

Stick with Jesus, he's 100% the real deal!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 June 2025

Preacher: Brian King

[0 : 00] Let's pray first. Father, as we come before you, I really ask, Lord, that you would help us to take to heart the message of Colossians 2.

! I pray that by your Spirit, you would alert us to maybe things in our lives which we have unwittingly given ourselves over to.

And you would also help us to open our eyes again, to help us to see again how amazing Jesus is and how much we want to stick with him, how much we want to continue in him, how much we want to live for him.

So please, Lord, do your work today. We pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen. Imagine a large, impressive-looking tree in someone's backyard.

From the outside, it looks healthy. Tick trunk, white branches, lots of green leaves. But actually, unseen by human eyes, termites have been eating away at the inside of the trunk for years.

[1 : 11] Over time, the tree becomes completely hollowed out. Then one day, a strong wind blows through. The tree snaps in half and crashes down, destroying a parked car and narrowly missing the house.

The family is shocked. But it looks so strong, they said. And that's what a hollowed-out Christian life looks like. From the outside, everything might seem healthy.

The person goes to church, sings the songs, maybe even serves in ministry. They look committed. But over time, their spiritual life with Christ is getting chipped away.

Perhaps by busyness, distraction, unrepentant sin, pride, or just neglect. There's no real prayer life. No dependence on God. No feeding on His Word. No wrestling with sin. Just a shell of activity. And so their life becomes spiritually hollow.

[2 : 23] A form without the substance. That some storm comes. Suffering. Temptation. Crisis.

Doubt. And just like that tree, they fall. Not because of the storm itself, but because they were already hollow inside.

So how do you avoid having a hollowed-out life? That's our question for today. How can you prevent such emptiness? And Paul's answer is really very simple.

By sticking with Jesus. That's verses 6 and 7 in a nutshell. In fact, those are the verses that sum up the entire message of Colossians.

Let me read it. So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthen in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

[3 : 32] You see, that's how we begin. Don't we? We start the Christian life by receiving Christ Jesus as Lord.

We start by learning that He's supreme over all creation. 1 verse 15 to 17. He is the mystery in whom all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

2 verse 2 and 3. He brings light. 1 verse 13. Redemption. 1 verse 14. And forgiveness. Also verse 14. And when we open our hearts to Him, we are transferred into His kingdom.

Meaning, He becomes our King. Our Lord. That's how it all begins. When we personally embrace the truth we have received about Him.

And we are no longer empty because we have Christ in us, the hope of glory. But how now am I to continue?

[4 : 35] Again, verse 6 tells us. Just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him.

Or more literally, continue walking in Him. Keep walking, Paul says. Don't stay still. Keep moving. That's the point.

But Paul adds, as you walk, never walk away from Christ. You've got to keep walking how you started.

You've got to keep sticking with Christ as your Lord. And to explain what that means, Paul borrows from the world of horticulture and architecture.

For one, sticking with Jesus means, verse 7, staying rooted in Him. Perhaps Paul is thinking of that image we read at the beginning of the service in Jeremiah 17.

[5 : 36] Where the prophet describes on the screen, a tree planted by the stream. And notice, as this tree stays rooted in its life-giving source.

As it continues trusting and staying confident in the Lord. It does not fear. When heat comes, its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in the year of drought. And never fails to bear fruit. So sticking with Jesus, Paul explains, means laying down roots by staying confident in Christ.

And as those roots are laid down, you are then built up in Him. Paul now switches images from nature to construction. God has already begun building us as His new temple, with each of us as living stones.

But the foundation of this temple is Christ. He's the cornerstone. Without Him, the whole structure will eventually crumble into rubble.

[6 : 47] But if we stick with Jesus, God will slowly turn us into a magnificent dwelling for His presence. And so sticking with Jesus means being strengthened in the faith as you were taught.

The idea here is to be solidly grounded in the true faith. You see, faith isn't something that each person gets to define for themselves. These days, people often talk about what Jesus means to them.

