

JESUS. PERIOD.

A five-day walk through Colossians 2 | The Orchard

On Sunday we only had time for part of this chapter.

But Colossians 2 is one of the richest chapters in the whole Bible, and there is a lot in it we never got to. So this week we're going to slow down and walk through the parts we skipped.

Each day takes about seven minutes. Open your Bible if you have one. If you don't, use the app on your phone. And if you've never really read the Bible before, you're not behind... just start Monday with the rest of us.

A word before we begin. **Nothing in this week is something you do to make God love you more.** That was Sunday's whole point. This is just what it looks like to stay close to someone.

MONDAY

Read Colossians 2:1-5

"I want you to know how much I have agonized for you..." (2:1)

Paul is writing this from a prison cell.

And the first thing he tells the church at Colossae is that he has been in agony over them. Losing sleep. Wrestling in prayer. For a church he has never once visited, full of people he has never met.

Sit with that for a second. Somebody was praying hard for people he would never shake hands with.

Now here's what I want us to notice. Watch what he actually agonizes *for*.

He doesn't say, I've been praying you'd try harder. He doesn't say, I've been praying you'd clean up your act.

He prays three things. That they would be **encouraged**. That they would be **knit together in love**. And that they would have **complete confidence** that they understand God's secret plan, which is Jesus himself.

Encouragement. Connection. Assurance.

That's it. That's what the man in the prison cell wanted for them.

And I have to be honest with you; that's not usually what I pray for myself. My prayers are mostly about outcomes and behavior. Fix this. Change that. Help me stop doing this thing again.

Paul goes after something underneath all of that. He wants them to be **sure**.

Then comes verse three, and it might be my favorite line in the chapter.

"In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Hidden. That word can throw us. It sounds like God is playing keep-away, like the good stuff is locked in a back room and only the really spiritual people get the code.

That's not what Paul means at all.

He means the treasure is hidden **in a person**. Not in a technique. Not in a method. Not in some deeper teaching you graduate into once you've mastered the beginner material.

And that matters because verse four tells us exactly why he brought it up. *"I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments."*

Somebody in Colossae was selling depth. Something beyond Jesus. Something for the serious people.

I've fallen for a version of that more times than I want to admit. I have spent seasons of my life quietly assuming that maturity meant finding something past the basics. Something more advanced than *Jesus loves me, this I know*.

And Paul says no. **You don't move past Jesus to find the treasure. He is the treasure.** Every bit of it is in him.

Which means the deepest thing available to you today is not a new insight.

It's a closer look at a person you already know.

Sit with this: What have I been chasing that I secretly believe is deeper than Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, I don't want to be impressive. I want to be sure of you. Encourage my heart today. Knit me to your people. And show me the treasure that's been in you the whole time.

TUESDAY

Read Colossians 2:11-13

"When you came to Christ, you were 'circumcised,' but not by a physical procedure." (2:11)

If you didn't grow up in church, this verse needs one sentence of background, so here it is.

Circumcision was an ancient physical sign that a person belonged to God's people. It was a permanent mark, made in the body, that said: I am in this covenant. And for a long time it was *the* boundary line between insiders and outsiders.

So when Paul reaches for that word here, he is reaching for the deepest possible symbol of belonging.

And then he says something stunning. **You got the real one.** Not the version done by human hands. God himself cut away your sinful nature.

Stay with that phrase; *not by a physical procedure*. Not by anything I did to myself.

Because I have tried the do-it-yourself version. I imagine you have too.

I have made lists. I have deleted apps. I have set alarms and made vows and told a friend to hold me accountable, and for about eleven days I was a different man. Then I wasn't.

There is a kind of change I simply cannot perform on myself. I can prune the branches all day long. I cannot get down to the root.

And Paul says God already went to the root.

Then verse twelve takes it further. *"For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life."*

That's the picture behind baptism, by the way. Going under the water is a burial. Coming up is a resurrection. It isn't a car wash for sin. It's a funeral and a birthday in the same moment.

But don't miss where the power comes from. Paul says we're raised to new life *"because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead."*

Read that slowly. **The power that got you out of the grave is the same power that got Jesus out of his.**

Not a lesser grade of it. Not a starter kit. The same power.

So here's the honest question I've been asking myself. If that's true, why do I keep living like the Christian life is something I have to muscle through?

