

# Colossians 2:4-8

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae. At the risk of giving you ammunition to mess with me during a sermon.

A little over a year ago, I had a hard time getting my notes to print on a Sunday morning. And as such, I just grabbed the iPad and pulled up the information on it and preached that Sunday and discovered that I love it because I can see it. I'm getting a bit older, my eyes are getting harder, and this light's a bit bright. Such a wonderful, wonderful thing.

But I get text messages on my iPad. And from time to time, I'll get a text message. It pops up at the top of the screen. It's kind of funny. And just now I got a text, but from four days ago, from my father that said, please call me.

So I just opened my iPad and went, what? Not now. Well, but it came many days later onto the iPad, apparently. So don't text me during the service.

It's ultimately the moral of that. But four days ago, you're certainly welcome to. Our text today is Colossians 2, verses 4 through 8. Before I read it, though, I want to remind you where we've been in our text.

[ 1 : 15 ] The church at Colossae is a fairly unsubstantial church in our definition of what is substantial. A small group of believers in a very small, insignificant town.

I don't remember the exact history as I presented it to you at the beginning of our study, but the Romans had moved the major highway around Colossae and went through Laodicea, and Colossae was just kind of left in the middle of nowhere.

This wasn't a church that Paul established. It's most likely that Epaphras, who's mentioned in the letter multiple times, carried the gospel from Ephesus, where Paul was, back to his hometown, saw converts and started a church there.

And it's also most likely that it's Epaphras who has come to Paul while he's in prison. We think in Roman imprisonment. We do know that he's in prison. We're not sure exactly where, but more than likely in Roman imprisonment.

And has come to him and asked for his help in correcting some erroneous doctrine, some heresy that's encircling the church and possibly making some inroads into the church.

[ 2 : 28 ] We don't know the exact nature of that heresy. In some of Paul's other letters, it's much more clear, specifically the heresies of the day that he's addressing.

Here we're not entirely sure, but in some way or another, as most heresies concerning Christianity do, these people seem to be denying the deity of Christ, that he was himself actually God, because Paul so clearly addresses that beginning in verse 15.

And they seem to, in some way, be attacking the sufficiency of Christ, that faith in Christ is what brings salvation and adding work to that, as he expounds upon, oh, interspersed amongst 12, 13, down 19, down through 23.

So these seem to be the two issues of the day, which are fairly massive heresies. I hope for our church and for most Christian churches this morning, that if these types of things were being taught, denying that Jesus Christ is himself God, or that we must work in order to maintain our salvation, that these people would be fairly readily shut down.

So as we come to these texts, sometimes it feels distant to us. We seem to live in a place where these aren't great challenges. But I would put forth to you that they are, in fact.

[ 3 : 58 ] That there are many ways in which the world and the enemy is trying to deceive us about who Jesus is. It just seems to be much more subversive these days, much more, as we live in such a Christian culture, deceptive.

So it's important that we, especially important, I think, that we draw our attention to how it is that Paul addresses and what it is he's trying to press upon the Colossian believers and how it is we ought to also take up these things in order to stand firm in Christ.

So beginning in verse 4, I read, I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in the body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus, Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 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.

This is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

[ 5 : 26 ] So Paul directly takes on here these doctrinal heresies. And again, the application is there's many such challenges to our faith today.

And this is why, and this will be the outline for the text today, that disciples of Jesus Christ, true disciples, those who have placed their faith in his saving work, number one, must have a resolute understanding.

Number two, must walk in him. And number three, must abound in thanksgiving. So firstly, disciples of Jesus Christ must have a resolute understanding of who their Lord is and of our salvation.

This is imperative for us, beloved. And in fact, he in caps this text today with two charges for this.

Verse four, I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

And verse eight, see to it that no one takes you captive. And then he lists off a number of ways in which this can take place, which we'll address in a moment. We have to pay attention to the very beginning of verse four, where he says, I say this in order that.

[ 6 : 43 ] What is the this that he is referring to? And last week, we fairly glanced over verses two and three of chapter two. And now I want to kind of help tie that in here as Paul speaks of his struggle on behalf of the Colossian believers.

