

Colossians 2 v 8 - 10

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[0 : 01] And often, as you know, on a Sunday evening from time to time we will read a psalm together. So this is in one sense we might call a New Testament psalm. It's a song of praise to the Lord Jesus.

So let's read from verse 6. We know it's about the Lord Jesus Christ because verse 5 tells us that. But let's read it together from verse 6 through to and including verse 11.

Let's read it out loud. Who being in very nature God, did not consider the quality of God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Wonderful. Wonderful truths that we believe and affirm this evening as we sing together our first hymn. It's 167.

[1 : 26] Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity, in perfect harmony, the man who is God. What a glorious mystery, and yet what a comforting truth, that God and man are one in Christ Jesus.

Let's stand and sing then.

Let's stand and sing then.

Let's stand and sing then.

Let's stand and sing then.

[3 : 41] Let's stand and sing then. Let's stand and sing then.

that we pray. preparing and sing then. that we pray that our God does rule and reign. That our God is real and near, a very present help in times of trouble.

And oh Lord, we ask that this evening as we come to you, that we might come with that fresh, with that new, with that energetic faith in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That though we do not comprehend and cannot comprehend how God and man can be in one person, two natures. Yet Lord, we declare that with God all things are possible and our reason bows before, oh Lord, your magnificence.

We ask that again this evening that we may be given something of a glimpse of the Lord Jesus. We ask that we might know something more of his splendor and majesty and beauty.

[5 : 11] We ask, oh Lord, that we might be enabled by your Holy Spirit to be able to grasp just a little bit of the glory of who he is and of what he has done for us, his people.

Oh Lord, we ask that this evening we may meet with you and you will meet with us. That you would speak to us. That you would help us.

That, oh Lord, we may be those who know that our God is indeed alive and walks with us and talks with us and lives with us.

We ask again that in this time you would exalt your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We long, Lord, for his name to be lifted high in our lives, in our thoughts, in our lives.

And yes, Lord, in our community and town, Lord, in our neighbourhood and street, in our family, in our workplace and school. Oh Lord, will you do that work in us that brings honour to Jesus, your Son.

[6 : 17] We ask you, oh Lord, to help us where our thoughts are here and there. Where, Lord, we've been thinking about so many things during the day, the sunshine and the sea.

Whether we've been busy in many different things. We ask that our minds and our thoughts may be centred and concentrated upon you and upon your Son, the Lord Jesus, this evening.

That, oh Lord, we may focus on him. That again, according to your word, we may look to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. And, oh Lord, that our eyes may rest upon him in whom is all our hope and all our joy and all our future and all our faith.

Come, oh Lord, then. Forgive us our sins. We know that they are many. We know that we are not the people we should be. But, Lord, we thank you that in Christ Jesus we are accepted in the beloved.

Oh Lord, grant that this time may be a hallowed hour, a holy time, a special time in which we know and sense ourselves to be in the presence of God.

[7 : 22] For we ask these things, oh Lord, in Jesus' name now. Amen. Well, we're back in Colossians and chapter 2. Those of you who are regularly with us.

And, very thankful, Frederick preached for us last week and the week before that we were in the open air, which was a wonderful occasion to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

So, we've been out of Colossians for a little while. So, we're in chapter 2 and I'm going to read the whole of chapter 2 to, again, give us a sense of perspective and context. And, particularly, we're going to be thinking, God willing, this evening, verses 8 through to 10.

Verses 8 through to 10. So, as we come to them, hopefully, the Lord will help us to understand them. So, let's read. Here is God's Word. We know it is true. It's Paul, the Apostle, writing.

His great hope and desire is for God's people. They might be kept in that wonderful race, that wonderful life of living for Christ.

[8 : 38] Chapter 2, then. I want you to know how much I'm struggling for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I tell you this, so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I'm absent from you in body, I'm present with you in spirit, and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

So, then. Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

[10 : 06] In Him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ.

Having been buried with Him in baptism, and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins, and in this uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code with its regulations that was against us, and that stood opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration, or a Sabbath day.

These are a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility, and the worship of angels, disqualify you for the prize.

