

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "Trusting in a Complete Savior" (Colossians 2:9-10)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 5/29/2011

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Introduction

For some time now we have been focusing on a section of Paul's epistle to the Colossians that addresses critical issues that we are facing in our time. This passage is found in Colossians chapter two, verses four through ten. As we begin today let me read those verses for you once again. And if you are able to do so as you are listening, I trust you will follow along in your own copy of God's Word. Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse four. The Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes this.

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 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. 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.

Now in this series of messages, we have seen that the Apostle Paul is telling us about Satan's ever-present triple threat to the church. Satan always seeks to use three main weapons, in order to undermine the individual believer's spiritual life

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and testimony, and in order to undermine the testimony and the message of the church as a body. Those three weapons, as we find them in Colossian chapter two, are worldly philosophy, legalism, and man-made doctrines. We have seen that the Devil is always trying to infiltrate these three things into our lives and into our thinking, and into the message of the church. And he does it in many different ways, and often in very subtle ways.

Five Imperatives

We have seen that in Colossians chapter two, the Apostle Paul is telling us how to deal with these threats. He does this by giving us a series of five imperatives. We have already studied three of them, and we are focusing now on number four.

The first imperative, in verse six of Colossians chapter two, is this: Paul tells us that in order to meet Satan's triple threat we must walk an enlightened walk: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

Secondly, in verse seven, Paul tells us that in order to meet Satan's triple threat we must grow upon a firm foundation: "rooted and built up in [Christ] and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Thirdly, in verse eight, Paul tells us that we must beware of the enemy's forces and the enemy's tactics. "Beware," Paul says, "lest anyone cheat you through

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philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Fourthly, in verses nine and ten, Paul gives us a strong declarative statement that puts before us yet another imperative. He says that “in Him [that is, in Jesus Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you [believers] are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” And so the fourth imperative is that we must trust in a complete Savior – the One in whom “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” the One who “is the head of all principality and power.”

The fifth and final imperative, which we also find in Paul’ strong declarative statement about Jesus in verses nine and ten, is this: We must rest in a complete salvation, because we as believers are complete in Christ.

The Head of All Principality and Power

Now today I want to focus our attention on the second aspect of imperative number four. We are to trust in a complete Savior – and Paul gives us the two great reasons why we can trust in Jesus Christ as the complete Savior.

Reason number one is the fact that in Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a body. We have already looked at this in some detail. And this, of course, is one of the main points of Satan’s attack in all times, and it has never been more the case than in our time. The cults, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses,

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the Mormons, and so many others all deny that Jesus Christ is fully God, or that He is God at all.

Islam also does that. Islam says that Jesus was merely a prophet but that Mohammed is the great prophet. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you study Islam objectively, you will see what kind of a man Mohammed really was. He was no prophet, and he was no holy man. He was a wretched and vile sinner, a violent man. To put Mohammed in a position above Jesus Christ is the worst kind of blasphemy. Mohammed saves no one. In Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a body. He is the complete Savior because that is true.

But Paul also gives us a second great reason why we must trust in Jesus Christ as the complete Savior, and stand in Jesus Christ against the attacks of Satan. And that second reason is at the end of verse ten: Jesus Christ is "the head of all principality and power." What does Paul mean by this? Well this is yet another case where the words in the original language are rich in the depth of their meaning. And they tell us three things in particular about the Lord Jesus Christ:

First, this phrase "the head of all principality and power" denotes the fact that Jesus Christ, God the Son, the Second Person of the Godhead, existed before any other power or authority. He is "the head of all principality and power." Paul has already spoken of this in Colossian chapter one, verse fifteen. He says that Jesus Christ "is the firstborn over all creation" – literally, the one who existed before all creation. And in chapter one, verse seventeen Paul says that Jesus is "before all

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things" – and the word denotes that He is not only before all things in time, He is also before all things in majesty; He is before all things in importance; He is before all things in authority. So the phrase "the head of all principality and power" denotes the fact, first of all, that Jesus Christ existed before any other power or authority.

Secondly, this phrase denotes the fact that the Christ who existed before all other power and authority is the One who created all other power and authority. We see this also back in chapter one, at verse sixteen: "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. All things were created through Him, and for Him."

Notice here how Paul, as he does so often, piles up the words to drive home his point, to make sure there is no room for doubt or misunderstanding about what he means. Jesus Christ created all other power and authority. It doesn't matter whether it is in the heavenly realms or here on earth. It doesn't matter whether it is a power or authority that is visible in the physical realm, or invisible in the spiritual realm. It doesn't matter of what kind or category the power or authority is – thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. All power and authority in all kinds and in all places was made by and for the Lord Jesus Christ. And He has ultimate power and authority over all of these things by right of creatorship. So this phrase "head of all principality and power" denotes the fact, first of all, that Jesus Christ

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existed before any other authority or power, and secondly, that He created all the other authorities and powers.

And then thirdly, this phrase also denotes the fact that Jesus Christ exercises supreme authority over "all principality and power." First Peter chapter three, verse twenty-two declares to us that Jesus Christ "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

And that is what Paul means in Colossians chapter one, verse sixteen when he says that all of these things were created "for Him" – for Jesus Christ. Literally the words "for Him" mean "toward Him," and the underlying force of those words is the fact that all things were created "with a *view* toward Him" – all of it ultimately pointing toward Him, all of it underlying and underscoring the fact that Jesus Christ existed before all other authority and power, that He created all other authority and power, and that He controls all other authority and power – it is all subject to Him.