And then in verse two, he writes 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, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

So his struggle on their behalf, even though he hasn't seen these people, his struggle on their behalf in prayer, his struggle on their behalf in the writing of this letter, his struggle in that he's going to send faithful workers to them, is that they would have a full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, that they would know Christ, that they would understand who Christ is and who he is to them, that they would get a clear and full confidence in Christ's deity and his sufficiency, as I referenced earlier in chapter one.

This is who Jesus is. Fully God, yet man, come to earth, lived a perfect life that we may have his righteousness, bore on the cross the wrath for our sin, ascended and seated at the right hand of the Father, now making intercession for us, will one day come back and judge the world, will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, the righteous for eternal glory, the unrighteous to eternal damnation.

This is our Christ. And we must have a very clear understanding of who he is and that his work was sufficient for the saving of us, that we must simply believe that it is his work that accomplished this thing on our behalf.

[ 8 : 42 ] 1 Timothy 3.16 And what very likely was a first century hymn, Paul beautifully writes, maybe somebody else wrote it and he's simply quoting it, but verse 16, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

Being Christ. The mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

So it is Christ that we must have a resolute understanding of. And as with Paul's writing, as it's so beautiful, and there's so much depth to it, it has to be unraveled.

In verses 2 and 3, this is the maybe even a bit trite summation of what he's trying to say. Christ. The treasure of wisdom and knowledge. It's Him that we must know.

And we must know Him so that no one may delude us with plausible arguments. This idea of delusion is simply to be led astray, to be confused by, to be, as he says later, taken captive by.

[10:02] And he uses this interesting language of plausible arguments, which I appreciate. It means that people who believe in other things aren't entirely insane in the world, but these are persuasive arguments that people are making.

They're arguments that contain within them some bit of truth. All believable lies contain within them some truth.

To be able to grasp it, to be able to understand it. An example to this, if I told you a story that yesterday I met and was punched by Mike Tyson, you'd be very unlikely to believe me.

Thinking that, how is it possible that Nathan met Mike Tyson yesterday? What if I told you that my wife punched me yesterday? Well, she didn't. But it'd be much more believable because I see her all the time and I certainly deserve to get punched at times as well.

You see that in order for something to be believable, it has to contain some truth within it that resonates within us. So there's a truth mixed with the error.

[11:12] So these arguments are plausible. They could sound to us at times like, oh, well that sounds pretty good. Do you know people like that or are you that person possibly? That it's very easy and simple for somebody to convince you?

You may be convinced of one thing and they make a simple argument and now you're suddenly convinced of the opposite of that very thing. So easily swayed back and forth by plausible arguments.

This has been promised to us that in the future of the church, Paul writes much about this, that there would be false prophets. There would be people who would come in amongst the church and lead members of that church astray with plausible arguments.

There's much strong warning given against this in the scriptures. It should be no surprise to us that we need to be firmed up in our faith, that we need to contend for the truth because this is a thing that's repeated again and again and again.

A couple quick examples of that. 2 Corinthians 11, 13-15. Paul writes, For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

[12:30] Sounds so good because they're coming in the name of Jesus. In verse 14, And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. People come and they say good things that resonate with us and then they slip in underneath the falsehood, the lies, those things that lead us astray.

Verse 15, So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. It's difficult to discern these people at times if we're not founded in the truth of who Christ is.

The end of verse 15 says their end will correspond to their deeds. Paul wrote to the Galatian believers, chapter 1, verses 6-9, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Here are people already being turned by plausible argument. Verse 7, Not that there is another one. There is no other gospel. There's one true good news.

But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. The great heresy we know for the Galatian church was from the Judaizers who said that Jesus is good and acceptable.

[13:45] You can believe in Jesus and you can follow Jesus, but you also must obey the law. You must keep the practice of the Jews and therefore you must be circumcised.

This was the great thing that Paul is addressing to the Galatian church. Verse 8 he says, But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

That is, cut off from the grace of God. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

And it's a challenge in our day, beloved. It's so very, very difficult because there's so few people I know that are so blatantly heretical. The kind of people, you just want them almost like people our day, preachers our day, I just want them to step across that line just so I can say, no, never listen to that man.

