

<b>Series:</b> Colossians	<b>Reference:</b> <i>Colossians 2:6-23</i>	<b>Title:</b> Walkabout	<b>Date:</b> 1.10.2021
<b>Website Writeup:</b> Do a walkabout through life with Jesus, constantly renewing & building on your understanding of who He is to you and others. The Gospel recipe is set, don't add or detract from it for the sake of Christ's glory!			

[Introduce: *'The Pursuit of Discipleship'*. Email for a copy if you are watching from home & did not get it as an attachment with our weekly email.]

Let's explore how Paul discipled the Colossians in Chapter 2:6-23. My proposition today is simply, continue to live in Jesus. Greek for 'live' means 'walk about' – go on a walkabout in Jesus! Despite all that you see around you, keep walking-about with Jesus. The question is...what gets in the way of that?

It's not clear what Paul was addressing in the Colossians Church. But we can make educated guesses. Remember there were Gnostic influences, although true Gnosticism didn't fully develop until later. There were remnants & probably teaching which led to Jewish Asceticism. Both of these hollow & deceptive philosophies would've considered matter evil, leading to two extremes.

Firstly, if matter's evil it doesn't matter what you do in the body. You can abuse it, or indulge it, nothing matters, because what's important is the spirit. Therefore, the intellect & how you feed it becomes important. This birthed also Antinomianism which said we were now free from the moral law of God due to Christ's grace which Scripture clearly doesn't teach.

Or secondly, you take the opposite view - if matter's evil, then the body's evil & you must deny it resulting in the ascetic life following strict rules which deny the body anything it wants in order to keep the spirit clean. These are things which have an outward appearance of holiness/godliness, but have no real value. Self-denial in the sense of seeking biblical purity is a healthy spiritual practice for witness & balance, but we must remember it doesn't earn us favor or salvation with God.

There was a sense you needed special revelation only a few elite spiritual people could attain. There was some teaching probably on angels as intermediaries to God. There may've been teaching from some Jewish background believers which said physical circumcision, dietary laws & certain festivals were necessary to know God. These issues, which added requirements to the Gospel message, detracted from the authority & sufficiency of Christ. But Paul always kept it simple. His message revolved around Christ Crucified & who Jesus is to the world.

In 1 Corinthians 2 he says...<sup>1</sup>*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.* <sup>2</sup>*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ & him crucified.* <sup>3</sup>*I*

*came to you in weakness & fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup>My message & my preaching were not with wise & persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.'*

Paul's discipleship shows through here as he leads the Colossians back to Christ, demonstrating the power of Jesus in front of those he disciples.

My wife's a great cook. She makes certain things I miss if I don't have them for a while. One of those things is Apple Crisp. A sort of apple pie thing with cinnamon, sugar, apples & oatmeal crisp topping. You can dress it up with milk, ice cream, whipped cream, but the inherent goodness of that dish is in the basic recipe. Put too much sugar in, no good. Too much oatmeal across the top, no good. Too much or too little cinnamon, no good. If the recipe changes at all it's not the same thing. There's a perfect balance of ingredients, change it & it's no longer apple crisp, it kind of resembles it, but it's really some evil derivation deserving only of the trash can!

Paul's looking at it the same way. The Colossian church is going to have a certain personality. Paul's not at all attacking their corporate personality, which is the whipped cream on the apple crisp. Every church in every culture has a personality, an outward dressing up that is its own - that's good. But every church must have the basic ingredients of the Gospel in it. Those ingredients can't change. If they're tampered with, it's no longer the church, but a twisted version of it.

Colossians chapter one is one of the most beautiful descriptions of Jesus we have. A poetic meat packed image of Christ as Lord, sustainer, creator, but a physical human who endured & paid the price for us. This description is the recipe for who He is. Take something away & you no longer have a Messiah. Add something to it & you no longer have a Messiah. If you want to know God, know Jesus. We have to be careful to let Jesus speak for Himself, not what we want Him to be.

There are things which rub me the wrong way about Jesus. I don't want to love my enemies, I want to defeat them. I don't want to bear with my brother in Christ in love, sometimes I want to hit him. The question becomes...is He king or not? We sometimes want all the benefits of inclusion in the Body of Christ, or in heaven at least, but we don't want a king telling us what to do. Remember people claiming Christ have justified some horrible things from the Scriptures, but those things weren't of Jesus. It's good not only to practice what Jesus says, but to understand the why of it.

Verse 6 in Chapter 2 begins...*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted & built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

Notice, these are in the passive voice, things done for us. This verse speaks of longevity in commitment to the relationship you have with Christ. Do we get bored? Or if something happens we don't like, we shy away? Or, it's not sexy anymore, it's become

hard & takes work? Or, Jesus demands we sacrifice one of our sacred cows? One challenging word or pushback from someone makes you want to give up on your faith, but that's not an option.