[11 : 21] Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He's lost connection with his head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ, to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belong to it, do you submit to its rules? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom, with self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining

It wasn't actually a real Ferrari at all. It was a kid car built onto the chassis and engine of a Ford Mondeo. In spite of its appearance, it wasn't a 200 mile an hour supercar.

It was a bog standard family runaround, all dressed up. Now, the believers to whom Paul is writing his letter here were being duped into exchanging a spiritual Ferrari for a clapped out banger of a religion.

[18 : 58] Well, not even a real car at all, more of a pedal car in reality. He speaks about them back in verse 4. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.

And there in verse 8, see to it no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy. These dodgy salesmen were peddling a type of Christianity that was substandard and downright dangerous.

And Paul, like the presenter from Watchdog, was exposing their products for what they really were. Now, the overall thinking of these false teachers was an attempt to unite Christianity with Judaism, or rather to insist upon all Christians living according to first century Jewish teachings, rules, and practices.

And so, Paul is very strongly rebuking and rebuffing that false teaching. It was something that came out in many of the letters that Paul had to write. It was a real problem in those early days of the church.

And Paul divides the teaching of these false teachers into three basic elements, three things that were particularly wrong with what they were teaching, and that each of them had the power to entrap and ensnare people if they followed them.

[20 : 21] Notice that. See to it that no one takes you captive. And it really is that sense of that word of somebody who's been enslaved, somebody who's been taken prisoner, somebody who's been against their will, put into a position where they cannot break free.

And that's exactly what these false religions are like. They are those which enslave people, that trap them, that bring them not freedom and liberty as true Christianity does, but rather that which is degrading and enslaving.

And the truth is that though we may think that these things are just in the past, the reality is that they're very much alive in the present. and that there are many people even today who with the modern counterparts of these false teachers are being enslaved and being robbed of the fullness of life that Christ Jesus alone can bring.

The first thing he says about these false teachings is that they are hollow and deceptive philosophies. Now the word philosophy, those of you who are educated unlike me will know that it's Greek and it means the love of wisdom.

Philo meaning love, sophia or sophie meaning wisdom, the love of wisdom. Philosophy is a good thing to love wisdom but these teachers and their teachings were anything but about wisdom.

[21 : 50] Paul says that they were hollow, they were empty, they were vacuous, they were just hot air and there was nothing substantial in them, no truth they were built upon and therefore they were deceptive, they were a lie, they were just a big, fat, empty lie.

There's many people peddling hollow and deceptive philosophies today. Many self-help gurus will speak about and write books about how you can be successful and how you can be happy and how you can be this and that and peddle these things through TV and through videos and all these other sort of things.

But ultimately in the end these philosophies are really what the Irish would say a load of old blarney. There's nothing to them. They're just recycled rubbish of positive thinking.

But many people as you know millions of pounds, billions of pounds are spent. People are searching and they're hungry and they will be taken in by somebody who just sounds like they know what they're talking about.

Somebody who is persuasive. And so indeed it was the case there. Hollow and deceptive philosophy. And the problem of course with their philosophy with their way of thinking the reason it was hollow and deceptive was why?

[23 : 20] Because it depended upon human tradition. Human traditions. Now traditions can be good. All of us have traditions. No doubt in each family there's a tradition.

It's traditional to do a certain thing on Christmas Day. We traditionally go around to see the parents or the parents-in-laws. It's traditional that we exchange our presents after lunch and not before.

Traditions are fine in and of themselves. Whether we recognize it or not all of us are shaped by traditions we've received from those who've gone before. Whether it be in our church or whether it be in our own lives.

But where tradition controls and where tradition rules it becomes therefore a very bad master. The Judaizers here these people who were trying to mix as it were Christianity and Judaism they were enforcing practices upon the Christians.

Practices that were instituted not by God but by men. As we see later in verse 16 they had rules about what you ate and what you drank about when you had a holiday about what you did at the new moon celebration.

[24 : 35] Rules and regulations that were purely man-made traditions. We know that this was the case because Mark makes mention of it happening in Jesus' day as well.

The religious people had their traditions. Here's one of them we're told in Mark 7. The Pharisees and all the Jews that's the ultra-religious Jews did not eat unless they gave their hands a ceremonial washing holding to the tradition of the elders.

When they came from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash and they observe many other traditions such as the washing of cups pitchers and kettles. They weren't doing these things because they had an idea of germs and hygiene.