But there's good stuff happening and I think good motivation and intention happening. I listen fairly often to conservative talk radio.

[14:51] The CD player doesn't work in my truck so the radio comes on when I'm driving places. And there's often a previous Southern Baptist leader, currently the pastor of a rather large church in the Atlanta area, and he has these little moments that he gets on and shares something.

And they're usually incredibly good. More often than not, I really appreciate the things he has to say. He takes these big grand truths about who God is and he brings them down in a simple way to a broad audience.

I really appreciate it. This week, however, he started off by talking about how in racing, people look for every little competitive edge they can get. The tenths of a second matter in racing.

And so they're always trying to find the way racers are that they can just get a little bit of a competitive edge. And then he went on to say that in life, Jesus is our competitive edge in our race. Oh my gosh, like I just wanted to tackle him and stop the broadcast of it all. That's not the case at all. Jesus puts us in a different race. He shatters the race. He says this is a pointless, fruitless race, and he puts us on another track.

[15:57] Completely different. And then we run after him. He's not a competitive edge. He is the goal. He is the prize of the race that we run. So you have to be so careful about what you take in and what you hear and where the foundation is for your understanding of truth.

Bookended again. Plausible arguments. This is a man that people listen to and probably just consumed what he had to say. He said, oh, that's very good. Competitive edge. I like it. This bookending, though, goes on in verse 8.

See to it that no one takes you captive literally means to kidnap, right? To bag up and take away by philosophy, right?

This is not referring to our modern study of general and fundamental problems, but it's a much broader term, which certainly can include our modern philosophy, but also allows for religious sex. Just as an example, the first century historian Josephus wrote in Jewish Wars, there are three philosophical, same Greek word, sex among the Jews. So it allowed for that, a much looser term of philosophy, ways of thinking, worldview.

[17:13] Don't be taken captive by the varying worldviews that are out there or by empty deceit. Certainly the Colossian heretics and those of our day would have found great value in their teaching, believed it.

Otherwise, they wouldn't teach it. But Paul here deems it empty and deceitful, of no value whatsoever. According to human tradition, which is to say that just because somebody believed it before, in the past, doesn't make it true.

It doesn't necessarily make it true. It's of interest for us today to study church history because it informs so much about what we believe.

If you tend to believe something that most of Christianity has deemed a heresy, you're probably wrong. There's some value in looking at the church itself.

I would encourage you to look at the great heresies that have come and been squashed throughout the days of the church and find that you may believe some of those things and may have, at one point in history, been burned for it.

[18:23] Human tradition is not the reason that we believe things to be true. It can have some value, but you never say just because, just because grandma and grandpa, just because mom and dad, therefore it must be.

The standard for our truth is the Scripture, is Christ. according to the elemental spirits of the world. Now there's a lot of conjecture about what this could mean.

I think the simplest explanation is the proper explanation, so I'm just going to give you that one. If you are interested, I would encourage you to study it on your own time. The phrase elemental spirits is a single noun and it refers, its weightiest definition is referring to the letters of the alphabet, the way the letters of the alphabet come in order.

The suggestion seems to be that Paul is stating that to believe in heresy is to descend to foolishness. Having been enlightened, having been taught the glorious truth, it's to come back down to the more base things.

It's like a child learns to read and then they go back to just like learning ABCs. You already know your ABCs. Move on to the reading. This seems to be what he's communing. It's a regression in one's understanding.

[19:45] He's juxtaposing, I think, the mature teaching of Christ's deity and sufficiency to the childish teachings that oppose his deity and his sufficiency that would suggest that Jesus was just a man and would suggest that we can somehow work and earn our salvation.

This same language is used elsewhere, Galatians 4.3. In the same way, we also, before we were in the faith, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. Same phrase, elementary principles and elemental spirit used in both places. I think this is what he's trying to say. It's childish to believe such things that are, the end of verse 8, not according to Christ.

So anything that is in opposition to who he is, the things that he has accomplished are heretical. So, we must know who Christ is and have an understanding, a resolute understanding of who Christ is. So how does that come to pass? How do we foster a resolute understanding of who Christ is and what he's accomplished as deity and his sufficiently?

