
Colossians 2:6-10 *Life with Christ!*

General Idea: Do not allow anything or anyone to come between you and Christ! It is enough to accept Christ as Savior for salvation; however, attaining spiritual maturity in the Christian life takes further steps. Christ must also be LORD—first and foremost—in one’s life! We must continue to live in obedience and give Him glory. We need to grow deeper, formulating deep roots into Him and His Word from which to gain our nourishment and substance. In that way, we can continue to grow in our faith and be strong and vigorous for the faith as well as be disciplined and apply what we learn to take root even further and deeper. Consequently, our lives are filled in Christ and we will flow His Truth, love, and appreciation onto others. The key to all of this is having gratitude for Who and what Christ has done for us. When we do this, no one can lead us astray; we will not buy into empty philosophies, but we must always be on guard against false teachings and harmful ideas, for this is nonsense and even dangerous to one’s faith and community. These come from evil thinking and pride, not from Christ. All we need is His fullness—and we already have that, for Christ lives in us and we are complete in Him. He is Lord over all—over any human ruler or anything in the universe.

Contexts and Background:

The Colossians had received the True Gospel, but now they were diluting it with falsehoods, missing the main thing. This passage is about the theme of “paying it forward,” meaning we receive a gift that is meant to be shared and passed on. We benefit from it and we get to continually use it, but we also get to show others so they can take it and play it and pass it on and so forth. This is how most sports are played. The basketball is played forward, the ball is passed on, and all work as a team to further the game. Christianity is very similar with the exception that we all have the ball and we all keep it in play to one another while also passing it to the spectators. The reason Paul used this metaphor is because the Colossians had become complacent and believed that *I received Christ so I can rest in my laurels and do nothing with my faith now*. Saved? Yes, perhaps. But what good are we in the kingdom when we do nothing to further the gospel or are not obedient to His Word? The solution to a great Christian life is to play it forward, to be grateful for Christ’s work on our behalf, so we want to eagerly play on with the faith. Being grounded in thankfulness is essential to our spiritual growth, to building healthy relationships, and for enjoyment in life.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Receive*. As a term, this word means to pass on traditions and continue in them. Here, it refers to forming a good habit and being constant. In context, this is about receiving God’s saving grace and His precepts, not man’s agendas and traditions!
- *Walk/Live in Him*. Means going about the business of God or walking in righteousness, to “*halakah*” (Lev. 26:3; Ezek. 36:27) as to regulate your life to behave according to what you believe. It is to know Christ, live for Him, and pursue Christ further beyond our salvation. To abide in His strength and not ours. We are to be obedient and constant with our learning and growth in Christ so it is the tradition of God empowering us, learning His precepts or living and relating to God, self, and others, not the traditions of men, who deceive us (Mark. 12:38; Rom. 6:4; 8:1; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:1; 2 Cor. 5:7; 10:3; 12:18; Gal. 5:16-25; 6:16; Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8-15; Phil. 3:10-18; Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 John 1:6-7; 2:6; 2 John 6; 3 John 3-4).
- *Rooted*. This is an agricultural image meaning God is the planter and Farmer; we are to take root in Him, meaning we are to obey Him. We have to grow by learning and applying and sharing God’s principles and love. This was also a Jewish metaphor for receiving God’s blessing for being obedient. If they followed God, He would allow the people to take root in the promised land (Ruth 4:11; Psalm 28:5; 51:18; 69:35; 147:2; Jer. 1:10; 18:7; 24:6; 31:4; 45:4; 1 Cor. 3:5-17; Eph. 3:17).

