



# Completed or Cheated? Part 2

*Colossians 2:1-10*

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Colossians 2:1-10 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>1</sup> 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,

<sup>2</sup> 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,

<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

<sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

<sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

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## CHART

Here, we have a presentation of **Paul (who represents the truth of the gospel as appointed by God) and false teachers** who present cancerous ideas and philosophies. Each one presents a prescription for what you need to become complete as a human being. Ultimately, depending on which track you take, you will become a **complete person or a cheated person**.

**PAUL:** To become a complete person, you need encouragement and mutual love as you grow in your understanding of Jesus Christ. As you grow, you must do so, being steadfast in the faith, rooted and grounded in the truth, and abounding in it with Thanksgiving. As you pursue this track, you also need to have a healthy caution of the things that seek to rip you off. By living this way, you will tap into the storehouse of all the riches of knowledge and wisdom that are found in knowing Christ, and because Christ is the fullness of the person of God in the flesh, you will become a whole and complete person when you live as though Jesus Christ is sufficient for you.

**FALSE TEACHERS:** The path of imitation truth has its own destination: to be cheated (vs. 8) from what God truly wants for you. This path begins with deceptive and persuasive words aimed at attacking the Word of God and the person of Christ. These will come in 4 packages: philosophies, empty deceit, traditions of men, and demonic principles of the world. When embraced, the end of the road is not completion but rather being cheated.

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# 1 The Conflict of Paul

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## APPLICATION

Great conflict – A sporting term. It's the term **Agon** where we derive the English word **agonize**. It was a term frequently used to describe conflict or warfare. The same word in 2

Timothy 4 - I have fought the good fight.

- Paul sees wolves leading the church astray and wants to fight for them to protect them. As we saw in the last chapter, he was willing to agonize, even through great suffering for the church's sake.
- Considering he says plainly that they have not seen his face in the flesh, his labor is for people that he didn't even personally know!
  - On a totally unrelated side note, this verse has changed how I've viewed modern satellite campuses. I used to really struggle with campuses that had video teaching. Now we have one, and I wrestled through the potential pitfalls. But this verse helped me understand that God has gifted and called some people to reach others with the truth, even if they've not "seen them in the flesh." Yes, every gathering of believers needs pastoral care, which is why elders and pastors should be among every local gathering. But sometimes God, for whatever reason He sees fit, calls someone to reach and teach people that they don't know personally. Paul used ink and parchment, we use cameras and screens!
- Conflict:
  - **Physical conflict** - Paul was imprisoned due to his love and commitment to the church.
  - **Spiritual conflict** - Paul agonized in prayer, study, and communication in order to help people be established in the truth.

In Acts 20, we see Paul leaving the church in Ephesus. There were tears and hugs, and he gave them a final exhortation that reflected the heart of a man who loved those people. "I did not shun to declare to you the whole counsel of God."

If Paul wasn't willing to agonize in spiritual warfare and agonize through physical trials for people, we would not have half the Bible today, and the Christian faith wouldn't have spread through the world!

## 2 The Cunning of Decievers

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

## Colossians 2:4 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>4</sup> Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

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**BIBLE PASSAGE**

## Colossians 2:8 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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**APPLICATION**

In Paul's day there were countless attacks, as there are today, on the faith.

- Judiazers were adding man-made rules and traditions to the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.
- Gnostics were bringing in mystic practices, minimizing the divinity and humanity of Jesus, and offering alternate paths to attain secret knowledge and divine consciousness.
- Heathens were tempting Christians back to their former lifestyles and bombarding the church with cultural pressure.

Today, we have different versions of more of the same.

- We have modern religionists who want to weigh believers down with unbearable rules and regulations, demanding adherence to their church, their rules, and their authority.
- The modern gnostics of the age want to pull the roots of the Christian up from the moorings of God's word, inviting them into spiritual experiences, mystical practices, and syncretism (the mixing of modern cultural normalcies, humanistic ideas, and Christian spirituality).