I think it's because resurrection power doesn't feel like anything most days. It feels like an ordinary Tuesday. It feels like traffic and email and a kid who won't put shoes on.

But feelings make terrible theologians. What is true is true whether the Tuesday cooperates or not.

You were buried. You were raised. God did the surgery you could never have done.

Sit with this: What am I still trying to cut out of my life by sheer willpower? What would it look like to bring the root of it to Jesus instead of the behavior?

Pray: God, I've been trying to operate on myself. Thank you that you already did what I couldn't. Help me live today like a person who has actually been raised.

WEDNESDAY

Read Colossians 2:13-15

"He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross."
(2:14)

The word Paul uses for *record of charges* is worth knowing.

In the ancient world it described a handwritten note of debt. An IOU. A certificate you signed yourself, in your own handwriting, acknowledging what you owed.

So picture what that word suggests. A list. Handwritten. The kind of document a person couldn't deny, because the debt is spelled out in black and white.

Everything I've done that I'd never say out loud. Every person I've been careless with. The version of me that only my family sees on a bad day. Written out, itemized, signed.

And Paul says God **canceled** it. Then took it away. Then nailed it to a cross so nobody could ever produce it again.

Not reduced. Not refinanced. Not marked *payment plan*. **Canceled.**

Now stay with me, because verse fifteen does something most of us have never had explained, and once you see it you will never read Good Friday the same way.

"In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross."

That phrase, *shamed them publicly by his victory*, is one word in the original language. And it's a very specific word. It's the word for a **Roman triumph**.

Here's what that was. When a Roman general won a decisive war, Rome threw him a parade. He rode through the city while the whole town watched. And walking behind him, stripped of their armor and bound in chains, came the defeated enemy. On public display. Everyone could see exactly who had lost.

That's the word Paul chooses for the cross.

Now think about what the cross actually looked like that Friday. A man stripped. A man publicly displayed. A man in chains, being marched through a jeering city on his way to die.

From the outside, it looked like Jesus was walking in somebody else's parade.

And Paul says: **no. That was his.**

He wasn't the prisoner in that procession. He was the one leading it. What got stripped and displayed and marched through town in defeat was every power that ever had a claim on you. Including that handwritten list.

I want to be careful and clear here, because people ask what those "rulers and authorities" are. The Bible doesn't hand us a detailed map, and I'm not going to invent one. But at minimum, Paul is telling us this: **whatever it is that accuses you, it lost**. It has no legal standing left. Guilt can still talk. It cannot convict.

Shame is a liar operating without a license.

So if there is something you have been quietly paying on for years... something you bring up to yourself at two in the morning... I need you to know that the bill was canceled and the collector was marched through town in chains.

You are allowed to stop paying.

Sit with this: What is the one thing I keep making payments on that Jesus already canceled?

Pray: Jesus, I believe you canceled it. Help me stop picking it back up. Thank you that the cross was not your defeat. It was your parade.

THURSDAY

Read Colossians 2:16-19

"These rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality."
(2:17)

Paul gives two commands in this section, and they're both protective.

Verse sixteen: **don't let anyone condemn you.**

Verse eighteen: **don't let anyone disqualify you.**

Somebody in that church had appointed themselves the referee. They were grading everyone else's spiritual life by what people ate, what days they observed, what experiences they'd had.

And Paul's response is a picture I can't get out of my head.

He calls all of it a **shadow**.

Now here's what's beautiful about that word choice. A shadow is not a lie. A shadow is real. In fact a shadow is *proof* that something solid is standing there in the light. You can trace its outline. You can tell a lot about a thing from its shadow.

But you cannot eat a shadow. You cannot lean on one. You cannot hold a shadow when your world falls apart.

All those practices were real. God gave many of them. They outlined something true. But they were never the thing itself.

"Christ himself is that reality."

And I have to say honestly, this is where I get caught. Not with festivals and food laws. My shadows are more modern than that.

Reading plans. Worship playlists. Podcasts. How consistently I show up. How I pray, and whether it sounded any good.

Every one of those things is genuinely good. Every one of them can quietly become the point.

And you can tell when it's happened, because of what Paul says next. When we fall in love with a shadow, two things start happening.

We start measuring other people by it. Whatever my practice is becomes the ruler I hold up to everyone else. And I don't usually say it out loud. I just quietly file people into serious and not serious.

And we start getting measured by somebody else's. Somebody who loves a different shadow decides you don't make the cut.

