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Col. 2:1-10 **Encouragement, Continual Growth & a Warning**

Well, in our digital age, we often talk to answering services rather than real people. What might this be like if you had problems? Now, my illustration isn't real. But we have probably all run into automated responses. So we'll see what your funny bone says. It's really funny. If you were to call a mental health hotline, this is what you would hear. Of course, no one would answer. It would be a voicemail, but it would give you options.

Welcome to the mental health hotline.

If you are obsessive-compulsive, press one repeatedly.

If you are codependent, please ask someone to press two for you.

If you have multiple personalities, press three, four, five, and six.

If you are delusional, press seven and your call will be transferred to the mothership.

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a small voice will tell you what number to press.

If you are manic depressive, it doesn't matter what number you press, no one's going to answer you.

If you have dyslexia, press nine, six, nine, six, nine, six, nine, six, nine, six. It's always bad to explain humor, but people with dyslexia will confuse the numbers nine and six.

If you have amnesia, press eight and state your name, address, phone number, date of birth, social security number, and your mother's maiden name.

If you have short-term memory loss, press nine.

If you have short-term memory loss, press nine.

If you have low self-esteem, please hang up because all the operators are too busy to talk to you.

If you are paranoid and fearful, we know who you are and what you want. Stay on the line because we're tracing your calls.<sup>1</sup>

Okay, there are some good ones there. Now, if you get on the line with God, He's not busy. He hears you. One of the ways God gets in touch with you, of course, is through the Word of God. As you read it, he communicates His truth to you. Another way you get God's help is through God's people, who can

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Stiles Live the Bible podcast, How to Face Your Greatest Fear #300 <https://www.livethebiblepodcast.com/livethebible/how-to-face-your-greatest-fear-podcast/>

be there for you. So I encourage you always to answer people when they give you a voicemail. Check it and, answer it, and be there for people. Be there for people. It helps.

Now, this was another funny story. We talk about change and change of direction and just different things we have to do. The basketball player Jason Kidd was interviewed by the Dallas Press when he signed up with the Mavericks basketball team there. He made a statement. He said, "We're going to turn this team around 360 degrees." I hope you caught that because it can be rough any time you have to explain a joke. But anyway, if you turn around 360 degrees, you end up in the same place where you are. That may not be the change that you want. You can change at a 90-degree- or 180-degree angle and automatically go in a different direction. But 360, you're coming right back to the same place.

Today, we want to direct you to make some interesting changes or corrections to your course. As Paul shares in Colossians 1, verses 1-10, he will discuss encouragement. In that encouragement, he's going to tell you something that you have to be aware of. There's a danger that people use there. He will also tell you about the foundation we have in Christ. Here is where we can see real progress in our Christian life. These are things that God has done. Finally, he's also going to share with us a warning, a warning related to man-centered thinking and God-centered thinking. I'll have more on that particular point as we get to it. Let's dig into this specific chapter or paragraph and see what God has for us. Now, I'd like us to read the section we're going to study and then have that paragraph in front of you as we discuss various things. "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea." Now we're in Colossians 2:1-10 chapter 2, verses 1-10.

1" For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." NKJV

### **Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom Come Together**

Here we have Paul's encouragement. He wants to encourage these believers, yet I want you to see a few things. First of all, repetition of words. We

have understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. And really, we're not just talking about three separate ideas. For example, you could be conflicted between knowing stuff and having wisdom where you're applying stuff. The emphasis by many Christian teachers is that it's the application of wisdom that counts. They might put it this way: knowledge is meant to bring about a transformation, a change, not just learning in and of itself. But I kind of like the way it is here in the Bible. These three words are put together and are all part of the same phenomenon. Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding go together. And that's probably a good way to think of it.

His burden—he's got a burden for them—is to see them face to face. He hasn't done it yet. He did not start this church personally, but the people who followed him were the ones who did it. And like those over in Laodicea, which was about 11 miles away from Colossians, Paul wanted to see these people and to encourage them. But they hadn't seen his face yet. But he wants their hearts to be encouraged.

