

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: “Walk an Enlightened Walk” (Colossians 1:6)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/30/2011

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## **Encouraging Words, Military Language**

At the present time we are focusing on Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse five, where the Apostle Paul writes this great word of encouragement to the Colossian church of two thousand years ago. And of course he is also writing this by Divine inspiration for the instruction and edification of the true Church of Jesus Christ in all ages. He says this: “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.”

Now in our last message we saw that in this particular verse, in the original language, Paul employs military terminology to make his point. The words that are translated “good order” and “steadfastness” are military terms. Terms of warfare. The words that he is using describe order and discipline among soldiers who have taken their positions for battle. Furthermore, the words Paul uses speak of soldiers remaining in their positions in the battle, and not breaking ranks, not leaving their posts, so that as an army they will maintain a solid and fortified front against the enemy.

We also saw that Paul’s use of military language in this passage is not an isolated case. He does this in several other places in his epistles – in Ephesians chapter six, of course, in that great statement about the armor of God, and also in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians and in both of his letters to Timothy.

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And so we have this military language, the language of warfare, the language of conflict, here in Colossians chapter two. And this is what Paul is saying to the Colossian Christians. He is saying, you Colossian believers are going to be constantly tempted away from the truth by spiritual enemies. Some of these enemy forces want to draw you away into bondage to worldly philosophies. Some of these enemy forces want to draw you away into the bondage of legalism. And some of these enemy forces want to draw you away into the slavery of man-made doctrines.

### **Know the Enemy**

And so Paul is writing in Colossians chapter two to tell believers this: I want you to recognize all of these forces for what they are. They are enemies of your souls. They are enemies of the true faith.

And they will come at you in different ways. They will use different tactics. Sometimes they will launch a frontal attack. But many times they will come in secret, they will seek to undermine you in subtle ways. They will infiltrate your ranks.

Learn to recognize who these people are, and what they stand for. And do not have anything to do with them, and do not have anything to do with what they are attempting to promote. What they are promoting is the way of the fallen world, not the way of the risen Christ. What they are promoting is the way of death, not the way of life.

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And so you need to maintain a disciplined, united battle front against these forces. Don't allow these things to come into your thinking as individuals; don't allow these people to influence you. And don't allow these people to undermine the church; don't allow these false teachings to come into the life and the thinking and the teaching of the church.

### **The Sad State of the Church Today**

And then, last time, as we saw the Apostle Paul writing these words to the Colossian church of two thousand years ago, we asked this question: What about the church in our day? Is the church maintaining a united battle front against these things? And we saw that the answer, for the most part, is that the Evangelical church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not in battle array but in disarray when it comes to these vital matters. And we looked, very briefly, at some of the overwhelming evidence that this is the case. And we saw that the church is in deep trouble in each of the three major areas of attack that Paul addresses in Colossians chapter two.

Worldly philosophies are carrying the church away from the truth. Nearly 40% of Evangelical church members no longer believe the Bible is inerrant. Nearly half of Evangelical church members no longer believe that Jesus Christ is a sinless Savior. Nearly 60% of Evangelical church members no longer believe that Jesus Christ is the only Way to eternal life. Leading theologians, men who were once respected as conservatives, are now saying that the church must embrace

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Darwinian evolution, we must deny what the Bible plainly says about the origin of the universe, and the origin of man, and the origin of sin, and we must instead embrace what the unsaved world says about the universe, and man, and sin – or else, these Evangelical theologians say, Christianity will be viewed as nothing but a fringe cult. Worldly philosophies are carrying the church away from the truth.

Legalism is also carrying the church away from the truth. Nearly 60% of Evangelical church members believe that good works gain eternal life. The false teaching of justification not by faith in Christ alone, but by faith plus works, is growing in popularity and influence.

Man-made teachings are gripping the church and carrying it away from the truth. More and more churches are mingling New Age teachings and various forms of Freudian psychology with the teachings of the Bible. Many churches are falling into the trap of the "word of faith movement" – this movement that says that faith is a force, that your words release that force, and therefore you can speak your own reality into existence, you can take the place of God.

