

Equipping Hour: Apr 19

Apr 19: Spiritual Metabolism (pt2)

Last week we spent our time chewing on Colossians 1:1-19. For the rest of the semester, our format will be to walk through a passage of Scripture using a biblical worldview, means applying all the truths of God's Word to aid our understanding of a particular text so we can draw application to our lives, to see how God wants to shape us more and more into the image of Christ.

This morning we will be walking through Colossians 2:1-23 and drawing out a particular theme: Holding Fast to Christ in a World of Counterfeits

In Colossians 2:1-23, we are stepping into a passage that takes everything we saw in chapter one and presses it into the realities of everyday life. In chapter one, Paul lifted our eyes. He showed us the supremacy of Christ—that He is the image of God, the creator of all things, the one in whom all things hold together, and the one through whom all things are reconciled. It is one of the clearest, most comprehensive pictures of who Christ is in all of Scripture. But now, in chapter two, Paul brings that truth down into the arena of conflict, because the moment you affirm the supremacy of Christ, you step into a battle over how you will interpret reality and live that reality.

And that is what this passage is about. It is about the battle for your mind, the battle for your heart, and ultimately the battle for your worldview. Because remember you do not live in a neutral environment. You are constantly being disciplined—by culture, by your own desires, by the voices around you. And all of those influences are offering you ways of interpreting life that are not according to Christ. So Paul writes to warn, to anchor, and to re-center.

Last week we saw how Christ is supreme. This week our central message points to a simple, but weighty, reality: Christ is sufficient. Everything else is a counterfeit. Let's read our first section, verses 1-5:

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

I. The Aim: Hearts Anchored in Christ (2:1-5)

Paul begins by opening a window into his pastoral heart. He says that he is struggling for them—for the believers in Colossae and Laodicea, even those he has not seen face to face. That word "struggling" is not casual. It speaks of effort, of labor, of deep concern. Paul is not indifferent to their spiritual condition. He is moved, engaged, and invested. He is

contending for something in them. This is not the language of mere instruction—it is the language of shepherding. He understands that what is at stake is not simply whether they believe the right things on paper, but whether their hearts are actually anchored in Christ in a way that will hold under pressure.

And what is he contending for? He tells us: that their hearts would be encouraged, that they would be knit together in love, and that they would reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ. In the world of spiritual formation, what Paul just described is comprehensive.

Notice how holistic that is. He is not aiming only at their thinking, or only at their relationships, or only at their emotions. He is aiming at all of it. Encouraged hearts—internal strength and stability. Knit together in love—relational unity that reflects the gospel. And full assurance—deep, settled confidence in the knowledge of God. Scripture points to a reality we often overlook: spiritual stability is not just about having the right answers. Spiritual stability is about having a heart that is strengthened, a community that is unified, and a mind that is convinced.

And all of that is centered in one place—Christ. He says that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That means there is no deeper truth, no higher insight, no more ultimate explanation of reality outside of Him. Everything that is ultimately true finds its source and fulfillment in Christ. And Paul says this because there is a threat. He says in verse 4, “I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.” That word “plausible” is really, really important. False teaching does not come dressed as obvious error. It comes dressed as something reasonable, something persuasive, something that sounds close enough to the truth to be convincing. It appeals to logic. It appeals to experience. It often even borrows language from Scripture but subtly redirects it away from Christ.

And that is what makes it dangerous, because you do not drift from truth by embracing what is obviously false. You drift by embracing what is almost true. Paul’s aim is not merely that they would avoid error. His aim is that they would be so rooted in Christ, so convinced of who He is, so shaped by His truth, that error loses its power and appeal. That when something is presented to them—even something persuasive—they instinctively measure it against Christ and recognize that it falls short.

An apprentice jade jewelry begins his training by examining a lump of jade in his hand. For hours a day, all he does is turn the piece of jade over and over again in his hand. This will be the only part of his training for months. Then one day the master will put a lump in his hand, and the apprentice will immediately stop and say, “Master, what is this? It’s not jade.” You might be tempted to think that’s when the “real” training begins, but I assure you, recognizing the real from counterfeit IS the training.

And that is the kind of recognition and stability Paul wants for the church in Colossae because when your heart is anchored in Christ, when your understanding is shaped by Him, and when your life is knit together with others in truth and love, you are not easily moved or fooled.

II. The Call: Continue in Christ (2:6–7)

From there, Paul moves into a direct exhortation that is both simple and profound in verse 6: “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him...” That statement is easy to read past, but it carries enormous weight. Paul is establishing the pattern for the entire Christian life. The way you begin is the way you continue. You did not come to Christ through self-reliance. You did not come to Him through your own strength, your own wisdom, or your own effort. You came by grace, through faith, in dependence. You came recognizing your need, trusting in what Christ has done, and resting in Him.

