



COLOSSIANS
ROOTED
COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

MAIN IDEA

We are positioned for transformation when every part of our lives is rooted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- **What is your level of skill at gardening: green thumb (yard of the month finalist), numb thumb (instructive letters from the community HOA), or something in between?**
- **Have you ever attempted to cultivate a vegetable or fruit garden? What were you hoping to grow, or what did you grow? Describe the process.**

Many people set out to grow plants and flowers, but not all of us succeed. Whichever outcome is our personal reality probably has something to do with the level of attention we give those plants and flowers. To grow plants, you need to water them but not too much. They need sunlight, but not too much. Even those factors are influenced by where you're doing your planting and how well the soil is prepared in advance. In other words, a plan of action is crucial. When the soil is well-prepared, roots grow and life bursts forth from the ground!

-
- **How are those realities about gardening also true about a person's spiritual growth?**

We receive salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. And at the same time, we allow spiritual roots to grow and produce what the Bible calls “fruit” through the daily decisions we make in relationship with Jesus.

- **When have you seen spiritual growth in your life? What affects your spiritual growth most?**

Today, we're continuing our study of Colossians by seeing that we are positioned for change or growth—spiritual transformation—when every part of our lives is rooted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Like salvation, that process of growing roots is a grace of God known as sanctification. And it is also a process we decide to allow or disallow each day.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 2:6-8.

What was the danger facing the Colossians?

- **Why did the nature of Paul's relationship with the church intensify this problem?**

Paul had a unique struggle trying to guide the leaders of the Colossian church. He had never visited Colossae or Laodicea, a larger city near Colossae. Paul wanted the Colossians to be encouraged, to work together, and to have

an understanding and true knowledge of Christ. One of his main concerns was false teachers. Paul did not want clever arguments and persuasive words to pull the church away from the truth about Jesus Christ. The fact that Paul had not met the church leaders intensified this problem because Paul did not know the depth of their commitment to the gospel.

These believers at Colossae were constantly bombarded with false teachings and faced a culture that was antagonistic toward their faith. Paul essentially told them to stick with God's plan. He wanted to make sure false philosophy did not pull them away from following Jesus and pursuing deeper faith. Paul was deeply committed to encouraging and equipping them to stay the course and grow in their faith, no matter their circumstances.

- **What do you think being built up or established looks like in a person's life (v. 7)? What practical things can you do to remain established in Christ?**
- **Read Galatians 1:6-7. What does Paul mean by "another gospel" (v. 7)? How does the search for hidden knowledge amount to searching for "another gospel"?**

Paul's exhortations for the Colossians focused on Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the leaders to persevere in their walk with Christ. His language—"established" and "built up"—suggests a structure that is on solid footing. And that solid footing is Jesus Christ. The way to become established was through trusting and living out the good teaching that had been imparted to them from Paul and other believers.

- **How can you relate to the situation Paul described in verses 6-8?**

- **What kinds of obstacles does today's church face in living our faith? What similarities do you see in the problems we face today and those of the church in Colossae?**

Christians are to walk in the Lord. Elsewhere, Paul said to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1). This means living according to God's wisdom and ways. We need to be rooted in Christ to continually grow and be firmly established. Anyone who tends to plants can testify about the importance of the roots being strong, deep, and grounded in good soil. Christians should assess our roots and continually seek nourishment from Christ.

During battle, one goal is to take the enemy captive. If you gain that kind of control over your opponents, you can render them ineffective. False teachers can do the same thing to Christians. Although the exact nature of the philosophy Paul referenced is not known, it was clearly deceptive teaching that contradicted the true gospel message. Many false teachings threaten to deceive believers today too. The most effective way to avoid the traps of deceit is to be deeply rooted in the truth, as Paul instructed the Colossians.

- **What are some ways the enemy seeks to deceive Christians in the world today?**
- **Why must we have a sure foundation in Jesus to resist these schemes?**

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 2:9-12.