Look closely at verse eighteen and you'll see the strangest part of all this. Paul describes these people as insisting on *pious self-denial*, and then says they are *puffed up with pride*.

Which is it? Humble or proud?

Both. That's the trap. **This kind of religion looks like humility on the outside and is running on pride underneath.** It's the most respectable sin in the room, and it never once feels like sin while you're doing it.

Then comes verse nineteen, and it lands like a diagnosis: *"they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body."*

There it is again. Every single time in this chapter, the problem is the same. Not effort.
Connection.

So hear this today, especially if somebody in your life has made you feel like you don't measure up spiritually.

Nobody gets to disqualify you. That's not their call. They don't have the authority, and the one who does has already ruled in your favor.

Now hear the difference, because it matters. Paul isn't saying nobody can ever speak into your life. A friend who loves you enough to tell you the truth is a gift, and we should want more of that, not less. He's saying **nobody gets to decide whether you're in.**

Sit with this: What good practice have I let become the point? And be honest... who am I quietly grading by my own shadow?

Pray: Jesus, I don't want to settle for the outline when I could have you. Free me from needing to measure people. And free me from believing anyone but you gets to decide if I'm in.

FRIDAY

Read Colossians 2:20-23

"These rules may seem wise... but they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires."
(2:23)

We're going to end the week on the most freeing verse in the chapter, and one of the most overlooked in the whole Bible.

Paul lists the rules people were living under. Listen to how they sound.

"Don't handle. Don't taste. Don't touch."

Short. Clean. Serious. They sound like exactly what a person who wants to grow should be doing.

And Paul admits that. He says these rules *"may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline."*

He's granting the point. They look impressive. They're demanding. Nobody would accuse you of taking your faith lightly.

And then he drops the sentence.

"But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires."

Read that again.

Not *less* help. Not *some* help, but you need *more*.

No help.

I don't know a verse that has done more for me than that one.

Because I have made rules for myself every January of my adult life. I have built systems. I have set limits. And I have watched the same desires walk right through every one of them like a screen door.

For years I assumed that meant something was wrong with me. That I was weak, or not spiritual enough, or that I just hadn't found the right system yet.

Paul says something far kinder and far more useful. **The rules were never going to work.** Not because I'm broken. Because that's not what rules do.

Rules operate on the outside of a person. Desire lives on the inside. A rule can change what I do. It has never once changed what I want.

Now look at how Paul opens this section, in verse twenty. *"You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world?"*

Now let's be careful here, because this is exactly where people go off the road.

Paul is **not** saying obedience doesn't matter. He is not saying it makes no difference how we live. He spends the entire next chapter telling us specifically how to live, and it is not vague.

What he's saying is that rules are the wrong engine. **You're free, and you keep behaving like you're not.**

It's a bird sitting in an open cage.

And if you're thinking, *so does what I do actually matter?*, hold that question. Paul answers it in the very next chapter... and that's exactly where we're going on Sunday.

So if rules don't change what I want... what does?

Go back to where the chapter started, back to Monday. *"Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him."*

Roots. Not rules.

Because when I stay close to Jesus over time, something happens that no system has ever produced in me. **My wants start to move.** Slowly. Unevenly. But they move. And I find myself no longer wanting things I used to have to fight.

That's the whole week in one sentence. **Connection changes desire. Rules only manage behavior.**

So here's the challenge, and it isn't a program.

Name the one thing you've been white-knuckling. The habit, the temper, the phone, the bitterness, the thing you've promised God about a dozen times.

Stop bringing him the behavior. **Bring him the want underneath it.**

Tell him honestly what you actually desire, even when it's the wrong thing. That conversation is the beginning of roots.

And then do one more thing, because this week we said out loud that nobody grows alone.

Tell one person. Not the whole story. Not a confession in front of a group. One trustworthy human being, this week, gets one honest sentence about the thing you named.

Because what stays in the dark stays in charge. And Paul has spent this entire chapter telling us that growth happens when we're connected... to Jesus, and to each other.

He is not waiting for you to get it right. He is waiting for you to get close.

Sit with this: What have I been managing that I've never actually handed over?

Pray: Jesus, I'm done pretending willpower is working. You said I'm already complete in you. So I'm bringing you what I actually want, not just what I've been doing. Change my desires from the root. Let me grow down into you this week.

Jesus above all. Jesus, period.