

Script: Pastor Frank R. Johnson

Colossians: Shaped by the Truth of Jesus

“World View Is Everything”

Colossians 2:6-10



Take a first look.

I. Some time ago, I presented a short series of messages on the theme, “Reason to Believe.” My title was borrowed from another Christian writer. My intention was to urge us to think more carefully about what we believe and why we believe it. Peter says to the suffering Christians in his time (1 **Peter 3:13-16**, NIV, 1984 ed., my emphasis), “*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*”¹⁴ *But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.’*¹⁵ *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,***¹⁶ *keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander,”*

II. Alright, so, we should regularly ask ourselves, is Christ set apart in our hearts as Lord? Are we prepared to give an answer, if we are asked, for the reason for the hope that we have? Can we do this with “a clear conscience,” knowing that our behavior confirms our belief?

III. Now, everyone needs corrective lenses when it comes to our view of the world and of ourselves in the world. Let’s examine once again what that corrective lens is, from a Christian point of view. The Apostle Paul helps us to consider what a distinctly Christian *worldview* may be.

Take a closer look at Colossians 2:6-10.

I. AN ASSUMPTION: LIFE IN CHRIST CHANGES EVERYTHING! “*Just as you received Christ Jesus as the Lord, keep on walking in Him.*”

1. Paul assumes the reality of the Christian life of his readers. They had received “Christ Jesus as the Lord.” This indicates a decisive response to Christ. They didn’t inherit their life in Christ through biology. It didn’t come through their human parents. They didn’t inherit their life in Christ through their connection with the country of their birth. Rather, they “*received* Christ Jesus as the Lord.” This describes a positive response of faith to the grace that God has extended to us in Christ. The Christians in Colossae had come to trust God to repair their relationship with God and to make their lives whole again.

2. Paul affirms that the Christian life is all about Jesus. Check out these three words that give us a pretty well-rounded view of Him:

a. Christ—This is a title of promise fulfilled.

b. Jesus—This is the name that indicates His essential work: Savior. “You will give Him the name Jesus,” the angel said to His step-father Joseph, “because He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

c. Lord—This is the title that indicates His deity and authority. The Greek word kurios (κύριος) that is translated here and in other places in the New Testament as “lord” was also used in

the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew proper name for God. It is clear that when applied to Jesus Christ, it emphasized both His authority and His deity.

The importance of this emphasis is clear. The Christian life is not merely about “doing good” or “being good.” It is about entering, nurturing and expressing a vital and life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ the Lord.

A—We should each examine ourselves as we consider good thinking about the foundation of our faith. Are we true followers of Jesus or just something of a Jesus admiration society?

I—My father’s conversion to faith in Christ illustrates my question. When my dad was about 35, he was working in the oil fields of Texas. He had been out of World War II for just over a year, after serving in the Army Air Corp from 1941-1945. He was stationed in New Guinea and Australia for most of those years, right in the heart of the battle line between the advancing Japanese army and the allies who fought against them. My dad’s own father had died in an oil field accident when my dad was only seven years of age. All that is background. One of dad’s friends began to pester him to attend a Christian meeting with him. Apparently, the man was persistent, and my dad finally concluded that that he would never get his friend to stop bugging him until he went with him. So he said, “OK, I’ll go with you.” At that service, he heard the gospel clearly for the first time in his life.

Dad has said that when he attended the presentation, he heard the man speaking from the Bible, and he had grown up with a reverence for the Bible (combined with ignorance of what it actually says). So he reasoned, “If this is what the Bible says, I should act on it.” And he did. He went to the front at the end of the message and prayed to receive Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior. The next day, he reported, the sky looked bluer and the grass greener. He didn’t make it through one day before he told his boss that he had put his faith in Jesus. And the response left dad at a loss. His boss replied (I paraphrase), “Oh, that’s great. I’ve been a Christian for many years.” What left dad at a loss was simply that he never would have associated his boss with Jesus Christ on any level. His boss simply did not have a credible living witness of faith in Jesus. Was he a true believer, under all that contrary behavior, or was he a member of the Jesus Admiration Society? Well, God knows. We should know about ourselves, as well.

3. *Paul asserts that his readers should “walk in Him,” i.e., keep living in the realm of His life and knowledge.* This means more than simply, “Keep the moral precepts that Christ presented.” Brother C. S. Lewis popped that bubble already (see *Mere Christianity*). What Paul is advocating is that the relationship that the followers of Christ had already entered should be cultivated and applied to all aspects of life in the world.

