

Sermon: Jesus is Enough (Part 3, Colossians 2:6-17)

THE WORD (NIV)

Colossians 2:6-17

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. ¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Romans 14:5-6

⁵One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Tell of something (whether a gadget, food item, health app, investment), you bought, or avoided, because of a sales pitch.
2. What unspoken rules and behaviours have you observed / encountered in a church or organization? What are some "thou shalt and thou shalt not" that never hit the Bible?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Read Colossians 2:6-7. Identify some of the metaphors that Paul uses. How does each one help describe maturity in Christ?
2. What were your emotions when you received Christ as your Lord? What life experiences cause that to change?
3. Pastor Henry reminded us that others may use special knowledge and require special behaviors to intimidate us. They suggest that Christ is not enough. What makes us susceptible to such approaches?
3. What is the result of following such special knowledge (Col 2:8) and special behaviours (Colossians 2:16-17; Romans 14:5-6). Where have you encountered this in school? in church? at work? in life?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. How could you dialogue with your family in response to claims that Jesus is not enough?
2. What do you need to do to point out the lie, and ask the right question?
3. How open are you to discuss your convictions about what is right and wrong?
4. Reflect on how this passage can help you enjoy the knowledge that Christ is enough

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Sermon Study Summary

Keeping fit is never easy. A fitness guru claims their wares to be the best on the market that will get you fit faster and easier than others. You buy it and after a while discover the results lacking from what was advertised. Then you see another advertisement of a different fitness program offering dramatic results in less time with less effort. The question arises: Whom will I trust in to guide me in my physical fitness? We have this same question in our spiritual lives. Whom will I trust to guide me in this life and to prepare me for the next? A man named Epaphras formed a church of new believers in the city of Colossae some 2,000 years ago. They put their faith in Christ and became a vital church community. Over time other 'spiritual gurus' said that Jesus was fine 'but' if they wanted to go to the next level spiritually they needed special knowledge and to have special experiences. When the Apostle Paul heard of this he wrote the letter of Colossians to them.

Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is enough. He is the invisible God become visible for us who died for our sins to become Lord of the church, and Lord and Savior of the world. Colossians 2:6 is key to the next section. Paul is saying that based on what you know Christ has done, 'continue to live your lives in Him,' trusting Him as you once did. The essential message was that these new believers were complete in Christ. They didn't need anything or anyone else. Christ was enough to experience life to the full so don't buy into these 'gurus'.

Remember back to when you first put your trust in Christ – the freedom of being forgiven, the excitement of realizing you were a friend of Jesus and that you could interact with Him. Over time this newness may have worn off. You may have focused on lesser things and have experienced a spiritual slump for a season. Rather than making a course correction to return to Him you instead dialed into a subtle teaching that suggested you needed something new – something more than just Jesus. In Colossians 2:8 Paul gives the warning to not be drawn away from the freedom you have in Christ into a philosophy that pulls you back into spiritual bondage. He names two deceptions that can kill spiritual growth and freedom in Christ:

1. The religion of 'special knowledge.' Gnosticism was active in this time. A Gnostic is someone whose mission in life is the acquisition of knowledge. In Colossae, they used their knowledge to spiritually intimidate the Christians who had a simple faith in Jesus. They would do so by implying the Christians were naïve and that Jesus couldn't meet all their needs and so chipped away at the believers' confidence and trust in Christ. Today we see this in media and campuses where 'highly educated people' take issue with the Christian faith in areas such as creation, truth and the way to God. Their goal is to weaken a believers' faith in Christ despite having nothing better to offer. Nowhere outside of the church do people present reasons 'to believe.' Thus, believers need to be equipped to give an answer for the hope they have in Christ - not just to the world but to their children. It is vital that Christians meet this challenge to talk about messages in movies or music lyrics that are counter to Christian values and beliefs, etc.
2. The religion of 'special behaviors.' Colossians 2:16-17, 19. Paul is speaking of legalism, or any attempt to earn God's favor through our own efforts. Rather than having an ongoing, vibrant, growing friendship with Jesus, the legalist, who has lost connection with Christ, attempts to replace this lost relationship with man-made rituals, behaviors and rules that they believe are pleasing to God. This is not referring to the clear teachings of Scripture (such as the 10 Commandments) of what to do or avoid. We are called to obey because God loves us and has our best interests at heart. Some in the early church attempted to please God by abstaining from certain food and drink, or observing certain festivals or worshipping God on a particular day. There is nothing wrong with having such convictions. The problem comes when we believe that our convictions should be everyone's convictions. Thus, legalism can often turn into judgmentalism. This happened in the early church and those same convictions relating to diet, days and festivals have become disputes which continue to our present day.

What Paul is saying is that we shouldn't make our diet the test of our faith and cause division in the body of Christ. The same is true with respect to special days or the day on which we should worship on. Christians are free to worship and declare their love for Christ on every day, for every day is holy to the Lord. See Romans 14:5. The date is not what is important. The important thing is what we're celebrating on those days i.e. Christmas or Easter. Down through history people and denominations have had their own lists of what a true Christian looks like. One's faith was called into question over what they did, how they dressed, or how long their hair was. Paul speaks of having freedom from human rules so nothing would distract one from growing closer to the Lord or having a close walk with Jesus. We are obedient because we love Jesus, not to prove that we love Jesus. The goal of reading the Bible is not to check it off our list but to know Jesus more and hear from Him. Legalism promises maturity but leads only to exhaustion, false guilt, conflict, division and judgmentalism.

Paul is calling us back to having a meaningful relationship with Christ – for He is all we need. The diets, the festivals, the days, are 'shadows' of what is to come (vs 2:17). Paul is saying that the reality has already come – in Christ - so why hold on to the shadow and go through the rituals when the fulfillment is in front of you? These 'shadows' were in place to prepare us for the coming of Christ. Therefore, we are free from the Old Testament rituals, diets, festivals and Sabbath laws. Our ultimate rest has come and is with us. Jesus. Christ is all we need. He is Lord and is more than enough. Don't settle for anything less.

'Freedom is like a tree planted by the water. Uprooted it is free only to die. To be really free it has to remain attached to something life-giving. And that is Jesus.'