These new believers were being bombarded with teachings and traditions that strongly conflicted with their faith in Jesus. Even though he didn't name the specifics, Paul's strategy for

dealing with false teaching applies to anything that comes in direct opposition to the gospel.

Regardless of what the rest of the world believed and taught, Paul reminded his readers that Jesus was the only authority or standard. No rule, tradition, or philosophy can equal or compete with the Word of God.

One of the first things we should do in response to false teaching and influences is remember who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and that He now lives in all who have placed their faith in Him, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

- **Why should we focus on Jesus and not ourselves or the problem as we face obstacles to our faith?**

- **Why are we often tempted to do the opposite?**

In Deuteronomy 10:16, God commanded His people to circumcise their hearts. Circumcision was a symbol of God's covenant. It was symbolic of the cutting off of the previous life and embracing the new one of faith. Circumcision and baptism both are designed to be outward symbols that God's chosen people are set apart and different. But in the New Testament, we see that because of Jesus, God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Most of the Colossian Christians were Gentiles, so they had never been circumcised physically. Paul reassured them that they had experienced an even more important spiritual circumcision through faith in Jesus. They did not need to be physically circumcised, but they needed to be baptized because that identified them with Jesus and demonstrated they had parted with their old life of sin and were now following Christ.

- **What are some things you cut away from your life when you trusted in Jesus?**
-

- **Why is it important that Jesus doesn't just change our behaviors but makes us into new creations? What difference does this make?**

> Have someone in your group read Colossians 2:13-15.

Victory over sin means it no longer has the power to destroy your life. But apart from Christ, this victory over sin and death cannot happen. Paul used strong words to make his point, giving the picture of our sin debt being nailed to the cross and canceled through the finished work of Christ. If we aren't rooted in this truth, false teaching can lead us astray.

- **How has Jesus achieved victory for you? What is this victory over? How does this impact daily life?**

The authorities Paul referred to are not human authorities. Paul wrote of spiritual rulers and authorities who oppose God. Paul stressed that when Christ died on the cross and rose again, these powers were defeated and publicly disgraced. Like soldiers in a defeated army were paraded around in chains to their own humiliation, the defeat of these spirits was made public and evident. No power in the universe, physical or spiritual, can rob us of victory in Jesus.

- **What rulers and authorities do you feel like you need Christ's victory over now?**
- **How can you approach Him about this?**

APPLICATION

- **How do we ensure that our faith is grounded in a solid understanding of the true gospel? How do we fight the temptation to add to the gospel of grace?**
- **How can you seek to grow more grounded in your faith?**
- **How can we rely on Christ for our victory over the forces we face in the world? In what way does this victory often look different than the world imagines?**
- **What strategy do we need to put into practice to further walk in a way that is worthy of Christ?**
- **How would you counsel a friend who thought he or she had to work to get God to like him or her? Do you know anyone who knowingly or unknowingly follows one of the false gospels described in this message? How could you share the real life-changing gospel with that person?**

PRAY

Thank the Lord that even when you were dead in your sin, He had a plan and offered you a completely different life. Confess the ways you've been distracted and renew your desire to be rooted and grounded in faith so that you can live in His victory.

Historical Context of Colossians

Purpose

Paul wrote to counter the “Colossian heresy” that he considered an affront to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The false teaching is identified as a “philosophy” (2:8), presumably drawn from some Hellenistic traditions as indicated by the references to “his fullness” (1:19); the “elements of the world” (Gk *stoicheia*, 2:8, 20); “wisdom” (2:3, 23); and “self-made religion” (2:23). In addition, the false teaching contained Jewish elements such as circumcision (2:11; 3:11); “human tradition” (2:8); Sabbath observance, food regulations, festival participation (2:16); the “worship of angels” together with “access to a visionary realm” (2:18); and harsh human regulations (2:21–23). Paul addressed this syncretistic philosophy by setting forth a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and by noting appropriate implications for Christian conduct.