- And we still live in a hedonistic world that normalizes sinful lifestyles, desensitizes people's consciences to evil, calls evil good and good evil, and pursues the love of self and the love of pleasure over the love of God.

### 1. THROUGH PERSUASIVE WORDS (COLOSSIANS 2:4)

### 2. THROUGH TRADITIONS OF MEN (COLOSSIANS 2:8)

Just as the Pharisees replaced God's law with human rules, today's church has replaced gospel imperatives with secular activism, progressive theology, and cultural trends.

### 3. THROUGH THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD (COLOSSIANS 2:8)

The "basic principles" Paul warns about are the fallen, godless ideologies that humans gravitate toward apart from divine revelation.

- But most Bible scholars agree that the implication of "Basic Principles" refers to demonically sourced ideals that take their root in the world.
  - The ESV translates "**Basic principles**" well: the "**elemental spirits**" of the world.
- In other words, Satan wants to fill the void within people. Satan wants to be the one to define morality, present solutions, and direct the populace. He does this through demonic activity.
- **[1Ti 4:1 NIV] 1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.**

## The Call for the Christian

## 3

**BIBLE PASSAGE****Colossians 2:5 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>5</sup> 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.

**APPLICATION**

Paul was not talking about astral projection or some sort of spirit travel. Paul was not onboard Spirit airlines on an invisible trip to Colossae!

- His reference is to the fact that in Christ, the hearts of believers are linked together. Paul's spirit rejoiced as though he was right there with them when heard from Epaphras that they were standing strong in their faith.

Paul said something similar to the church in Corinth regarding an issue of church discipline.

- **[1Co 5:3 NKJV] 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.**
- **The Spirit of Paul's authority extended to the church even when his body wasn't present.**

**Epaphras had reported to Paul that the condition of the church's faith was intact and steadfast. In other words, the external attacks hadn't yet dug their roots into the church because the church's roots were in Christ.**

It's not about how you start your race but how you continue, persevere, and finish it.

**QUOTE**

**“ The greatest protection against lies is to be steadfast and rooted in the truth.**

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#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Colossians 2:6-7 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>6</sup> As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

<sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

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#### APPLICATION

Paul gives an illustration, painting a picture for the church of what it looks like to truly "go deep" with Jesus.

- Deep faith isn't about discovering secret, mysterious Conspiracy theory "knowledge" that is hidden from everyone else.
- Deep faith isn't about having a surreal, ethereal, mystic experience with the Holy Spirit.

***"Deep faith is about remaining in the truth of the gospel amid the consistent attempts of the world, the enemy, and the flesh to uproot you."***

***Deep faith is a holy defiance against all that is contrary to Christ.***

**EXHORTATION:** We need to walk in Christ the same way we received Him: In faith and trust in the sufficiency of Jesus.

- What happened when you received Christ? You laid down your pride. You confessed that god's ways were greater than yours, and that his knowledge and wisdom surpassed yours. You recognized that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man and that the wisdom of man was foolishness to God. you weren't looking for what you could do to add to Christ, or earn your salvation, you were looking to Christ Himself as that all-sufficient one for the deepest need of your eternal soul.

- So why, after time walking with Christ, would you then become dependent on your expansion of knowledge, your moral or religious performance? Why would you go from a complete dependence on Jesus alone to seeking additives to your faith and experiences outside of authentic interaction with Christ?

Paul says we must continue in the same way we received it.

Here are two images:

### ILLUSTRATION

In 1986, the **Chernobyl nuclear disaster** caused radioactive contamination that seeped into the soil. Trees in the area absorbed these toxins and became **deformed, weak, and unable to grow properly**. Some forests in the area still suffer from radiation poisoning, where trees appear healthy but are hollow inside. One study revealed the **rings in the trees** marked the year of the disaster and that cell death and deformity regularly occurred after the nuclear fallout. One researcher noted that the younger trees were affected the most.