[ 21 : 02 ] Two quick points to that. Firstly, prayerfully read the text in its context. That's the exhortation. Prayerfully read the text in its context.

Before you ever come to the Word of God, which completely speaks of Christ, we need the Holy Spirit's illumination. We need His illumination. We need Him to give us spiritual eyes to understand rightly what is contained within this book.

It was spiritually inspired. It was given to us by God and we need Him to help us understand it rightly. There's a wrong way to read this book, beloved. We must read it rightly.

We must prayerfully, we must ask, we must come to the Word of God on our knees. This is why Paul prays for the Ephesian church as we see recorded in Ephesians 1.18 that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened.

That they would understand the truth of the Gospel. So read it prayerfully. And read it. Prayerfully, read the text.

[ 22 : 07 ] We never, never outgrow our need of the Scripture. This is such a beautifully complex book in the way that God has orchestrated its writing and the way in which He uses it in application to our life.

I am continually astounded at the way that God speaks to me through His Word. It still blows my mind. Texts that I am so incredibly familiar with.

Things that I can rattle off to you. And I'll go back and reread it and a phrase will like stamp me on the forehead as if I've never seen it before. It's alive and it's active because the Spirit uses it as a tool to change us from one degree of glory to the next.

99% of the time someone comes to me for counsel and we're talking about what's going on in their life and I ask them have you been consistently prayerfully reading your Bible?

The answer is no. It's incredible. Go. Read your Bible. Ask that God would work the truth into your life and then come back and let's talk. He uses the church as a tool.

[ 23 : 14 ] But you have to be practicing these things beloved. You have problems in your life and we all do. Go to the Scriptures for them. They're sufficient to give us the guide for holy living.

You must read the text. You never, ever, ever outgrow your need of it. You never become so familiar with it that meditation becomes unnecessary for you.

You've heard me say before that no doctrine stays alive in the mind. No truth just automatically gets in our heads and stays in our heads and has effect in our lives. It must be fed.

You must continually remind yourself of the truth of the Gospel. Sunday morning's not enough.

Necessary, good, valuable, important. Please come and hear the preaching of God's Word.

But it's not enough. You have to be in this book. If you spent all summer with us, the only thing you're going to hear about is the book of Colossians. Go study something else as well. And I'm in no way suggesting legalism to you.

[ 24 : 15 ] You have to get up at a certain time. You have to do this many minutes in the Bible, etc. But it ought to be the meditation of your life. You ought to be continually considering what it is the Word of God has to say to you.

Psalms 1, 1, and 2. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. Happy is the man who's not this man, but instead, verse 2, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

Not a labor for him, but his delight, his joy, is to come to the fountainhead of God's truth and impact in our lives. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night.

I know very few people who can meditate on the law of the Lord day and night and not spend time reading it. I shouldn't even say very few. I don't think I know anybody who could do such a thing.

There are days that I don't open the Scripture for the study of my own soul because there's something that's running around inside my head from the day before. Something I've learned. [ 25 : 28 ] Something that's stuck with me and I'm still in the process of meditating on that very thing. So it isn't to say that you've got to have your quiet time every single morning, but you need to if you want to have a life that's fulfilling and beneficial and honors God.

You need to be in the Scripture. Constantly. Constantly letting it work through you. So prayerfully read the text. It's a jewel, a gift given to us.

And prayerfully read the text in its context. Both immediate context and broader context. And I'm saying this and I'm adding this phrase to the end of this because there are so many people who spend lots of time in the Bible and misunderstand it completely.

A very favorite verse of so many people. And I hope I'm not squashing your favorite verse right now, but it's Philippians 4.13. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Athletes love Philippians 4.13. It seems that they believe that God's great concern is that they win games. It's not.

[ 26 : 32 ] It's not what Paul's even talking about at all. Does it include that as a much lesser thing? Yeah, sure. Can we do anything apart from Jesus? No. There's some element, some kernel of truth contained within there.