And yes, that can be meaningful. But whatever we say about Jesus has to be in line with what the New Testament teaches. So how do you know if you are being rooted, built up, and strengthened? One helpful indicator is to ask, Are you overflowing with thankfulness? That's the end of verse 7. Rather than grumble at what you do not have, Are you grateful you do have what you don't deserve? You have grace and mercy.

[8 : 05] To overflow with thankfulness is not to pretend everything is okay. It's not even necessarily to be thankful for every circumstance.

But it is to be thankful in every circumstance. Because you know you belong to Christ. And Christ is still yours.

And that is a clear sign your Christian life isn't hollowed out. And all this happens, I'm sure you noticed already, In him.

Paul keeps repeating that phrase, Not just in verses 6 and 7, but throughout this passage. Because that is Paul's big point. We have Christ.

And we can continue with the same Christ that we receive, As we now walk on. And we could just end the sermon here, right?

[9 : 12] We have our answer. But Paul doesn't. Why not? Because his is not the only voice in Colossae.

You see, there are other groups around. And they too are proposing solutions to prevent a hollow Christian life. Solutions that are different and appealing in their own way.

So Paul can't stop at verses 6 and 7. No. He must persuade us his answer is right. And the other answers are wrong.

And so that's what we're going to explore for the rest of today's sermon. Firstly, we'll see what the other alternatives on offer are, And why we must reject them.

And then secondly, we'll see why we should keep sticking with Jesus. So firstly, why should we reject these alternative solutions?

[10 : 18] Because, Paul says, Any alternative to Jesus is 100% not the real deal. Instead, verse 8, They are hollow and deceptive philosophy, Which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world.

So reject them. Now, it's important not to misunderstand Paul here. He isn't asking us to throw our brains away. Certainly, we read Paul's other letters.

We know very well he uses logic and reasoning often, doesn't he? So he is not advocating some form of anti-intellectualism.

Rather, Paul is speaking to a context where there is a rojak of philosophies out there. And at least some of them, he says, are hollow and deceptive.

It's hollow because it's empty of any spiritual value. And it's deceptive because it promises deep spiritual insight, But actually draws people away from the truth of the gospel.

[11 : 34] And it is empty and hollow because it is ultimately based on human tradition. In other words, it doesn't come from God's all-knowing mind, But our ill-informed minds.

More than that, it's based on what verse 8 calls The elemental spiritual forces of this world. Now, that is a tough phrase both to translate and to understand.

What does it mean? It could refer to spiritual forces that lead us astray through unchristian practices Like astrology, ethnic supremacy, or ancestral veneration.

What Paul calls powers and authorities in verse 15. Or, if you look at the footnote in the NIV 2011, This phrase could alternatively be translated as The basic principles of this world.

In which case, it might refer to merely human commands and teachings, Similar to what is mentioned in verse 22. But whichever way it is, the basic point is clear.

[12 : 56] If you give yourselves to any of these philosophies that have no basis in the gospel, You will end up with hollowed-out Christian lives.

Ironically, you will end up with precisely what you want to avoid. So don't be taken captive, Paul says. But you might wonder, Does anyone really get captured by such things?

I mean, go around Kuching and ask a hundred people How much interest they have in philosophy, And you'll be lucky to find even one.

So who would even want to listen to such things? Well, perhaps it helps to understand what philosophers in the ancient world were like.

They essentially offered what we now call philosophies of life. They would say, Here is how to live the good life.

[14 : 02] Or, Here is how to make sense of the world around you. And they would work hard at developing the right look, The right feel, And the right language for their audience.

They'll offer practical advice, Inspiring stories, And general wisdom, While positioning themselves as experts.

In short, They were the podcasters, YouTubers, And social influencers of their time. As the historian Robert Louis Wilkin notes on the screen, The appeal of the philosopher on the screen, The quote, Claire, The appeal of the philosopher frequently had less to do with the teaching of his school, Than with how the philosopher dressed, What kind of success he could promise his adherents, And which philosophy was fashionable, And highly regarded in influential circles.

