

Colossians 5 – Christ Above Philosophy
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We are in a sermon series called Christ Above All and we are preaching verse by verse through the book of Colossians. Paul wrote this letter to combat errors – not by just pointing out what was wrong – but by replacing error with truth.

One of the essential questions of Colossians is: what are you adding to Jesus? The gospel is not just for information; it's for transformation.

The truth is not about philosophy or secret knowledge; it's about knowing a person – Jesus Christ. It's not so much WHAT you know, but WHO you know.

Today we're looking at Christ Above Philosophy. Let's take a look at Colossians 2:1-10 verse by verse.

1- Christ Above the Deceptions of Men

Col. 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, Paul agonized in prayer and spiritual warfare for churches in Colossae and Laodicea.

The church at Laodicea was just south of Colossae and is referred to in Rev. 3:14 as the lukewarm church.

Here's the amazing thing about this verse - Paul had never even met any of these believers. Think about that. It is hard enough for us to agonize for people we know let alone someone we've never met.

So many people these days talk about loving Jesus but hating the church. That is so contrary to the spirit of Scripture. Paul loved the church – even churches that he had never even been to. What was Christ's attitude towards the church? John 2:17 says this about Him:

Zeal for your house will consume Me.

The Good News Bible says: *My devotion to Your house, O God, burns in Me like a fire.*

And people today have the audacity to say they don't care about church. Even so-called believers!

Paul agonized for the church – some people today antagonize the church!
 Paul fought for the church – some people today fight against the church!
 Jesus is the builder of the church – some people want to tear down the church.
 Paul wrote to encourage the church – some people try to discourage the church!

Verse 2 tells us God's desire for churches:

that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

God wants us to be encouraged and knit together in love. Knit together here means being united, as the beams or the timbers of a building are joined together securely. Individually these pieces of wood are pretty much useless, but once you join them together they become secure and useful.

You are not called to be a piece a wood! You are called to be part of a building.
 You are not called be just a sheep – you are called to be part of a flock!
 You are not called to be just a soldier – you are part of an army.
 You are not called to be just a child of God – you are part of a family.

I say this in love – Get over thinking that it's all about you! The Christian life is not a game of solitary! We are to be knit together – joined together – in love. Ephesians 2:19-22 says:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We are being fitly joined together to be a dwelling place for God. Yes – if you are born again, God dwells in you. But there is also truth about God's manifest presence dwelling in us together as the house of God. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says:

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Paul tells us what happens when we are knit together – Col. 2:2 says:

and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

The result of unity is a deeper understanding of God. You won't come into a complete revelation of God all by yourself! We all see through a glass darkly. We all see part of the picture. When those pieces come together, we get a fuller understanding of God.

But what did Paul want the Colossians to be assured of?
 The mystery of God.

The Gnostic teachers in Colossae were falsely teaching that there was deeper, secretive, mysterious teaching than what was being taught about Christ. They taught that people had to join them and learn secret rituals and doctrines in

order to earn salvation and spiritual power. Paul turns this notion on its head in Colossians 2:3 –

In Him all the treasures of [divine] wisdom (comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God) and [all the riches of spiritual] knowledge and enlightenment are stored up and lie hidden.

The word "mystery" in the New Testament has a different meaning from what those in Colossae thought 2,000 years ago and different from what many people believe today. In the New Testament, a mystery is not something that is mysterious or secretive or unknowable.

In Scripture, a mystery is a truth that is outside of natural understanding. A mystery is something that can be made known only by divine revelation. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; in the Bible a mystery is truth revealed. Remember Colossians 1:26-27-

...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

A New Testament mystery is truth that was hidden in Old Testament times, but is now made obvious in Jesus Christ. Paul made it abundantly clear that all wisdom, all knowledge, all insight is found in Christ. Romans 16:25-27 says:

Now to Him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

The mystery is the eternal counsel of God which is hidden from the world but revealed in the cross of Christ.

There are 15 mysteries mentioned in the New Testament:

- 1- Mark 4:11 speaks of the mystery of the kingdom
- 2- 1 Cor. 2:1-8 teaches the mystery of Jesus Christ crucified
- 3- 1 Cor. 15:51-57 teaches the mystery of end-time resurrection
- 4- Romans 11:25-33 teaches the mystery of Israel's present spiritual blindness and future salvation
- 5- Ephesians 1:9-11 teaches the mystery of God's will
- 6- Ephesians 3:3-11 teaches the mystery of Jews and Gentiles being joint heirs with Christ
- 7- Ephesians 5:32 teaches the mystery of Christ and His bride—the church
- 8- Colossians 1:27 speaks of the mystery of Christ in you—the hope of glory
- 9- Colossians 2:3 speaks of the mystery of God
- 10- 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 teaches the mystery of iniquity

- 11- 1 Timothy 3:9 speaks of the mystery of faith
- 12- 1 Timothy 3:16 speaks of the mystery of godliness
- 13- Revelation 1:20 teaches the mystery of the 7 stars – which are messengers to the 7 churches
- 14- Revelation 17:1-6 teaches the mystery of Babylon
- 15- Revelation 10:1-7 teaches the mystery of God’s judgment

God gave Paul a deep revelation of the mystery of Christ. Ephesians 3:2-6 says:

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Paul wants us to understand that the mysteries of God are revealed by God and they focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You don’t need deeper truth than this! All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ.