And Paul says: do not leave that behind. There is a subtle but powerful temptation to think that the Christian life begins with dependence on Christ, but then progresses into self-reliance. That we start with grace, but then grow through effort. That we are saved by faith, but sustained by our own strength. But Paul dismantles that idea entirely. The Christian life is not about moving beyond dependence on Christ—it is about growing more dependent.

To “walk in Him” means that Christ is not just the starting point of your faith—He is the ongoing source of your life. Your thinking, your decisions, your responses, your growth—all of it flows from your connection to Him. And then Paul expands that picture with four images: ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Let’s break that down.

Rooted—this speaks of something that has already happened. Like a tree planted firmly in the soil, your life is anchored in Christ as its source of nourishment and stability. Your life draws from Him. Our passage last week hit this theme hard.

Built up—this is ongoing. Like a structure being strengthened over time, your life is continually being formed and shaped. This is not static. It is progressive growth.

Established in the faith—this speaks of stability. Not easily shaken, not easily moved. A settled confidence in what is true. An established faith will be an enduring faith.

And then, abounding in thanksgiving. That is the overflow. When your life is rooted in Christ, built up in Him, and established in truth, gratitude becomes the natural result. Not forced, not superficial, but genuine. And this is important, because it shows us that spiritual maturity is not merely measured by knowledge or discipline, but by what overflows from the heart. A life truly grounded in Christ will increasingly be marked by gratitude, because you recognize that everything you have is received, not earned.

What Paul is describing here is not a frantic, performance-driven pursuit of growth. It is a steady, rooted, Christ-centered life. It is not about trying harder to produce something externally, but about remaining deeply connected to the source of life internally. And that brings us back to the central question of this section: are you continuing in the same way you began? Are you still living in dependence on Christ, or have you subtly shifted into relying on yourself? Because the moment you move away from dependence on Christ, you begin to disconnect from the very source of growth. But when you remain rooted in Him, when you walk in Him day by day, your life is strengthened in a way that is lasting, stable, and real.

III. The Warning: Beware of Counterfeit Worldviews (2:8)

And then comes the warning in verse 8. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

That phrase “see to it” is active and urgent. Paul is not suggesting passive awareness—he is calling for vigilance. This is something you must watch for, something you must guard against. Because the danger is not hypothetical. It is real, and it is present. The image he uses is striking: being taken captive. This is not just being influenced or persuaded—it is being carried off, being led away from where you belong. It is the language of loss, of being removed from a place of safety and stability and brought under the control of something else. And how does that happen?

Through worldly ideas. Through worldly ways of thinking. What Paul calls “philosophy and empty deceit.” What James 3:15 calls earthly, unspiritual, demonic wisdom. Paul is exposing demonic systems of thought that attempt to explain reality apart from Christ. Folks, the implications of this are limitless. It’s been so much of what we have unpacked in our worldview class. Be on guard for ways of thinking rooted in human tradition, shaped by cultural assumptions, and disconnected from the truth of who Christ is. We could just sit in this and be done for today.

Scripture says that what the world offers is empty. Not because it lacks complexity, not because it fails to persuade—but because it lacks substance. The wisdom of the world cannot deliver what it promises because those philosophies and empty deceit are not anchored in ultimate reality.

And this is where the warning becomes intensely relevant for us because we often assume that deception will be obvious, that we will recognize it immediately. But Paul has already told us that these arguments are plausible. They sound reasonable. They often align with what we feel or what we want to be true. And that is what makes them dangerous. We are constantly being exposed to these kinds of ideas. Through media, through education, through conversations, through our own internal reasoning. Ideas about identity, about fulfillment, about truth, about what humanity’s greatest problem is and what the ultimate

solution is. And what the world offers is not according to Christ. Which means the issue is not simply whether you believe in Christ, but whether your thinking is actually shaped by Him.

Are you interpreting your life—your circumstances, your struggles, your desires—through the truth of who Christ is? Or are you being subtly shaped by something else? Because remember: you are always being disciplined by something. Your mind is always being formed. Your worldview is always being shaped. And if it is not being shaped intentionally by the truth of Christ, it will be shaped by something else by default.

That is why Paul's warning is so strong. Do not be taken captive. Do not allow yourself to be carried off by ways of thinking that are ultimately empty. Folks, this plays out most by how the world tries to distort and excuse sin, by offering worldly solutions and definitions. We have to be on guard and reject the world's definition of the problem and solution. No matter how persuasive they sound. No matter how widely accepted they are. Measure everything against Christ and His Word. Because if it is not according to Him, it will not lead you where you think it will. And the only way to resist that kind of deception is not simply by avoiding error, but by being so anchored in Christ that you recognize anything that falls short of Him, just like the jade jeweler.

