

Topic	Walking with Christ or Thieves and Robbers
Reference	Colossians 2:1-10
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In my life I have happened to walk with both Christ and thieves and it has been a very interesting journey to say the least. The word ‘walk’ is the Greek word ‘apateó’, which means all of the circumstances and activities of life that propel you forward. This encompasses our daily behavior, our friends, our relationships, our activities and so on.

**6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,**

That is a curious phrase to me and I have thought about it for many-many years. When we get saved (born again) there is usually, not perhaps always, an understanding that you can’t save yourself, that you are kind of at the end of your resources and that Holy God in order to be satisfied needs a payment for sin. Most of us have that in our psyche, deeply ingrained it is the fingerprint of God so to speak on human soul, but in the Garden of Eden the human soul, the spirit actually died and became separated from God. So there is some important message in how we receive Christ. The way in which we receive Christ is the same way we are to continue in Christ. Then there is warning in verse 8

**8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.**

So the admonition is to be careful to be watchful and don’t be deceived and let astray or taken captive.

### **Background on the Epistle of Colossians**

Colossae was in Asia Minor. It was in the same area as the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, but this was not a church that Paul had ever visited. In fact Paul had been teaching at Ephesus for about three years and there at Ephesus there was a young man by the name of Epaphras and Epaphras was the guy who actually went back to Colossae and help to organize and start that church and several years later while Paul was in prison therein Rome during his first imprisonment Epaphras returned to him and said, ‘we have some problems that you need to be aware of in the church’ and it was on that occasion that Paul wrote the letter to Colossians which he probably handed to Epaphras who delivered it to the congregation and throughout chapter 1 we see Paul talking about the excellency and the superiority of Christ through all religious traditions and other ways of thinking and he is preaching Christ and in Christ alone, Christ is the creative agent of the universe, Christ who redeems in salvation by the work that he committed on the cross. Then we also see that the church was primarily a church of gentiles, not

very many Jewish members there. Church of Jerusalem was filled with Jewish people obviously but some of these churches in Asia Minor not so much so. And the reason we know this is because of a couple of verses in Colossians and because there is no illusion to some of the Old Testament scriptures really and not much illusion to Jewish practices or religious practices at that time. There is in the verses of chapter 2 verses 18 through 23 or so some talk about what we have come to know as Judaizers, people who are adding to the gospel, adding to what necessary to be saved and we would understand the gospel to be death burial in resurrection of Christ and Christ paid for our sins which satisfy the justice and righteousness of a Holy God and we say in our tradition as Baptist or evangelicals, we say that salvation is in Christ alone through faith alone, but these people were being deceived. The Judaizers kind of pretended they were like Christians or they bought in the sum of what was going on but they wanted to bring these people back to Judaism, so they insisted that the new believers become circumcised. They were adding something to the gospel so to speak to please themselves but certainly not God and they also insisted on giving angels a certain preeminence, holy days, rituals that were traditional to the Jewish faith and Paul was saying none of this really applies. These were the doctrinal problems that they were facing and Paul said here, *Don't let anyone deceive you, don't let anyone carry you away captive with these lies* and he was very emphatic about that.

#### 6 “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him”

How do we receive Jesus into our lives, well that is a good news bad news story and the issue is that the bad news must always proceed the good news. So what is the bad news? The bad news is found in Romans chapter 3 where scripture tells us that *there is none righteous, not even one* and later on in the same chapter it says *there is none that seek after God, no not even one* and so you have heard may be years ago in the States it was very popular to say I found Christ. You did not find Christ, you weren't looking for Christ, Christ found you that is the more accurate scriptural position of what actually took place. Romans 3:23 says, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** In Roman 6:23 it says, *For the wages of sin is death.* That is bad news. The word there means separation and so were forever separated in God first in the Garden of Eden and then later on that cursed pass to all mankind, our spirit died in the Garden of Eden.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 says that *man is a tripartite being.* He is composed of body, soul and spirit and in the Garden of Eden originally all of those aspects of man were working. The body has relationship with the nature and the environment in which we live and the personality it has relationship to other personalities, it is kind of who we are, people can identify us by our personalities but the spirit is something unique. When man was created God said he breath into them the spirit of life and that word breathe is actually the word for spirit or wind, pneumatos. So God breathed into man the spirit of life but at the fall when Satan approached Eve he told her, did God really say that you can't eat of everything that is in the midst of the Garden including that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, did God say that? And we see that even at that time Satan was starting to spin his lies to deceive and to destroy Adam and Eve there in the Garden of Eden and Eve didn't fall for the first lie, she withstood that and was successful, she didn't