Author

The Apostle Paul is identified as the author of Colossians (1:1; 4:18). The church fathers unreservedly endorsed Pauline authorship (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 3.14.1; Tertullian, *De Praescr. Haer.*, 7; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, 1.1; cp. Justin, *Dialogue*, 85.2; 138.2). A close reading of Colossians reveals a considerable number of lexical, grammatical, and theological similarities with the other Pauline writings (1:9, 26; 2:11–14, 16, 20–21; 3:1, 3, 5–17). Also favoring the authenticity of Colossians as a letter of Paul is its close connection with Philemon, an epistle widely regarded as Pauline.

Setting

During his ministry in Ephesus (Ac 19:10), Paul sent Epaphras to spread the gospel in the Lycus Valley. Epaphras subsequently established the church at Colossae (1:7; 4:12–13). The city’s population consisted mostly of Phrygians and Greeks, but it also included a significant number of Jews. The church, likewise, was mostly composed of Gentiles (1:21, 27; 2:13), but it also had Jewish members (2:11, 16, 18, 21; 3:11). When Epaphras (Phm 23) informed Paul of certain heretical teachings that had spread there, Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians as a theological antidote.

Special Features

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae is one of the prison letters (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). Paul’s desire with this letter was to correct the false teachings that were cropping up in the church. In doing so, Paul presented a clear picture of Jesus Christ as supreme Lord of the universe, head of the church, and the only one through whom forgiveness is possible.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15

2:6–7. Paul’s practical concern was that believers would grow in spiritual maturity. The basis of their conduct is Christ’s lordship (1:15–20) and indwelling (1:27). The command to continue to live in him, (cp. “walk” in 1:10) is followed by expressions of what this involved: (1) being rooted (firmness; cp. Eph 3:17); (2) built up; (3) established in the faith (a legal term meaning “confirmed”); and (4) overflowing with gratitude (cp. 1:3, 12; 3:15–17; 4:2).

Notes:

2:8. Be careful is a strong warning to watch out so believers are not taken captive and enslaved to false doctrines through philosophy and empty deceit. “Human tradition” implies human origin (whether Jewish or Gentile) as opposed to the divine nature of the gospel. The elements of the world were most likely astral deities, spirits, and/or angels commonly associated with pagan worship, astrology, and magical practices (see vv. 15, 20; 1:16; Gl 4:3, 9; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12).

2:10. You have been filled denotes a completed act with ongoing results (see notes at 1:9, 18).

2:11. The reference to circumcision indicates the Jewish nature of this false philosophy. Circumcision was established and mandated by God for entrance into the covenant community of his people. But the circumcision of Christ was spiritual and associated with “circumcision of the heart” (Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jr 4:4; Ezk 44:7; Rm 2:29). Here the reference is to the death of Christ, not the literal OT practice of circumcision.

2:12. Baptism relates to Christ’s death and burial (Rm 6:3–8); it is not the NT equivalent of OT circumcision. Believer’s baptism symbolizes union with Christ in death and complete separation from the former way of life. Likewise, believers are raised with him through faith (1:23; Gl 2:20) according to God’s power.

2:13. Prior to their faith in Christ, the Colossians were spiritually dead in trespasses (cp. Eph 2:1–3) and cut off from God’s people because they were Gentiles (Eph 2:11–12). However, in Christ, God made them alive and forgave all their sins (Eph 2:4–8).

Notes:

2:14. The certificate of debt may refer to a handwritten document or to the Mosaic law. Paul typically viewed the law’s purpose as revealing the guilt of sinners (Dt 27:26; Rm 7:13; 1Co 15:56; Gl 3:10). In the OT God is viewed as keeping a record of people’s sins. He likewise has the power to erase or blot out sins (Ps 51:1, 9). Paul gives a vivid picture of this action that is God’s exclusively. Through Christ’s atoning sacrifice, God erases the sinner’s certificate of debt and removes it by nailing it to the cross.

2:15. The phrase disgraced them publicly relates to God humiliating these spiritual rulers in a public spectacle of shame and defeat. The word triumphed (see note at 2Co 2:14) evokes the imagery of a triumphal procession where a victorious general would lead a parade to display the treasures and prisoners of war from his conquest.