

**Give Gospel-Centered Literature to Them
... Because Everyone Needs the Gospel
Colossians 2:6-23**

Introduce **Penn Video**

A few **observations**:

- An atheist thinks we should evangelize. “How much do you have to hate someone not to proselytize?”
- An atheist was grateful for the gift of a Bible (and the phone numbers). He didn’t say, “**Get out of my face.**”
This should **encourage** you.
 - Not every non-believer is hostile to gospel conversations.
 - o **Seth, “I didn’t know if the co-workers would take this booklet, but they did.”**
 - o Two weeks ago: I gave **Orphanology** out to everyone...
“You wrote a book?”
- An atheist was impressed by the attitude of this Christian businessman.

We're spending two weeks on this...

- **How are you doing this?** This is our fifth week in the study.
The goal of this study is action, not for us to exegete the word “evangelize.”
- May The Lord give us encounters like **Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip?** It can happen!

Everyone needs the gospel...

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL IN COLOSSIANS

The book of Colossians is a book about the centrality of the gospel – or the supremacy of Christ. The gospel is *the good news about what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.*

How **they became Christians** – through the gospel.

- **Means: 1:4** – “faith in Christ Jesus ... you heard in the word of truth, the gospel ... heard the grace of God in truth.. ”
 - o The sincerity of their faith was expressed through a genuine love for one another.
- **Work of God: Qualified/Transferred: 1:13-14** - either/or
- **Stand Firm** - 1:21-23; 2:5 –
- **1:28-29** - three-fold

2:6-23 – This section is the **main argument in the book**. An **example of warning, teaching and proclaiming**.

False Teaching Abounds and False Teachers Are Aggressive

The Colossian believers were at **risk of drifting away** the gospel because false teachers were so **aggressive**.

Notice the active words section:

- **Seducers and Kidnappers**.
 - **2:8**: “See to it that no one takes you captive” –
- **Slave traders**.
 - o **2:16** – “Let no one pass judgment on you” –
 - o **2:18** – “Let no one disqualify you” an the believers.
 - o **2:20** – “Do not submit to the regulations”

Christianity dies when false teachers are more zealous than believers.

We must spread the truth.

- **People are “incurably religious.” They will believe something.**
- **The whole world evangelizes**

What we must do is saturate the world with sound doctrine.

Haiti: My number 1 point tomorrow evening in Haiti is this: Saturate your city and churches with sound doctrine.

- **Poverty is bad enough...** Prosperity gospel is everywhere in impoverished cultures.

IT doesn't have to be formal false teaching. In America, we have our own gospel, "**moralistic, therapeutic, deism.**" There is a general embarrassment over the gospel.

So we need to spread the gospel throughout the world. Saturate the world with the gospel – **translate books, sermons, send people to drop off Bibles, and so on.**

People will believe something, what will they believe?

3 GOSPEL QUESTIONS FOR EVERYONE (UNBELIEVER AND BELIEVER)

#1: Have You Received Christ and Are You Walking in Him? (6-7)

This verse is very important for helping us understand the basic truth that we never go beyond the gospel; we never go beyond Christ. We only go deeper into the gospel; we only go deeper into Christ.

The gospel is how we **get in** the kingdom;
and the gospel is how we **go on** in faithfulness.

A. Receive Him (6) - Past Reality

- It involves confessing "**Jesus is Lord**" – You receive Him for Who He is. This was the early confession.
 - To say He is Lord is to repent and bow the knee to Him.
 - To say that He is Lord was to say that Caesar is Not.
- It involves receiving **a gift**.
 - You don't earn salvation; it is given to us.

- My friend Benjie was an atheist, and then he read the Bible; he was contemplating suicide...
- He received Christ as Lord. Have you?

B. Remain in Him (6b-7) - Present Activity

- **Continuity** of Conversion to a life of faithfulness – Just as you received him, walk in him.
 - By Faith - Galatians 3:1-5
 - Desperately
 - Needy
- **Go Deeper into the Gospel**
 - Rooted and Built Up
 - Let your roots go deep, and you can withstand the storm
 - Discouraged? Depressed? Fruitless? (Psalm 1)
 - You will build your life on something
 - Just as You Were Taught – Same things
 - **Bowling... same fundamentals not changing the game**
 - The same **Doctrines** get more personal and powerful
 1. Sin gets *more* disgusting
 2. Grace gets *more* amazing
 3. Cross gets *more* glorious
 4. Resurrection gets *more* hope-giving
 5. The kingdom gets *more* worldview shaping
 6. Adoption gets *more* identity-shaping
 7. The church gets *more* important
- How much time have you spent this week on these things?
 - How do you expect your roots to go deep?
 - **Ethics** gets more shaped by the gospel
 - We don't abstract responsibilities from the gospel.
 - Don't live your life in compartments.
 - **Christ is our life** - 3:4 - no more comprehensive

- **Race** – 3:11
 - **Forgiveness** – Col 3:13
 - **Church** – Christ’s body, Membership – Consumer, “What have you done for me lately?” Covenant, “What promise did I make to you previously?” 3:15
 - **Good works** – 3:17
 - **Marriage**
- **Be thankful for the gospel (7b)**
 - Col 1:11-13
 - Col 3:16 – Do this everyday

#2: Do You Understand Who Christ Is and What He Has Done? (2:9-15)

Paul wants the church to know that you have everything you need and more in Christ Jesus.