Because of this introduction of toxic radiation, trees that were designed to thrive and grow in a healthy environment were cheated of the opportunity to become healthy and strong.

### ILLUSTRATION

In Kansas City, Missouri, two suspended walkways inside the **Hyatt Regency Hotel collapsed in the 1980s**, resulting in 114 deaths and 216 injuries. The disaster was traced back to a last-minute design change: the original single-rod support system was altered to a double-rod system without proper evaluation. The steel company had an issue manufacturing the designed rods and made a last-minute suggestion about a different design. This modification significantly reduced the walkways' load-bearing capacity, leading to their failure during a crowded event.



## APPLICATION

### **Why these two analogies?**

Paul paints a picture of what happens to a life that isn't firmly rooted, like a tree, in the soil of Jesus Christ or firmly grounded, like a well-planned building, in the truth of the gospel. They collapse and become an incomplete, broken version of what they could have been.

You see, like a tree or a building, the Christian life will only be as complete, mature, and healthy as what the heart and mind are rooted in and grounded upon. The Colossians were holding fast, but things were beginning to buckle. Paul wanted to get ahead of the potential of rotting roots and cracking foundations.

Paul draws from the imagery of Psalm 1: **[Psa 1:1-3 NKJV] 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.**

He draws in the teaching of Jesus and wants them to be a fulfillment of His words: **[Mat 7:24-25 NKJV] 24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.**

### **Established in the faith as you have been taught -**

One of the greatest contributors to drifting is ignorance of the unchanging truths of the faith.

- It's not "Faith" - Paul certainly would want us to be built up in faith, but here he uses the definite article. It's "THE FAITH." Or in other words, the truth upon which our faith stands. Faith is not merely belief, it's believe in revealed truth.
- Sadly, today, many people will come to Jesus out of an emotional response to the gospel, but then they won't get plugged into a church that grounds them in the truths of the faith. This means that whatever next persuasive argument of spiritual experience comes along, has the potential to uproot them and divert them from the path of life.

### **As you have been taught -**

**1. People need to be taught** - Yes, the Christian faith is about action, doing, serving, and living out the faith... but in order to live something OUT, you have to first out something IN.

You can only live out what you put in.

- It's really important to come to church prepared to learn from the Holy Spirit and His Word. What helps you learn? Take notes in your need to, download my notes if it helps, take pictures, listen through again, and meditate on how the truths taught should impact your life and actions.
- In an age where most people's attention spans don't last past the next swipe on their phones, we have to be diligent and intentional to instill habits of learning, studying and meditating on God's word.

**2. You don't need new teachers** - There are those who claim to teach new divine revelations and mysteries but the one we already have is sufficient. Paul's teachings about the gospel are still the ones we need to root ourselves in.

- If you leave this church for another, or you're listening online, or you're visiting our church, listen up. If the church you attend is not practically standing on, preaching and teaching the Word of God as the sole foundation for life and faith, find somewhere else to attend. You will end up with water in your gas tank.
- Biblical illiteracy is leaving countless people vulnerable today to the wiles of the devil, and that's not just among the people of God, but also the pulpits of the church.

**Abounding in it with Thanksgiving** - Sometimes we forget to be thankful for ***what we have*** and replace it with longing for something ***we don't***. Physically, how many of us have more than 99% of people in this world have simply due to where we live and the wealth of our nation, yet, we find ourselves constantly complaining about what we want and longing for more?

- That's also possible spiritually. You can be in Christ, an inheritor of all the riches of God in Jesus, the reviving party of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, and because of a lack of focus or a general "taking for granted," we begin to complain rather than embracing what we have with thanksgiving. Paul says, "Don't be deceived into longing for something that some other spiritual promise is offering. Abound in what you have and be thankful."

