



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Christianity for Dummies

Preeminent. Christ's Place in the World | Part 8

Tim Badal | February 8, 2015 | Colossians 2:6-10



Turn in your Bible to the book of Colossians as we continue in our series entitled, "Preeminent." We have been learning about Christ's place in this world. As we look at Colossians 2:6-10, notice that what we teach at this church comes from the Scriptures. This isn't some man-made idea, but as we go word-by-word, verse-by-verse, you can see that you are learning from the Word of God.

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, 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. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

As we have walked through the book of Colossians, we have seen that the Apostle Paul is writing to a church which lies in what is now modern day Turkey—a place called Colossae. He had never visited this place before. Paul had never met many of the people to whom he writes. Yet, he writes and shares his heartfelt love and concern for the people of this small church. He got to know their elder Epaphras and, through him, the situation in Colossae. Paul learns that the church there was dealing with many complicated things. False teachers had come in, propagating all kinds of different gospels under the guise of wisdom and specious godliness and, as a result, people were being led astray. There were people who said that the way you get close to God is by living by a set of duty-bound activities and rules. This included circumcision, baptism and refraining from certain foods and activities. It was all about a list of rules. Then there were others who taught that all that really mattered was a person's spirit. Whatever you did with your body didn't really matter. You could indulge in all kinds of immorality and sin and that would be okay. I'm sure the church threw up their hands in frustration saying, "This is too complicated. Where's the simple faith? Isn't following Jesus supposed to be easy?"

Just like in the days of the Colossian church, we find ourselves in difficult and complicated times. Things aren't black and white like they used to be. So many things are just a subtle shade of grey. We struggle to know what it means to follow Christ. We vacillate between the two spectrums. Either we focus too much on practicing our duties and having our life in order, or we focus on the intellectual and the spiritual freedoms we have in Christ and slip into lives of sin.

Paul writes something in our passage for today that will alleviate some of that confusion. For those of you who are living with a complicated view of Christianity Paul writes what I'm calling "Christianity for Dummies." I don't say this in a pejorative way. I'm not trying to slight anyone. I'm merely drawing from the books that we have all seen: the "For Dummies" series. There are all kinds of these books. I know some people in my family who could use *Internet for Dummies*. If you struggle with understanding the Internet, you can get a book that describes the ins and outs of the Internet in simple terms. For those of us who are raising kids and know that raising children is an impossible task, there's *Raising Smart Kids for Dummies*. That's a great book.

Those who have an unwanted mole or blemish can read *Cosmetic Surgery for Dummies*. Some of you could use the book *Grilling for Dummies*. Grilling is like brain surgery—not everyone can do it. I want to help you with that. Valentine's Day is this week, and I

know that some of you don't know how to date or show your love and affection, so you might need *Dating for Dummies*. If you just aren't sure what you think or know, there is *Thinking for Dummies*. The subtitle says, "The fun and easy way to get un-dumb." That works for some of us.

If you get asked to coach a sport there are different books for that as well. Our staff here at church really appreciates *Ministry for Dummies*. The little bubble on the cover says, "Skip years of practice and celibacy with this easy to use book." I'm not sure what that means. They have some great authors for this book like Jesus of Nazareth, Who was the Messiah. There is actually a *Christianity for Dummies*, which is a reference guide to articulate the complicated ideas and theologies of Christianity. It presents theology in an easy to understand way.

In Colossians 2:6-10, I believe Paul does this for the Colossians. In complicated times with complicated matters, Paul explains Christianity in a way that everyone can understand. Perhaps today you are throwing your arms into the air in exasperation saying, "Christianity is too hard to understand. How do I know what I should be doing and when I should be doing it?" What Paul describes in our passage is as easy as a two-step process. This is what I want to look at today in our text. Amidst complicated times, Paul gives two simple commands:

1. Look Out for Spiritual Counterfeits

Paul says right away in Colossians 2:8, "*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.*" Paul seeks to keep his readers from the harmful effects of bad doctrine and false teaching. Let's camp out on verse eight. We need to first recognize that in our translations, the phrase "see to it" doesn't quite carry the force of what Paul is trying to articulate. This is the Greek word *blepō* which was often used to grab someone's attention: "Look out! Beware! Watch out! Take heed!" It is like what a parent says to their children when they see them running into danger. It arrests the attention of the listener. Paul wants to get the attention of the Christians in Colossae. He warns them to be on the lookout.

