

Good morning. I thought there might be a little video up there, but I don't see it yet. So we're just going to ignore the video. You remember what it looks like? It goes from wintertime to summertime.

It's very promising and hopeful today. Look what we have outside of the windows. We don't need a video. We have sunshine and blue skies. Isn't that amazing?

Can we just be thankful for that for just a moment?

I mean, that was moderately thankful. I. I hope God gets the idea. Maybe you can work on that the rest of the day. When I was growing up, one of the favorite places for us to play was in the barn.

The barn was filled with hay bales. Nowadays, farmers don't even take time with the little square bales. But back in the day, that's. We were poor. That's all we had.

We had a square baler, and we had these hay bales, and we stack them up in the barn. And we spent summers just building tunnels and houses and all kinds of stuff with those square bales. Anyone know what I'm talking about when I say that? Yes. How many of you guys were also barn dwellers when you were youth?

Yeah, we loved that. Always put me in mind when we're building those of the little pig, remember him who was sent out along with his two brothers to make a life for himself. And so he builds a house, and he builds it out of straw, out of and those hay bales. And of course, what happens? The big bad wolf has his eye on the pig, and he goes to the pig and he says, hey, open up, pig, I want to come in.

And the pig says, not by the hair of my chinny chin chin. The wolf says, well, I'm going to huff and puff until I blow it in. And so he huffs and puffs, and what happens? The house blows apart. The second little pig, of course, what's he build his house with?

Sticks. He goes to find some sticks. I mean, these are horrible building materials. Guys, if you're thinking about building a home, do not take instruction from the first two little pigs. Of course, what happens?

The same thing. Huff and puff, and the house blows up. And now this little pig, along with his brother, they're running for their lives. And they go to their third brother, who has had the foresight and maybe the wisdom to build his house out of something besides straw and sticks. He builds his house out of bricks.

And when the wolf gets there and says, open the door, and those three little pigs are like, okay, we got this. Well, the one does. The two others are traumatized from their previous experiences. Says now, by the hair of my chinny chin chin, the wolf says, I'm going to huff and puff and blow your house in. And what's he do?

He huffs and he puffs and he huffs and he puffs and the little brick house stands firm as followers of Jesus. We live in a world that's full of wolves knocking out the door, huffing and puffing. Let me in. Let me in, let me in. We've got failing systems.

We got our kids. I love that prayer time with Darren, just praying for our kids who are living in a very difficult world right now. It's got a scary future. We have some scary futures in front of us. Increasing hostility to what we would consider biblical morality, new beliefs, rejection of old truths.

Our world can feel like those pig houses, shaky and insecure like the wolf is at the door. Let me in, let me in, let me in. We can say not by the hair of our chinny chin chin, if we can muster that much, because most of us are traumatized by our Previous experience where our houses were built on something very insecure. And when the winds and the storms came, we saw our lives implode or explode. But Jesus says, Paul says in Colossians that Jesus is at work in us and he is redeeming all of those things.

We do not live in our traumatic past anymore. We now live in this new place where God is using even the huffing and puffing to build in us something new. He is redeeming. That's the word the Bible used to talk about, taking things that are, on the face of it, difficult and maybe even bad, and God doing something good and eternal with it. This is sort of a redemptive act here.

So Paul says to the Colossians, we're going to get into it just a little bit. He goes, you need to keep your focus on the right place, not on Lego Jesus, but on real Jesus. And if you keep your focus on him, you don't falter, you don't waver in keeping your focus on him, then you're going to ride the huffing and puffing out. It is going to have no effect on you. So if you've got your bibles and you want to turn to Colossians, I would encourage you to open up your bible app if you've got that, and we're going to dig in.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word this morning. We're thankful for Paul, who in all of his stuff remained faithful to the call that you placed on his life. And he used that call, you used him in that call to encourage not just the church at Colossae, not just the church at Corinth, but the church at Bedford. And today we are the recipients of your grace. In Paul, you redeemed Paul's life so that we might have life here too.

What an amazing way you work. As we open your word, instruct us from it in Jesus name, amen. So if you've not been with us for the last couple of weeks, you've missed a lot. I'm not going to say you've not missed anything. You have missed a lot.

But I'm going to catch up just real quick. And this is synopsis. So, Paul, first of all, in chapter one of Colossians, greets the Colossians. He's never met these guys. They're strangers to him, but he greets them and he prays for them.

This beautiful, beautiful prayer. He says, may you bear fruit in every good work as you grow in the knowledge of God through Christ. This is an amazing prayer. It's a prayer that all of us need to lean into as we pray for one another. Then he unpacks this beautiful picture of Jesus, who this Christ is that he's praying that they grow into and bear much fruit in.

He says, he's not a lego Jesus, he's not a little guy. He's not just the guy dressed in old fashioned clothes with nice sayings. That's not the Jesus that I'm pointing you to. He says, I'm pointing you to Jesus, the Christ. And christ is a big word here.

It's not a cuss word, it's a cosmic word. And that cosmic word is he is not only the Jesus of Nazareth, but he is the Jesus who was at the beginning. He is the word and the logos of God. In verse 16, it says, for in him, in him all things were created. Everything was created, everything.

There was nothing that exists that was not created by him. Things in heaven, things in earth, things that you can see, things that are visible, things that are invisible, everything, thrones powers, rulers, authorities, presidents, everything runs and was created through him. All things have been created through him and for him. Paul says to the colossians, now, HERE's the deal for US, this is what changes everything for US. This same Christ has redeemed you and all your stuff and brought you into himself in a new way.

And you're part of a new thing, the church. And he is the head over the church. And now Paul says something CRAZY. You with all your stuff and your past and your nonsense and your embarrassing stuff, you now are part of God's plan for eternity, his cosmic plan for the world and the universe and everything he created. He says, christ in you is the hope of glory.

Now, I got a little pushback from that last week because where is Tammy? TAMMY's not here this MORNiNg. But TAMMY said, I just don't know. I've always taught that God DOesn't REally need us. And in one sense she's absolutely right, isn't she?

God can accomplish anything he wants. He doesn't need me or nate or JOBY to do that. However, God has intended to not operate that way. His intention is that he NEeds you. We talked ABOut christ is counting on you as you count on christ.

So christ in you the hope of glory, you matter to the eternal scheme of things. And the Colossians said, that's great, that's great. We love all that. But there's also this crazy stuff happening in our world and there's lots of huffing and puffing going on. And Paul says, listen, if Christ is in you and you are in Christ, then you've got this.

So in the very first verse that we're going to look at today, Colossians chapter two, verses five, we're going to go all the way through ten. You know what? Let's stand up together. Let's read this out. You've been sitting for a little bit.

Rested your eyes, rested your feet and rested your eyes. Maybe if you've closed them. But now open your eyes, stand to your feet and let's read this together. For though I am absent from you

in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is, so then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. And if your bibles are open, that line right there is one I want you to underline. He is the head over every power and authority. And if you need to underline every a couple of times, just so you don't forget it I'm going to encourage you to do that.

You can be seated. Paul begins by saying to the Colossians, yeah, there's huffing and puffing, but you've got this. The outside forces are strong, but you've got this. He says, I wish I could be with you to tell you this face to face, but what I'm hearing from our emissary there, from Colossa is that you guys understand this. It's so encouraging.

Paul says, he says you're disciplined and you're firm of faith. This resolve, and this is our military terms here, if you've ever served in the military, you know what discipline and resolve are. You know how important it is to accomplish the task, the commission that has been given to you. So he says, you're disciplined. And what does that mean?

That means all of you aren't running off on your own direction. You're not all doing your own thing. You're working together as a unit, you're disciplined and you're firm of faith. You're resolved and you're firm of faith. You're keeping your eyes not on the wolf at the door, but you're keeping your eyes on Jesus.

A lot of times we get caught up with the wolf at the door. But Paul says, no, that's not keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus. That's not resolved in your faith. Resolved in your faith is keeping your eyes fixed firmly on Jesus. He goes, because of that, you're doing that.

So keep on living there. He says, just as you received Christ, keep living your life in him. Now, how did you receive Christ? You received Christ by trusting in his grace and resting in his power. It was nothing to do with you, it wasn't your goodness.

Paul makes that clear in other places. Nothing you did, it's all about God's grace and God's power. He received you, he accepted you, he loved you, he brought you in by his grace. And now you are just resting in his power, letting God do what only God can do. So stay there in that place, resting in his grace and trusting in his power.

Trusting in his grace and resting in his power. What's going to happen? You're going to find yourself growing deeper and you're going to go taller, says you're going to be rooted. Your life's going to get very firm and stable. Living in God's grace will get you into a place where you are.

No matter what's going on around you, you're healthy and you're bearing fruit. The psalmist said it this way. He is like a tree planted by streams of living water that yields its fruit in its season. And its leaf does not wither in the summertime. Here it can get pretty dry and the leaves can get kind of crispy.

But Paul says to the Colossians, if you remain resting in his power, trusting in his grace, you're going to look like a tree that's planted by the water. No matter what's going on around in the other areas, that tree that's right there by the source of water is always looking good. It's always doing what it's supposed to do. It's bearing fruit. Its leaves are green.

It's a source of shade and comfort to those around us. And it says, if you're resting in his power, trusting in his grace, that's what your life is going to be like. You're going to be able to weather storms, you're going to be able to weather droughts because of you're rooted in him, so you're going deep. But he says, you're also going up. He uses this architectural term, you're being built up like a building.

He says, if you live in God's grace, if you're right there where you need to be in Jesus, then you're going to be going upwards. You're becoming something that the spirit is building, not just individually. So this is, I think, the world I lived in growing up was. It was all about me. And there was these constant checks on how I was doing with Jesus.

Was I praying enough? Was I in my Bible enough? Was I going to church enough? Was I doing enough good stuff for the neighbors or for the community? And that is absolutely a marker of how we are growing and how we're rooted.

How is our lives personally being exhibited? But Paul doesn't stop there. He says, here's the deal, guys. You've been brought into something more than just you. If you think this is all about you, then the focus is on you.

And you are diminishing Jesus when the focus is all on you. He says, here's the deal. You've been brought into something bigger. You've been brought into this church. Or Peter talks about this.

He says, you are like living stones being built up into a spiritual house of worship. Together, you are being built up. Each of you are stones that's being added to the entire structure. Being raised up, says, this is growing in Christ. Together, you're being made into something stronger and grander and bigger than the individual parts.

By yourself, you're a stone on the ground. Together, you are a magnificent temple of worship to the Holy Spirit.

Staying in this place of God's grace will keep you thankful. He says you're going to be overflowing with gratitude. One of the key markers of maturity in Christ. Let's just say one of the key markers of maturity in general is gratitude. Have you noticed that?

I'm surveying the room to see who's in the room right now. But I will tell you this, that when you were a young kid, you were not as grateful as you are now that you're in your can you just recognize that when we are immature, we think the world exists for our purposes. Anyone remember that time in your life? Hopefully you're not still there. Hopefully you've moved out of that.

But when we are young, we think the world exists for us, and we are shocked when we discover that other people have lives themselves. They have whole stories going on that we know nothing about. And we realize, oh, I'm not the center of the universe. Now. If you still think you are, then you are immature, because the sign of maturity, spiritual maturity, is gratitude.

And Paul says, listen, when you're being rooted in Christ, when you're growing in Christ, the natural byproduct of that is you're going to mature and you're going to be thankful for everything God has done in your life and is doing in your life. Gratitude is an indication of humility, of meekness. And Jesus says that the meek will be the ones who will inherit the earth. Be thankful, because where true thankfulness exists, it always overflows. It builds on itself.

There's a gushingness to gratitude. And Paul says, this is what it means. When we are resting in his power and trusting in his grace, we're going to become so aware of what God has done and is doing, we cannot help but be thankful. Then he says this, see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophies. He says, don't let anyone drag you back to this idea of Jesus.

And we talked about this last fall. Do you remember that sermon series, the Jesus and is the stuff that we tack on as Christians oftentimes to Jesus? So Paul, when he's talking to the Colossians, is dealing with a culture that has both Jews and pagan gentiles sort of running the culture. The Christians are definitely in the minority in this world that Paul is writing to. And so these Christians are living in a world where they're being pressured on one side to observe all sorts of weird dietary laws and religious ceremonies and stuff that they've got to do to make themselves worthy to receive God's grace.

On the other side, they're dealing, I think Alan talked about this. They're dealing with a weird pagan culture that has this weird angelology where they worship angels and they pray to angels and angels give them instruction and wisdom from God. So there's this weird thing about angels going on here. And Paul says, listen, these are hollow and deceptive philosophies. Now, the first one, hollow.

Hollow simply means there's nothing there. So if you remember in, I think it's the Corinthians, Paul talks about to the Corinthians, he goes, you guys are really in an uproar about whether you can eat meat that's been offered in the temple markets that would be used for worship to idols, or you don't touch that stuff. You guys are really, really upset about this and it's causing some tension between you. Paul says, here's what you need to know. They're powerless, so do what you're going to do, but don't make a big deal about it.

And if you can avoid offending people, don't do that. Don't offend people unnecessarily, but those things are powerless. Do or don't do. And Paul says, this is sort of the idea that some of those philosophies are powerless. You want to have a Christmas tree, put up a Christmas tree.

If you think Christmas trees have pagan ancestry, don't put up a Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is powerless, especially if it's a fake one. It just is. So do it or don't do it, but don't give it more power than it actually has. So that's a hollow philosophy.

But there's also the deceptive philosophies that we need to be mindful of. And those are philosophies that take our attention and distract us from Jesus. So this angel thing was a big deal. And Paul says, don't get caught up in that worship of angel stuff. Don't let yourself go down that path.

Because angels serve Jesus, Jesus doesn't serve the angels. Keep your focus on Jesus. Special prayers. I grew up in a church where how you prayed and whether you spoke in tongues or whether you did all this stuff, it really mattered. Like, were you really a Christian?

If you didn't, that's the Jesus and stuff, by the way. And Paul says, don't let them do that to you. Don't let them make you feel less than because you don't celebrate the same things they do. And you don't celebrate it the same way they do. Don't let people look down on you because you don't listen to the same teachers that they do, that you don't go to the same church they do, that you don't take communion the same way they do.

Those things are Jesus ands. And what can end up happening is those little things that are supposed to be just expressions of our worship to God become the thing that we worship. And that he says is deceptive. That pulls our focus from Jesus, and that is deception. Don't do it.

And then he says this thing, he says, listen, in light of the greatness and grandeur of God, in light of the majesty and magnitude of Jesus, those things are so insignificant, not meaningless. But in light of the grandeur of God, you are putting a lot of weight on things that don't really matter for eternity. You got to be careful with this. Of course there's things that will pull us away from Jesus far enough that we are now out of Christ. Don't let those things pull you out of Christ.

Instead he says, focus on Jesus. The interesting thing about this letter is I don't know how you guys write letters. When I write letters, I sort of just say, oh, who am I going to write to? And I say, dear Paula. And I start writing, hey, Paula, how's the day going?

Just want to check in and see how John's doing after his surgery. Hope everything's going all right. And my letters sort of meander. And I think of things and I add those things in and then I go back to something. So Paul's got a pretty good handle on how to write a letter.

This is something that they do. And so Paul now goes back to something that he alluded to earlier in the letter, in chapter one. So he says this because Jesus is complete, you are complete

as well. He talks about this idea of fullness, and so he says, in Christ, you have been brought to fullness. Now remember, Darren alluded to this.

The Jesus that Paul is pointing them to is not a little Jesus. He's not a Lego Jesus. He is Christ. The fullness of God. The fullness of God, everything about God.

You may have done this, but I'm off right now. Sometimes we talk about God and Jesus as if they are two different things. That is not good theology and that's not good language. God. This is a little discussion on the Trinity.

God is God inside this. And again, do not hold my feet to the fire on my description. The Trinity is something that I am still unpacking. But the Godhead is made up. The father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Together they make up God. And sometimes we speak as if God is God. And then Jesus is sort of his right hand man. You know what I mean? And Paul says, that is not.

That's a lego Jesus. Lego. Jesus is God's right hand man. That's not Jesus. Jesus is God.

The fullness of God dwells in him bodily. Paul says, don't. This God and Jesus thing, that's bad theology. Jesus is fully God, the Father is fully God, the Holy spirit, fully God. And this Jesus, whose spirit now lives in you.

The fullness of Christ is now in you and you are in him. Remember, this is the Christ who in him and through him and by him, everything came into existence. Everything came into existence. He is the logos, the wisdom and the word of God. He is the voice of authority over everything.

Think of something. Try to think of something that Jesus is not the authority over. I'm waiting. Tell me, anyone. The Bible says Jesus is a voice of authority over everything.

Every earthly power, every earthly authority. Now what is that? That's people, that's princes, that's kings, that's presidents, that's pastors, that's you. He is the authority over every tradition and custom and belief system. If it doesn't align with Jesus, then he still has authority over it.

Over government systems, over economic systems, over judicial systems. Jesus is the authority over all of it. All of it.

Things seen and unseen, angels, demons, the force. Jesus is over all of that. He is above all. And everything, everything bows to Jesus, if not now, soon. And we have been brought into this.

We're part of Christ. We live inside sort of the blessing and the protection and the authority of Jesus over all these outside forces. They can huff and they can puff, but we are inside Christ.

Not by the chin of my chinny chin chan. Is it going to affect my heart or my mind or my attitude? They have no hold. They have no control over me except what I release and give to them. You open the door, you let it in.

Okay, there you go. Welcome, Wolf. But if you say, no, no, I am in Christ, I will not give my attention, my thought, my energy, my concern, my anxiety to that out there because Christ is overall, Christ is the head of everything. If it's a good thing, Christ is the authority over it. If it's a bad thing, guess what?

Christ is the authority over it. Amen. He is the head over every power and authority, Paul says. And that changes the way I think about life and especially the things that I pray about. Because when Christ is over it all, then I don't have to have Jesus to come in and sort of rescue me from something.

It changes the way I pray about my life. We often pray to be delivered from something when God is the one who delivered us into it. I heard a preacher say that one time and it changed my life. We pray to be delivered from something. When God says, I just delivered you into it, I put you there for a reason.

James says, so God can complete the work he's beginning in us. James, chapter one. Most of us know this verse. If we don't know it by memory, we know it by heart, because it's a hard one. But James says, consider it pure joy, brothers and Sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith, this thing God has delivered you into, is producing good stuff.

It's producing perseverance. And perseverance has got to work its way through you. You got to learn to stick to it so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. So these light, momentary afflictions that we go through, they're training us. God's delivered us into them so that he can train us.

They help us become disciplined and firm in our faith, like those Colossians were. They're part of the redemptive work of God in our lives. And they help us grow our roots deep and build us up into this testimony that the world around can see. Listen, cultural wars. The philosophies of the world are always going to be beating on our door.

They were doing it to the Colossians and they're doing it to us right now. Always. Don't be surprised. Don't be shocked by that. It just is.

It's the world and the world systems don't open the door to it. But you do not need to sit inside Christ and tremble in fear. You don't need to. If you are in Christ, you are secure. Stay there.

Stay in Christ. Don't go out looking for trouble. Don't open the door to the stuff. But stay in Christ and you don't need to worry about it.

When darkness veils his lovely face, what do we do? We rest in his unchanging grace in every high and stormy gale our anchor holds right there behind the veil, within the veil in Christ. Let the world huff and puff. We are living confidently in this place, living stones that God is building among us, built according to God's grace. We're living confidently, trusting in his grace, resting in his power, strong and unshakable in Christ.

Amen. Heavenly Father, this morning, as we share in a time of communion, we recognize this unique and privileged position we have in you, a place of peace and of joy that even when life is difficult, we know you are over it all. Even though we go through times of trial with our physical well being, with our economic well being, we get anxious about our families. We get anxious about our futures. And forgive us, Lord.

Teach us instead to trust in your grace and to rest in your power. Accomplish your purposes in our lives through every means at your disposal. In communion, we recognize that we are not the center of the story you are telling. You are. Thank you for bringing us into it, allowing us to be part of what you're doing, redeeming us for your glory.

Christ in us the hope, the hope of glory.

We thank you for Jesus who has chosen to love us.

Thank you for your grace. Amen.

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