With a parallel analogy, Paul says that the readers should build on Jesus Christ as their foundation for all of life (v. 7). The foundation is sound and is time-tested. We not only have the inspired Biblical witnesses to draw from, but we have twenty centuries of Christian experience to help us.

4. *Paul also assumes the natural abundance of thanksgiving from the hearts of his readers.* When you concentrate on the relationship that Jesus Christ has made possible between human beings and the living God, the Creator of all else outside of Himself, then you have every cause for humble thanksgiving.

A—We must approach all matters of life in the world with Christ as our starting point. If He is Lord of all, then *all* must come under Him.

I—This may seem obvious, but it really isn’t. Too many followers of Jesus have never considered how their Christian perspectives apply to the pressing moral issues of our time. I remind you again that it was **William Wilberforce** and several of his well-to-do friends who crusaded against slavery in England in the late-18th and early-19th centuries. First, they attacked the slave

trade, and later they brought all their moral and political powers against the institution of slavery itself. After decades of persistent and painstaking work, often at great personal cost and risk, Wilberforce and the others in the Clapham Group brought Great Britain to move its entire economic foundation away from the necessity of slavery.

“Evangelical abolitionists have received high praise from secular commentators. For example, nineteenth-century historian W.E.H. Lecky said, ‘The unweary, unostentatious, and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages comprised in the history of nations.’”¹

I remind you of the comment made by a Member of Parliament when Wilberforce referred in the arguments against slavery to the Christian nature of Great Britain’s history and principles (I paraphrase): “We’ve come to a pretty pass when we allow religion to invade public life!” Don’t forget that the British Parliament paid the salary of the Archbishop of Canterbury and supported The Church of England, as well! There was no such myth as the one trumped in America under the banner “Separation of Church and State.” Yet, the spirit of that separation was already in the air. As followers of Christ, we can never argue on moral issues from a merely human point of view. God has not given us this option. Jesus is *Lord of all!*

II. A WARNING: OTHER IDEAS CHALLENGE THIS LIFE.

“Watch out that there shall be no one who keeps making captive of you”

1. Paul warns that the philosophy of naturalism would threaten a Christian basis for life in the world. Verse 8 is a powerful statement of warning. What he warns against is a form of slavery, intellectual slavery, to a view of the world that does not take the presence of God seriously. This is a kind of philosophy, Paul says (the actual Greek word here is just that, *philosophia* [φιλοσοφία], from which our word *philosophy* comes. It means “a love of wisdom”). But the word here is used in a negative sense. Paul also describes the line of thinking that poses as a love of wisdom as “empty deceit.” Here is why.

a. This challenge would take the form of human tradition: “according to the tradition of people.” The challenge to life in Christ that Paul warns against is one that thinks more of human tradition than of what God has revealed to us through salvation history and supremely through Jesus Christ. In fact, such a line of “empty deceit” may deny either the presence of God or the role of God’s acts of revelation in forming ethical judgment.

b. This challenge would take the form of natural science: “according to the elementary things of the world.”

A—We must beware of any claims of science that deny the truth of Jesus Christ, and of the creation by God, as a part of their first principles.

I—Darwinism—the persistent belief that the universe, including rational human beings, came into its present form by a random combination of matter, energy, time and chance—has a legal and political stranglehold on public education. This makes the point of view more plausible for students coming through the public schools, because it is the only viewpoint they hear! Surely they must reason that if there were some other viewpoint that was important enough, they would be taught what it is. That should be true, but sadly it is not. Darwinism also has a political death grip on popular science journals. *National Geographic* assumes that naturalistic evolutionism is a “done deal,” even in the face of insurmountable fatal flaws in its grand claims (which they dismiss as so much creation-pseudo-science).

Darwin lived in a period of great disillusionment during which people were grasping for something that would give them hope. The whole “onward and upward” inner longing had begun to take root in the Romantic poets of the early 19th century. Indeed, what gives evolutionism its mythic

¹ William Wilberforce, *Christian History*, no. 53.

quality is simply, as C. S. Lewis pointed out in a clever essay entitled “The Funeral of a Great Myth,” “Imagination runs ahead of scientific evidence.” Keats and Wagner give expression to the evolutionary myth four decades before Darwin published his work.² Darwin sought to give scientific backing for this “spirit of the age.” In other words, he seemed to be looking for anything that would shore up the idea that human beings came into existence and can find meaning for their lives apart from the creation and criteria established by a personal-infinite Creator of the kind the Bible describes.

