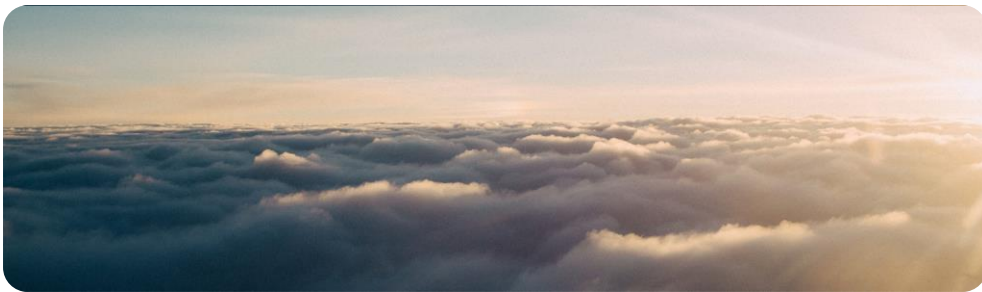


Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 6
CHRIST, OUR
WISDOM



“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6-7).

Practically speaking, that which is principally required of us when we encounter aberrant teaching is to remain in the faith that was delivered fully and finally to God’s people. This can be a hard concept to grasp, for often we read passages like Jude 3 and believe contending for the faith begins with learning all that we can about a false teaching or teacher in order to offer a refutation. Certainly there is a place for this as a part of what it means to give an answer for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:14–16). But the first step is always to be solidly grounded in the orthodoxy we have received, for only then will we have a foundation to stand upon as we combat error.

This is precisely Paul’s point in today’s passage as he exhorts the Colossian Christians — and all believers after them — to walk in Christ Jesus as they received him (Col. 2:6). The Greek verb translated “received” in this passage, *paralambanō*, is the same one used elsewhere to speak of the reception of the apostolic traditions about the life, work, and significance of Jesus (1 Cor.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

CORAM DEO

Discontent in our lives and envy of the blessings of others is the opposite of thanksgiving, and these things threaten to plunge us back into the darkness of sin.

John Calvin comments, “Ingratitude is very frequently the reason why we are deprived of the light of the gospel, as well as of other divine favors.”

Walking in thankfulness for salvation keeps us in the light of the gospel, which reminds us always how grateful to God we should be.¹

11:23; 2 Thess. 3:6). Such traditions are not secret through the centuries; rather, they comprise the teachings of the apostles, which are now known to us as the New Testament. So, then, Paul is exhorting believers in Colossians 2:6 to hold fast to the Christ spoken of by the prophets and apostles.

Walking in Christ Jesus is nothing less than submission to His lordship. Our Savior calls us to obedience, not that we might earn our salvation but that we may display our gratitude for His grace. If we love Him — if we have love for God poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:5) — we will keep His commandments, which are not burdensome (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). We will reflect the fact that we are in union with Christ, and we will grow in our knowledge and application of the gospel as we bow to Him as Lord (Col. 2:7). Matthew Henry writes, “If we live in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more intimately we shall live in him.”

Following Jesus as Lord does not manifest itself in checking off a list of rules, though our Savior has given us rules to follow. Instead, obedience to Jesus is a humble embracing of His way as we reflect on and proclaim our gratitude for His salvation (Col. 2:7). The true Christian life is, first and foremost, a life of thanksgiving.

OPEN IT



Describe a time when you were able to watch something grow or be built. What things did you learn about the growing or building process?

READ IT | Colossians 2:6-7

EXPLORE IT



1. What did Paul tell the Colossians to do after receiving Christ?
2. According to verse 7, how would the Colossians know how to grow in their relationship with Jesus?
3. What attribute should come as we grow in our relationship with Jesus?

GET IT

Paul begins this passage with the phrase “just as you accepted”—the assumption being that his readers have chosen to make Jesus their Lord and are actively following him. Paul then focuses on the “what next” of being a Christian. Faith isn’t confined to saying a simple prayer and deciding to follow Jesus. This is only the beginning of our journey with Jesus. Paul says that just as you received Christ into your life, you also must continue to grow in Christ and in your knowledge of Him. Without roots, the tree won’t live! This lesson is all about developing spiritual roots. For Paul, godly living is about being rooted and growing in Jesus—becoming a person who has a strong faith and is filled with gratitude.

4. When did you receive Christ as your Savior and Lord? What were the circumstances? What were your expectations about being a Christian?