How important, you know, he wants to encourage them. And to be knit together in love, attaining the riches of the full assurance of understanding the knowledge of the mystery of God. That's interesting. We have to know what we're learning. And that's a big thing. I mean, that's the big crux of a lot of things. It's when we understand the gospel and apply it that it does what it does. And there are some things here in this particular section that we're going to study today that, once we understand it, happen. So understanding is very important. And we have to teach knowledge, what the Bible teaches. And even in a class, you have to prepare the discipline of the class in order for the students to understand how the knowledge applies.

Sometimes, you might have a class teaching kids how to think. Maybe it's in the logic of math or science. And they might be thinking, "I'll never use this." Well, they haven't even learned how to think yet. So they have to learn how to think. Often, this happens when they reach the age of understanding abstract thought. And as they learn how to think, when they're older, they can do critical thinking. And they could look back on these classes that they did not understand at first and realize that's what it was teaching them.

There must be a time when we understand what we are learning. And what we're learning, if it's not connected to an understanding of it, it falls short, I think, of its targets. But there are things to know. Whether it's the periodic table in chemistry or your mathematic tables, you must learn about multiplication, addition, subtraction, etc. You know, on up to algebra and how you have to balance out your equations and geometry, how you have to think through your

theory and postulate and how you have to prove it. All these things are just; they're teaching you how to think. And you can apply that process to any subject afterward and get a lot out of it. So there's, you know, there's a legitimate study in what we're going to be looking at a little later here in verse 8.

But there's just, you know, Paul's saying, "I want you to know, I want you to understand, I want you to apply it to your life." So there's that knowledge, that understanding, the light bulb goes on, and that practical wisdom that you apply in your life. And that's what he wants.

### **Warning Deception**

Now, contrast that with what he's afraid of. Now, verse 4, "This I say, lest anyone should deceive you with pervasive words." Oh my, people know how to make a sales pitch. Over the years, advertisers have been able to advertise a product with little to do with the truth. Now, this used to be bad, and then we had to check on it, and they had to be more truthful in their advertisement. But they will only be as honest as they're forced to be. Now, we have a new kind of advertising going on the internet, and you will constantly see many claims. And I'll give you an old adage: don't let people persuade you with pervasive words. "If it sounds too good to be true, it's probably wrong." You know, "If it's too good to be true, it may not be true." Look at advertisements; they're trying to sell you a product, and with a lot of things on the internet, we have no way of verifying whether the product is good or not. You know, and you can follow their sales pitch, but the product may come back like, "Oh, that was a dud. That's a real waste of time. That wasted my money." You got persuaded into something you can't use because the product was inferior.

Now, this is a real problem today, you know, and it illustrates very clearly that people try to persuade other people about things that are not true, and they're doing it for their profit. If it's true in commercials, it is definitely true in religion. Many people are using pervasive words to get their money, and you know, there are even people who say, "Hey, listen, when you give to me, you'll be blessed." In the meantime, they're driving around like everybody's desire to be part of the affluent crowd, and you might be poor. Now, this has happened in the past, and it's happening today. You have to be careful. People are, especially if the equation they're trying to build up here is they benefit, they get the money, and you don't get anything. You know, be aware of that.

So don't let people deceive you with deceptive words. "For though I am absent in flesh, yet I am with you in spirit." And here's what he wanted here. He's rejoicing to see their good order and steadfastness of the faith. In other words,

through his disciples and the ones who started this church, these people have been growing in the Lord and doing it steadily. There's a good order about it. It's not chaotic. The church is growing. The church is functioning. The people are learning to grow in it, and there's steady progress being made.

When we think about this idea of steadfastness, I would like to give you the idea that steadfastness has much to do with long-term thinking. Yes, we make those daily changes like here, where we won't just listen to some silly commercial and buy the product. No, no, no, no. We will check that out and see the product's reviews and what that product is. It doesn't do what it's claiming to do, you know, especially in the light that a lot more things are being done on the internet where you're not at a store where you can look at the product. You know, you're looking at it through pictures. So you have to verify it, which is a very wise thing to do. Well, if that's the way it is in the commercial world, that's also the way it is in the spiritual world.

There are a lot of phony people trying to sell you something so that they get ahead. We have to be a little leery of, "Hey, if it sounds too good, you know, it's probably not true."

