). Question: am I putting my total trust in Christ through Whom God created the universe? Or am I drinking the polluted water of “Jesus, plus...”?

**vv.4-5** Paul warns the Colossians about overconfidence. “Don’t be **deceived with well-crafted arguments**,” he said the same to the church at Corinth (1 *Corinthians 10:12*).

**vv.6-10** The way to avoid deception is by becoming so familiar with the truth that you can immediately spot a counterfeit. **Let your roots grow down into [Christ]**. Be careful of the soil into which you are planting yourself. Healthy trees wither (and sometimes die) because their roots are in soil contaminated by herbicides. **Let your life be built on Christ**—“the solid Rock; all other ground is sinking sand.” Stay grounded in the truth of God’s Word—every day. Anything else is **empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world**. The hope of the world is not in education (though that is good), not in government (though that is necessary), and not in improved living conditions (though that is humanitarian). None of these change the heart. Only Jesus changes the human heart because **the fullness of God lives in Him**.

**vv.11-15** Jesus created the universe; He can rebuild your heart. He begins that process **when you come to Christ**. He does **spiritual surgery (circumcision) by cutting away our sinful nature**. The old person was **buried with Christ when we were baptized and we were raised to new life because we trusted the mighty power of God who raised Jesus from the dead**. Three of the most beautiful verses in the Bible are vv.13-15. **We were dead, then God made us alive with Christ—He forgave all our sins**. What is forgiveness? (1) Forgiveness is the **cancelation of the record of charges against us**. What is the charge: lies, murders, lusts, hatred, greed, haughtiness, envy...and the list goes on. We are guilty. It's all right there. But through Christ and His work on the cross, God **cancel**s the record. One picture of that cancellation is God putting a big X across the page and writing "paid in full" at the bottom. And that is wonderful. But the reminder is still there—even if the charges have been X-ed out. Paul use a word here that means the record has been erased. Not only has the debt been paid, but there is no record of the debt at all. Nothing but a clean page. That's what David meant in Psalm 32:2 - "What joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt." God doesn't keep rolling it around in His mind, and He doesn't want us doing it either! There is no record of my guilt—it's GONE! And if that is not enough, God takes that blank page and **nails it to the cross**. In Christ's body on the cross any hint that there was ever a record of wrongs has been crucified and buried at the bottom of the sea. Leave your past in the past. God has! **In this way, [Christ] disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross**. As the song reminds us: we are redeemed and we need to stop fighting the fight that's already been won! Hallelujah!

**vv.16-19** Not only do we need to stop heaping condemnation on ourselves (we have been forgiven and purified [1 John 1:8-9]) but we also need to **stop allowing others to condemn us for not following all the rules** they have laid out that is supposed to make us better Christians. My job is to "follow Jesus" (2:6)—not those who claim to have the secrets of Christian living.

**vv.20-23** Paul says it again: *don't be scammed. Don't buy costume jewelry because someone has put an expensive price tag on it*. Don't give up the diamonds for the cheap stuff. **You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from these rules and human teachings that may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires**. In fact, they may even feed your pride—what a good person am I!

I think Paul would pray David's prayer: "Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again...Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me" (Psalm 51:7-8a, 10). Don't let anyone scam you into trying to do what only God can do. Don't lose what you have been given in Christ.

## APPLY

A

*Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.*

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. In a few sentences, how would you summarize Colossians 2?

3. What does it mean that, "In [Christ] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"?
4. What are some of the arguments we see today that try to add to or take away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
5. Read Colossians 2:6-7 again. What do you need to do to continue following Him? How can you continue to overflow with thankfulness?

## R

## RESPOND

*The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.*

1. Consider if you are living by God's expectation of you or man's expectation of you (or even your own). Search the scriptures this week for what the Bible says about God's expectation of you. Start the day by reflecting on God's truth in this area of your life and pray that through the power of the Spirit he will give you the grace to live according to **his** truth.
2. What are expectations you put on other people? Do you find your thinking things like "I just wish so-and-so would do this" and "So-and-so just doesn't seem to care about the things that are important to me"? Are you placing undue expectations on others? Think back to the previous question, what does it mean for that person to be obedient to God? How does it change what you think about them?