Yes indeed, we saw that the postmodern Evangelical church is in a scandalous condition today. Spiritual enemies are rushing in like a flood, and far too often, church leaders are welcoming the enemies of Christ into their midst with open arms.

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## **Restoring the Battle Front: Four Imperatives**

Dear friends, the battle front must be restored. And so last time we asked this vital question: What, according to Scripture, must be done to restore the church's battle front against Satan's onslaughts? And we found that the Apostle Paul gives us the answer in the very next verses of Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse six:

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. 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. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:6-10)

Last time we took note of the fact that we find four things that the true Church of Jesus Christ must do in order to restore the broken battle front, in order to get the soldiers of the army of the Lord back into their positions for battle, and back to the great work of maintaining a solid and fortified front against the enemy. Those four things were these, and they apply to every Christian individually, and they apply to the church as a body of believers, and as the army of the Lord.

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First, we are to walk an enlightened walk – Colossians chapter two, verse six: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

Second, we are to grow upon a firm foundation – verse 7: “rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.”

Third, we are to trust in a complete Savior – verse 9: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

And fourth, we are to rest in a complete salvation – verse 10: “and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

### **Imperative Number One: An Enlightened Walk**

Today I want to focus our attention on the first of these. We are to walk an enlightened walk – “As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

The first thing I want to point out is the connection between the imperative that Paul is stating here, the imperative of walking in Christ, and the verse that precedes it. Paul says, “*As you therefore* received Christ.”

“As you therefore received Christ.” These connecting words take us back to verse five, where Paul commends the Colossian believers for the steadfastness of their faith. These people had a faith in Christ that presented a united battle front against the world. It was a faith born out of spiritual conflict. Let me remind you

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that back at the end of Colossians chapter one, we saw that this is Paul’s great emphasis.

Paul says, chapter one, beginning at verse twenty-eight, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor” – Paul says, I labor to do this one thing, I labor to the point of absolute exhaustion – “striving”, he says – that is, contending against spiritual adversaries – “striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”

And then in the very next verse, the first verse of chapter two, he says, “I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you.” Paul says, “I am engaged in a spiritual struggle on your behalf, teaching you the truth about Christ, and interceding before God in prayer on your behalf, because it is so vitally important for you to maintain this united battle front against the enemies of your souls, against those who want to take you away from the truth, and make you captive to worldly wisdom and false religion instead of the wisdom of God in Christ.

Secondly, notice that in verse five Paul says to them, “As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” What does it mean to receive Christ Jesus the Lord? Well in the original language, what Paul says is literally this: “as you therefore received the Christ, even Jesus the Lord.” What Paul is emphasizing here is that the Colossian believers had received the authentic Christ.

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They had received the true Christ, Jesus the Lord. The preeminent Christ that Paul describes in such magnificent words in Colossians chapter one.

The Colossian believers had not received the false Christ of the Gnostics and the Judaizers who were exerting such an evil influence in Colosse and the surrounding region. They had not received a false Christ of worldly philosophy. They had not received the false Christ of legalism. They had not received a false Christ who is the invention of man-made doctrines. They had received the genuine Christ, even Jesus the Lord.

And how had they received Him? The word that is used in the original language means that they had received Him by instruction. They had received the true Christ because they had been taught the true doctrine of Christ, and that doctrine is found in only one place, in the pages of the Word of God.

They had received the true Christ that Paul describes in Colossians chapter one. The One who is the very image of the invisible God. The One to whom the Father has given a kingdom. The One who redeemed us by His own blood. The One who is eternal, who had no beginning, who existed before anything else existed. The One who is the creator and the sustainer of the entire universe. The One who is the Head of the true Church. You cannot separate the person of Christ from the doctrine of Christ. As soon as you do that, you begin to invent your own "Christ".

Dear friends, this is where we must begin restoring the battle front. We must restore sound teaching about the preeminent Lord Jesus Christ. We must expose

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counterfeit “Christs” wherever and whenever we find them. The one sure way to expose the counterfeit is to hold up the genuine article in plain view for all the world to see – the Christ who is the Holy God Himself. The Christ who is the sinless Savior. The Christ who is the only Way to heaven. The Christ who is the coming Judge.