A. Do you understand Who He is? (9-10)

- **He is fully God! (9, see Col 1:15-ff)**
 - o In Him are all the treasures of wisdom
 - o HE’s fully God. “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity.”
 - He’s not just the *highest of created beings*
 - He’s not a spiraling figure who *worked himself up to God*
 - HE’s not just a great example
- **Most cults and religions have a problem with Jesus.**
 - o **Last week I was on a plane with a Pakistani man.... HE is a prophet... He wrote some names down; I wrote some names down**
 - o **This is one reason we need them to read, and study.**

- o “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.”
- We are filled in Him! (10)
 - In this remarkable statement, Paul reminds us of our position and our power in Christ. We have everything we need in Christ.
 - Why weren’t they **satisfied** with Jesus?
 - They wanted spiritual fullness
 - They wanted victory over sin
 - They wanted the deep things of God.
 - All of these are good, but you don’t go beyond Christ to get them! (1:28-29) **“Don’t we need to talk about deeper mysteries?”** You don’t outgrow Jesus.
 - o Brainard: "I never got away from Jesus and him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality."

B. Do You Understand What He Has Done for Sinners? (11-15)

What God offers to everyone... Three stunning transformations that come to believers through the cross-work of Jesus Christ.

i. We were spiritually dead (12-13)

We were “cut off from Christ”

- **Like a Rose** – Looks beautiful but it’s cut off. A person may be beautiful but they need spiritual life.

God **made us alive** through Christ (11-13a)

- Verse 11 – inward change – different circumcision

- Verse 12 – Baptism
- Verse 12b – Powerful working of God!

With – Syn – **Synch** = Paul wrote of our union with Christ in Ephesians, which he wrote at the same time.

- Buried with him (12a)
- Raised with him – We are already sharing in Christ’s resurrection presently
- Made alive together with him

We didn’t just die like Christ; but with him. We were raised with him.

When Christ got out of the grave, Tony Merida got up with him.
We have been united with Christ!

How did this happen: God did it!

ii. We were in spiritual debt

- – but we have been forgiven
- We are forgiven because Christ paid our penalty.
- This refers literally to a hand written document, in which you would write out your indebtedness, and then sign your name.
- **Criminals would be placed on the cross with a inscription of their crime written down and signed by the criminal.**
- We had a debt we couldn’t pay.
- The good news of the gospel is that Christ paid it!
- He was nailed to the cross.

Martin Luther experienced the reality of this truth in a dream in which he was visited at night by Satan, who brought to him a record of his own life, written with his own hand. The Tempter said to him, “Is that true, did you write it?”

The poor terrified Luther had to confess it was all true. Scroll after scroll was unrolled, and the same confession was wrung from him again and again. At length, the Evil One prepared to take his departure, having brought Luther down to the lowest depths of abject misery. Suddenly the Reformer turned to the Tempter and said: "It is true, every word of it, but write across it all: 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.'" (Hughes)

"My sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought; my sin not in part but the whole, was nailed to the cross and I bear it no more."

iii. We were spiritually dominated (by the flesh and the devil)

The enemies have been disarmed

- They still rage, but they know their final doom is sure
- They are disarmed in this way: the weapon of accusation has been taken away from them! They **used to wave the papers** in front of our face; but Christ has taken it away.
- When the enemy lies to you and makes accusation; remind him that Christ has paid it all!
- Christ put them to **shame** –
- The image is of a triumphant Roman processional – the defeated enemy and his warriors were paraded through the streets as a public spectacle.

But the **flesh** used to dominate us as well, but now we have a new power through the Spirit, to walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh.

#3: Are You Rejecting Substitute Gospels and Spreading the True Gospel? (8, 16-23)

Screwtape (Demon, writing to his apprentice) letters.
Screwtape tells Wormwood to keep Christianity in a state of what I call "Christianity and" Vegetarianism; Christianity and the New Order, etc.

Keep them distracted from Christ by adding to Christ.

What to Reject (8, 16-19)

a. Syncretism (9)

- The definite article is in front of the term philosophy here. This suggests that one group of teachers called their false religion "The Philosophy."
- Paul says that it's **empty deceit**.
- He says that it also contains "**elemental spirits**," which means "pagan principles," and Paul probably has in mind demonic spirits.
- It probably contained a mixture of Jewish ideas, along with astrology and Persian religious texts.
 - Some countries have what the Colossians had, syncretistic religion – **animism mixed with Xianity, for example**.
 - In Haiti and other cultures, there is much witchcraft, voodoo, etc, mixed in with other beliefs.

Application

- Do you know anyone like this - paganism, philosophies? Politicians? Divinity school students?
- Have you invited them? Prayed for them? Served them? Given Give Gospel centered literature to them?
- Is Syncretism alive and well today? Yes.
- Are sophisticated Philosophies alive devoid of Christian truth? Yes.