But if we back up just a little bit, oh, I don't know, read the chapter before we make this our favorite verse. Beginning in the last half of verse 11, Paul says, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Verse 12, I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. And Paul's version of abounding is not our version of abounding. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Paul is talking about in the midst of his struggle in advancing the kingdom of God, that he's able to walk through the trials as well as the comfortable times because he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

The context matters a lot for these verses. Another great example in a broad sense, to understand the scriptures, another favorite of many peoples, Jeremiah 29.11.

[ 27 : 43 ] For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. You need to know the broader context of what's happening and who the you is in this particular text.

God is making a promise to exiled Israel. Israel. So, unless you're an Israelite in Babylonian captivity, this promise is not for you. A lot of health and wealth is based on this verse.

Right? Subversively, subliminally, based on this verse. Recently, I went to a dance recital for my niece and the church building that the dance recital was in. Had this verse painted on the wall huge when you first walked in.

And what it seems to communicate to people, the way people quote it all the time, is that God has welfare plans for us. Future and hope.

It's not what the verse means. Certainly, we can look at God's character. We can go other places in the Scripture to see that God has a great deal of care and compassion for us. We can see that He has our good in mind, but defined much differently than here.

[ 28 : 59 ] Himself giving us Himself. So you must prayerfully read the text in its context. And beloved, you don't have to be brilliant to do this.

You don't have to be a scholar to be able to do this type of thing. All of us are theologians. All of us can spend time in the Scriptures prayerfully asking that God would teach us about Himself.

that we might understand it better. So firstly, prayerfully read the text in its context. Second, surround yourself with biblical teaching.

Surround yourself with biblical teaching with people and other ways that you can take in the truth of the Bible. We have the most amazing, almost limitless resources at our fingertips to be able to do this.

We have no excuse for not knowing this book and knowing it very well. Be in fellowship with a church. For us, show up to our congregational meetings like this morning.

[ 30 : 01 ] Be involved in a community outreach group where people study the Scripture and minister the Scripture to one another. Get involved in some small group discipleship, meeting with people on an individual basis or in small crews to talk about the Scriptures to be of encouragement

to one another in that way.

I have been told that my preaching style tends to be a bit academic. If you don't like that, I apologize. But part of the reason I do that is because I want you to see how I arrive at things because I want you to be able to do it on your own. I want you to need me.

Like you have to come and I impart something to you every Sunday and you just go, oh, thank you. That was so good. And then you try to nourish yourself throughout the week on it. I want you to understand how it is we come to the Scripture and understand the Scripture so that you can go and do it yourself.

This fellowship is really, really important to that end. The church is a grace given to us to help us be founded in the truth. Remember that Paul is writing to a church and the way in which they're meant to be functioning together.

You remember in verse 2 that he talked about them being knit together in love. That this seems to be important and conditional for them coming to a full assurance of faith. And there are ways to access the broader church.

[ 31 : 10 ] Don't just come and hear my preaching. I've not written any books so you can't read anything I've written but throughout history brilliant scholars of the Scripture have written books for us to enjoy that speak of the Scriptures.

And so, kind of prioritized in this order, be in fellowship. Read books that employ the Bible heavily, that tell you what the Bible says, that helps you pull it together thematically.

Flip to the back of a book and check the Scripture index. If it has a good Scripture index, it's probably, not always, still need to be discerning concerning the book, but probably a good book. If you want to read good books, there's a lot of men and women in this church you can ask about good books.

Read biography. Access the lives of saints that have gone before. See these examples of faithfulness, the breadth of somebody's life and the way in which God has worked and moved through them.

It's always so nice in the midst of your trouble and the way the truth applies to you to step back up high and look down at somebody's life and see the way in which God has been providential through it all.

[ 32 : 13 ] Read. Take up and read good books. Listen to sermons beyond mine. Man, we have a great wealth of sermons. You have so much little bits of downtime in your day.

Driving in the car, waiting in the doctor's office. John Piper, it's a wonderful resource, [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org). Decades of his preaching recorded on there.

Amazing project that they made available. John MacArthur, [GraceToYou](http://GraceToYou), [GTU.org](http://GTU.org). Also another wonderful one. Arturo Azzardia, [SpiritEmpoweredPreaching.com](http://SpiritEmpoweredPreaching.com).