“Rooted” suggests stability, nourishment and life derived from contact with Christ (**“in Him”**). As a tree’s roots sink deep into the earth for stability and nourishment, so too our faith should strike deep into the sound doctrine and solid food found in the words and ways of Jesus Christ.¹

5. What does it mean to be rooted in Christ? How would you explain this to someone who recently became a Christian?

6. Read Colossians 1:3-14. What are some words or phrases from this passage that relate to the idea of being rooted in Christ?

What is Paul attempting to communicate through these verses?

What ideas resonate most strongly with you, and why?

7. What are some practical steps you can take to strengthen your spiritual roots this week?

Established (GK. *Bebaioo*) means to make firm or reliable so as to warrant security and inspire confidence. The passive voice indicates that the effect of this establishing is the product of an outside source (the “divine passive,” the Holy Spirit). The present tense indicates that this is an ongoing process in every believer’s life. The more we walk in Him, totally trusting Him, nourished by His Word and our Teacher (His Spirit), the more established in the faith we become.

8. What does it mean to you that this “establishing” is something done by God, but requires that we are active in it at all times?

¹ http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_24-71.htm#2:6

“As you were **taught**” (GK. *Didasko*) refers to the passing on of information – often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth – contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see **Acts 17:21**). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated by that of Jesus, was basically expository. Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse. ²

9. Who have some of your teachers been that have impacted you and helped to grow you in your walk with Christ?

10. What was it about their teaching that was so helpful and valuable?

11. What are some ways this week you can take new steps to feed others spiritually?

12. How can we challenge each other to grow spiritually?

Group Exercise: Identify two or three ways we can help each other as a small group?

*In this letter, Paul emphasizes thankfulness several times. N.T. Wright, a well-respected Christian author, links this reference to worship: “**The church that truly learns to worship God is a church growing to full maturity**”.* ³

13. How do you link thanksgiving and worship?

² John MacArthur: **Matthew 1-7** Chicago: Moody Press

³ N.T. Wright *Colossians and Philemon*; Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

14. How is thanksgiving part of your personal time of worship? Corporate worship?

15. Why does Paul say that we ought to be overflowing with thankfulness?

How is being thankful connected to growing spiritually?

16. What does a person's life look like when the habit of thankfulness is lacking?

Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 7
**HUMAN
PHILOSOPHIES**



“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” (Col. 2:8).

Despite the fact that the Christians in Colossae were standing in the truth when Paul wrote his letter to them (Col. 2:5), there was still a need to be vigilant about the error that was being proclaimed in their city under the auspices of Christianity. So, having exhorted them to keep on walking in Christ, believing in Him as the express image of God and submitting to His lordship as the way to resist error and grow in the faith, the apostle warns the Colossians to beware of “philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition” in today’s passage (Col 2:8).

The apostle is not disparaging philosophy as such, and the tools this discipline gives us can be immensely helpful in formulating summaries of biblical doctrine. What he is condemning is philosophy that is based on human reason alone, apart from divine revelation. Moreover, the term philosophy in the first century had a broader connotation than it does in our day—it could be used to describe

COLOSSIANS 2:8-10

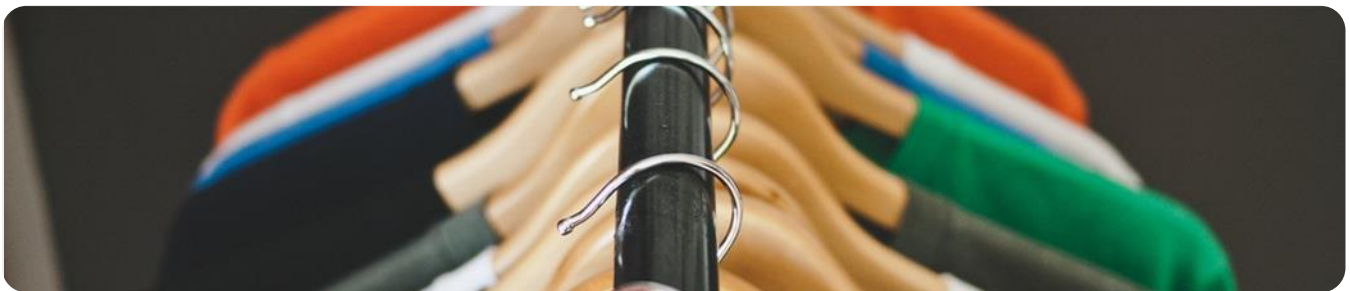
CORAM DEO

God prescribed food laws and other ritualistic observances for old covenant Israel, so we know that these practices are not inherently evil. They only become wrong when they become ends in themselves (1 Sam. 15:22–23). We might not be tempted to follow certain food laws today, but we are tempted to think that real spirituality is tied to specific forms of personal devotions, avoiding certain movies, never gambling, and so on.¹