Notice a couple of things about the word that is translated, "see to it":

1. It's used in the present tense. We are to live in a way that habitually discerns the things around us.
2. This is a command, not a suggestion. This isn't something that we can opt out of if we don't want to do it. This is not something that is only for the spiritually elite. This command applies to every single person. You must be discerning in what you are taught. The verb is in the active voice. This is something that you must do because no one else will do it for you. It is an act of your own personal will.

Paul stops and grabs our attention and says, "You've got a job to do as a follower of Jesus Christ. Your job is to be on the lookout for false teaching." Paul gives his audience a warning that has a twofold protection. It protects us from being:

Captured

The reason Paul gives this warning is to protect us from being captured. This is substantiated by the phrase "*takes you captive*" (Colossians 2:8). If you allow yourself to read this too quickly, you will overlook the immense danger that Paul tries to guard us against. The phrase "take captive" was used in ancient Greece to describe the actions of someone who kidnaps another with the intent to harm. Men would come into a city and take children and young people in order to enslave them.

This is something that I learned as a young boy right here in the Fox Valley area. Those who have been around the Fox Valley area will remember the name Melissa Ackerman. Melissa Ackerman was a seven-year-old girl from the town of Somonauk, not too far from here. Melissa and a friend of hers were walking on a gravel road in the northwest side of Somonauk when a man came asking for directions. He grabbed Melissa's friend and threw her into a car. He then went after Melissa. As he grabbed Melissa, her friend was able to escape. Melissa wasn't that lucky. Weeks later, her body was found just outside of Ottawa.

As an eight-year-old kid at the time, I remember the police did a special training at our community building. Our parents drilled it into us: "You have to be on the alert." The man was never found. His name was Brian Dugan; he was a serial kidnapper and murderer. As a kid, I remember being told never to be by ourselves. If someone approached us, we needed to be ready. We needed to try to discern between the good and the bad. This wouldn't always be easy; people might even try to lure us away.

What Paul is trying to communicate is that we need to have our spiritual guard up. We need to be on the lookout. This doesn't mean that we have a critical spirit, pushing away everything and everyone. Paul is talking about a discerning spirit that is able to

keep watch for anything that could cause harm. This spirit holds fast to what is proven and good and faithful. It is wary of what is suspect. Why does Paul want us to be so careful?

False teachers are trying to take you captive. How will they do it? They won't grab you like Brian Dugan did. They will do it in subtle ways. The text says they will do it through empty deceit. "Empty" literally means that there's nothing of value to it. What they talk about has no spiritual value. "Deceit" means that these people are doing this for hidden reasons, for mischievous or devious reasons. Perhaps they deceive to pad their pocketbooks or to exert authority or some other reason. Their personal motivations are often far from the reasons that they proclaim. It is not so that you can "get closer" to God. The same is true in our own time. People are teaching false things under the banner of Jesus. They redefine Jesus, similar to what the Colossian false teachers did. People write books, appear on talk shows, and attain celebrity status in the Christian community by redefining Who Jesus is. They redefine how to interpret Scripture. They redefine morality; things that were once sinful are not anymore. The same type of false teaching is alive and well today, just like it was in the days of the Colossians.

Here's the problem: that type of teaching not only captivates people, it also corrupts them.

Corrupted

Paul says that there is a specific teaching that is being taught to the Colossians. It is being done with *"empty deceit."* What is being taught with empty deceit? Philosophy. In the original language there is a definite article before the word "philosophy." Paul wasn't against all philosophy, but a particular philosophy. In the original language Colossians 2:8 says, *"See to it that no one takes you captive by [the] philosophy."* Paul is talking about a specific idea or thought. At the root of it, philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is the study of abstract and ultimate questions with a pursuit for answers. Is Paul upset with this? No. In biblical times, the word "philosopher" described people who were engaged in endless debates and speculations that led nowhere.

So this group of people would get together and philosophize about doctrine, theology, and Jesus. These kinds of conversations never led anywhere. G. Campbell Morgan said this about philosophy in biblical times: "Philosophy in biblical times had become a quest and never a conquest." Hugh Sylvester said that it was constantly full of arguments but lacking in conclusions. Philosophers during that time would talk about things that other people didn't understand and make them think it was their fault for not understanding. It could be described as a blind man in a dark room looking for a black hat that isn't there. Philosophy was something that everyone already knew articulated in a way that no one could understand.

