

Colossians 2.⁶⁻²³

6. 'The best life!'

Background

One of the concerns of pastoral ministry (remember, the previous section [1.24-2.5] was all about the *ministry* to which we're called) is that of 'safeguarding' – not in the technical, contemporary sense, so much as in the sense of protecting the flock from falsehood and error, from a counterfeit gospel message.

Error and falsehood are never flagged up as such, of course! The devil is much too clever and careful for that – and it is indeed the devil and his minions who lie behind the spread of such deceit. The devil is a liar through and through (see [Jn.8.44](#)) whose intent is ever (if he could) to 'lead the whole world astray' ([Rev.12.9](#)).

Paul in this passage is thus seeking to guard the believers at Colossae from the subtle ways in which they are in danger of being led astray. He'd prepared the way for this in the previous couple of verses ([Col.2.4-5](#)), of course, where he'd pointed to the reality of those whose 'fine-sounding arguments' might easily deceive the careless and undiscerning.

That in itself is part of the way in which believers are guarded against the counterfeit – by being warned of the threat of deceit which there will undoubtedly be (in much the same as banks, for instance, will warn their customers of potential 'scams').

The primary way in which protection is given against the counterfeit is by familiarising people with the genuine. It certainly used to be the case that American agents whose task was to spot counterfeit money were trained to be so totally familiar with the genuine that they recognise the counterfeit immediately: and that essentially is what Paul is seeking to do here.

In the opening few verses (vv.6-8) he provides a summary statement – first positively (vv.6-7) and then negatively – in relation to the life of faith: the initial *decision* to 'receive Christ Jesus as Lord' (note how carefully that's phrased) must be followed through with a life of continuing *discipleship*.

A clear exposition, therefore, of the 'fullness' of life which is ours in Christ is what Paul then articulates (vv.9-15), before teasing out for them the practical implications of that life, not least in terms of what it definitely *doesn't* entail!

A couple of points to note.

First, you should notice the recurrence (really throughout the whole section but particularly in vv.9-15) of phrases such as 'in Christ/Him', 'by Christ', and 'with Christ/Him': at the heart of this new life is a relationship with the risen Lord Jesus.

Then, too, it's worth noting Paul's pastoral awareness that there will always be a certain gravitational pull away from grace, either towards a 'religion' of rules and regulations (2.16-23), or towards a licentiousness of life (3.5-17).

I suggest that the 'days' on which to major (if you're not able to cover them all) are '**days**' (1), (4), and (7): there are, as ever additional questions under each of those 'days' which I hope will prove useful in Community Group discussion.

1) Monday 31st October – gratitude

Read [Colossians 2.6-7](#)

“.. continue to live your lives in Him ..” (Col.2.6)

Life begins with Jesus! Root yourself constantly in His lordship, build your life on the teaching of His Scriptures, and ensure that your living is marked by an ongoing gratitude to Him. His life is endless: make sure your following of Him is endless too!

If someone asked you what it means to ‘receive Christ Jesus as Lord’, how would you answer them?

In what ways does **receiving Christ Jesus as Lord** change your living?

By what means are you being ‘strengthened in the faith’ [NB. it’s *the* faith]?

How can you ensure there is a constant overflow of thankfulness in your heart, regardless of your circumstances?

Prayer: *Keep me from a critical spirit, Lord, and fill me instead with ever deepening gratitude for all that You are, for all that You’ve done, and for all that You give today.*

2) Tuesday 1st November – discernment

Read [Colossians 2.6-8](#)

“.. see that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy ..” (Col.2.8)

Be grateful, certainly, but be on your guard as well. The devil is the arch-deceiver and will seek to lead you astray and spoil your experience through attractive, impressive and persuasive arguments and worldviews which society around you presents.

What ‘philosophies’ are prevalent in society today which should be seen as ‘hollow’ and ‘deceptive’?

When such ‘philosophies’ are being propounded constantly throughout society, how can you best guard yourself against them?

Prayer: *I’m easily taken in, Lord, by impressive people and their impressive arguments. Keep me from slipping back into patterns of behaviour which will enslave me.*

3) Wednesday 2nd November – renewal

Read [Colossians 2.9-12](#)

“.. you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God ..” (Col.2.12)

Believers are 'in Christ' – united to Him by faith through the gracious work of His Spirit. What is true of Him is true of them. No single picture can tell the whole story, such is the richness of the new life you have in relationship with Him!

What 'pictures' does Paul use here to describe the effect of Christ's work on the believer?

In what ways will it be evident to those who know you that you have been raised to a new life with Jesus?

Prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for the fullness of life You've secured for me and given to me. Help me today to live that life to the full as I walk humbly with Yourself.*

4) Thursday 3rd November – forgiveness

Read [Colossians 2.13-15](#)

".. He forgave us all our sins .." (Col.2.13)

The work of Jesus in His life and death is comprehensive. The guilt of sin is removed and the power of sin is broken. As you trust in Jesus, anything that might have been pinned against you was nailed to the cross on which He died: it's all been dealt with!

Might the assurance of the Lord's forgiveness be more clearly expressed in the life and worship of our fellowship? And if so, how?

What difference does it make to you knowing that all your sins are forgiven?

Read [Psalm 130.4](#): what is the logic behind the psalmist's statement that the sequel to forgiveness is a life of reverent service?

How does that reverent service find expression in our life as a fellowship?

What is it about His death that enables Paul to say that 'by the cross' Jesus 'triumphed over' the powers and authorities?

Prayer: *If You, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve You. Help me to do so today!*

5) Friday 4th November – relationship

Read [Colossians 2.16-19](#)

".. do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink .." (Col.2.16)

Life ceases to be about rules and regulations when you entrust your life to Jesus! It's Jesus Himself who matters now, and neither pious performance (observing rules), nor spiritual experience (worship of angels) are any sort of substitute for that relationship.

In what ways do you find yourself being critical of the conduct of other believers, requiring that they conduct themselves in certain ways?

While grace doesn't give you license to behave as you like, how do you handle the pressure from other believers to conform to certain 'norms'?

Prayer: Forgive me, Lord, when I have harboured a somewhat judgmental spirit in my heart. Help me to prize above all else relationship with You, and to live accordingly

6) Saturday 5th November – freedom

Read [Colossians 2.20-21](#)

".. you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world .." (Col.2.20)

Mere 'religion' doesn't set you free. Its rules are always constricting and controlling. That, though, now is history if you've put your trust in Jesus! It belongs to a different world: you died with Christ and have risen with Him to a whole new way of life.

How do you distinguish between 'worldly' rules and the 'rules' which the Lord lays down? Or are there now no rules at all for the believer?

To what is Paul referring when he speaks of 'the elemental spiritual forces of this world'?

Prayer: Lord, how easy it is for me to slip back into living my life with the aim of performing to please: help me today simply to walk humbly with You, my God.

7) Sunday 6th November – shackles

Read [Colossians 2.20-23](#)

".. these rules .. have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use .." (Col.2.22)

Performance-based 'religion' may seem an attractive option: it may sound wise, feel good, and look commendably praiseworthy. But its shibboleths are shackles, and it's impotent to free you from the self-indulgent drives within your heart. Avoid it!

What sort of 'unwritten rules' might there be in the life of a fellowship, against which Paul would have us on our guard?

Do you have a tendency to asceticism?

How does 'grace' teach us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions ([Tit.2.11-14](#))?

Paul elsewhere teaches believers to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' (Rom.8.13): how do you do that?

Prayer: Purify my heart, O Lord, and cleanse me from within. The urge to gratify the desires of my sinful flesh is always strong! I need You to hold those desires in check!