partake of the fruit at that time, but then Satan said, you know God doesn't want you to eat that fruit because you will become just like God. He knows that you will become just like God, knowing good and evil and the remarkable thing is God does want us to become just like God but we don't do that on our terms, we don't do that by the methods that we want to select or take or we have a preference for. If we come to God, we have to do it on his terms. Why? Because he is God and he gets to define what the nature of the relationship is with mankind.

So he said to Eve, you won't surely die and God has a problem, he doesn't want you to know good and evil and that was a lie and Eve started thinking about it and it was at that point where Eve began to doubt the loving purpose for God in her own life and we do that sometimes. We begin to think that all the trials that I am going through and struggling with, God doesn't really love me, where is God and yet we know that God is love, the scripture tells us that but we listen to that lie and we begin to doubt God and we begin to be led away captive through the lie.

But we don't stop with the bad news. The good news is that in the last half of Romans 6:23 where it begins the wages of sin is death, it says but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So in addition to Roman 6:23, Roman 5:8 shows *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. John 1:12 and 13 it says, *but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but God*.

First of all, we do not become Children of God by virtue of our family ties that is what it means when it says not of blood. We are not born of a natural family. You cannot become a Christian simply because your parents are Christian. I have heard other say, 'of course I am a Christian, I live in the US this is a Christian nation'. That is not how you become a Christian, it is not how you receive Christ. Second it says, it is also not of the will of the flesh and by that it means I cannot live a spirit filled life or be reconciled to God simply because I choose out of the force of my will or my self determination to live a righteous life that is not how we become Christians. Some of us we have our confidence in the wrong thing and it goes more to the point of after you've become a Christian and you are walking with Christ and you are continuing with Christ. So I can't shed my own selfish nature strictly by resolve and will powers. The matter of fact that the more that I try it seems that the more I am challenged by my own sinful nature and even when I do seem to get on top of things and start living a righteous life if I do that through the power of the flesh then God is not satisfied and ultimately I am unhappy as well.

Last, it says it is not by the will of man. So someone else cannot determine my salvation for me. Your parents can't make you say it. They can pray for you, they can lead you and guide you but salvation is a personal individual experience and for you to be saved you have to be saved personally and individually. Nor can a husband or a wife cause you to get saved. They might be used by God in the process but if you are saved it is not by the will of man, it is by the will of God and it is by the power of God. So I can't possess the divine nature except and apart from the work and the grace of God. We are told in 2-Cor 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who*

*knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* So salvation is all of God, it originates with God, it continues with God and it ends with God, it is not a work of the flesh. I only become a son of God by receiving Jesus Christ. In verse 12 it says, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* He is the one who gives me the authority or the power to become a child of God. He became what I was so that I could become what He is. He took my sin; in exchange he reconciles me to God. He came as the son of man to make me a son of God.

So what happens when we really get saved, well a couple of things. In Acts 20 and 21 Paul was preaching from house to house in Jerusalem not long after the Pentecost and the moving of the Holy Spirit, all in very short order but listen to what he said. He went from house to house preaching. He said, *how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So repentance means a change of mind. It doesn't only mean a change of mind by a confrontation of truth it means that truth turns me around and I start walking in a different way. It changes my behavior that is repentance, but some of us think we can repent on our own and that is the work of the flesh, you can be sorry for your sins, that all originates again with God. When God opens your mind through the Holy Spirit when he begins to illuminate and show you the truth of the word, the truth of circumstance then God has the opportunity to move in to your life. If you will deal with that truth, if you will deal with that confrontation by God honestly, the only thing that really a lost man can do is to approach God honestly, in sincerity and in humility, but even God has to give that grace to a lost person. So Romans 2:4 tells us that the goodness of God leads man to repentance. We have heard the bad news, but you know what is so remarkable about God, God gives us space to repentance. He never gives up on us.