2. Such “empty *deceit*” would undermine life “according to Christ.” This seems clear enough. If the world has come about through God’s direct creation, and if Jesus is truly the Son of God and the Savior of the human race, then any philosophy that claims credence without taking these truths seriously qualifies as “empty deceit.” *Deceit* because untrue. *Empty* because it leaves people with nothing from which to draw meaning.

III. AN ASSERTION: WE FIND FULLNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST ALONE!

“You have been made full in Him.”

1. Paul asserts that in Christ “all the fullness of the deity is dwelling in bodily form.” This statement affirms two central ideas of Christian truth:

a. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. There can be no denying His deity. This establishes once again His authority over every realm of human life. “... Who is the head over every ruler and authority” (v. 10).

b. Jesus Christ was God *in the flesh*. There can be no denying His humanity. This establishes His blessing of the physical world through the incarnation.

A—By the way, this means that our physical existence, our embodied existence, is not an unnatural and temporary aspect of what it means to be a human person. The ultimate fulfillment of human nature does not come when we escape the body and make it to *heaven* (understood as a quasi-spirit-like existence). Rather, the proper and Christian view of our hope is that our embodied life will be unmade and remade according to God’s original intention. We do not hope for a disembodied heaven; we hope for the Resurrection of the body!

2. Paul asserts that followers of Jesus “have been made full in Christ.” Therefore, any other philosophy of life is ultimately *something less than life in Christ*, not something more.

A—So we begin at the beginning today. We assert with the Apostle Paul that any other basis for thinking about our present human lives in the world is empty and even dangerous deception. We need Christ not only to give us forgiveness of sins and the hope of the Resurrection but also to help us live our embodied present lives to their fullest under His grand design.

I—I followed *The Onion* on Twitter for awhile until I lost interest in some of their particular bias. Before I completely gave up, though, I got a feel for their phony news items, some of which were really quite funny. One such fictitious news item came out a few years back. It purported to be a news release from the World Health Organization (WHO). Here is how that article read:

² C. S. Lewis, “The Funeral of a Great Myth,” in *Christian Reflections* (Eerdmans, 1967), edited by Walter Hooper, p. 84.

World Health Organization officials expressed disappointment Monday at the group's finding that, despite the enormous efforts of doctors, rescue workers and other medical professionals worldwide, the global death rate remains constant at 100 percent.

Death, a metabolic affliction causing total shutdown of all life functions, has long been considered humanity's number one health concern. Responsible for 100 percent of all recorded fatalities worldwide, the condition has no cure.

"I was really hoping, what with all those new radiology treatments, rescue helicopters, aerobics TV shows and what have you, that we might at least make a dent in it this year," WHO Director General Dr. Gernst Bladt said. "Unfortunately, it would appear that the death rate remains constant and total, as it has inviolably since the dawn of time."³

All kidding aside, there is something clearly true about this report. As the book of Hebrews puts it, "It is destined for the people to die once" (Hebrews 9:27a, FJV). That is a universal appointment for every human being, barring an interruption by God on a global scale. But that sentence also adds another sobering clause: "... and after this to face judgment." If this life is our golden but limited opportunity to get prepared for that final judgment, we ought to pay attention to what God has done to help us. He has sent His own Son, Jesus called Christ, to pay our debt, to face our punishment, to give us something we will never deserve and could never earn: forgiveness, new life, eternal hope. We need Jesus Christ, my dear friends! And along with Him, God has thrown in everything else we might need for all eternity:

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31b-32, ESV).

Take it home (applications).

I. Have we established our foundation for belief and life through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord?

II. Let's grow up in Him!

1. We need a soul-nourishing practice of meditation on Scripture and a corresponding life of prayer.

2. We need a life-checking practice of Christian fellowship—study and worship together that keep us on track as followers of Jesus Christ.

3. And once we have life in and through Christ, we must live! We should live fully in the entirety of human life as though the whole of it is a gift from God—which it is!

³ *The Onion*, "World Death Rate Still Holding Steady at 100 Percent" (1-22-97).