It was purely ceremonial tradition. Here's what Jesus says later in that chapter. You nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down and you do many things like that.

And so there was this religious practice which was just tradition. And we see it again around and about day by day. If you watch any football at all if you watched any of the World Cup disappointing as it was you'll see so many footballers will cross themselves before they go onto the pitch and cross themselves before they come off the pitch.

[25 : 56] Most of them aren't Catholics and most of them if not all of them are not Christians. But it's a tradition. It's a superstition. It's a bit of luck. And many people even today and we've got to be careful will cross their fingers for luck and touch wood for luck.

And it's just a tradition. You say well it's meaningless. Well why do you do it if it's meaningless? Because behind these things there is some tradition which people are bound to that rules them, that gives them some essence of hope.

Human tradition. There's one other ingredient as well in these false teachers which Paul brings out which shows the emptiness and the falseness of what they were doing.

Paul says here that their philosophy depended on human tradition and the basic principles of this world. Now this phrase, the basic principles of this world is not an easy English translation to bring out.

And without going too deeply into it the NIV takes one of two views as to how we translate and understand that phrase. The basic principles of the world, the NIV writes, speaks about the underlying common way of thinking found in the world.

[27 : 20] That's one way, basic principles, how people operate and the world operates. But other translations, English Standard Version and many others as well, translate the word principles as spirits.

again, this is a difficult word and I think that's right. The basic spiritual forces of this world. That's what Paul is talking about.

You see, throughout history, throughout the world, people have always believed in a spiritual realm. And even today, when you take the animistic religions of Africa, particularly, with spirits living in plants and rocks and animals.

Or if you go to the east, with the ancestor spirits of eastern religions, previous generations influencing life in each day. You see, in the modern world of the west, where we are, this is the first and only society which doesn't believe in a spiritual realm.

Everybody else does. Everywhere else does. So in Paul's day as well, people saw the world as being subject to spiritual forces, to spiritual powers, to gods.

[28 : 34] Sacrifices had to be made to these various gods for a good harvest, or a happy marriage, or a successful business venture, incense or sacrifice and so on.

These spirits and gods ruled life. If you read through the book of Acts, you'll find again and again these things cropping up where there is sacrifice and offerings to these gods.

So what is Paul saying here? He's saying that the teaching that these people were bringing, this false teaching, rather than being divinely inspired by God, rather than being that which directs us to God, rather is that which is of the same source as the pagan worship of the people around about, the worship of spirits.

Paul is declaring their corrupt form of Christianity is as ineffective and empty as the pagan religions and superstitions that they were living amongst.

Here's Paul writing his letter to the church at Corinth where there was a problem with making sacrifices or eating meat which had first been offered to false idols.

[29 : 47] Here's what he says about these false gods and idols. we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.

For even if there are so called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father from whom all things came and for whom we live and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ through whom all things came and through whom we live.

These things are nothing. People built their lives about them. There were whole businesses built upon them. Of course, if you read about what happened in Ephesus with Paul and the little silver statuettes that they used to make and people had in their homes.

But today people are caught up again with the spiritual occult that is going on in our world. Not just in the, we might say, the devil worship but the horoscopes, the tarot cards and such like.

People looking for hope in their lives, placing their goals and their dreams upon such things. Things that just don't exist.

[31 : 05] Things that have nothing to offer. They are no gods and no lords but one. So what is Paul doing here? He's showing the believers here and showing us here as we get to the end of verse 8.

That every man-made religion, every man-made philosophy, every man-made teaching which does not centre upon the Lord Jesus Christ is worth nothing.

Notice how he says it. See that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principle of the world rather than on Christ.

Every teaching, philosophy, no matter how dressed up it is, no matter how sparkly, no matter how much it promises, no matter how old the tradition has been, none of these things are anything more than an empty sham when they're not built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can he say that? How can we say that? Like Paul, we're living in a multi-faith generation. Paul was living in a multi-faith generation where there were all these different regional gods.

[32 : 20] There was the gods of Rome, the gods of the Gentiles, there was the foolish Jewish traditions that he was speaking about here.

Like today, it was a multi-faith community, but he says simply as we say simply, without Christ everything else is empty. Why does he say that?