There are lots of different kinds of flesh, there is big flesh and small flesh, there is intelligent flesh and somewhat stupid flesh, there is flesh that is attractive and appealing on a personal level as you relate to them and there is flesh which we find difficult and hard to deal with but it is all flesh and Nicodemus was talking to Jesus in John chapter 3 and Jesus said, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.*

So salvation is a work not of the flesh, we are born of the flesh by blood and by water in this particular verse, but when we are born of the spirit, we are born from above and that spirit of man which died in the Garden of Eden that is what needs to be regenerated to come alive again to God, so man can be whole and reconciled in his entirety to God. So the spiritual birth is something that we cannot avoid if we want to receive Christ. We don't receive Christ just by mental assent where we understand and where we know the facts but we receive Christ when we actually repent, when we are confronted with the fact of our sin, the helplessness of anything to do to save ourselves. God says, I prepared a propitiation or a substitutionary death on the part of

Christ to pay your sin debt so that you could be right again. When you begin to understand what God has done for you, it results in the change of mind and the change of your walk.

How do we walk or continue in Christ?

The scripture says, just as you received Him. Most of us who are saved we will say it is a work of God, it is not from man, there is nothing I can do to save myself I get it, but then we turn around and say the way that we continue to please God, the way that we continue to walk with God is by a list of dos and don'ts, by our own performance, by our own behavior and when we do the things on a good list we feel close to God, but when we do the things that we shouldn't do on the bad list then feel bad about ourselves and we feel distant from God, that is a lie. The scripture says as you receive Jesus so walk in Him.

How do you continue that walk in Christ?

You continue it in faith. 2-Cor 5:7 says, *for we walk by faith not by sight.* You continue in Christ; you walk with Christ in obedience. 1-John 2:3-6 says, *By this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.* That is how we can know that we know him but it is not how we become Christian. *4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

So there is the admonition to obey the Lord in all things. Micah (KJV) 6:8 says *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* So we have to walk in humility. When you got saved, you didn't come to God and say, God look what you got here, you have got a very talented person, I have got all these potential incapability, you really need me on your team that is not how it works and if you think that you are going to please God after you are saved by saying God I went to Bible college, I tithe, I pray, I attend church regularly, aren't you pleased with me. No, he is not pleased with you because you do those things. God is pleased with his son Jesus Christ. When Jesus was baptized by John he said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. When you stand before God at the judgment day the question we are going to deal with is what did you do with my son. Did you become a believer, did you accept his death, burial and resurrection and exchange for your imputed righteousness, the righteousness that comes from God by that act. If you did that then you have a home in heaven.

When I was led away by the lie of Satan and I spent 30 years making a living for my family, I told myself, my wife is really a better Christian than I am, she will be a better influence on the boys than I will. I made a quite good living but that was a lie of Satan. I was pursuing success by human standards which is in the States; a big house, a big car and plenty of money in the bank and I did that for 30 years, now I didn't completely walk away from Christ and abandoned the faith and start womanizing and drinking and partying as the phrase goes, I was still by everybody

that you mean my business a very dedicated Christian, but the power of God did not rest on my life because I wasn't doing what I was supposed to be doing and even as I say that I realized of course that God is in control that he is sovereign. The scripture says, *the steps of a righteous man are ordered of the Lord* and again it says in another place *that a man plans his ways but the Lord direct his steps*. The scripture says that the calling of God is without repentance, he does not change his mind. Once he makes on your call then He intends to complete that or see you complete it.

Now the second verse that we were talking about is Colossians 2:8

**8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.**

In King James version 'spoil' means to take as bounty or booty in a war in a situation like that. So who is taking you, spoiling you, robbing you and doing how. Through philosophy and vain deceit. So actually the one who is taking us the robber is Satan himself. The scripture tells us in John 8:44 that *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires...*