Philosophers liked to hear themselves talk. They liked the idea of trying to make themselves look smart and spiritual. Instead of doing this based on a relationship with Jesus Christ, they created their own ways of looking spiritual. They came up with new ideas of what it meant to follow Jesus Christ. They defined spirituality not on the Word of God or the Person of Jesus Christ, but rather under the guise of Gnosticism.

The philosophy described in Colossians may have been Gnosticism. Often the History Channel and the Discovery Channel will mention this philosophical system on their shows about Jesus and the Bible. They often mention the "Gnostic Gospels." These "gospels" were written by individuals who had branched off from orthodox Christianity. Their writings contained all kinds of weird ideas about Jesus and the Christian life that were contrary to the Scriptures.

What did Gnosticism believe? There were two main aspects:

1. Everything in the material world was evil. Your physical body was bad. Its appetites and desires were all bad. There was no way to reform it, redeem it or fix it. A Gnostic Christian could yield to the wants and desires of his body. This belief is still alive and well today. Think about our culture's mindset. "This is how I feel God has made me, therefore I must do it. This is how I feel called to love, so that means I should follow my body's wants." Our culture says, "If it feels good, do it—no matter what it does to your body or your relationships with God and others." Gnostics believed that the only thing that matters is the spirit. First John deals with Gnosticism as well. John battles Gnosticism by asking questions like: How can you say that you love God, but live in immorality? How can you say that you love God and keep sinning? Gnostics would come in on Sunday morning after living a life of debauchery and immorality during the week. They would come to church, sit in the pews and say, "I love God." John says, "You can't do that. That isn't how Christianity works. You can't say that you love God and hate your brother. You cannot separate the physical and the spiritual." You cannot say that you have a great relationship with God while having a horrible relationship with everyone else. Gnostics would filter the Person and work of Jesus Christ through that lens. They would say, "There's no way that Jesus could be God and put on flesh. There's no way! Why would pure, perfect,

Spirit-God put on sinful flesh?" No, God incarnate is the beauty and mystery of the virgin birth. Christ put on flesh—a pure, untainted flesh that did not carry the sin of Adam. Gnostics deny the physical death of Jesus. They wonder how the shedding of physical blood could produce something of spiritual value. They say that Jesus didn't die on the cross, that there was no need for Him to die, be buried and rise again. They don't understand why Jesus would rise again only to put His spirit back into a worthless, earthly vessel. Paul says that the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form. God was pleased by it. If you don't understand Gnosticism, you will miss the meaning of the text. You will miss things in 1 John; you won't understand parts of Ephesians or Colossians. You won't get it because you're not aware of what Paul is addressing. The whole reason Paul says things like "in the flesh" is because he wants to silence Gnostics by declaring Jesus to be the God-Man. He took on flesh. He made His dwelling among us. He was full of grace and truth, fully God and fully Man. Not to be adulterated in any way, He is the God-Man.

2. There was a "secret." No one knows exactly what the secret was. It was a hidden knowledge that only a select few could understand. If you were enlightened to this special truth, you had this secret that you were given that made you a superior Christian. You had become a spiritual elite. That meant that you were now close with God. If you did not receive this secret, then you were far from God.

So the Colossian people pondered the dichotomy between material life and spiritual life, wondering what spiritual knowledge was. There were two camps of Gnostics:

1. Those who espoused shunning everything in the material world by flogging the body, becoming circumcised and baptized, by eating certain things, by following Jewish festivals and by abstaining from all sexual activity, even in marriage.
2. Those who lived indulgent lives and yet said they had a relationship with God.

Paul addresses both of these groups. Gnosticism was wreaking havoc in the Colossian church, causing confusion among the believers. Paul rejects both ideas and tells the Colossians that they need to follow Jesus Christ. Christ must be the foundation of our lives.

In case you think that Gnosticism is dead, it still takes people captive and corrupts them in our own church. It happens throughout evangelicalism. A few years ago I read a book called *The Late Great Evangelical Church* by C. Vaughn Doner. He writes that this age-old heresy of Gnosticism is alive and well in the church today and that it wreaks havoc in our world of Protestantism. Orthodox churches and Catholic churches don't struggle with this, but it is alive and well in the evangelical world. He says that there are six ways in which Gnosticism still captivates and corrupts Christians today. Gnostics believe:

