



## Colossians 2:1-10

### Christ Above All

Christ Jesus the Lord is the greatest affirmation of the deity, humanity and sovereignty of Christ.

The apostle Paul was deeply concerned for the Church at Colossae because she was threatened from the inside by false teaching. In love he exposed the danger that was threatening the church. Like a skilled surgeon he exposed the life threatening cancer and prescribed the only cure.

The prescription is loyalty to Jesus Christ. Christ was all the church needed.

How strange in our day many people go off searching the religious cults and mystery religions for a deeper spiritual life when the key to fulfilment in Christian living is to deepen our loyalty to Christ.

To be a Christian is to be in fellowship with Christ. The Christian life is an intimate love relationship with Christ Jesus. It is not a commitment to a culture or traditions or a denomination. It is a vital union with Christ. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6) is the key to a vibrant living Christian life.

There were believers in the church at Colossae who were being distracted and led away from the all-sufficiency of Christ.

### PAUL'S GOAL IN THE MINISTRY (2:1-5)

The apostle Paul stressed this great secret: Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). That is the secret of Christianity. It is Christ living His life in and through you to God's glory.

Paul said in effect, the mystery is out. It is an open secret. Go to the house tops and shout: Christ the hope of glory! In the first century the word mystery was a truth undiscoverable except by divine revelation. The great mystery is that the believer has a spiritual union in Christ. That which was once a secret has now been fully revealed in the good news of Jesus Christ. The content of this mystery is Christ in you. It is not found in some cultic religious leader, or secret formulas, or philosophies. It is Christ! It is Christ indwelling in His people. He is the grounds for the expectation of glory.

The goal of His ministry was to proclaim Christ Jesus, "admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every

man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (Colossians 1:28-29).

Paul's struggle, like every God-called pastor is to preach, teach, and admonish every person by the mighty working energy of Christ in him. Our goal is to present every man complete in Christ. Christ is the one who gives us the strength to accomplish the superhuman task. If anyone thinks he can do God's work in his human strength, personal power, charismatic personality, denominational programs, etc. he will fail. The fruit will prematurely fall from the tree on the ground and rot. It will not receive the blessings of God. This was why Paul was in agony for these believers at Colosse.

### ***Paul's agony over believers (vv. 1-3)***

In the opening words of Colossians chapter two the apostle Paul opens his heart and shares with the church his struggle for them. He had never been to the city before and had never seen most of them. I have had a ministry for almost fifty years with many people in different parts of the world whom I have never met face to face. I love them and have given many hours of preparation and prayer for them. For many years my Bible teaching ministry to our radio audience was in over a hundred countries and we received letters from listeners from many of those countries. Today these Bible studies are read by pastors and Christians in many counties of the world. The apostle Paul wrote out of compassion and love for churches in the Lycos valley.

He felt agony (*agon*) for these believers because their relationship with Christ was being threatened. Paul could not go to Colosse because he was under house arrest and chained to a Roman soldier in Rome. But he could agonize over them in prayer.

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face" (Colossians 2:1). He is deeply anxious for their spiritual safety and growth. Pastors have every reason to be deeply concerned when every religious fad comes to town. Just because a TV evangelist has a new video or tape or book does not mean it is Biblically sound in its teaching.

Paul felt the responsibility of being a Christian leader. He knew that people were watching him to see how he handled the prison life and the stress of the ministry. In a companion letter sent to the church at Philippi shortly before this letter, Paul said, "I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well-known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Philippians 1:12-14). Paul understood that God was in control of the circumstances and He was using it for His glory and Paul's good. All eyes are watching you and me to see how we handle life. Let's make sure that God is honored and glorified by the way we live.

### ***Paul encourages the believers***

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Paul's inward struggle is "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3). It is the picture of a pastor's heart.