And once we understand that, We can see how it's still the same today. Isn't it? Just hop online, And within minutes, You are flooded with podcasts, Videos, And memes, Telling you how to live your best life, Or how to make sense of our world.

One might say, Just live your truth. And other whispers, Always follow your heart. And they sound empowering, Right?

[15 : 43] But here is the catch. These ideas often encourage us to indulge in ourselves. To make me the center of everything.

And if I am already feeling lost, Or feeling empty, How does focusing even more on myself help? It doesn't.

It just leaves me spinning in circles. It's like trying to fill an empty cup, With more emptiness. And so these philosophies, Attractive as they might sound, Are in the end, Deceptive.

They simply leave you hollow. They're not good news. They offer no true hope. And if I get caught up in this, I can't grow to maturity, Or help others do the same.

Which as we talked about last week, Is what God really wants for us. And that is why Paul warns us today, Don't be taken captive.

[16 : 55] More specifically, Verses 16 to 23, He says, Watch out for these three common philosophies.

Let's have a look at each of them. First of all, Beware in substantial religion. Verse 16. 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.

You see, It seems as if some people in Colossae Knew their Old Testaments well. They were aware it included Certain food laws, And special days. And so they were saying, This is what you

really need To keep your Christian life From falling apart.

You need to cut out certain foods. Or you need to fast on specific days. Otherwise, They want, It will be like missing Your spiritual vitamins.

And then, You won't be strong enough To finish your spiritual race, And you will be disqualified. So what's the problem?

[18 : 16] Sounds like good advice, right? And, After all these things are in the Bible, right? And they were given for good reasons. The food laws, for example, Reminded God's people They were meant to be different From those around them.

The Sabbath Reminded God's people He was both creator And redeemer. And his ultimate goal For his people Was for them to find rest In relationship With him.

So what's the issue? Yes, All these things are true. But these guys have forgotten One essential thing.

Verse 17 These are shadow Of the things that were to come. The reality, however, Is found In Christ.

In the end, you see, All these food laws And festivals Are just Shadows. And here is Poe's point. When you have the substance, Why go for the shadow?

[19 : 28] When you have Christ, Why go for Old Testament Religion? True, Whenever you look at Someone's shadow, You get to know A few things about them.

For example, You get a rough idea Of their body shape Or posture. But there is so much more You don't know. For example, You can't see their eyes Or their smile Or know anything About their personality.

But once the person Is standing Right in front of you, Everything changes. You will know Way more about them.

You can personally Connect with them. Personally engage with them. And in fact, It would be Strange And almost sad To ignore them And keep talking To the shadow.

Wouldn't it? And that's what These Old Testament Laws and festivals Were like. They gave hints Of who God is And what he would do.

[20 : 35] And they were meaningful Because They pointed to Christ. But Christ Is now here. And if you decide To ignore Christ And just focus On the fasting Or the religious routines For their own sake, You've completely Missed the point.

You've missed The substance. And so you will get Zero spiritual benefit From these religious Practices. But such Insubstantial religion Can be Attractive.

Because it offers Something visible. Something tangible. They offer External Markers Of holiness. And so they can Seem like Helpful ways To ensure Our Christian life Isn't hollow.

And they can Come in so Many forms. Perhaps they Come in the form Of a strict Dress code For Sundays. A church Perhaps Might say No jeans Allowed.

And yes Of course While Discussions Around dress Codes For Respect And edification Are valuable The moment It purely Becomes A way To grow Or to measure Someone's Faith It becomes A mere shadow It might Seem Tangible But it Is actually Insubstantial Because true Purity And dignity Comes from Being clothed In Christ Not in a Particular Fabric Or perhaps Such Religion Comes in Tallying up How many Minutes we Spend Doing our Quiet times Again That is Attractive Because You can Easily Measure Such Things And certainly There might Be a place For setting Aside A set Time To read Our Bibles