1. **In Christians withdrawing from culture.** They teach that because Christians are followers of God and the material world is bad, then they should withdraw from everything in the material world. In the last few generations, we have made it our goal to remove ourselves from this world. We focus on the Scripture that says we are "not of this world," and we forget that we were commanded, "Be in the world, but not of it" (John 17:15; Romans 12:2). Some of us have rejected a relationship with the world because the world is bad and full of sinners. They seek to separate themselves and their families from sinners by removing themselves from it. The Bible never advocates that kind of behavior. God is building His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We can't run away from the world; we are supposed to engage in it as salt and light, preserving it and saturating it in such a way that they can see Christ in all that we do. Gnostics were saying, "Get out of the world," and we buy into this mentality as well. We focus on our place outside of the world and create these "Christian bubbles." We create a protective bubble that isn't biblical, but Gnostic.
2. **In a limited view of redemption.** The Gnostics believed that the way to be redeemed is to receive the secret. Once you had the secret, nothing else mattered. You could lord this over others. About 50 years ago in America an idea took hold and people started believing that if they made a decision for Jesus and prayed a prayer then they were "all good." They had their fire insurance and no longer needed to worry about the flames of hell. Studies show that many of the people who "make a decision for Jesus" never walk in His ways. We have bought into the notion that our kids "pray a prayer" and forget that redemption is not a one-time decision, but something that changes every aspect of a person. They become transformed and their lives—the way they walk, the way they talk, the way they engage in relationships—are forever changed. They were dead and now are alive in Christ Jesus. They are a new

creation. Evangelicals have bought into the sound-bite salvation where you raise your hand and you're in. That is Gnosticism, not Christianity.

3. **In a reductionist view of theology.** Most evangelicals aren't concerned with theology. They don't really care about it. They don't think they need to know it. It bores them. For them, it isn't important. We have this mistaken concept that theology weighs us down. In reality, it's a relationship. It's more than a relationship. It involves more than Jesus just being our Friend. Colossians 2:10 says, "*You have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.*" A part of theology is that Jesus is your Friend. We sing, "What a Friend we have in Jesus." But don't forget that this same Friend is also the King of kings and the Authority above all authorities. As Mark Knoll so aptly put it, there is a scandal for the evangelical mind: there is no evangelical mind. We're not thinking. We're not using our heads. You might think that you aren't an intellectual. Let me tell you what Jesus said to us. He said that the greatest of the commandments was to love our Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:36-40). We often forget the mind aspect. As evangelicals, we've thrown out our mind and buy into this bubblegum, Facebook banner theology. It's a bunch of mucky Hallmark garbage. It's Gnostic. It's not biblical.
4. **In a compartmentalized, part-time approach to Christian living.** Gnostics believed that you could live Monday through Saturday like a child of hell, and then on Sunday, as long as you dressed up and played the part, you were all good. This sounds an awful lot like 21st century Christianity, doesn't it? The Christianity that we buy into says, "As long as I make a date on Sunday morning with Jesus, I'm all good." We've done with Jesus the same thing that we do with our dogs: put Him in the laundry room. We tell our dogs, "This is where you have to stay. If you get out, it will wreak havoc in my life." We tell Jesus, "I'll find a nice evangelical church. I'll go there on Sundays, but that Sunday experience will have no effect on the life that I live Monday through Saturday." The involvement you have with Jesus has no influence on the things you watch, on the books you read, on the decisions you make, on the way you use your money, on the way you parent, and on the way you cultivate your relationship with your spouse. There is a Sunday morning part of you and an everyday part of you. Here's the problem. You look different from the world in only this way: you hide it a little better. That's it. You hide it a little better. You are involved in the same things. You look at the same things on the Internet. You read the same books. I am blown away by the fights on Facebook right now between Christian women on whether a Christian should be looking forward to the *50 Shades of Grey* movie. Women who claim Christianity think there is redemption and love in that movie. That thinking is Gnostic, not biblical. We compartmentalize our lives and have a part-time view of Christianity. Paul says that this must go.
5. **In an overemphasis on individualism.** Gnostics believed that you were on your own. If you received the secret, you were good to go. No one would help you with that secret, however. You had to get it on your own. As evangelicals, we're all about the individual as well. It's all about us. One of the things that my devoted, godly Roman Catholic in-laws always tell me is, "We just don't get it with you evangelicals. Why do you guys change churches all the time? Why can't you stay in one spot?" They'll say that there are a lot of issues with the Catholic church. I have issues with the Catholic church as well. But one of the things they question us on—that for me is a checkmate—is that we change churches all the time. Why do we do this? Because we make church about us. "The pastor didn't say what I thought he should. They didn't do what I wanted. They didn't have the programs that I needed. This, that and the other excuse." We bounce around and change churches like we change our socks. We need to recognize that all of that is a Gnostic understanding. The Christian life is not about you; it's about Christ. We need to see that this type of thinking is alive and well today so that we can avoid it.
6. **In the marginalization of the church and its mission in the world.** Every study tells us that America has a whole lot of Christians living in it who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ and His Word. They claim a rebirth experience. Here's the problem: the more Christians we have in our country, the less effective we've become. We're not influencing the world like we used to. We believe that the church's job is to be the safe refuge for us and that the world cannot come in. We are worried that the world is taking away our liberties. However, the church was better off with no freedoms rather than all freedoms. It understood that it needed to be salt and light in the world. It was all about hell-or-high-water preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ. They influenced the world for the sake of the gospel and we are here because of it.