## 4 The Completion of the Person

**BIBLE PASSAGE****Colossians 2:9-10 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

<sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

**FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD**

The word Godhead is used three times in the New Testament. Historically, this term has been defined as expressing the unique, divine nature and essence of God. It is sometimes translated as "Divine nature." The word *theotēs* reflects what Paul stated in chapter 1, that Jesus is the bodily expression of the exact essence of God.

This is a consistent pattern in Colossians, namely, discrediting the gnostic heresy that Jesus was something less than God and more than man. Gnostics taught that Jesus was an emanation who was attaining to the divine within himself, just as we can. It's very similar to Mormon theology.

**APPLICATION**

Paul sets two realities side-by-side:

**1. Divine fullness in Christ:**

Jesus Christ is not merely "touched" or influenced by God—He is literally filled with the very essence and being of God. He embodies the totality of divinity. Everything God is, Christ is, in human form.

**2. Human completeness in Christ:**

Just as Christ embodies God's fullness, the believer, in union with Christ, receives completeness or wholeness. Outside of Christ, humans remain fragmented—searching for meaning, identity, and wholeness. In Christ, however, we are brought into

alignment, becoming what we were intended to be: fully human, fully alive, fully restored.

#### QUOTE

**“Christ embodies the fullness of Deity being perfectly united with the Father. We embody true humanity only when we're fully united with Christ.”**

#### ILLUSTRATION

Imagine an empty vessel (the believer) plunged beneath the water's surface (Christ's divine fullness). The vessel is simultaneously surrounded, filled, and saturated with water, just as believers become completely immersed in Christ. Christ doesn't give us merely a sip of personhood; He immerses us fully, leaving no part untouched by His transforming presence. While we never become the ocean (never becoming divine), we're fully permeated by it, completely transformed by His fullness.

#### APPLICATION

Every person is an empty vessel, trying to find a filling in this world. But everything they immerse themselves in to try and be filled ends up leaving them emptier and dryer than before. Humans are like broken mirrors that distort the image of God within them and present a shattered view of the humanity God intended for us.

Now, Paul is obviously concerned for the souls of those who don't know Christ. But this chapter emphasizes the more significant concern that those who do have access to Christ are still exploring the swamps and the sewers to fill their cups.

## ILLUSTRATION

Decades ago, a woman in London was browsing a local car boot sale—a kind of flea market where people sell secondhand goods. Among the many trinkets and odds and ends, she spotted a ring with a large, sparkling stone. It looked beautiful, but certainly not expensive. The vendor assured her it was just costume jewelry, so she **bought it for £10 (about \$13)** and wore it as a fun accessory for years.

For decades, she went about her daily life, wearing the ring casually—while shopping, cleaning, or running errands—never thinking twice about it. To her, it was nothing more than a cheap, pretty piece of jewelry.

One day, a jeweler happened to notice the ring on her finger and suggested she get it appraised. Amused but curious, she agreed. The results shocked her. The "costume jewelry" was, in fact, a 26-carat diamond—an extraordinarily rare gem. At an auction, it sold for an astonishing **£656,750 (nearly \$850,000)!**

## APPLICATION

How many Christians are seeking something outside of Christ to complete their humanity when all they need to do is access what they already have in Christ. Listen to Peter's words on the subject.

**[2Pe 1:2-4 NKJV] 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

The divine power of God has (past tense) given us everything we need to make it through this life. EVERYTHING! He's given what we need to get through our anxiety. He's given us what we need to get through suffering. He's given us what we need to live wisely and fruitfully. He's gives us everything we need to understand His will. But notice the channel by which those things are accessed: Through the knowledge of Him...

- When there is an area of your life that feels empty, turn first to Jesus and you will find everything you need.

**ILLUSTRATION**

Less than one month before C. S. Lewis died, he wrote this letter to a little girl:

***Dear Ruth ... Many thanks for your kind letter, and it was very good of you to write and tell me that you like my books; and what a very good letter you write for your age! If you continue to love Jesus, nothing much can go wrong with you, and I hope you may always do so.***