Not the false Christ of much of postmodern Evangelicalism, the “Christ” who is a mere moral example. Not the false “Christ” who is the life-mentor presented in the prosperity “gospel.” Not the false “Christ” who would be, as I’ve heard some misguided Evangelical church members put it, someone who would be a good drinking buddy on Saturday night. That kind of blasphemy is all too common among Evangelicals today.

Every preacher and teacher of the Word must hold up the authentic Christ. Every Christian who is truly worthy of the name must seek to learn more and more of the authentic Christ, and to become more and more like Him.

And so Paul says, “As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord” – as you received the genuine Christ and not a counterfeit – “so walk in Him.” Walk in Him in the same way you received Him – with the same steadfastness, the same united front, the same determination, the same battle array, the same “don’t leave your post” way of thinking. Walk in Christ in the same way you received Christ – by instruction in the person and work of the authentic Christ.

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“Walk in Him.” In other words, conduct your lives in Him. Conduct your lives in Christ, in that full and accurate knowledge of Christ that comes through the study of His Word. Walk an enlightened walk. “Walk in the light,” John says, “as He is in the light” – First John 1:7. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” – John 1:4.

Individual Christian, conduct every aspect of your life in view of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. Seek to become more and more like Christ by the work of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Christian church, conduct every aspect of your work and ministry in view of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, and in view of the things that He has commanded His church to do. These are things that the unbelieving world cannot do. Christian church, don't waste your time doing things the world can do. Do what Christ commanded you to do. Tell the world about Him, in all His majesty and glory and power and preeminence.

### **The Need for Genuine Revival**

Now let's come back to our main point. How does this apply to the restoration of the Christian church's battle front against the world in our time?

Let me begin by saying this. There are many people in the Evangelical church in our day who need to be saved. Some of them are young, some of them are old, some came into the church for the first time last week, and some have been in the

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church their entire lives. But they have never truly "received Christ Jesus the Lord." And often that is because they have never been confronted with the message of the genuine Christ. The man in the pulpit hasn't been preaching the true Christ. Many of these people have received a false "Christ" but not the genuine Christ of the Bible.

Dear friends, we need revival in our day. And true revival is not a series of meetings that are designed to get people emotionally stirred up. True revival is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). True revival is purely and only a work of the Spirit of God.

And as you look at the pages of church history, you will see a consistent pattern. You will find that one of the first signs of any revival is that people in the church who thought they were saved realize they aren't saved, and they come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. They realize they haven't been walking in Christ because they have never before received Christ.

You can't be a true soldier of Jesus Christ, you can't take your position on the battle front against the enemies of the truth, unless you cease being an enemy of the truth yourself. Paul told the Colossian believers in chapter one, verse twenty-one that before they came to true faith in the true Christ they were exactly that – "And you," he says, "who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death,

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to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" (Colossians 1:21-22).

Secondly, let me put this before you. When true revival comes in the church, when God's Spirit moves in that way, it has the effect of changing Christians' lives. It has the effect of changing Christians' thinking. The Word of God once again has its rightful place as the church's sole authority. The church submits to the authority of the Bible.

And just as importantly, the church in times of revival rejects all other authorities – worldly philosophy, legalism, man-made doctrines, anything else you can name – it rejects all of these things as illegitimate authorities. Christ once again has His rightful place as Head of the church. There is no other man instead of Christ. There are no other doctrines instead of Christ's pure doctrine.

Let me remind you of the words that our announcer says at the beginning of every one of our broadcasts. He says this: "The Church of Jesus Christ must be the Scripture-driven church. God's inspired, inerrant Word must be our sole authority, and our infallible critic, in every area of life and ministry." That is what it means to "walk in Him."

"As you therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." Walk an enlightened walk. You are no longer to walk in darkness. He has delivered you from the power of darkness. Don't give any ground to the forces of darkness in

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your own life or in the life of the church. Walk in the light of the glorious knowledge of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the first step in restoring the battle front that has broken down. That is the first step for every believer in Christ, as a true soldier of Christ. Know the One who is the Captain of your salvation. Know the One who stands at the head of the army. Fill yourself with the knowledge of Him.

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