So I would recommend that you read the book *The Late Great Evangelical Church*. It's an effective treatment of what's going on. You will learn that Gnosticism is alive and well today. It's in your Christian bookstores. It's on your Christian radio. It's everywhere.

Whenever I share this with people, they get mad at me. They say, "You're just being legalistic. You're just creating a straw man." If you understand Gnosticism, you will see that it is all over our churches today. Paul tells us to rid ourselves of it. How do we rid ourselves of it? Paul makes it simple: "Christianity for Dummies." He takes something complicated and makes it simple. Here's the simple thing:

2. Live Each Day for Christ

How do you make sure that you don't fall for this garbage? Colossians 2:6-7, *"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, abounding in thanksgiving."* Paul wants to make it simple. How do you live for Christ? Walk with Him. This life involves:

Walking closer with Him

To walk with Christ is to walk close to Him. Look at the word "walk." This word is used in the present tense which means that this action is habitual. As we walk, we don't stop walking. It's a command. When we receive Christ, it doesn't say, "Just believe in Jesus. Sign your name on the dotted line and you're in." Rather, it means that when you give your life to Christ, it is a perpetual and habitual walk with Christ. What does it mean to walk?

1. **It takes one step at a time with Jesus.** It doesn't mean that you have to have arrived as soon as you start the journey. I understand that younger believers will wobble a bit. I understand that at times your walk will be encumbered by temptations or trials in your life. I gained a new sense of walking this week because of my bad knee. I understand that sometimes you can be crippled during your walk.
2. **It implies an action.** The Christian life isn't something that you do in your head. It involves your entire being. It is something that you are called to do every day of your life.
3. **It involves progress.** *"As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him."* Let me ask you a question. Can you see progress in your life since you first began walking with Jesus Christ? Can you say, "I can now say 'No' to sin with greater consistency as I've gotten closer to heaven"? Can you see steps of maturity in your life that allow you to look back and say, "I have come a long way; I'm not where I need to be, but I'm a lot further than I was"? If there is no progress in your life since the time you accepted Christ, you need to question your salvation. Colossians 1:21-23 says, *"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."* What does walking with Jesus look like? There's progress. One step at a time.
4. **It requires perseverance.** I cannot say, "Watch me walk," if all I'm doing is standing still. You need to be moving and continue to move. The Christian life is a persevering walk with God. It's not always easy. You are going to stumble but when you do, Christ will forgive you and draw you up. However, you need to get on your feet and continue walking with Him. It needs to be part of every aspect of your life. You cannot say that your legs are walking, but then your torso is staying behind. It involves your entire being.

Paul wants you to know what the Christian life is all about. How do you live a godly life? You must walk closely with Jesus.

Working out our faith

As you walk, there are things that you must do. Paul uses three examples:

1. **An agricultural example.** You need to be rooted in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:7). No plant or tree will ever live long without a root system. Rooting is something that allows you to withstand the storms of life. With roots, you can withstand all of life's enemies. When dry seasons come, you will have firmly established yourself because, as Psalm 1 says, you have planted your roots near streams of water. You are nurtured in every way, firmly rooted. As the dry seasons come, you can withstand the scorching heat because you are rooted in Jesus Christ. When the storms come, the wind and rain will beat down upon you, but you will bend, not break. A rooted Christian will not break because their roots are in Christ.