### **God Will Continue to Work in Your Life**

Now, here's where I wanted to go. Let's go back to our chapter now, verses 6 to 8. Now, this is what I wanted, or 7. This is what I really wanted to focus on, particularly in application. I did my own study here in the original languages, and I discovered a couple of things and explored some critical processes in the Christian life. So follow closely.

2:6" As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." NKJV

Now, there are a couple of neat things. My grammar teachers are shaking in their boots now because they're saying, "No, Oh Willie, you can't be teaching this English stuff. You were horrible in English." And I know it. When I learned that Bible study had a lot to do with grammar, it was a very depressing day for me. I had to make a change, and I had to work on it and work on it and work on it so that I would understand it. One of its beauties is that our English Bibles are excellent. Two, I got into the study of Greek, and by studying the grammar in Greek, I got a second chance to look at grammar in another language. It was a path into the language that I didn't quite grasp when I was a kid, the English grammar. But going back door through the Greek studies, I started to see the logic of grammar, and I could relate it to what I was also discovering in English.

It's just weird how that happened, and I'm still working on it. But these verses here, 6 and 7, really give a cool grammar-related thing. The main verb in verses 6 and 7 is "so walk." Now they receive the Lord, now walk. When we accept Christ as our Savior, John tells us that "for as many as received him, to them he gives the power or authority to become children of God, even to those who believe on him. John 1:12. God saves us when we receive Christ and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do that by faith.

Now our faith could be strong or it could be weak. It gets stronger when we understand the gospel. When we understand it, the faith grows a little bit. So in that same way, we receive Christ by faith; now we're going to walk. The Bible tells us to walk by faith, "For the just shall live by faith."<sup>2</sup> And so here we are, to walk. That's the main verb, but the rest of these things are participles.

The first participle we have here is "having been rooted." Having been rooted. Rooted is the first participle. It happened in the past; it's a complete action, and this was done by Christ himself when he saved us. So, our being rooted in the gospel has already taken place. I like to take that to the metaphor of a tree. The metaphor of a tree. Psalm 1, okay, turn your Bibles to Psalm 1:1-3

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor set his foot on the path of sinners, nor the seat of mockers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night." (Here's our metaphor now.) "He is like a tree planted by the streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all that he does."

Now, picture a tree with very strong roots. That's what we got going on here in Colossians chapter 2:6. We got a tree with a good root system. Now, a sound root system can draw the nutrients from the ground and the water it needs. As you know, when the trees develop the leaves, the leaves appear on the trees. Some are evergreen, and some trees are seasonal, where they bud in the springtime, and then the leaves come out for a spring, summer, and fall experience, where that tree now makes food from the sunlight. If that tree is by a stream of water where the roots can get to the water, it has everything it needs to become a mighty tree, and the roots grow deep.

Now, let's stay with the metaphor for a second. Let's turn to Matthew chapter 13:3. Jesus tells a parable of the soils.

"Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5Some fell on stony

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<sup>2</sup> Hab 2:4; Ro. 1:17; Heb. 10:38

places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Now, Jesus goes and interprets this. Let’s listen to his interpretation.

Matt. 13:18-23

18 “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The condition of the soil is the key thing in these parables—the good soil vs. 8 and 23. We see the key idea where a person understands the need to receive the word. Keep in mind. We already discussed the importance of understanding and its link between knowledge and wisdom. Faith is knowledge understood and able to make an application. God always does the saving, but we have to believe which takes some understanding. We don’t have to understand it all, but we do have to realize that Jesus is our Savior, and we need him because we sinned. He saved us from the penalty of sin and death and gave us eternal life. The gospel is to be understood. There are probably hundreds of things that happen when we are saved, and we may never learn all of them, but we need to know the gospel and put our faith in Christ.

The one planted in good soil will bear fruit and produce a crop 100 fold, 60 fold, and 30 fold. So that’s the parable of the seed.

Turning to Ephesians chapter 3:17, we get a similar truth. Listen to it. Remember, Ephesians and Colossians are like brothers or sisters. They’re very similar, written about the same period.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God.”

Similar topic that’s talked about here in Colossians, but we’re being rooted here. And that’s something God has done, and he’s helped us understand it, and it gets rooted. It’s in good soil, and that’s the extended metaphor here. So when we look at this wonderful thing that’s already happened, we have been rooted. Now, he changes metaphors.