IV. The Reality: Christ Is Completely Sufficient (2:9–15)

Paul responds to that threat by grounding everything in the sufficiency of Christ. If the danger is being taken captive by ideas that are not according to Christ, then the answer is to see clearly who Christ actually is—and what we have in Him. He continues in verse 9 with a statement that leaves no room for ambiguity: “For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...”

This is one of the clearest affirmations in Scripture of the full divinity of Christ. Paul is not saying that Christ reflects God, or that He represents God, or that He participates in God in some partial way. He says that the fullness of deity—the totality of what it means to be God—dwells in Christ. And not abstractly, but bodily. In real, physical, incarnate form. That means there is nothing lacking in Christ. There is no deficiency that needs to be supplemented. There is no higher spiritual reality beyond Him. If you have Christ, you have God Himself.

And then Paul says something just as staggering in verse 10: and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Catch this, folks: not that you will be filled, not that you are working toward fullness, but that you have been filled. You are complete in Christ. There is no spiritual lack that requires something additional. There is no missing piece that must be supplied by worldly philosophy, by self-righteous effort, or by spiritual experience.

And Paul knows this is where people are vulnerable, because when life feels incomplete—when we feel weak, uncertain, or lacking—we are tempted to look for something more. Something to add. Something to supplement Christ. But Paul closes that door completely. Christ is not a starting point to be built upon by other systems. He is the fullness, the head of all, the ruler of all, the total and complete authority of all.

And then Paul begins to unpack what that fullness means for us in verse 11: In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ... He says that in Christ we have experienced a circumcision made without hands. This is not physical, but spiritual. It is the cutting away of the old self—the removal of what once defined us. This is identity language. Something fundamental has changed about who you are.

Then in verse 12 [having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God] he says that we have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with Him through faith. This is union with Christ. His death becomes your death. His resurrection becomes your life. You were dead in your trespasses, but God made you alive together with Him. This is not improvement. This is resurrection. Notice who is doing the action.

And then Paul brings us to the cross in verse 13 and 14: And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Again, look at the action. God made you alive. God forgave. God cancelled. God set aside. God pounded in the nails Himself. Stew in this reality until it moves your soul. And not only that—He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame. Every spiritual power that stood against you, every force that held you in bondage, has been defeated through Christ.

So when we step back and look at this, the conclusion is overwhelming: Christ is sufficient in every way. He is fully God. He has fully saved you. He has fully secured your standing. And He has fully defeated everything that stood against you. Which means there is nothing left to add. And that is exactly what Paul wants us to see. Because the only reason we reach for something more is that we have not fully grasped what we already have in Christ.

When we grasp this, we will experience freedom.

V. The Freedom: Do Not Return to Shadows (2:16–17)

In verses 16-17, Paul writes, in light of everything he has just established about the sufficiency of Christ, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.” That “therefore” ties everything back to what we have just seen. Because Christ is fully sufficient, because you

are complete in Him, because your debt has been canceled and your identity secured—therefore, do not allow anyone to place you back under a system that suggests something more is needed. What Paul is addressing here is a form of religious legalism. These are practices that, in their original context, were part of the Old Covenant—dietary laws, religious festivals, calendar observances. But now they are being used as a measure of spiritual standing, as if obedience to these external practices determines whether someone is truly acceptable before God.

And Paul says: do not let anyone judge you by those things. Why? Because they are shadows. He says in verse 17, “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” That is a powerful distinction. A shadow has a real connection to something, but it is not the thing itself. It points beyond itself. It has no substance on its own. And once the reality arrives, the shadow no longer serves the same purpose. All of those Old Testament practices were meant to point forward to Christ. They were never the end goal. They were signposts. They were anticipatory. And now that Christ has come, the substance has arrived.

So to return to those things as if they are still the measure of spirituality is to go backward. It is to trade the reality for the shadow. And this is not just an ancient issue. The same tendency exists today. We are drawn to things that feel tangible, measurable, and controllable. We want clear markers that tell us we are doing well. Boxes to check. And often, that leads us to elevate external practices—what we do, what we avoid, how we structure our lives—as if those things define our standing before God.

But Paul is clear: those things cannot define you. They never could. Christ is the reality. Christ is the substance. Christ is the standard. And when you begin to treat anything else as the measure of your spiritual standing, you are functionally moving away from Him. You are placing weight on something that was never meant to carry it. Don’t chase the shadow; pursue the substance.