When I met Kim, I knew she was for me - she had a mystery & elusiveness about her. I couldn't pin her down. It keeps me coming back, it's a challenge. I was afraid married life would become dull. I was young, liked to go out with friends. But married, would I spend my weekends sitting on the couch not talking to my wife? I'm happy to report, I'm not bored. Even when sitting at home on the couch. Kim's still elusive, keeping me guessing & there's so much more to know about her.

Some of us beg Jesus for answers, growing impatient because we want everything laid out. You don't need answers, you need faith, you need mystery & adventure. If Jesus just did an information swap with you, it wouldn't be relationship. Allow Him to lead & take you where you've never gone before. Be a Trekkie for Jesus. And it'll never be boring. Maybe we need to sacrifice & then mourn the loss of our need to know. Likewise, realize you don't know so much. When Jesus challenges you in a situation or through the Scriptures & it doesn't feel good, let Him lead anyway, showing what you don't already know.

One characteristic of post-moderns is the lack of staying power. That can be descriptive, but it can also be an excuse...will we stay committed to Jesus? Or, will fine-sounding arguments lead us away? Staying thankful means constantly going back to the Gospel, seeing its usefulness in everyday life. It shouldn't only be a future hope, but something forming you now.

Do you know how a tree grows? It's not like us, our internal organs & every part of our body is able to grow larger with age. A tree however just continually adds onto itself, which is why when you put a nail into its side the nail isn't any higher in 10 years, but it may be covered up by the bark. The tree just continually adds a shell around itself. It's rooted down in the soil soaking up the nutrients which continually adds new cells to it making it larger & stronger. Paul's saying to us, root yourself in Jesus, soak him up, draw your nutrients from Him alone, the Living Word, Allow Him to add to your life growing you larger, stronger & more able to weather the storms.

*Verse 8...<sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow & deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition & the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup>and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power & authority.*

The verb 'take captive' (sylagogeō) is found only here in the NT. It's very close to the word synagogue. Wright suggests, Paul intentionally chose this rare word as a contemptuous pun to warn believers not to be taken in by Jewish asceticism.

In response to this idea of deceptive philosophies one writer draws a parallel to our modern addiction to intellectualism. He says...*'In our day, as in the ancient world, people often measure the value of what others say by how well they say it. Even within the church we put great stress on a person's academic credentials, as if a Ph.D. granted one a corner on heavenly wisdom. The result is that we learn to value elegant systems of church dogma that are held together by sophisticated & learned arguments. In the life of many congregations, faith has become so intellectualized that its relational, experiential dimension has been bleached out.*

*Certainly it's important to think through carefully what one believes & why. Yet many of my students come to university with strongly held convictions about Christ but without the experience of a vital relationship with him. Knowing what to believe has replaced knowing whom to believe.*

*In the pastorate & in academia, I have often found that when faith consists only of ideas, without practical experience of their truthfulness & usefulness, it's easily shattered when it comes up against competing ideas. Biblical faith is very concrete, rooted in the teachings & work of a person, Jesus of Nazareth, and embodied in personal & social relationships. Thus, when one's understanding of Christian faith centers on a collection of elegant, even powerful ideas at the expense of an experience of God's love, it quickly becomes an idolatry: the idea of God replaces a life-transforming relationship with the Lord.*

*So in 1 Corinthians Paul warns his readers that the reign of God is not a matter of eloquent, educated talk but of Spirit-empowered walk (1 Cor 4:18-21). To know Christ as the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:30) and to acquire "Christ's mind" from the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14, 16) rather than the "philosophy of this age" (1 Cor 1:20) is the measure of true Christianity. Paul isn't against education; rather, he opposes a Christianity that elevates academic ideas about God above our spiritual relationship with God in Christ.'*

Don't be uprooted allowing yourself to be taken prisoner once more since you've found freedom in Christ. Why is it hollow & deceptive – can a philosophy have a personality? No, can the people as proponents have an agenda to deceive you, maybe, but not usually. They usually believe it themselves. So the enemy is falsehood, not people. What are some of the hollow & deceptive philosophies of life people buy into? Things dependent on human principles, or basic principles of life? Is it our democratic system? Our freedom? The security of economics? What is it that *we* add to the Gospel? I'll let you answer that for yourself. Your security lies in nothing else but Jesus. There's always hope.

In one of the *Lord of the Rings* movies the army is holed up in a castle & they've recruited everyone to fight, young boys & all the men they can find within the castle walls. 10,000 Orks were coming in on this army of 300 men & boys. Aragorn stops one of the boys looking at his sword. The boy says something like, 'They say we'll not live

through this'. Aragorn looks into his eyes & says, 'There's *always* hope.' The fight ends with Gandolf (*the Christ figure*) showing up & they win the battle. There is always hope.

Paul's saying the same thing we said 2 weeks ago, everything you need's found in Christ. But you need to allow Him to work, not being turned to other philosophies. Jesus did the ol' switch-a-roo on Satan, who'd thought he'd won. Likewise, Christ turned the tables on the Roman & spiritual authorities – everyone thought they'd won, but they didn't realize the power of the resurrection to come. That resurrection was in many ways the undoing of the Roman Empire.