Now he will use building and built up, and built up. Again, this is a present participle, and it is very similar. It’s in the present tense, and it’s showing continual growth. And that’s what should characterize the Christian walk: continual growth. Turn over to me to Philippians chapter 1:6. could you get this idea? I want you to capture it. Paul could say here,

“Being confident of this very thing, that he who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

This is what’s going on. You are continually growing. God is not going to stop that. He will continue that growth process during all the days you live here on earth. And we’re all at different stages. We are all individuals. We all learn just a little bit differently. We have different experiences, and there’s something about how God forms us because we are individuals, and it helps us to continue to grow.

As long as you’re coming here to church, listening to God’s word, and wanting to put it into action, you want to understand it so that you can apply it, and you continue to work on that, where you get more practical experience, that’s all evidence that this stuff is continually growing. And that’s how it is. And this is the long view because we all have days. We all have seasons where we struggle. But in the long run, especially as we look back, God’s been working all along. And that’s what I want you to see here. This is God’s work. This is his doing. As he works with you, he’s building you up like he builds a building from the foundation up.

Now that I’m an old man, I think the Lord’s working on my plumbing.<sup>3</sup> That’s a joke. So anyway, He’s building us up.

Now, what’s the next word? “Established is also a participle. And now you’re being strengthened. You’re being established. You’re being settled. You’re

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<sup>3</sup> Most men of a certain age have already laughed. Moving on



being stabilized. How unstable you might have been. Maybe some sin or sins really had a hold on you. And you were being tossed to and fro by the wind.’

James here in verse 1:5, 6

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach.” In this segment, we’re looking at knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. So here we have “If anybody lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally without reproach and be given to him. But let him ask of faith, not doubting for the one who doubts is like a sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

And that, of course, in James here is the double-minded man. But I want you to see that we may have come from that position where we were tossed back and forth. There’s another reference here to the being tossed.<sup>4</sup> Now, the unstable person is struggling with a sin or struggling with problems. They’re unstable. But God roots us. He starts to build us up. And here, He’s strengthening and stabilizing us, making our muscles more stable so that we overcome sin and learn to walk with the Lord and stabilize our lives.

I can remember when I was in fights all the time. I get saved and start hanging around other Christians where I’m learning. And suddenly, I’m not going to the same places where I was getting into fights. Number two, I was starting to have an inner change about the desire not to have fights. I lost that desire. And before too long, there was no fighting in a relatively short period. And throughout my life, that’s been the practice and the pattern. Now, occasionally, I’ve had to defend myself like any one of us might have to do, but it wasn’t a pattern. It wasn’t a pattern. It wasn’t all the time. My life stabilized, and I was no longer driven by anger. So, God stabilizes us.

The last part of this is, okay, back to Colossians. The whole idea of abounding with Thanksgiving is that we are in action, we are in the moment, we’re doing this, and we’re being thankful as we go along.

Now, here’s the idea of this verse. This stuff is going on in our life. God is building us up. He’s rooted us, and now he’s building us up. He’s strengthening us. And our response is increasingly, “Thank you. Thank you.” And we become a people of Thanksgiving. And that’s ongoing. I want you to be encouraged by

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<sup>4</sup> Eph. 4:14 *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*” Paul is writing about the same subject here. Notice how vulnerable we can be to get conned by deceptive people. Con artist work in advertising but also in every endeavor we find ourselves in.

that. No matter where you are, God is not finished with you yet. He's continuing and will stay at it until He takes you home to be with him in glory. That's going to happen. We have to believe that.

### **Warning Against Man Centered Philosophy Opposed to God**

Col. **2:8** Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; <sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." NKJV

Now, in Ephesians, the emphasis is on the body. In Colossians, the emphasis is on the head. And Christ in you is the theme of Colossians. And Christ here will have all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in the flesh. Jesus was God. John tells us in his letters; he says it that if you deny Christ was God in the flesh, if you deny that, then you're of the antichrist.<sup>5</sup> You don't know the Lord. For you to believe in Christ as the Son of God, deity is essential to being rooted and grounded in love. So Paul says, beware lest anybody cheat you. Now, he has already talked to us about deceiving.

