

## **Jesus, Our All in All – Spiritual Maturity: Part II, 2:8-23**

A couple of weeks back we looked at the beginning verses of Colossians chapter 2 and learned that Paul places a great deal of emphasis on living “in Christ”. He says it this way a few times here in chapter 2; “*walk in Him*”. When is the last time you took a walk with Jesus? As you consider these words from verse 6, pay attention to Paul’s emphasis on what is required to become spiritually fit. We know he is not against a good run. Afterall, he teaches the Corinthians a similar lesson when he focuses on the importance of disciplined and intentional training required for runners to race after the prize. Paul teaches us about the importance of growing in our faith by focusing on who Jesus truly is and then trusting the Holy Spirit to do a continual work in our hearts. I hope one of your reasons for being here today is the pursuit of **Spiritual Maturity**. It ought to be of highest priority for every Christian to do what is necessary to grow spiritually and become more mature in their faith. Instead of training for a run, Paul, knowing the newness of the Colossians faith, places emphasis on walking in Christ. If we want to become someone who is spiritually mature, then we first must get off the sofa, and begin a steady routine of walking with Jesus. It is clear the apostle Paul desires to provide some advice on how we can mature in Christ and ensure that we will finish the race well.

One of the ways Paul chose to help the Christians at Colossae was to warn them of some of the dangers they faced. Perhaps he felt the best way to offer sound guidance to them would be to address some of the influences endangering their new faith. Paul wanted them to know that even though they had a fervent desire to follow Jesus, if their knowledge and faith remained embedded in ideas and concepts from the world, they could never truly mature in their faith. In verses 8-10, he goes after the philosophies and traditions created by man. In verses 11-17, he addresses the ceremonialism of the Jews. In verses 18-19, he confronts their propensity to worship angels. And in verses 20-23, he attacks their forms of self-made religion and asceticism. Remember, Paul wanted them to be “perfect” (NKJV) or “mature” in Christ. To accomplish this, we too must be on guard against influences in our life that may seem legit and harmless but can easily lead us away from Jesus. Let’s look briefly at the four examples found here in Colossians and see if we can find something of significance that can help us move along the path of spiritual maturity in Jesus.

Let’s go to Colossians 2 and begin by reading verses 8-10, focusing on what Paul is warning against but also on the blessing associated with walking in Christ. **Read Colossians 2:8-10.** Notice his warning here concerns those who put their trust in the made-made philosophies and traditions present in their world. He is speaking out against any teaching or support which places emphasis on human thought and practice. If a teaching or practice gives credit to a human being or brings glory to anyone other than Jesus, then it should be recognized as a false religion. Do you remember how Jesus addressed the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem concerning this same thing? **Read Matthew 15:1-9.** Only traditions established by God should be acceptable in the church. Otherwise, they can cheat you out of experiencing the fullness of all that God intends. Often these manufactured philosophies and traditions hold some truth but is the error in them that works to lead you away from the doctrine of Jesus Christ! Concerning this danger, Paul states back in verse 3 that only in Jesus can one discover the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In verse 9, he states that only in Jesus can one discover the “fullness” of God. When you know Jesus, you know the Father, you know Him, and you also have a relationship with the Holy

Spirit. In verse 10, Paul says, Jesus “fills” us, or makes us complete. I pray you leave here today, knowing and trusting in these truths.

Remember, many of the people Paul addresses with this letter are converted Jews. Because of this, these Jewish Christians continued to rely on some of the ceremonial practices they were previously accustomed too. In this case, Paul wanted them to stop attempting to force those practices on the gentile believers in the group. **Read Colossians 2:11-17.** Jewish males were circumcised as a sign of their commitment to the covenant that God had made with their ancestors, and as such, felt that every gentile believer should be willing to do the same as a showing of their new commitment to Jesus. Paul explains that with the death of Jesus on the cross, physical circumcision was no longer required because following Jesus brought them into God’s new covenant. Jesus’ death took the Old Law out of the picture and allows our trust in Him to stand as evidence of our commitment to God. Through a believer’s baptism into Christ, one experiences a “spiritual circumcision” which cuts away the sins of the flesh. It’s not as prevalent among Baptist denominations, but various denominations still place dietary restrictions on their people. They assign specific priestly requirements or place requirements from the Law of Moses on their people. With Jesus, the circumcision is no longer physical but is of the heart. **Read Romans 2:28-29.** Before Jesus, a lost person’s heart is evil, but with Jesus, a person’s heart is made new. The Christian has a new nature; a nature that is born out of holiness and not out of sin. I pray you leave here today, experiencing this newness.

Why do you think people worship angels? **Read Colossians 2:18-19.** Guess what? It happened then, and it still occurs today. It was being taught that access to God wasn’t possible unless God was pleased with how they worshipped various levels of angels. If the worship was flashy enough or demonstrated enough visual humility for those present, then God would be pleased and would in turn allow them access. When Jesus came into reality, the people changed their focus to Him but held onto this same belief. In other words, if I want access to Jesus, then my worship of angels must match how I previously worshipped them, otherwise, Jesus will not allow me in. Let me just say, this belief is not Scriptural! God makes this noticeably clear in **Exodus 20:3-5** and in **Revelation 22:8-9**. Paul is reminding us that true humility can only come through a genuine “walk” with Jesus. True worship must be directed to God and Him alone. Remember what Paul said to the Corinthians... **Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.** I pray today you leave God-centered and not self-centered.

Finally, as a continuation of words from verse 18, Paul addresses asceticism, which is a system of practices designed to demonstrate humility. It is a system which focuses on self-control against the desires of the flesh and includes extreme, non-biblical forms of abstinence, fasting, meditation, celibacy, silence, holding vigils, and sometimes self-mutilation or beating. All done for the purpose of conquering the flesh so that one’s spiritual life can improve. In verse 23, Paul informs the people at Colossae that these things are futile and have no power over the desires of the flesh. Consider fasting as an example. It has a place in the life of a Christian, but it has nothing to do with self-control. It does however have everything to do with approaching God in prayer, humbly seeking His guidance in your life. The various religions today that teach, and practice forms of asceticism want people to believe that neglecting the whole body is the secret to humility and true spiritual maturity. The real secret is JESUS! Paul says in **Galatians 5:24**, *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* In

other words, the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross is where the real power is! It is this work that overpowers the flesh.

Throughout chapter two, Paul emphasizes the power of “walking in Christ.” As we live in this world and we strive to live this Christian life, attempting to grow spiritually, we must also be aware of the things around us that are working to pull us away from Jesus. Some are subtle, others are not. Never forget, the answer is Jesus. He is not “A” way but is “THE” way!