nearly any kind of belief and not just the systemized thinking of the Greek philosophers. In Colossians 2:8, Paul is referring to false religious instruction, specifically the erroneous teaching being proclaimed in Colossae. Because this “instruction” did not exalt Christ (as God did), it was empty and worthless. Like the emperor in the old story, those promoting such lies had no clothes—the superior Christian life that they claimed to be wearing was nonexistent, made of that which is unreal, making promises it could not keep.

Today’s passage describes the errors taught in Colossae as according to “elemental spirits of the world,” a translation of the Greek word *stoicheia*, which had several meanings in the ancient world. Paul seems to use it here for the “gods” of the nations, the patron protectors of particular geographical locales. As believers, we know that such “gods” are nothing more than demons who enslave those whom they are supposed to liberate (1 Cor. 10:1–22). Colossians 2:16–23 indicates that the false teachers in Colossae advocated, among other things, keeping food laws and following a specific calendar as the key to holiness. These teachings were according to the “elemental spirits”—demons—because evil powers used such things to excite sin in people, not because ritual calendars and dietary regulations are inherently evil. Traditions like these are sinful only if we think salvation is in them or if we impose them on others.

OPEN IT



Describe a time when you were duped into “buying or doing something” because someone else talked you into it.

READ IT | Colossians 2:8-10

EXPLORE IT



1. What two things were taking the Colossians captive?
2. From where does such false teaching come?
3. How much of God's deity does the Son possess?
4. According to verse 10, how much authority does Jesus have?

GET IT

See To It

Paul gives a serious warning for continual vigilance, for you to keep your "spiritual radar" continually on high alert. Paul is saying we need to keep our "spiritual antennae" in the "receiving mode" with the filter of discernment turned "on" so that we can filter out the wisdom of man. An unguarded mind, even of a believer, is subject to deceit, misunderstanding, and confusion, which inevitably results in false doctrine and false (sinful) living.¹

5. In verse 8 we get the first real glimpse of the heresy being taught to the Colossians. What do we learn about it?

¹ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_28-15.htm

6. What connection can be made between the perils in verse 8 and his emphasis in the preceding verses (6-7) on making spiritual progress?

7. Paul is deeply concerned with false teaching taking the Colossians captive. Why are we so casual when it comes to defending our self against false teaching?

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

8. What philosophies today diminish Christ's supremacy and sufficiency in our lives?

What specific principles or truths do these philosophies claim are true?

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 can you do to be on guard against false teachings and harmful ideas?

How can your church help you to see that such teachings are nonsense and even dangerous to one's faith and community?

² R. J. Krejcir Ph.D. *Into Thy Wor* http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_28-15.htm#2:8d Ministries www.intothyword.org/

*“The false teaching is described, first, in terms of its source—**human tradition**, and, second, in terms of its content—**elemental spirits and not according to Christ**” Tradition usually serves merely to perpetuate error. In our own day, a common argument for evolution is the false assertion that it is “what scientists have always believed.” If a new Christian from a distant mission field were to visit many of our churches, he would probably be astounded at the ideas and practices we have that cannot be supported by God’s Word. And tragically, man-made **traditions** are often given more importance than the God-breathed doctrine of Scripture!³*

11. When can human traditions be profitable for us? What causes these traditions to be detrimental to our faith?

12. What is it about these traditions that make them so attractive to follow?

13. What are some man-made traditions within Christianity today?

“You have been filled in Him”

This means to be completely filled, with one of the implications being that one is to be totally controlled by that which fills them. Paul’s main thrust here, however, is that believers have come to completion, a state of having no deficiency. To be sure, we are all “works in progress,” but Paul’s point is that in contrast to empty philosophy, believers are filled with the One in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!⁴

14. What does it take for most Christians 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?

Of all the things in the universe that we could focus on, one rises to the top: Christ is preeminent. He alone is worthy of being our singular focus. When Christ comes into focus, he brings everything else into focus because all things were made by him and for him.

15. What is currently taking your focus away from Christ?

What are the gauges you use to determine fullness of life?

How can you fix your eyes on Christ as the right gauge this week?

³ http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_28-15.htm#2:8

⁴ http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_28-15.htm#2:8