[22 : 39] To keep Us disciplined But the Minute we Start fixating Purely On numbers As a Way to Develop Christian Maturity Instead of Simply enjoying Our time With Jesus We have Lost The plot You see When these Rules And these Totals These numbers Become the Focus Instead of Pointing you To him They end up Pulling you Away from him That's the Irony So don't Get Taken Captive That's one Hollow Philosophy Here is a Second one Beware Spiritual Hype Beware Spiritual Hype Look at Verse 18 Do not Let anyone Who delights In false Humility And the Worship of Angels

Disqualify You Such a Person Also goes Into great Detail About what They have Seen They are Puffed Up With Idle Notions By Their Unspiritual Mind So it Appears Some other Guys were Promoting A particular Experience They might Have been Worshipping Angels Treating them Like spiritual Middlemen Who can Help them To get Closer To God Or To keep Them Safe Or maybe They had Visions Of angels Worshipping And as a Result They assumed That they were More

connected To God Than Everyone Else And these Guys were Saying You need What I Have So Let me Tell you How to Produce Just the Right Atmosphere The right Conditions To access The heavenly Realms Let me Tell you How to Enter That secret Place With God Otherwise Can you Even call Yourself A Christian But Paul Is blunt Contrary To appearances He says Such things Are Unspiritual Because once Again Christ Is Missing The problem Isn't having Visions Per se God can Certainly send Them and use Them if he Wants to The problem Comes when People begin Ranking How great Our Christian Lives must Be based On such Experiences And that Is not Christ Like But Worldly In fact Verse 19 It is not Just worldly But Dangerous For Paul Says We end up Disconnecting Ourselves From Christ And that Is bad Because As the Head Christ Is the One who Feeds And holds

The whole Body Together Without Him We can't Grow Or even Survive It's like A bicycle Wheel With all Its spokes And its Rim But the Central hub Is missing And no Matter how Good the Rim and The spokes Are Without That hub The wheel Will Move It can't Go Anywhere That's What Paul Is saying Here You can Claim To be Worshipping God With Intensity Or Claim To be Seeing All kinds Of stuff But If the Hype Has become The focal Point And not Christ It is Useless Empty Hollow Scary Isn't It So it Is good To ponder If any Of us Are in Danger Of being Taken Captive By Spiritual Hype And then Thirdly Beware Important Ruse Beware Important Ruse Now you Might think Does anyone Actually like Ruse But Ruse Can Be Attractive They Give Us Clarity About What We Can And Cannot Do That's Why People Sometimes Come up To me And say Pastor Don't Just give Me Basic Principles Tell Me Exactly What To Do And That Is What Some Of The Voices In Colossae Were Offering Verse 21 Detailed Ruse Don't Handle This Don't Taste That Don't Touch That So Hey At Least You Know Exactly What To Do And It Is Even Better Verse 23 If These Rules [27 : 41] Can Stop Me Indulging In Sin Right So Let Think I Want To Avoid Getting Drunk Okay Easy Rule Avoid Alcohol At All Costs That's The Rule Or If I Catch Myself Indulging In Lust Oh Okay Here's The Rule I'll Deny Myself Watching Netflix For The Next Few Days Whenever That Happens So They Are A Bit Like The Insubstantial Religion We Mentioned Earlier But There Are A Couple Of Differences For One Thing Whereas The Things Like The Festivals Are Externally Imposed Regulations These Are Internally Imposed Rules On Your Own Body For Another Whereas The Focus Of These Food Laws Is Compliance With An Outside Standard The Focus Of All These Particular Rules Is A Mastery Of The

Self But In The End The One Thing They Both Share In Common Is That They Are Empty And Hollow As Verse 23 Says They Have An Appearance Of Wisdom With Their Self Imposed Worship Their False Humility And Their Harsh Treatment Of The Body But They Lack Any Value In Restraining Sensual Indulgence To Put It Simply Our Man Made Rules Cannot Fix Ourselves Perhaps This Illustration Might Help Meet Anna Whenever She is Stressed She Snacks And She Hates That She Knows It's Not Healthy So She Decides On A Strict External Rule I'll Wear This Rubber Wristband And Every