All of the believers in the Lycus Valley had been exposed to the Gnostic heresy. Leaders from the churches in the area had visited Paul in prison and had given him a report on the churches. He wants to encourage their hearts. The word *heart* includes the intellect, the will, and emotions. It stands for the whole person. The Greek *heart* never refers only to the feelings as our English does. He is afraid they will lose heart. He wants to encourage them. In Paul's day the word meant a military leader talking to his men to strengthen their morale and willingness to go to war. Paul wants these believers to be filled with courage.

The basis for such a strong heart is being knit together in love. It is the picture of two people walking together. A community walking together in love for the Lord Jesus and one another is extremely rich and full of assurance.

Why all of this concern? "I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument" (Colossians 2:4). There were slick and sophisticated false teachers who had infiltrated the church. Their reasoning sounded convincing, but it was far from the truth. They used the speech of thieves who were trying to fast talk them into a false Christology.

"For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5). Like good soldiers these believers were holding their ground and faithful to Christ. They remained loyal to Christ.

### ***God's mystery is Christ***

Christ is a great treasure house where you find wisdom and knowledge. In Christ Jesus all these spiritual treasures are stored away; come and discover them and enrich yourself. In Christ we have access to unlimited stores of wisdom and truth. Why then do we settle for less? Christ is the full complete revelation of God to men.

Our spiritual wealth comes from the full assurance of understanding of a true knowledge of God's mystery is Christ Jesus. In Christ is found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of God. Christ is the mystery of God, and in Christ is locked up or hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Do you want to know what God is like? Take a long hard look and examine Christ. Do you want an intimate knowledge of God? Look to Christ.

All wisdom is hidden in Christ. It is a wisdom hidden from the common gaze of men and is a secret revealed by God in Christ.

The false teachers claimed a secret knowledge that only their initiated could know. It was their secret and you could know it only by following their rituals and ceremonies.

The true knowledge that leads to God is found in Christ Jesus, and in no other.

### **LOYALTY TO CHRIST JESUS (2:6-8)**

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"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Colossians 2:6-7)

### ***How did you receive Christ?***

That is an important question? Let's suppose you died today and stood before the Lord God and He asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven? How would you answer Him? What would you say? How did you receive Christ Jesus?"

The only adequate response is Jesus Christ died for my sins on the cross as my substitute and I have put my trust in Him alone for eternal life. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The apostle Paul wrote, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . . "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). What must I do to be saved? "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved . . ." (Acts 16:31).

The apostle Peter gave an invitation to one of his sermons saying, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We are justified by faith apart from works of the Law as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone.

In Colossians 2:6 the apostle Paul stresses, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." There are many cults in our day who teach that Christ is just one good man among many. His religion is just one of many ways to get to heaven. He was a nice prophet and teacher, but my ideas are just as good as his. Let's combine all the great teaching of world religions and pick and choose what is appropriate for me. That is not what Jesus offered, nor did the early church. That is why Christianity is offensive to many people. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him is our responsibility as believers. The word translated "received" referred to the passing on of tradition as when a teacher passed on his teaching to his students (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3). However, in this passage Paul has in mind the day when these believers received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. To be a Christian is to have Christ. It is to be in fellowship with the living Lord. Christianity is Christ and to be a Christian is to have received Christ, the Lord.

When we confess "Christ Jesus is Lord" we are declaring that He is the anointed Messiah, the Son of God. He is our Savior who came and died for our sins. Jesus means Yahweh saves. He is our sovereign Lord who reigns over our lives and the universe.

Christ Jesus the Lord affirms the deity of Christ the anointed of God that Judaism denied, His humanity as Jesus that the Gnostics denied, and His sovereignty as Lord that the Roman cults denied.

Paul here meets the two forms of Gnostic heresy about the Person of Christ (the recognition of the historical Jesus in His actual humanity against the Docetic Gnostics, the identity of the Christ or Messiah with this historical Jesus against the Cerinthian Gnostics, and the acknowledgment of His as Lord), notes A. T.

historical Jesus against the Cerinthian Gnostics, and the acknowledgment of His as Lord), notes A. T. Robertson. The false teachers tried to manipulate the Christians to agree to additions to Christ. The implication is Christ is insufficient. You need Christ plus something else. The apostle Paul said enough of this nonsense; Christ is all sufficient. Christ Jesus is Lord! ”

The Colossian heresy was basically Jewish with elements of pagan mysticism that made its appeal by considering the initiated as spiritually elite. These elements in the first century developed into the elaborate philosophical-religious Gnosticism of the second and third centuries.