- o Religious Level: Pluralism – there are many ways to God
- o Academy, very liberal: Barclay
- o Popular level: New Age Experiences, the power of positive thinking, animism, etc.

E.V. Rieu was an amazing scholar, who translated Homer into English. He was asked to translate the gospels into a contemporary language. His son said, "It will be very interesting to see what Father makes of the Gospels. It'll be still more interesting to see what the Gospels make of Father." Soon this well-educated, sophisticated man was converted within a year, as he testified that they came with the ring of truth.

b. Religious Legalism or Ritualism (16-17)

- Some teachers were advocating the need for Jewish observances, arguing that they were essential for spiritual advancement.
- But these shadows are no longer needed for we have the substance. Why have the shadow of Christ, when you can have Christ. **Who looks at the shadow of a mountain instead of the mountain!?**
- Diets and Days don't have to be observed since the fulfillment has come. The Sabbath is debated here; whether it has to do with the fourth commandment or other special Sabbaths in the Jewish calendar.

Application:

- Do you know any religious legalists that cannot rest in the finished work of Jesus?

Ralph Davis illustrates how God uses *means* to bring people to faith and Christ; and often it's very simple. Dr. Gaebelein sent a copy of his book *Studies in Zechariah* to every rabbi in Greater

New York City and never received an acknowledgement from any of them. After a while, however, a young Hebrew Christian began attending Gaebelein's Bible studies. He had been the secretary to one of the great Rabbi's in New York. The rabbi had tossed Gaebelein's book in the trash can – but this young secretary fished it out, read it, and trusted Christ!

It's possible to wrapped up in religion, and miss Jesus. Don't look to the shadow – look to the substance! And let's point people to the substance.

c. Asceticism

- Ascetics denied pleasures; they were in to self-denial.
- We read about them in **1 Timothy 4**, where they were denying food and marriage (and probably sex within marriage).
- In **verse 21** he refers to **specific taboos** – specific teachings floating around.
- Do we have modern day ascetics? Yes.
 - o **Religious** Ascetics – Amish, Buddhists
 - o **Popular** Ascetics that take *food and diet as god*.
 - o **Popular ascetics** are *all into self*.
 - o Gaffigan: **“Let me go to the gym so I can work on myself. Let me work out in front of mirror so I can look at myself. Let me read Self Magazine while I work on myself. Let me take a picture of myself. Let me go on facebook and look at the pictures of myself.”**
 - o Many struggle with eating disorders and image problems because they haven't learned to rest in Jesus.

Application:

- Do you know such people? Mutilating the flesh to earn favor and acceptance?

Consider William Holland and gospel centered literature. In the late 1730's, a little group led by John and Charles Wesley, got together and were seeking God in the Holy Club. They fasted and sought God, but didn't know him. They denied things.

Murray says:

One night it began to break through, when one in their group, William Holland, got a hold of Luther's commentary on Galatians. In the Preface of Galatians, Luther tries to distill Paul's main argument. Holland brought it to Wesley and said, "Let's read it to each other." A few of them got together and began to read it to each other. Holland later said:

Mr. Charles Wesley read the Preface aloud. At the words, 'What, have we then nothing to do? No! nothing but only accept of Him, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption"', there came such a power over me as I cannot well describe; my great burden fell off in an instant; my heart was so filled with peace and love that I burst into tears. I almost thought I saw our Savior! My companions, perceiving me so affected, fell on their knees and prayed. When I afterwards went into the street, I could scarcely feel the ground I trod upon." [Cited from Dallimore, George Whitefield, i, 183.]

After that, what Holland took the Preface and went house to house and said, "Let me read this to you." According to some historians, John Wesley himself was listening to Holland read the preface and he said, "My heart was strangely warmed, and I felt that I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation."

What are you resting in? Do you know anyone denying certain things to earn salvation?

d. Mysticism

- Paul speaks of the worship of angels - **millions of books written; fascination**
- **and an obsession with visions.**
- The language is reflective of that which was found in Ephesus regarding initiation into mystery cults.
- **“Puffed up”** – Gnostics
- Christian Science

V. 19 – Not holding fast to the Head. This is the fundamental problem; and one of the main reasons we must do Christ-centered preaching and teaching.

- Christ is truth.
- Christ is the Leader
- Christ nourishes His church.

Why Reject Them (20-23)

- **False religion is built on man’s precepts; the gospel is built on The word of God. (20-22)**
- **False religion has appearance of wisdom; the gospel is the wisdom of God. (23a)**
- **False religion is man-made; the gospel is A gift of God. (23b)**
- **False religion is powerless; the gospel is the power of God (23c)**
 - Not only is false religion filled with extra biblical rules, that the followers themselves can’t keep; but the rules have no power to change the human heart. Only the gospel does.

So let’s fix our eyes on Jesus – Christ is Enough.

For every one look at yourself, take ten looks to Christ" (M'Cheyne)

Depressed?

Angry?

Doubting?

skeptical?

Unsatisfied?

Confused?

Though O Christ, art all I want

More than all in Thee I find