Time I'm Tempted To Snack I'll Snap It Against My Skin And The System Works For A While The Pangs Of Hunger Come She Snaps Her Wristband Her Wrist Stings And She Resists But The Problem Is Her Desire For Snacking Remains And One Day With A Deadline Looming She Snaps Her Band But She Reaches For The Cookies Anyway And Before You Know It She Starts Doing Stuff Like Eating In The Shower When She Isn't Wearing The Band Just To Get Around Her Own Rule So What Has Happened The Rules Restrain Her Behavior Temporarily And She Might Even Have Felt Virtuous

Power To Deal To Deal With Hollowed Out Spiritual Lives And So That Is Why We Must Reject All These Philosophies That's Why We Stick With Jesus Instead Because Jesus Is 100% The Real Deal Deal That's What Paul Will Now Focus On In Verses 9 To 15 Jesus Is 100% The Real Deal And The Only Thing That Will Protect Us From A Hollowed Out Spiritual Life And He Is 100% The Real Deal In Two Substantial Ways Firstly Jesus Is The Real Deal Because He Has It All Look At Verse 9 For In Christ All The Fulness Of The Deity Lives In Bodily Form I Mean!

Wow! Think About That For A Second Paul Is Saying Do You Really Want To Know God? Really Really Want To Know Him For Who He Is Know What He Is Really Like In Every Way Well He Is All There In Jesus Jesus Isn't Just Someone Who Simply Happens To Have The Right Ideas About God He Is Not Even Someone Who Happens To Be Closer To God And So Can Give Us Some Help In That Direction No All Of God Is In All Of Jesus Every Aspect Of The Divine Being Wisdom Power Holiness Goodness Finds Its Home In Jesus Incarnate Person And That Is Why End Of

Verse 10 He Is The Head Over Every Power And Authority And So If This Is Who
[33 : 03] Jesus Is Why Would You Stick With Anyone Other Than Him How Can Any Religion Or Rule! Or Some Form Of Hype Compete With Christ But We Are Just Getting Started For Secondly Jesus Is You Have Been Brought To Fulness Now That Is A Stunning Statement You See Sometimes You Might Hear Us Say Something Like This In Christ We Have Everything We Need And Of Course That Is True But Sometimes When We Say That It Can Come Across As If We Saying That Christ Is Just Offering Us The Bare Minimum To Get By Doesn't It It's Like Saying I Have Food And Water So I Have Enough I Have Christ So

I Have Enough But Paul says Hang On A Minute In Christ You Don't Just Have The Bare Minimum For Christ Has Given You His All He Brought You To Fulness That's What We Really Mean When We Say Christ Is Enough Well Don't Believe Me Paul Us Then Let Me Show You How Christ Has Given Us His All He Has Done Three Amazing Things Three Things That Make Sure Our Christian Lives Will Not Be Hollow If We Stick With Him Number Number One He Dealt With Our Flesh You See Before Christ Came What Were We Like We Were Those Who Put Our Sells First Our Natural Tendency Was To Make Our Sells Number One And To Look After Number One Verse Eleven Describes It This Way Our Whole

Self Was Rued By The Flesh But When Christ Came He Cut That All Off He Circumcised Our Hearts He He Cut Off The Fores Skin Of Our Wrong Desires He Made!

Sure We Are Free To Say No To Our Old Sells And Yes To Our New Sells And Only Christ Can Do That This Is A Circumcision That Cannot Be Achieved By Human Hands And As Paul Goes On To Explain In Verse Twelve That's What Your Water Baptism!

You Were Buried With! you passed through the waters of death, all the old you was killed and buried with Christ, selfish ambitions, envious thoughts, unwholesome talk, and you were raised with him, free now to live as God made you to be.

[36 : 04] You can now choose to be unselfish, unenvious, wholesome because you are raised a new person.