Dear friend, let me sum up all of this as the Word of God sums it up. It only takes four words: "Jesus Christ is Lord." Jesus Christ is Lord. Dear friend, a Jesus who is not the Lord of all is not the true Christ. And this is why Paul is so clear in Romans chapter ten when he tells us how to be saved. Romans chapter ten, verses nine and ten: "If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus" – literally, confess that Jesus is Lord – "and believe in your heart that God raised Him from

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the dead, you shall be saved." And then Paul says, Romans chapter ten, verse twelve: "For the same *Lord over all* is rich unto all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the *name of the Lord* shall be saved'."

The Deadly Deception of "Lordship Salvation"

Now, dear friends, I want to be very careful here, and I hope you will listen carefully to what I am about to say. In our generation there has been a great debate over what is called "lordship salvation." "Lordship salvation" has become a popular teaching in some circles. But let me tell you that what I am preaching today is not what some men call "lordship salvation."

The advocates of "lordship salvation" are teaching a way of salvation that is not the Biblical way of salvation. What these men teach is that Paul's declaration to the Philippian jailer – Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" – they teach that this is not enough. They teach that you must additionally take up your cross and follow Christ, *in order to be saved*. Let me repeat that. They teach that you must additionally take up your cross and follow Christ, *in order to be saved*. That is the essence of "lordship salvation."

The men who teach "lordship salvation" step over a line that the Bible says we must never step over. And when they cross that line, inevitably they end up preaching what amounts to salvation by faith-plus-works. And that is a teaching that the Bible condemns. The Apostle Paul condemns it in no uncertain terms in Galatians chapter one.

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Now I understand that these men who teach "lordship salvation" have a zeal to preach against the deception of "easy believism". "Easy believism" is also a false teaching. It is the false teaching that a person can be saved merely by repeating a formula of words, apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit. But the problem is that the men who teach "lordship salvation" go too far in the other direction. They say that *in order to be saved*, you must take up your cross and follow Christ.

Now when they say that, these men are breaking down a vital distinction that the Bible makes absolutely clear, and that is the vital distinction between justification and sanctification. Justification by faith is just that — it is what takes place when a sinner exercises genuine, empty-handed saving faith in Christ, brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is the *evidence* of that saving faith. It is the changed life of the believer. We don't change our lives *in order* to believe on Christ. God changes our lives *because* we have believed on Christ.

Now this is not a theological technicality. I am talking about confusion on the essence of the Gospel. The men who teach "lordship salvation" mingle these two elements of Bible doctrine that must always be kept distinct, justification and sanctification. Those two things must always be preached in proper relationship to one another.

We aren't saved by being sanctified. God sanctifies us because we are saved. The Bible makes a clear line of demarcation between those two things. And the Bible warns Gospel preachers in the strongest terms, never to confuse people about those

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two things. "Lordship salvation" is just such confusion. "Lordship salvation" says you must do a work *in order to be saved*, that you must be sanctified in order to be saved, and that is as wrong as wrong can be. The "lordship salvation" teaching is one of the manifestations of Satan's triple threat in the church today. It is a man-made doctrine that is rooted in legalism.

What It Means to Confess Christ as Lord

Now that being said, let me bring us back to focus on what the Bible says. Dear friend, here is the true Biblical picture: In order to be saved, you must put your faith and trust in the *Lord* Jesus Christ. You must put your faith and trust in the complete Savior, the One in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a body, the One who is also the head of all principality and power.

I have heard many preachers tell people that they need to "*make* Jesus Lord of your life." Dear friends, that is an entirely wrong way to say it. We do not *make* Jesus Lord. He *is* Lord. He always has been. He always will be. Salvation involves *recognition* of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Salvation involves repentance. When Jesus was here on earth He told people to "repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). When Jesus met the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection, Luke tells us that Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from

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the dead the third day," – notice – "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem' " (Luke 24:45-47).

And what did Peter preach to the people in Acts chapter three? "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

What does this word "repent" mean? It means to change your mind about sin. What does it mean to "confess" your sins? It means, literally, to see your sin as God sees your sin. It means to see your sin as Christ sees your sin. It means to submit your will to God's will regarding your sins. It means to recognize that Christ's way of looking at your sin is the only way to look at your sin.

Dear friend, in order to be saved you must bow your knee to the lordship of Jesus Christ in the matter of how you view your sins. You must understand this, as we read in Isaiah chapter fifty-nine:

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. (Isaiah 59:1-4)

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And so you must confess your sins and repent of your sins, as we read a few verses later in Isaiah 59. We must say this to the Lord:

For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. (Isaiah 59:12-13)

Dear friend, in order to be saved you must recognize your sins are sins against the One who is "the head of all principality and power" – and "all principality and power" includes you and me. We too are part of that created order of authorities. We each have a will of our own. But we must recognize that Christ existed before we did. We must recognize that Christ created us. And we must recognize that because these things are true, Christ has the right to exercise authority over us.

And the exercise of that authority begins with His exercise of authority over the question of the nature of our sins, and how our sins are to be dealt with. And in His Divine authority, Christ alone – the One who is "head over all principality and power" – He has made provision for the blotting out of our sins by coming into this world, laying aside the prerogatives of heaven, taking on the form of a servant, becoming "all the fullness of the Godhead in a body," and going to the cross to make the propitiation for our sins with His own blood.

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Dear friend, are you trusting in that complete Savior today? Is that the message your church is preaching? In order to put up, and keep up, a solid battle front against Satan's attacks through the weapons of worldly philosophy, legalism, and man-made doctrines, we must trust in a complete Savior, the only complete Savior.

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