He's my favorite, so if you have limited time, go check out Pastor Art. And more recently, Martin Lloyd-Jones, [The Doctor](http://TheDoctor), [MLJTrust.org](http://MLJTrust.org) is a wonderful, wonderful resource.

Listen to podcasts. Three that I listen to daily. Five Minutes in Church History by Stephen Nichols. Ask Pastor John by John Piper. And The Briefing by Al Mohler.

[ 33 : 15 ] These things will help you to have a resolute understanding of who Christ is. This should be our activity, beloved. You are a theologian if you're a Christian.

You must understand God rightly. It matters for your life. So, disciples must have a resolute understanding. Secondly, disciples of Jesus must walk in Him.

Must walk in Him. Verses 5, 6 and 7, I guess the first part of 7. For though I am absent in the body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith just as you were taught. Now, remember that Paul has never seen these believers.

He's never been to this church. And as far as we know, he never did go there. And he says, as I'm absent in the body, I'm with you in spirit. Just to say that I'm longing to be there with you. I'd like to be there with you.

[ 34 : 21 ] I'm considering you. I'm praying for you. I'm writing to you now. And he's rejoicing. He's heard reports from Epaphras of their good order. The way in which the Gospel is having effect in their life and that they are in fact standing against some of these heresies.

There's a challenge to it. There's a tearing at the seams. But yet, there's a firmness of their faith in Christ. And so Paul commends them for their conduct.

Good order and the firmness of their faith. Proper learning, a resolute understanding yields proper living. It's the necessary outcome of understanding that we get it to the degree that we act on it.

That it's not just some thing in modern terms we call it philosophy, but that it's a reality. It's a thing that who Jesus is causes us to turn and to move and to work and to act.

A good example of this is Romans 12. Verse 2 where Paul writes, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

[ 35 : 42 ] So don't be like the world. Be different. Be changed from one degree to another by the changing of your mind. Resolute understanding. Getting who God is and how He functions with you now that you're His child.

That by testing you may discern. And the word discern here in the ESV is kind of a word too weak, I think. It means, some of your translations may say, approve what is the will of God.

Still, maybe not quite there. The word carries with it the meaning of valuing. Doing something because you have assessed it and that you agree that it is the proper thing to do.

That you have looked at something and you've said, yes, because my mind is being transformed, I'm looking at this thing in the world and I'm seeing that it is good and right and true.

It's a thing that God treasures, therefore I will treasure it. It's good and it's acceptable and it's perfect. And this is the way in which we're meant to walk in truth under God.

[ 36 : 47 ] Ephesians 4.18 It's an interesting connection here that Paul makes. I think I just realized that every single reference today was written by Paul. Ephesians 4.18 Paul says, speaking of those who are not in the faith, unbelievers, I hope categorically different than who you are this morning, it says, they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart.

So it's an interesting kind of phrasing that he connects on the end here. Rather than just saying they are darkened in their understanding, they don't understand who God is and how they're meant to relate to Him and therefore they're alienated from the life of God because of this ignorance that is in them, he takes it a step further to say it's due to their hardness of heart.

And I just want to press to you and say to you again that man is dichotomous, that our head and our heart are never divorced, that the two function together, that these people have a hardness of heart, their emotions, their desire for the things of God are turned away from God and therefore they're darkened in understanding.

And for those of us who have been delivered from that, our affections are turned toward God and therefore our mind should also be as well. We should desire to know Him more.

These two things should be functioning together, kind of conduiting one from the other. So it's important that we see this, that we see that there should be an outflow, an outcome of the way in which we think.

[ 38 : 25 ] That there shouldn't be head without heart or heart without head. And so in verse 6 He says to them, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

And there is so very much to be said about walking in Christ. This little tiny phrase, so walk in Him. We could expound on the entire Christian experience of what it would mean to walk in Christ.

And I'm not going to go there today. We don't have time for it, or you guys have the bandwidth for it, or myself, but lest you think I'm neglecting this, the breadth of that phrase, let me assure you that there's much opportunity to divulge more concerning this in the rest of chapter 2 and chapter 3.

In fact, that's what Paul intends to go on to do. In the coming weeks, we'll look more at what it looks like to walk in Christ. But here it is, and we can't possibly overlook it here in its immediate context.

We have to deal with it. He says, therefore, therefore, because you have received Christ and have settled convictions about His deity and sufficiency, this is working in your lives for good order.

[ 39 : 40 ] You've come to this resolute understanding and now it's out working. He's saying don't stop. Just as you received Christ, walk in Him. Don't stop doing the thing that you're doing.

I've heard of your good order. I've heard of your firmness of faith. Don't stop. Walk refers to daily conduct. Continue believing the truth concerning Christ.

Have an unwavering Christology and have an effect in your life. This is specifically what he's talking about. As he goes on in the letter, he talks about how that should come out of you more practically.

But in the beginning of verse 7, there are three participles that elaborate on so walk in Him. This idea rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.

Those are the three. First part of verse 7, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.

The phrase here, rooted, you have been firmly planted in Christ.

[ 40 : 46 ] This took place at your salvation. If you have placed faith in Him, it's in the perfect tense which denotes it is a completed and eternal work. You have power to walk in Him, to be sustained in the truth because you have been rooted in Him.

You've been planted by God. And you are being built up in Him. The present tense here indicates that it is a continuous action.

It is an ongoing thing. That God is at work building us up in Christ. We've been rooted in Christ and we're being built up in Christ. And we have been established in the faith.

The passive voice denotes that the establishing happens outside of us. we have been established. We have not established ourselves, but we have been established.

And that is that it is God who does the establishing. It should be of a great deal of encouragement to us as disciples of Jesus Christ must have a resolute understanding, must walk in Him.

[ 41 : 55 ] And lastly, disciples of Jesus Christ must abound in thanksgiving. The last part of verse 7, abounding in thanksgiving.

This is the fourth participle that explains the walking in Him. And it would seem, the way the Greek works, get down and start trying to sentence diagram this all out, that it's a response to the other three aforementioned participles.

Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith because of these things abounding in thanksgiving. It kind of seems on first reading to almost be like an afterthought.

Like Paul's like, oh yeah, yeah, oh and be thankful. It's good, important to be thankful. But it really deserves a closer look because there's a giving thanks theme, a theme of thanksgiving that develops in the book of Colossians.

Look quickly, chapter 1, verse 12. You'll see it there. Here in chapter 2, verse 7. And again, in chapter 4, verse 2.

[ 43 : 01 ] I'll talk about each of those briefly. But why is it that Paul finds thanksgiving to be so incredibly important? It seems to be, what he seems to be presenting it as, is a weapon against the very false teaching that he's addressing.

Thanksgiving is a weapon, an offensive against false teaching. So how could that be true? Chapter 1, verse 12. Giving thanks is the proper response of what has proceeded in chapter 9, verse 11, and what follows in verses 12-14.

Right? The goodness of God to us, the brevity of it, the breadth of it, in Christ. How is it God has saved us by the work of Christ?

And giving thanks is given as this proper and right response to that. Again, here in 2-7, abounding in thanksgiving is the proper response of the things that have been said previously, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith, just as you were taught.

Taught what? The things that we've seen to be true in chapter 2, 2 and 3, which I read to you previously. Hearts encouraged, together in love, to reach the riches of full assurance, of understanding, and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

[ 44 : 29 ] So it's a proper response giving thanks to who Christ is and who He is to us. Being thankful, beloved, is the outworking of, the grasping of the reality of what Christ has done on our behalf.

It gives it wheels. When our hearts overflow with thankfulness, it takes it from being high and philosophical to being real to us when we respond to it with thanksgiving.

Being thankful has perspective shifting power. Let me give you a very obtuse example of this, then I'll give you a spiritual application as well.

Yesterday, I mowed the grass at our house. I really hate mowing grass. I would love someday to pay somebody to mow my grass all the time. It was hot out yesterday.

I have allergies, so as soon as I start kicking up the dust and the other weeds and things that are in our yard, I sneeze a lot. But I'm out there and I'm cutting the grass and my mind's beginning to take this grass and kind of an attitude about it.