And that's what Christ did for everyone who trusts in him. He's dealt with our flesh. And then number two, he's dealt with our guilt.

You see, imagine the list. It's a list of every single thought and thing that you and I have ever done. And that is a scary list, isn't it?

Because it will be full of stuff we know we shouldn't have done. And that list confirms we are guilty. We are in God's debt. And what is the penalty for unpaid debts? Death. But what did Christ do?

[37 : 04] Look at verse 14. God cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, that is the list that I've just talked about, which stood against us and condemned us.

He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. You see, when the Romans crucified someone, they wanted people to know why. And so they would write down the charge against that person, and they would nail it to the cross.

You might remember, Pilate did precisely that when he wrote, Jesus, King of the Jews, and then he nailed it to the top of Jesus' cross. But now, what is nailed is every potential charge against us.

Because Jesus paid the penalty in full. He gave us his all by taking upon himself every charge of sin and being nailed to the cross itself.

Today, there might be a past sin in your life, a sin that is so big that it clings to you like a huge burden.

[38 : 17] But guess what? Jesus has dealt with even that. He is the real deal. And then number three, he has dealt with every spiritual force.

You see, it is not only our flesh and our guilt that holds us back. Hostile spiritual forces opposed to God can also keep us from living the full Christian life we are meant for.

But look at verse 15. Christ has disarmed such powers and authorities. He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

So the idea is this. The Romans love a war. And whenever they want one, they would have a triumphal procession. Think of this big parade down the main street.

And the honored war heroes would march out front with all their loyal soldiers following behind them. But behind this group of people, there would also be a line of captured enemies dragged along.

[39 : 31] And put on display for everyone to mock and shame. And Paul was saying, that's what has happened to all the evil spiritual forces.

They are defeated. They are prisoners of war. Amazingly, Jesus, by being mercilessly crucified by the Roman authorities, has now completely neutralized these so-called higher powers.

And here is the thing. You never throw victory parades when you are still halfway fighting a battle. You only throw one when you win. And the reason Jesus can show this victory parade is precisely because he has already won the victory.

He has completely beaten them. It is done. So my brothers and sisters, I want us to take stock today.

[40 : 36] Have you been taken captive by worldly philosophies? Then remember, they are hollow and deceptive. They only offer empty cups.

They try to tame the flesh with rules, but end up keeping you enslaved to them. They tell you to ignore or manage your guilt with religion or experiences, but they can't erase it.

They ask us to deny or appease evil spiritual forces, but they can't disarm them. But Jesus can. And so stick with Jesus. Stay rooted in him. And yes, that might mean dying to our old selves, and we think, oh, that's going to be painful. But we do that so that Christ can make us alive again and become our all in all.

So just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him. For in the end, what is walking?

[41 : 50] It is simply planting one foot in front of the other. It is a skill we learn as a toddler and something we do for the rest of our lives.

You know, whatever the terrain might be, stairs or hills or whatnot, we keep utilizing that same pattern of balance and forward motion of putting that one foot in front of the other.

We never ever say, oh, let's stop walking now. Let's graduate to more advanced stuff. That's how it is with the Christian life. We keep walking with Jesus.

We keep sticking with Jesus, step by step, grateful that he is 100% the real deal. And as we daily return to his grace, as we daily acknowledge he's the boss, we can be sure our Christian life won't be hollowed out.

So today let's pray. We'll keep sticking with Jesus and become that fruit-bearing tree of Jeremiah 17. Let's pray now. Father, this is indeed our prayer today, that just as we have received Christ Jesus as our Lord, we pray that we will continue to walk our lives in him, to be rooted and built up in him, to be strengthened in the faith that has been taught to us, so that we might overflow with thankfulness.

[43 : 35] So Lord, please help us to keep sticking with you. Help us to be alert to any human deceptive philosophy that might have kidnapped us. And we pray that you will release us from them.

And if there is anyone here today who has not even begun that first step of receiving Christ Jesus as Lord, I pray that you would do something in their hearts so that they might take that very first step as well.

Pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen.