

Title: OVER ALL — What is the Most Important Influence Over a Christian’s Life?

Text: Colossians 2:8-23

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INTRO. We are all shaped by many things. How we were raised. Our family life as children. The school that educated us. The community/city where we were raised. Our own personal experiences. And then, of course, what is most widely accepted by the mass (the mainstream).

Background. Paul is pleading with the Colossian church to seek maturity. He wants them to grow up in the faith by growing deeper into God’s Word and Christlikeness.

Q: Who are we as the church? What are we supposed to be about?

A: Paul sheds light on this in Col 2:6-7 (last week’s text).

If you have received Christ (2:6a) — received Christ’s free gift of salvation, by faith, through grace, through repentance and trust in Christ’s Word.

Continue to live in Him for the rest of your life (2:6b) — *walk ye in Him*. Every step you take, you take it in Christ, through Christ, with Christ, for Christ.

Col. 2:7 gives us three pictures of what God’s grace does for us. As we trust in the Lord...then God Himself makes sure we are:

Rooted (language of the farm).

Built up (language of construction).

Established (language of school/certification).

And as a result of God’s grace in our life — we are then overflowing with gratitude. Our gratitude is connected to a deeply personal awareness (knowledge) of God’s grace!

So here the text takes a turn/pivot in tone.

First, Paul told the Colossians to be careful that they are not led astray (2:8).

Keep in mind that the whole mandate of Jesus, for Christians, is stated in two words: “Follow me...” (Peter, Andrew, James, John the fishermen.) (Levi the tax collector.)

Yes, we unashamedly have theology, doctrine, and core beliefs. We wholeheartedly embrace what has been called orthodoxy. We never back away from truth.

But the point of Colossians is that Jesus himself is the truth! Jesus is the living Lord of the Word of God! We follow Christ himself. The only perfect direction is God’s direction. The only perfect words are God’s words. Anytime I am not following Christ...I am vulnerable...exposed...headed for trouble.

(ILLUS: deep sea fisherman...just two clicks off the compass...nowhere close!)

Since the beginning — the devil (the serpent) has been trying to get us to take our eye off of God's truth. *Did God really say?* Satan wants us to take our eye off the ball (truth).

Paul says here don't be led astray by:

Philosophy — the language of the academy. Men who speak about a worldview...but they don't speak with God's truth...they speak their own opinions.

Empty deceit — means to overpromise. It means you speak as an expert...but you don't know what you're talking about. You speak out of turn/ignorance.

Human tradition — the way something has always been done. We are not anti-tradition. But nor are we in full support of something just because it's tradition.

Elements of the world — this means we get our talking points from whatever is popular at the time. It ebbs and flows based on mainstream popularity and political correctness.

Does this sound like a message for Colossae? Or the modern U.S.? How about BOTH!

Modern, foolish narratives:

This is what life means...this is what marriage means...this is what sexuality means...this is what personhood means...this is the best way to care for society.

This was true with Israel at the giving of the 10 Commandments...and it's true for the Church of the 21st century. The further we drift from the Word of God...the more dangerous our lives become! Don't be led astray!

Second, we must always remember the truth about Jesus Christ (2:8b-15). The best way to not be led astray...is to constantly keep your eyes turned to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every morning...every thought...every situation...every trial...every opportunity. Remember the Lord Jesus! Stand close to Jesus! Rest in Jesus! Why?

V9. All God's nature existed in the physical body of Jesus.

We call it the hypostatic union (deity, humanity).

The powerful God of Creation (in just 6 days).

The human miracles performed by Jesus in the Gospels (food, demons, healings).

Literally, "God in Jesus did these miraculous things..."

Note — God was in Jesus. Jesus is in you. And Jesus in you overpowers the darkness!

V11. Christ achieved in us what the Law could never do.

Christ is our spiritual circumcision.

Genesis 17 — Abraham and family — the physical mark of the covenant; must circumcise the males in the household.

A very graphic lesson: what was physically a very personal act of cutting away at tender flesh...even more now is transferred to the spiritual circumcision of our hearts by Christ.

Previously: it was a physical mark of tradition, done by men.
Now: it is a spiritual mark of the truth, done by Christ!

V12. Paul provides a vivid, fresh reminder of our triumph in Jesus Christ!
We were buried with him in baptism...and raised with him by faith!

Remember Jesus's events: baptism at the Jordan, cross/burial, and resurrection.
And now: our baptism is a picture of our being dead to sin!
It's why we baptize by immersion...dead...buried...raised to new life in Jesus!

V13. I was previously dead. I could not perfectly obey the Law in my own strength.
There is a picture/connection in the language: the guilt of being uncircumcised is compared with the guilt of breaking God's Law. They are associated together here.

V13-14. But Jesus forgave all my trespasses!
There was a nasty debt...I couldn't pay...slavery...bankruptcy.