2. **An architectural example.** You are being *"built up in him"* (Colossians 2:7). This is also found in the present tense. This building process isn't complete. Paul tells the Philippian church, *"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6). Right now you might be a ten-story building. God's not done with you yet. He will continue working on you until you reach the clouds. Even when you understand the building process, there is a temptation to steal the glory. It is easy as you mature to take the glory for yourself when people say, "Wow, what a steadfast individual. That person is really smart. That person really knows theology." It can be easy for mature believers to say, "Hey, look at me! I'm important." Next time you're driving downtown on the Eisenhower Expressway, roll down your window. When you get close to downtown, you will hear the buildings talking. Listen well, because you'll hear the Willis Tower shout, "Look at me! Look at how majestic I am!" The Hancock Building will say, "Well, I might not be as great as he, but I'm catching up." Then there's the Trump Tower that is a little shorter than the other two, "I'm getting there. If I just had a hairpiece of my own, I would be taller than all of you." They fight amongst each other. Does this actually happen? No. You won't hear anything. The only thing buildings can declare is the greatness of the ones who built them, not the greatness of what they are. When you look at a building, you marvel, not at the Willis Tower, but at the men and women who built it. The next time that you think you've come a long way and you deserve an award, remember that the only Person Who receives the glory is the Builder. You just stand there and let people marvel at what the Builder has developed in you. You are just a bunch of material that the Master has fashioned together into a beautiful structure for His glory.
3. **An academic lesson.** There are many false teachers out there. Paul reminds you that you shouldn't become a vigilante Christian, being your own teacher. Paul says that you should be *"established in the faith, just as you were taught."* Paul implores the Colossians to show love and compassion, submitting to godly teachers. It is an affirmation of Epaphras, a godly teacher, who is wrestling for their sake. Be willing, as you seek to learn the Word of God from your leaders at this church that you discern the right teaching. If your teachers are teaching what is right, honor them. Last week, I was at my old high school playing basketball and one of my former teachers was there. It was so good to come back. I didn't learn a lot in high school, but that teacher invested in my life. I had the opportunity to tell that teacher just how much he influenced me. I haven't forgotten the things he taught me or the way he modeled life for me. Paul wants you to recognize that there are good teachers out there who need to be honored and blessed and ministered to because they need encouragement to be faithful. As they teach you, you need to teach others.

How does Paul wrap all this up? As we walk in close relationship with God, when we work out our faith knowing that God is doing the work within us, the only thing we can do is worship Him.

Worshipping Him alone

In Colossians 2:9, Paul addresses the Gnostic's view of Jesus. *"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."* The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. That Man, Jesus Christ, had all divinity in Him. Colossians 1:19 says, *"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."* Once again, Jesus is not some emanation. He is not the first created Being, greater than us but less than God. He isn't a Man Who did a great job here on earth and then became God. Jesus Christ is fully God and embodies God entirely. Everything that God is, Jesus is in bodily form. Jesus reigns supreme with all rule and authority (Colossians 2:10).

What should our response be? It should be one singular thing: thanksgiving. Colossians 2:7 states that we must be *"abounding in thanksgiving."* Why should we be thankful? It stems from a couple of things:

1. **Jesus Christ has saved you.** When was the last time you took time in prayer to remember that you were once sinful and that Christ came and died a sinner's debt and death for you? When was the last time you stood in awe and said, "Thank You"? Jesus didn't have to do this. Remember to thank Him for giving you new life, for cleansing you, for giving you the Holy Spirit Who leads and guides you in all truth. Thank Him for interceding on your behalf and for the inheritance waiting for you in heaven. Thank Him that you are no longer a slave, but His child. Thank Him. Thank Him. Thank Him. You want to know your spiritual temperature? It can be gauged by your gratitude. Do you have gratitude for the abounding love of Jesus Christ and His forgiveness?
2. **Jesus is moving in your life today.** As God gives you steps of faith, as He grows your faith, as you walk with Him, be thankful. Don't look down on everyone else saying, "What's his or her problem? Why haven't they figured this

out? Why am I so much smarter or greater than they?" No. Be thankful to the Lord. Thank Him for changing you, transforming you, for the opportunity to pour into others so that they can see what you have seen in Christ. Don't keep it secret, but allow it to bear fruit in the entire world.

You want to follow Christ? You want it to be simple? Look out for false teaching and live each day walking with Christ in a close, intimate way. Take one step at a time. As you do that the Lord says that you will be established (Colossians 2:7). You won't have to worry about the earthquakes, troubles and temptations of this world. God will grow in you the ability to say "No" to sin and to live life in this world without being involved in its practices. In all your decisions, be salt and light in the world. Teach and train others to do likewise. This is Christianity for dummies. It is Christianity made simple. While it doesn't address everything, it addresses the necessity of what it means to walk and talk with Jesus each and every day.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).