Colossians 2:4 says:

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

Here Paul says he is concerned we will be deceived by persuasive words. The word persuasive means artful, smooth, enticing, having an appearance of wisdom and humility. Romans 16:18 says:

By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

To be deceived is to be lead astray by that which sounds convincing. With deception there is always enough truth to make it sound right.

Deception is not always obvious. It’s like counterfeit money – looks authentic to the untrained eye. How do you know what is counterfeit? By studying the real thing. How do you know Satan’s deceptions in your life? By studying the word of God.

Satan’s is a deceiver and his main work is deception. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Some people want you to believe that is doesn’t matter what you believe. They say that doctrine is not important. But doctrine – what you believe – is of utmost importance.

We believe doctrine is vitally important and that it should be based on the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We believe that if we don't get grounded in sound doctrine based on the word of God - we will be susceptible to false doctrine and deception. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 says:

*For the time will come when men will not put up with sound **doctrine**. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

Brothers and sisters – that time is here! That's why we work so hard on sermons and teaching the Word of God. That's why we have Grace Journey and other classes. We want you to be grounded in the truth of God's word!

Colossians 2:5 says:

For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Paul rejoiced in order and steadfastness. These are military terms having to do with soldiers being in their assigned places and staying there through thick and thin. Not leaving when it gets tough. Can you imagine an army that runs away when the enemy starts shooting at them?

That's what happens to many Christians when spiritual warfare heats up. Why do most Christians run in battle? Notice Paul was rejoicing in the order and steadfastness of their faith. This is telling us we run because we lack faith. He goes on to tell us how to remain steadfast in faith in verses 6 and 7.

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

We walk in Christ as we received Him. How did we receive Christ? By grace through faith. We live and walk out the Christian life in the exact same way – by grace through faith.

We are saved by grace through faith!

We are filled with the Spirit by grace through faith!

We live a holy life by grace through faith!

Everything we do is by grace through faith!

That's how we become rooted and built up and established in faith.

Rooted in Him is referring to the roots of a tree. Roots have to go down deep spread far, and wide. That is how trees get nourishment. Deep roots also protect the tree from being uprooted during strong winds.

Rooted means to be firmly fixed into place, like a tree that is deeply rooted and therefore immovable. Built up speaks of something that grows upward and is built on a strong, solid foundation — just like a tree’s root structure that holds the tree firmly in place and provides it with a constant stream of nourishment.

When I was a kid we had real Christmas trees, not artificial ones. The base was a bowl that you had to keep full of water so the tree wouldn’t dry out too quickly. But because this tree had no roots, it could not survive for long. Neither can you!

God does not want us to be like artificial Christmas trees that look outwardly beautiful, but they have no life. And He doesn’t want us to live “brittle and dry” as though we’ve been cut off from Him as our source of life. That’s why we must maintain our connection to Him, continually drawing our nourishment and life from Him.

That’s why God commands us to focus on rooting ourselves deeply in Him so we can then be “built up” in Him. This can only happen as we regularly commune with the Lord in the Word and in prayer, allowing Him to refresh us continually with the waters of His Spirit that we need to stay alive and vibrant.

By the way - What causes roots to go deep? Dry times! Shallow water results in shallow roots! You need dry times in your Christian walk to cause you to press in to God and let your roots go deeper in Him.

How do you know when you are rooted and built up? You will be established in faith and abounding in thanksgiving. Established means having a firm foundation, solid, immovable. Abounding in thanksgiving means to be grateful, to count your blessings.

If you fall every time life gets tough – you are not deeply rooted in Christ!
If you lose your praise easily – you are not deeply rooted in Christ!

So, we have seen V’s 1 – 7 that Christ is above the deceptions of men.

2- Christ Above the Traditions of Men

Colossians 2:8 says:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,

Beware – watch out, there is danger ahead! Don’t let anyone cheat you – plunder you, take you captive. How? Through philosophy – empty deceit – the traditions of men.

Paul is not anti-philosophy or anti-knowledge. Philosophy means love of wisdom.

Philosophy that is empty is full of man's wisdom, not God's.

Traditions – that which is handed down - can be good or bad. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 talks about good traditions:

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Matthew 15:3 talks about bad traditions:

Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"

We can't do things just because that's the way we've always done it. We need to be sure our traditions are based on God's Word! So, we see Christ is above the deceptions and traditions of men. Now let's look at ...

3- Christ Above Worldliness

Colossians 2:8 says:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Here Paul is saying don't be cheated by the world. The world is the ORDER and the WAY unbelievers do things. What are the basic principles of the modern American world system? Success – Money – Looks - Self - Anything goes

We are in the world, but not of it. We must choose between the world and Christ. He is the better choice because verses 9 and 10 say:

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Demonic principalities and powers are the forces behind all deception. But Jesus has all power over them!
Being complete in Christ fills us with power to resist Satan's schemes.

Remember - everything that is of God is in Christ and Christ is in us. That is the secret of the Christian life – Christ in us the hope of glory.

Because Jesus is the Lord of all – when you are in Him – you are complete. The word complete literally means to be crammed full – to fill in a hollow place – to fill to the top.

This means that you don't need to add anyone or anything to make you complete. I know many of you feel empty and you are looking for something to fill you and make you feel alive.

But no amount of drugs or alcohol can fill your emptiness—only Jesus can!
No philosophy or wisdom of man can complete you – but Jesus can!
No job can complete you – only Jesus can!
No amount of money can complete you – only Jesus can!
No person can complete you – only Jesus can!
No power on earth can complete you – but Jesus can and He will when you
receive Him as Lord.
Jesus provides everything you need for life and godliness!
All your needs are met according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!