- *Built up.* God is the builder. We are to receive Christ as our foundation and continually adhere to His teachings. Then, we are to remain obedient so we can continue to live and serve in the Kingdom. It is more than just acceptance of the Truth and teaching about Christ; it means that we have to be affected and infused as His saving faith rescues us, and then reach deep in our being so our minds, will, and lives make Christ primary in us.
- *Established.* Accepting Christ as Lord and Savior is the primary platform and only entrance to salvation and the practice of Christianity. This also means we have a vital union in Christ, and our call is to be united with other believers cooperating together (1 Cor. 15:1-5; 1 Thess. 2:13).
- *Just as you were taught.* Meaning to continue to live in Christ. This refers to being mentored and disciplined in the Truth of Christianity and solid doctrine, and then passing on the message of God to someone else. This is not about tradition or customs or historical theology in a church. Rather, it is receiving the good news of Christ and then doing something with it, engaging the Word and Truth and passing it along—*playing it forward* (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:1).
- *Overflowing/abounding with thankfulness.* Our growth in Christ is motivated by the magnitude of what Christ has done for us so we respond from our indebtedness and gratitude. In this way, we can stay grounded in His Word and Truth. (Col. 3:1-17)
- *Takes you captive/cheat you/spoil.* Meaning to be robbed or carried off as a spoil or booty or plunder of war. Beware not to be led astray as you will not only miss God's blessing, but also become captive to the slavery of sin and error. This comes from the opposite of gratitude; it is not being thankful to Christ, so we disrespect Him and thus are motivated by hurt, resentment, frustration, or guilt, and more likely to buy into what is misleading and false.
- *Philosophy.* Greek Philosophy was "the love of wisdom" which primarily focused on the pursuit of truth. Here, it is pursuing what is hollow, as in *not rational or beneficial or true*. Human reasoning and intellectualism are finite and flawed whereas God's is infinite and True. Paul uses the arguments and language of Greek Philosophy to refute irrationality and occult practices. We are to love Christ and His wisdom and not the world's or what is error. There were many different movements then, just as today, lobbying for our attention and influence. Paul's point is that our influence and source for knowledge is very important, and we must make sure it comes from God and not trends, feelings, or humanistic ideas. This does not apply to academic discipline; rather, this is the "garbage-in-equals-garbage-out" thinking. What we put in our minds will drastically affect our virtue, values, character, and spiritual growth in how we are and behave in the world, either glorifying our Lord or tearing down His Church (2 Cor. 10:5; Gal. 4:3; 1 Tim. 6:20).
- *Tradition.* Here, means repeating bad practices formed from bad ideas—those without merit, thought, or Scriptural guidance. The Pharisees were famous for making their own traditions then forcing and conniving so others would obey them, thus missing what God had actually intended. Jesus responds to them in Matthew 23. Our point is not to make up traditions that remove or distract us from His principles. We are to see the Church as His and us as the servants; we worship and placate Christ, lift Him up, and never allow our ways to become "front and center." Thus, we must make sure and certain, as Paul urges, that our traditions are from Christ, that they are true, mutually beneficial, and used to further His Gospel and Kingdom.
- *Basic principles/rudiments.* This is another Greek philosophical term referring to the elements of the universe, "elemental matter." It can also refer to the forces of nature or angelic beings because some Jews and Greeks believed that these controlled the working of the universe and our fate. This also refers to spiritual beings' tyrannical power plays, seeking to manipulate. This does not refer to the Old Testament or foundations of truth; rather that the simple message of the Gospel is far more profound

than any philosophy or great human reason could ever be, either now or in the future (Gal. 4:3-9; Col. 2:18-21; Heb. 5:12; 2 Pet. 3:10).