You know how deceptive words can be. Now Paul is talking about somebody cheating you, robbing you of a good life "through philosophy and empty deceit. According to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the word, and not according to Christ. For in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." He will be talking about those principalities and power in just a few minutes, not minutes, but the next time we pick this up. But here, people are going to cheat you. And they're doing it with man-made philosophies that are against God. Philosophy is a legitimate study of life. Everybody has a philosophy.

We used to have a disabled girl who came here occasionally. She was so severely handicapped that the family needed help. So they have specialized help that the state does for her, and the family visits take her out for home visits quite often. However, for her day-to-day care, which is 24/7, she has to be cared for by the people in the state who particularly care for these types of people. Now, she had only the mind of a one-year-old, but she had a philosophy. Now, I'm not 100% sure I understand her philosophy. She did have a handicap that impaired her so that she might have been more impaired than a one-year-old, but that's what they said she was. So, if she was a one-year-old, what is a one-

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Jn. 2:22, 23; 4:2,3, 15; 5:1; 1Jn. 7

year-old philosophy? It is entirely disabled because it includes taking care of changing diapers. The philosophy of a child like that, a baby or an infant, is to feed me, hold me, change me, help me get to sleep, do it kindly, and I will be happy. And that was her philosophy. Now, if she didn't get fed, if she didn't get changed, if she weren't held or cared for for these basic things, then she would let them know by complaining. And by nature, she wasn't a complaining baby. She wasn't. She was happy. But you had to take care of those basic needs. That was her philosophy.

Now, other people might have more sophisticated philosophies. Everybody has a philosophy. There are some people whose philosophy is being cheap. Being cheap. That's their philosophy. But everybody has a philosophy. Some of them are developed. Some others are not. Some people may not know their philosophies, but everyone has one. We have to live in this world. So, we have to come to an understanding of how to live in this world. That's part of science, and that's part of philosophy, and it's part of communication, etc., etc. But it's legitimate. We have to live on this planet. So philosophy in and of itself is not evil.

But when that philosophy has excluded God, eternity, the spiritual salvation in Christ, and communication with God who is there and not silent, it has excluded what happens after this life. We all live for so many years, and then we die. Well, what happens after death? If we have a philosophy that excludes everything the Bible says about these things, then we have a philosophy that's trying to cheat you.

Look at there are people today who have no security about what's going to happen to them after death.

We just recently had an actor, Gene Hackman, who died of Alzheimer's. Now, he died of a problem where he probably needed to be cared for. He was alienated from his family. Nobody contacted him. And his wife got a rare virus. She was probably taking care of him. And she gets a rare virus, and she dies. And she's in the house, and she's been dead for a while. He's got Alzheimer's. And over a couple of weeks, he gets so stressed out that he has a heart attack. I don't know what his fears were. I do know that he communicated in an interview with Larry King some years before that he had a fear of death. But I don't see what's playing in his mind when he's got Alzheimer's.

I know that there's more to this life than just dying. And there are a lot of people who do not have an assurance of what happens after death. They may say things when they're younger, but when they get closer to death, there's a

fear there that happens. And they have no assurance. And don't let anybody cheat you out of the Bible's truth: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish and experience the second death, but shall have eternal life." And the Bible tells us that when "we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord." And there are so many places, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, where it tells us about the belief of life after death. And it's so important to hear it from God's perspective. We need it.

Don't let people cheat you. And that's very important.

So, to sum it up, we need to be encouraged that God is working in our lives, trying to give us the knowledge and the understanding to apply it with practical wisdom and have a Christianity that works. He wants to help us understand the foundation He's working on. If you've trusted Christ, he's already saved you. And he's working in your life, building you up. And finally, don't let people cheat you. You know, don't let people cheat you. Don't let them take away not just the assurance of your salvation but the very truths that God is working in your life today, that he's answering prayers, that there's more to life than our strength, that we can depend upon God who made us.

Let's pray, Lord, thank you for continuing to work in our lives. Thank you, Lord, for encouraging us along the way. And thank you for your warning not to let con artists rob us of our spiritual faith and hope that we have that you work in our lives today and that we have hope beyond the grave. Thank you, Lord.