How can we say that? Well, simply put, every religion, every pseudo-spiritual activity, if it has not Christ, is missing the vital ingredient.

And the vital ingredient in anything spiritual is this, God. If God's not in it, then it's worthless. If God isn't a part of it, then it's empty.

And so he says, for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. All these things do not have Christ, therefore they do not have God. But when we have Christ, we have the fullness of God in bodily form.

[33 : 23] The Lord Jesus Christ was no mere prophet who spoke the word of God. He was not only a miracle-working man through whom God's power was at work. No, he was nothing less and is nothing less than the very perfect fullness of God himself.

Again, it's a mystery. We sang at the very start of our service this morning, meekness and majesty, manhood and deity. In perfect harmony, the man is God.

Oh, what a mystery. It is a mystery to us. We can't comprehend it. We can't work it out. But that doesn't make it less real and true. Throughout the Bible, it makes clear that Jesus is and must be God who has come into this world.

Back in the gospel of John, the very start of his gospel, John speaks about this truth. In the beginning was the word and the word was God. John chapter 1 and verse 14, the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We've seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father full of grace and truth. We read at the start of our service from Philippians chapter 2 and verse 6, Jesus Christ who being in very nature God.

[34 : 45] Colossians and chapter 1 which we've read earlier on here, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. Hebrews and chapter 1, the sun is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

The testimony of God himself to humanity is this, that my son is truly and fully God. The tremendous miracle of Christmas that we celebrate each year is Emmanuel, God with us. The child that was born that first Christmas was fully God, not merely God-like, not merely like John the Baptist who we're told is filled with the spirit of God from the womb, but who was in nature God. You see, if religion has any meaning at all, then it must mean a relationship with God. Everything else is peripheral, isn't it?

If religion is a relationship with God, then it must mean that the one through whom we relate to God is God himself. God himself. Or else it's a substandard thing.

[36 : 05] But the one to whom we come to God is God himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only true God. He is the only one through whom we come to God.

That's why Jesus himself was able to say to his disciples in John 14, I am the way and the truth and the life. God is the only one through the life.

He makes that unique and intolerant declaration. No one comes to God except through me. So it doesn't matter what people will say.

It doesn't matter how glossy their words. It doesn't matter what feelings they bring to us. If there is not Christ Jesus, then it's nothing but an empty sham.

Paul's whole argument here for these Christians against them being enslaved by false teaching hangs on the deity of Jesus.

[37 : 06] See to it no one takes you captive, so on, rather than on Christ. For in Christ. That word for is important. It's telling us that everything he's said before is bearing upon this truth.

For in Christ all the fullness of the deity dwells. That's the reason you should shun these things. That's why you shouldn't be sucked down their empty way. That's why you shouldn't give in to superstition and tradition and empty religion.

Why? Because in Christ all the fullness of God dwells. For this reason, don't be deceived by what is hollow. Why? Because Christ Jesus is full of God.

Everything else is empty. For this reason, don't depend on human tradition. Why? Because Christ Jesus is full of God. And what he has brought to us is God himself. For this reason, don't submit to the gods of this world.

Why? Because Jesus Christ is full of God. He is the only God. Everything else is substandard. The answer to every religion and every philosophy in the world is Christ Jesus.

[38 : 15] In him the fullness of the deity lives. God is the only God. That's why as Christians, we may seem to be so very intolerant to the world around about us.

But if we don't declare the reality of the truth that Jesus Christ is God and he is the only one through whom we can come to God, then we are selling people a hollow and deceptive philosophy.

And we are allowing them to continue in the slavery of ignorance. But notice what it says here. For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.

In bodily form. That's the wonderful thing. Not just that God came into this world. Not just that Christ is God, but that he is God made man.

That he has taken on that human nature. Yes, we must trust only in Christ because he only is God. But we can trust in Christ alone because he is God made man.

[39 : 23] God come to us. God who has humbled himself and condescended. And notice that Paul doesn't speak of this in some sort of a past reality. He doesn't say, for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lived in bodily form.

It's not just that when he walked the earth he was God made flesh. But it's a present reality. Not just in his earthly life, but now in his glorified life. He now lives.