[ 45 : 46 ] And I was thinking about this text and I was thinking about how it is that being thankful combats lives. So here I am beginning to pick up all of these things like it's hot, starting to get damp up here.

I couldn't get my earbud to stay in my ear. Every time I turned my head, it would pop out of my ear and I'd have to put the music back in my ear. It was annoying, I was sneezing a lot. I'm thinking about being thankful and the power of being thankful and all of a sudden this breeze just blew through our backyard and it was so nice and cool, it felt so good and I went, it's actually not that hot out here.

The cloud covers out and yesterday got hot but when I was cutting the grass it was cloudy at our house and there was this nice breeze. I realized that I just hadn't noticed the breeze before but the breeze had been blowing the entire time I was out there.

I began to think about how I'm thankful that I have a yard. We just recently did a bunch of work on the yard and it went well and there's some good and some value in having a space to enjoy in that way and suddenly my mind shifted doing the exact same activity and my mind shifted from being grumbly about it to being happy, happy that I was cutting the grass.

I have grass to cut and it's a nice cool day and God has been good and blessed me with this house. So there's this ability to shift. If you leave here and I hope that you do and you go with people and go have food together, some form of fellowship, I'd encourage you to talk about sermons.

[ 47 : 21 ] If the first thing you talk about is how long the sermon was today, you're likely not going to say a whole lot positive about the sermon beyond that. You say, man, Nathan preached all the way to noon, which now I have to, to just make the example work well for you.

What a long sermon that was. Rather than somebody breaks the ice and says, isn't it good that we have the truth of God, that we can sit it in our laps and we can listen to it preached?

Whether I do a good job or not, I'm always very hard on myself, that someone this week took the time to try to divulge to you the truth contained in the Scriptures. You begin a conversation like that and it changes.

The perspective changes. Yes, God is good to us. Right? It causes cynicism, which I am so guilty of, to flee.

It turns our hearts. It's the outcome of recognition of how very good God is to us. And Paul places it so strategically in here as the way in which we turn our minds from the lies that the world is telling us to the truth of God.

[ 48 : 34 ] And just to drive that home for you, chapter 4, verse 2, and this is it. We're going to wrap up here in just a moment. Chapter 4, verse 2. He says, continue steadfastly in prayer, so persevere in your prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Not and be thankful or be thankful in your praying, but be watchful in it, and the way you're being watchful is with thanksgiving. And why is that? Because the enemy does not want us praying. God's people praying are a dangerous thing because God uses the prayers of his people to accomplish his will. He doesn't need us, but he uses us in that regard. We're dangerous when we get on our knees.

John Piper said it this way, which I just love, really appreciate. He said, when we pray, we kneel in a hornet's nest of evil. That, that evil pours out.

Have you, have you not experienced this in your prayers? You're so easily distracted. You buy lies so readily. The greatest lie that I believe is that God doesn't hear my prayers.

[ 49 : 40 ] That my prayers aren't worthy to go up to him. And this is something that's told to me by the enemy. When the truth of it is, that I'm clothed in Christ's righteousness, by myself, they're certainly not, but because I'm clothed in Christ's righteousness, when God sees me, he sees Christ.

And that Christ is sitting at his right hand and he leans over when I pray and he goes, you should hear this, I've got him. That my life has been redeemed and therefore my prayers are heard.

So, thankfulness is the way in which we are watchful. That we can rejoice in the truth of the gospel and rightly pray and not be attacked by these outside influences because it's the outcome, it's the outflow of our recognition of God's goodness to us in Christ.

I hope you're seeing that connection. I'm not sure my mind is totally wrapped it up yet, but I'm going to end there because it is now noon. And now my example doesn't work if I go much further.

So let me just conclude this, beloved. If we're going to contend for the truth, if we're going to stand firm in the faith, in the midst of a day when the truth is being torn asunder, when the truth is being

distorted, the enemy is certainly at work trying to lead us astray, trying to take us captive, we must have a resolute understanding.

[ 51 : 04 ] We must walk in Him, Christ, and we must abound in thanksgiving. Let's pray together.