VI. The Danger: False Spirituality (2:18–19)

Paul then turns to another form of deception—one that can be even more subtle because it appears deeply spiritual. In verse 18 he says, “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions...” This is not legalism in the traditional sense. This is not about rules and external conformity. This is about spirituality that feels elevated, experiential, even profound. It carries the appearance of depth. It claims access to something beyond the ordinary—visions, spiritual experiences, deeper insight into unseen realities. And Paul says: do not let anyone disqualify you through that.

That word “disqualify” is important. It carries the idea of being ruled out, of being told that you are somehow lacking, that you do not measure up spiritually. And that is exactly how this kind of false spirituality works. It creates a new standard—an unspoken hierarchy of

spiritual experience—and suggests that unless you have what they have seen, felt, or experienced, you are missing something essential.

But Paul exposes what is really happening. He says these individuals are “puffed up without reason by a sensuous mind.” In other words, what appears to be humility is actually pride. What appears to be spiritual depth is actually rooted in the flesh. It is self-generated. It is driven by the desire to elevate oneself through experiences that seem impressive or unique.

And then Paul identifies the core issue in verse 19: they are “not holding fast to the Head.” That is the decisive problem. No matter how spiritual something appears, if it is not anchored in Christ, it is ultimately empty. If it does not lead you to depend more fully on Him, to trust Him more deeply, to remain connected to Him as your source of life, then it is not true spirituality. Why? Because growth does not come from experiences. It does not come from visions, or mystical encounters, or self-imposed practices that seem impressive. Paul says growth comes from the Head—from Christ—“from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.”

That is the only kind of growth that lasts. It is not self-produced. It is not experience-driven. It is Christ-centered. And this is where the warning becomes very relevant for us. We can be drawn to what feels spiritual, what feels intense, what feels deeper than the ordinary rhythms of the Christian life. We can begin to measure spiritual maturity by experiences rather than by faithfulness. But Paul calls us back to something far more stable and far more real. Hold fast to Christ. Because the moment you begin to pursue spirituality apart from Him—even if it looks impressive—you begin to disconnect from the very source of life. And disconnected spirituality, no matter how convincing it appears, cannot produce true growth.

So as we step back and take in everything Paul has said in this passage, the message is both simple and searching. Christ is sufficient. Completely, finally, and exclusively sufficient. And everything else—no matter how persuasive, how spiritual, or how disciplined it appears—is ultimately a counterfeit. That is what Paul has been showing us from every angle. There are systems of thought that sound compelling, but are ultimately empty. There are religious practices that look serious, but are shadows. There are spiritual experiences that feel deep, but are disconnected from the source of change, God Himself.

And underneath all of them is the same temptation: to move beyond Christ. To look for something more. Something additional. Something that feels more immediate, more tangible, more within our control. But Scripture brings us back, again and again, to the same reality: you do not need something more than Christ. You need to hold fast to Him. And that language matters—hold fast. Because this is not passive. This is not casual agreement. This is not simply affirming that Christ is central while functionally living as if something else is. To hold fast is to cling. It is to grip tightly. It is to refuse to let go, even

when other things seem appealing, even when other voices seem persuasive, even when your own heart pulls you in another direction because the counterfeits Paul describes are not always obvious. They often come in forms that feel helpful. They promise clarity, control, growth, relief, or depth. They appeal to your desire to make sense of your life, to deal with your struggles, to become more mature.

And in those moments, the question is not simply, “Is this wrong?” The question is deeper: “Is this leading me to depend more fully on Christ, or is it subtly replacing Him?” We need to sit in that question. You can affirm Christ with your words and still functionally move away from Him in how you think, how you respond, and where you look for help. You can begin to rely on your own reasoning. You can begin to measure your standing by external performance. You can begin to chase experiences that feel spiritual. You can begin to build a system of control that gives the appearance of growth. And all the while, you are loosening your grip on Christ. That is why Paul’s call is so urgent. Hold fast to Him.

When your life feels uncertain, hold fast to Christ rather than grasping for control. When your sin feels overwhelming, hold fast to Christ rather than trying to manage it through external effort. When your mind is filled with competing ideas, hold fast to Christ rather than being carried along by what sounds persuasive.

Why? Because only Christ is the source of life. Only Christ is the source of truth. Only Christ is the one who can actually transform you from the inside out. Everything else will eventually prove empty. Everything else will eventually leave you where you started—unchanged at the core. But Christ will not.

And that means this passage is not just about identifying error. It is about re-centering your life. It is about asking, with honesty and humility: where am I being tempted to move beyond Christ? Where am I subtly placing my confidence in something else? Because whatever you hold fast to—that is what will shape you. And Paul’s invitation, and warning, is clear. Do not settle for shadows when you have the substance. Do not chase counterfeits when you have the reality. Do not loosen your grip on the One who holds all things together. Hold fast to Christ.