Even in his glorified nature. As he is seated in that place of power at the right hand of the Father from where he rules. Paul says here, and is head over every power and authority.

He is still the fullness of deity living in bodily form. There is yet a human nature that is attached to the divine nature, which is Christ's.

And so we come to the whole point of what Paul is saying. Everything else is empty. Everything else that is offered to you is meaningless.

[40 : 30] Everything that you need is in Christ. for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form and you have been given fullness in Christ.

That's the great thing. It's not just that Jesus Christ has all the fullness of God in him and therefore we should adore him and worship him and put our faith and trust in him.

But the glorious thing is this, that when we became a Christian, that fullness of God's deity was, we became part of it and it became part of us.

We became united in it. We became those who are the partakers of it. There is nowhere we need go. There is no one we need look to.

There is nothing that we need have which is not already given to us in Christ Jesus. You have been given fullness in Christ.

[41 : 29] Isn't that marvelous? Isn't that marvelous? Whatever you face, whatever struggles we go through, whatever circumstances we come against, whatever doubts that we have, everything possible that we could need or want, we already have in Christ.

And so if you have Christ, you have everything. Everything. Nothing lacking. And you may say, oh well I'm lacking in this and I'm lacking in that and I wish my faith was stronger and I wish I was more holy and I wish I was this and I wish I was that.

But dear friends, that's fine except for the fact that you already have the resources that you need completely in Christ. Don't beat yourself up. Don't look to yourself and say, well if only I was more of this and more of that.

Everything that we need, Christ has provided for us. We are united with him and therefore the fullness of God is united with us. Here's Peter as he writes to Christians who are going through a really tough time of persecution and oppression and so on.

What does he say to them? He says to them this, his, that's God's, divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

[42 : 53] Read it again. His divine power has given us everything we need for life. tomorrow morning you have everything that you need for life in Christ.

God's divine power is at your disposal. There's nothing that you can add to Christ's power. Have you got anything that, can you add anything to God?

Does he need anything from you or from me? It's impossible to add anything to God because he is completely perfect and complete. There's nothing that we can give that he hasn't already got and there's nothing that we need that he hasn't already given us.

And so these false teachers were trying to deceive the Christians into saying, yes, you've got Christ but you need these rules and you need these regulations and you need these practices and you need these other things to help you and to make you a better Christian and person in Christ.

And Paul is saying, no, you've got Christ and all the fullness of God is in Christ and all the fullness of God is in you. There's no shortfall with God. He lacks nothing so you lack nothing.

[44 : 03] Everything we need Christ has provided. You and I don't know what's ahead. You and I don't know what's coming this week.

You and I don't know the challenges that we face, the fears and the struggles that are around the corner. None of us do. We needn't fear.

We needn't be anxious because God has given us everything in fullness in Christ. Close with these words of Paul as he writes to the Christians in Corinth.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Well, let's pray together, shall we? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[45 : 13] Amen. Father, we do come to you again and give you thanks for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that in giving him to us, you have withheld no good thing. You never will withhold anything good for us, such as your love for us.

For in giving Jesus, you've given us the very riches of all the treasures of heaven. In giving us, Jesus, you've given us not only the pearl of great price, but you've given to us every possible

conceivable grace that we could need.

And thank you that not only does the fullness of God dwell in him, but because, Lord Jesus, you live in us, the fullness of God lives in us.

We can't really understand it. We find it hard to believe. We look at ourselves and we seem so very weak and frail, but we take you at your word and we believe that you are faithful to your word.

[46 : 23] We ask, O Lord, that you would help us and enable us to look to yourself when we feel weak. Help us, Lord, when we are tempted to be drawn away into some spurious or false idea when we are misled or when doubts come from the enemy who would tell us this or that.

Help us, we pray, again to take hold of your wonderful truth and to enjoy and to receive of the power and the help that you give to us in Christ.

Lord, we know we can't face this week and all that is ahead in our own strength, and we're so grateful that we don't have to because we're so grateful that in Jesus you've given us all things.

We ask again, O Lord, that our faith may rest in him, not in our own righteousness or works, and that, Lord, we may take him and own him as our Lord, our King, and our sufficiency for all the days that you give us of this life.

For we ask it again, our God and Father, in his name. Amen.