But here's the great news — all of my guilt/sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus!
2 Cor 5:21, *God made him who knew no sin...to be sin on my behalf!*

Horatio Spafford said it like this:
My sin, oh the bliss, of this glorious thought.
My sin, not in part, but the whole.
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord...praise the Lord...oh, my soul!

V15. All the demons of hell were disgraced through the triumph of Jesus!
Think of the first sin of Adam and Eve.
The serpent in the garden...sin...death.
Satan temporarily won...until Jesus Christ rose from the grave!

This is how Keith Getty said it:
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from his hand
Til he returns, or calls me home
Here, in the power of Christ, I stand

Third, don't let your life be driven by the changing rules of men. Instead, be controlled by the permanent truth about Jesus (2:16-19).

Don't be judged by food and drink.
Don't be judged by festivals or moons.
Don't be judged by the precise timing of the Sabbath.

Yes...the Hebrew dietary laws were important.

Yes...the principle of the Sabbath was important.

But note, Mark 7:19 — Jesus came to make all foods clean.
And the day of worship/rest changed with the resurrection of Christ.

The principles of holiness have not changed...but the application and spirit of God's truth were transformed with the coming of Jesus.

Jesus said in Matthew 5 — I did not come to do away with the Law...but to fulfill the Law!

V17. Important word here. Are there elements of good things in well-intended people who sometimes major on the minors? Yes!

But Paul is saying this: don't be driven by the periphery...don't be driven by the side details of man's tradition...be driven by the truth of Jesus!

V18. Some condemn Christians by delighting in secondary issues. They try to enforce personal preferences as biblical and Christological truth — but we must have none of that!

Ascetic — they seek out physical pain.

Angels — they are close, but they miss the mark.

Visions — they give a dream the same weight/authority as Scripture.

They are braggarts and arrogant! Avoid them!

V19. The most foolish thing in the world — not holding on to the headship of Jesus Christ! If you have Christ...why would you ever focus on anything else!?!

FACT. If you are growing...but it's not in Christlikeness...then it's not truly "healthy" growth. It's likely a sickness!

The best growth, the true growth, is always godly growth (character)!

Fourth, never forget — if you're a Christian — you belong to Jesus, not the world (2:20-23). This is important, biblical language here. Filled with good theology.

V20. *"Died with Christ to the world."*

The world crucified Jesus.

The world will hate me (Jesus, Paul, etc.)

Jesus Christ and Paul used very important vocabulary:

Luke 9:23, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and pick up his cross daily, and come after me.

Gal. 2:20, For I am crucified with Christ...and the life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

1 Cor 6:20, *We have been bought with a price! We must glorify God with our body!*

V21. In Paul's culture, the message was "*don't.*" But in our culture, the message is "*do.*"

FACT: the world always gets it wrong!

The world: a reputation for wisdom/knowledge...but it's not! The world over-promises and under-delivers!

VV22-23. Human regulations change and pass away. Self-made religion...false humility...gets no one anywhere!

The Bottom Line. Paul told the Colossians to let nothing shape/influence their lives more than the truth of Christ.

Nothing should shape us more than the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Why? Because no one loves us like Him...and no one else is worthy of our love like Him!

(ILLUS: the reunion shows on TV when a person can thank the hero/EMT/officer for saving their life...how powerful!)

Jesus is my Creator...Redeemer...Purpose.

Jesus loves us!

Master-servant...Potter-clay...Shepherd-sheep...Head-body...Cornerstone-building...

Groom-bride...King-adopted sons/daughters.

BIG IDEA. The most important influence in a Christian's life is the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth about Jesus...is supposed to transform everything about how we live!

FACT. If we will just spend our life — knowing our Bible...obeying our Bible...seeking to honor the Lord Jesus...and love everyone he puts in our path...WOW...what a powerful influence that would be!

APPLICATION for today:

1. Let us learn our Bible! Let us be informed by God's Word. Read your Bible daily. Ask God to teach you what it says. Listen to your Bible (apps). Fastest way to a brand new life...15 mins with your face over an open Bible! Study your Bible with godly friends. Be in a church where the Bible is preached.

2. Regularly ask this question. Does the activity I have the opportunity to be involved in shape me to be more like Jesus? Is this helping or hindering my pursuit of holiness? What do the godliest people I know say about this?

3. When it comes to serving others (ministry opportunities) — am I doing it for myself? For my church? Or for Christ? (Col 3:17) (Col 3:23).

4. Notice the negative language here in 2:8 and 2:16...Paul says, “Don’t be shaped by these things.” Don’t be shaped by what’s wrong. All of us are being influenced and shaped by something...but is it the wrong things that are shaping us?

5. Yes, we honor our laws, government, and cultural traditions. We don’t seek to dishonor anyone or anything. But more than anything, we seek to honor Christ first and most! (Acts 5:29)