Jesus Christ is Lord. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:21). What the believer has in Christ Jesus is completely adequate.

Paul describes healthy believers who are firmly rooted as a tree, built up as a building, increasingly stable in their faith, and constantly producing fruit of thankfulness. The born again believer is firmly rooted and continues to produce the evidence of that spiritual regeneration. The believer "having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Colossians 2:7). A characteristic of Christian maturity is a thankful attitude. You cannot grumble and be thankful. You cannot complain and be full of thankfulness. You cannot criticize and be overflowing with thankfulness.

The apostle Paul uses passive participles, meaning these things have been done to you. You don't do it; God does it. You have been rooted in Christ. You have been planted in Christ and those strong roots will keep you firm. You have been built up in Christ and are growing up in Him. Your faith is growing strong. You have been strengthened in the faith. This causes us to overflow with thankfulness.

The metaphor the apostle Paul used was walking in Christ. Go on walking in Him. The idea is to continue to live your life in Christ. Christ is the way; walk with Him. Live as men and women who have a vital union with Christ. Walk in a manner of dependence upon Him.

Then the apostle changed metaphors in verse seven and says "having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude" (Colossians 2:7). He mixes his metaphors because of the rich ideas he is communicating to his readers. We walk as live men, rooted like a tree with deep roots in Him, and a house built on a solid rock. Christ is both the ground in which the root is held and the solid foundation upon which the building rests.

Having been rooted is a perfect participle suggesting something that took place in the past and has present effects. You were born again and as a result you are continuing to be rooted and grounded in Him. He is your source of life for spiritual growth. If your spiritual roots go deep into His soil you will not be easily uprooted.

He is stressing the solid foundation of our faith in Christ Jesus. Our Christian life is a continuous process, daily living in and through Christ. Yes, there is a need for the study of Biblical truth. There can be no spiritual growth without the study of His Word; otherwise the believer is cast upon what ever current fad washes ashore.

The emphasis the apostle Paul is making is to walk with Christ not just with Him. Christ is the living Lord and He has redeemed us and lives in us to strengthen and transform us.

***Essentials in the Christian Life***

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

See to it that no one takes you captive . . . The word captive is the idea to carry off as a booty or as a captive, rob someone. Don't let someone carry you away from the truth into slavery. These false teachers would entrap innocent believers.

This is the only place where the word philosophy is used in the New Testament. Here is not referring to the examination of the basic questions regarding God, man and the significance of life. Paul has in mind Gnostic speculations of the mystery religions. Paul describes it here as empty deception. These false teachers are deceitful. It was a mixture of legalism, asceticism and mysticism and Christianity. It was empty, without truth and therefore without power.

The danger was these believers were being deceived by fine sounding arguments that were empty of truth. They were being "deceived," literally "to reason beside something." There was something being thrown along side the truth that looked much like truth, but was deceiving. It was not the truth. Truth and error sometimes look a lot alike, but totally wrong. Counterfeit hundred dollar bills look a lot alike the real thing.

A well ordered disciplined spiritual life helps to guard against deception. Lazy minds open the door to being deceived. Bad theology invites sloppy spirituality. The cults that knock on your door a looking for Christians who have no idea of what is true or false.

A firm faith in Jesus Christ will chase the cults away. The secret cults in Colossae degraded Christ. They cheated people out of true knowledge of Christ just like the Gnostic societies in our day. The apostle Paul is not opposed to true knowledge of any kind. He is opposed to anything that would cheat people out of knowing and having a true relationship with Christ. Christ will stand up to any true knowledge and wisdom.