Verse 11...<sup>11</sup>*In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, <sup>12</sup>having been buried with him in baptism & raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

<sup>13</sup>*When you were dead in your sins & in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us & that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers & authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Paul's now speaking to the Jewish asceticism which says true spirituality comes in outward form of circumcision. He's attacking the rules & regulations of an outward form of religiosity. Circumcision's a cutting away. A permanent mark on your life. He's saying you've been circumcised from your former life. Done not by men, but Christ – a supernatural thing, not a concoction of earthly philosophy. The power of God raised us. It's done for us.

We were dead in our sin & uncircumcised in our hearts, but God made us alive, canceled the written code, the old ceremonial requirements put in place to teach us the need for repentance & understanding of what sin had done to our souls & how it cut off our relationship with God. God nailed it to the cross. We've been brought out of a life of bondage to freedom.

There are two ways to be in bondage – licentiousness & legalism (*antinomianism or asceticism*). Neither have value, only faith expressing itself through love (*Gal 5:22*). Christ did for us on that cross what we couldn't do for ourselves. He crucified the written code becoming the punished for us. Now, neither Satan, nor any earthly power has any authority over you as a believer, including the effects of the Law. They've been disarmed, since Jesus took their power away by becoming the sacrificial lamb for us (*describe the lamb*). This is why the image of immersion baptism is so powerful. It reveals we've been buried in Christ, he raised us from spiritual death & washed us clean by his blood.

Verse 16...<sup>16</sup>*Therefore 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. <sup>17</sup>These are a*

*shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup>Do not let anyone who delights in false humility & the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup>He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported & held together by its ligaments & sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

*<sup>20</sup>Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup>"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? <sup>22</sup>These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands & teachings. <sup>23</sup>Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility & their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

Just like if you add to my wife's apple crisp recipe it's no longer apple crisp, if you cut off the head, the body dies. If a church doesn't follow Jesus, something dies - it becomes a social organization working on worldly principles. Some talk in circles about their knowledge, but in the end the Gospel's simple, understandable to all. It works on the level of the mind & heart. Another writer has said this same tendency towards moral asceticism continues to influence conservative Protestantism today, where spirituality is excessively inward.

It becomes only the private life of ones feelings & intellect having little to do with ones public life. But Christ's Lordship over all things material & spiritual produces in the Christian a worldview in which our spiritual devotion's integrated with our material obligations - no separation of spirit & body.

I used to watch *Wife Swap*, the show where they take a mother from two houses & switch them. Someone I know was on the show & hated it. The producers are brilliant, they pick the absolute opposite people to do it. This particular episode switched a wife from an obviously Fundamental Christian home who home-schooled their children, didn't allow TV or video games, no dating & stayed absolutely separate from the world.

They switched her with a family which allowed anything, live in boyfriends & girlfriends of their children, drinking, swearing, their son was a foul mouthed rapper, none of the kids worked, etc. It was the perfect picture of two extremes which mirror this passage & Galatians. The licentious family & the family who lived by external rules, the Law. Neither lifestyle worked. You could easily see how both had a detrimental effect on them. They had to learn something from each other & come to a middle ground.

I think it was Luther who said if you preach grace as it should be, you'd be blamed for being a total liberal (*not actual quote*). Because grace tells us that no matter what we do, or who we are, God accepts us in Christ. But Grace also leads to repentance & a lifestyle of purity. Grace brings us to center. It makes us whole, not afraid of the world, nor overly affected by it.

To surround yourself with laws of doing this or that actually makes temptation worse. Sheltering your children increases temptation. Keeping them from harm actually harms them more. But to walk through it with them, facing danger & temptation with them helps them to think through their faith. Somewhere along our recent history we've thought Christian schools would shelter our children *until* they could handle life. But honestly, it sometimes just takes them out of the world, increasing fear, or curiosity of it. It's possible sexual sin, drug & alcohol use, can be just as rampant in Christian Schools.

Walk through life with each other. Ask questions about life, what does Jesus say about this? Are people evil, or just deceived? How do I feel about it? Why am I tempted to these things? What will it do to me? Why do people do these things?

You see outward forms of religiosity focus on the question of 'what' & actually foster a form of idolatry on things or practices. But the theological question of 'why' focuses on the heart & brings us back to center which is always Jesus. So has the blood of Christ become sickly sweet Kool-Aid you sip by the pool due to what we've added? Or, so bitter by what we've added that it can only be choked down?

Neither extreme should be true of the Gospel. The Lordship of Christ over us should always bring a bittersweet joy. A thing which wakes us up to the pain of life in ourselves, and in others, but also soothes that pain like cool water.

Take a walk-about in Jesus. Get to know Him as we've said, in a discipleship relationship. Seek Jesus, let Him change you, allow Him to throw off anything that's either licentious or law-keeping which hinders His life in you. And do this hand-in-hand with others.