- *Empty deceit/vain deceit.* Meaning what is infective and meaningless. This is Paul's passionate and eloquent rebuttal to false teachers—then, now, and/or any who dare to come: *you are fools!* God hates false teachers and those who dare to manipulate His children. They will not only be unacceptable, they will be severally judged. The pursuit of any sin will have a cost that we can't pay; we will be left empty, hurt, and living with the dire consequences thereof. Our fate is in Christ, not in our works, ideas, or nature. Who Christ is and what He has done are far more profound and impacting than any philosophy or belief (Psalm 148: 2-4; Gal. 4:3-9; Col. 2:20)!
- *Fullness of the Godhead/Deity.* Means the essence of the Divine nature of God. Here, it means we are "complete" in Christ, by His work alone. In Greek philosophy, this meant being filled with God's rule (Philo). The stoics believed they were filled with all things, a form of *pantheism*. The Jews saw this as the heavens that surrounded God's rule or throne; others said it is God's Spirit that indwells us, while others stated it was Divine Wisdom. Here, it means that God is not all things (pantheism); rather, He encompasses and fills all things (Omnipresence). Paul was combating the false teachers who were saying we are not fully accepted by God, that we have to earn it through spiritual manipulation and knowledge seeking. Paul urges us to overcome our fears of not being worthy, because although we are not worthy, yet we can still receive His grace in full (John 1:14-16; Col. 1:19-20).
- *Dwells/lives.* This was a Greek term for *pantheism* that Paul turns around. For us, it means God fills and fulfills all things, not *pantheism*; rather, His rule and encompassing presence is all powerful and in all places (omnipresence, omnipotence).
- *Fullness/complete in Christ.* Meaning we have completeness in Him, and have access to God and His fullness including His wisdom and all we need for an abundant life through Christ (Eph. 1:3, 19-23; Col. 1:22)!
- *Principality/power/rule and authority.* This refers to angels and unseen beings that were worshiped and honored by the Greeks and even many Jews, allowing this mindset to penetrate the Church. God is God solely and completely, and we are complete in Him; there is no need or use for other "authorities!" In Christ, we have assurance with no condemnation and no separation (Rom 8:1, 31-39)! This means we are saved and do not need to fear having our sin, fears, and failures condemn us when we are in Christ! Nor do we need to search for more or better philosophies or information, because there is none better! Our joy must be built on nothing else but what Christ did for us, not because of joy or sufferings, but in spite of them (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 2:14-15; 10:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:3-4)! No power on earth or in the universe can conquer God in us!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Spiritual growth is not a mandate for our salvation; rather it is the "oughts" that we must do. We ought to know Christ more and grow in Him more because we have already received from Him. We ought to pray more, we ought to read His Bible more, and we ought to be in Bible study and under good teaching more. It is like being given the great Birthday present and then on that person's birthday, we do not even show up to his party. We can never *give* in the same manner Christ has given to us, but we can still respond out of a wondrous heart, fueled by His presence and our gratitude. It is a question of being thankful for what Christ did for us, and then not allowing the frustrations of life be either our fuel or prison. Rather, it is using His presence in us to employ and empower us. We are grounded to Christ by our trust, faith, and obedience—not by obligation, guilt, or any influences that surround us.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?

2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How is Christianity like receiving a gift that is meant to be shared and passed on?
2. What have you allowed to come between you and Christ? What caused this to happen? What did you learn? What will you do now?
3. Why is it that to be able to live a deep and growing Christian life, it is not enough to stop at accepting Christ as Savior? What else do we need to do?
4. What does it mean to you that Christ must also be LORD (not about salvation, but rather concerning our response to Christ)? How can this mindset and purpose help you live an abundant life?
5. What has helped you realize the need to grow deeper in your faith? How have you created deep roots into Jesus and His Word? How does this help you gain your nourishment, your sustenance for daily living as well as spiritual growth?
6. Who has modeled the confidence in faith to you? How has that helped you to handle life and adversities? How and who can you model this to? How and why does mutual support flow into confidence and faith production? How can your church do this better?
7. How have others helped you be strong and vigorous for the faith? How have you done so with others? What about being a disciple? How does discipleship help you grow and apply what you have learned to grow even further and deeper?
8. How does appreciation for others help you be content in your relationships? Why is it that the key to healthy relationships and spiritual growth is having gratitude for Who and what Christ has done for you?
9. Have you ever bought into empty philosophy or false teachings? How does having appreciation for our Lord Jesus Christ keep you from being led astray?
10. What does it take for most Christians, maybe even you, to realize that all we need to live an abundant life is Christ's fullness, and that we already have all we need because we are complete in Him?
11. What do you need to do better in order to continue to live in obedience and give Christ the glory?
12. What can you do to be on guard against false teachings and harmful ideas? How can your church teach that these are nonsense and even dangerous to one's faith and community?