They made the elemental spirits, not Christ, the center of their religious system. Christ alone deserves the supreme place in our thought and worship. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

A simple formula that helps us get our priorities straight is Christ plus \_\_\_\_\_ is salvation. Christ plus \_\_\_\_\_ equals eternal life. The correct evaluation is Christ plus nothing is eternal life. Salvation and eternal life comes as God's free gift received through faith in Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. Christ plus nothing. Christ is all —and all you need. You do not need anything or anyone else.

## **FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD IN CHRIST (2:9-10)**

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10). Paul plainly asserts the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ in corporeal form.

### ***The apostle Paul stresses the full deity of Christ.***

Do not let anyone cheat you out of the truth that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. He is God of very God. All that God is, Jesus Christ is. All that makes God, God, Jesus Christ is.

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). In Christ alone the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells. Deity has taken up permanent residence in Christ. It is a continuous

fullness of the Godhead dwells. Deity has taken up permanent residence in Christ. It is a continuous permanent dwelling in Christ. In Christ the fullness of deity permanently resides. It has found its permanent settled home. In Christ dwells all the attributes of God. There is nothing in God's nature which is not fully present in Christ. Everything that is the very essence of God is found in Christ. The very total of everything that makes God God is found in Christ. He did not give us His deity when he became a man. It continues in His resurrected bodily form.

Phillips translates: "It is in Him that God gives a full and complete expression of Himself."

Pause for a moment and ask yourself: Is there anyone or anything in my spiritual life that diminishes or replaces Christ and his saving work? Are you putting a man, a pastor, a friend, a religious leader, denominational leader in the exclusive place of Christ? Are you adding someone or something to Christ?

It is in Christ alone there resides the absolute deity.

### ***The apostle Paul stresses the real humanity of Christ.***

Not only do we have the absolute deity of Christ revealed in this verse, but His perfect humanity as well. "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). This also a clear statement of the incarnation of Christ. In the glorified body of Christ all the plenitude of deity permanently dwells.

The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. The fullness of Deity resided permanently in the preincarnate Word, but not in bodily fashion. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:1-3). Replace the word "Word" with the name of Christ and you have the correct interpretation of this passage. However, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem the Word was clothed in human flesh. God became man. Yes, Christ is fully God—very God of very God. But He is also fully man. He is God-Man. A. T. Robertson wrote, "The actual deity of Christ is combined with his actual humanity in one person. All the attributes of God dwell in the Son of God who is also the Son of man, the incarnate Son of God. He adds, 'Jesus was the Son of God before the incarnation, when He became the Son of man. He took back to heaven with Him His humanity and so obtained more glory than ever (Phil. 2:5-11).'"

### ***The apostle Paul stresses the all-sufficiency of Christ.***

"And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:10).

Because Jesus Christ is God-Man and we have a vital union with Him, we share in His fullness. No, we do not become like little gods like the cults teach. We have a vital union with Him. This fullness is ours only as we are joined to Christ.

This perfection of Christ is not transfused to us, but as Calvin stresses, are resources from which we may be filled, that nothing be wanting to us. All of our spiritual needs are fully met in our vital union with Christ. Possessing Christ, we possess everything. All we need is found in Christ. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). It is in Christ that we are made full. Our fullness comes from Christ's fullness (John 1:16; Eph. 3:19; 4:13).

Christ meets a believer's needs out of the fullness of deity."

## **SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

***Because Jesus Christ is God He is supremely adequate to meet all our needs.***

The most important theological issue mankind faces is who is Jesus Christ?

The critical issue in life is what will you do with Jesus Christ? He is not going to go away. What you decide about Him will determine your eternal destiny.

***Because Jesus is God with us He is able to redeem us.***

We who were dead in our trespasses and sins have become partakers of divine nature by the new birth. "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Peter 1:4). Even so, we must always keep in mind that Christ is God's unique, only one of a kind Son.

***Because Jesus Christ is who He is there can be only one adequate response.***

"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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