It is very common for people to say, we are all trying to go to the same place, heaven, and God is a God who loves and he is just going to take us all to heaven. He is going to weigh the good and the bad, God is the father of all. This is another lie. That is just not true. In that verse he was talking to the Pharisees, religious people, Jewish people, people who were the identified people of God in that day and he called them children of the devil. *Your father is the devil and you will do the will of your father and his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and he does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks of his own character for he is a liar and a father of it.* Not only was he lying in the Garden of Eden but there is in Isaiah chapter 14 even before creation Satan Lucifer says, *I will exalt my throne about the most high God.*

Lucifer had a problem, he was jealous of the glory of God, but when he looked at God and saw the glory of God he was actually looking at Jesus. The Bible tells us in John 1:14

***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

So Satan's agenda has always been to murder or assassinate the character and the reputation of Christ, to make it of no effect and the method in which he does that is the lie. So we have to ask ourselves, how do these lies take place? Well it tells us here right through philosophy, which simply means it is a world view of how we see things, it is the wisdom by which we figure out the world and some people would be led astray by these empty philosophies. These philosophies are; I don't need to do anything with Christ now, I have got plenty of time. We are not promised tomorrow. We have to do business with God when we can, we are not promised about

tomorrow. *If you hear the voice of God, do not harden your heart as in the day of rebellion he told some people in the book of Hebrews.*

2-Cor 6:2, *For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

If you are here this morning and you are relying on something other than the work of Christ on the cross, the shed blood which satisfies God's righteousness. If you are relying on your works, your intelligence, your wealth, your charity or your benevolence to get you into heaven, I have got to tell you that is not going to work. If you can't hear the voice of God speaking to you in your heart or your mind and convincing you of the truth which he is the truth, then you are going to be lost.

When Paul wrote these words about being deceived and led astray he was writing to Christians. These people knew the Lord, they walked with the Lord but somehow or another just a little bit started getting added to the story of the gospel, like you need to be circumcised, you need to keep holy days, you need to do this and that and by adding to the gospel they just basically were led astray and they were robbed of their freedom of Christ and that is one of the most powerful tool as we have as Christians. John 6 says *If the son makes you free you shall be free indeed and if you know the truth, the truth will set you free.*

Jesus is the truth and so we have to careful not to listen to the devil's lies. It also says in the same verse 2:8 *vain deceit can lead us astray* and some of those areas of vain deceit are hedonism, which means I am going to do my own thing. I am a self-made individual, don't need God, religions are crutch and the Bible says and warns us in Luke 12:20 *But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'*

This guy was very wealthy. He built barns and enlarged them. He was massing at great fortune and God called him a fool and he said, whose were those things be when I require your soul tonight.

Moral superiority is another one, I am not really like the others, I am a good person. I use to work in the 1980s going to school at a place that manufacture railroad tracks for the trains, big heavy steel pieces, some of them 10 to 20 thousand pounds, it was heavy stuff and beside me were two brothers, Philip and David. We worked together for a couple of years' side by side and one February night in 1980 Philip didn't show up for work and I thought it was strange and then he didn't show up for another two nights. I asked David, where is Philip? He said, he is gotten in trouble. Then I asked him what he means. He said, he has killed a man. This guy was really quiet, he was not what I thought was a partier or anything like that, and he was very shy. I asked David about the incident, David told me that we were raised in a Baptist church, our father was the chairman of deacons in a Baptist church in Memphis, Tennessee and both of us became Christians when we were young. But he said along about the time of 12 or 13 we really began to

resent the restrictions that our religion was putting on us and we kind of started hanging out with people who didn't have the same views and values. We started smoking pot and drinking and Philip basically got stoned one night smoking pot and he had remembered that he had given a pistol to a friend and he thought I have got to get that back and so he went over to his friend's house and he got his pistol and for whatever reason he kept that with him. Because he has been smoking pot he was hungry and he went into a convenient store and he was walking up and down the aisle looking for something to eat and he didn't know it but at the time the cashier was watching him and he noticed the gun in his back and so when Philip got his toasted pastries and took those to the counter to pay the clerk thought he was going to be robbed so he grabbed the baseball bat from underneath the counter and was prepared to defend himself and swing it at Philip and Philip without thinking pulled that gun, stuck it in his head and shot and killed him. Philip ran and in the running he stole his girlfriend's car and to keep himself moving, fleeing from the police he committed four other armed robberies and he was caught about three to four weeks later, returned to Memphis and I saw him in the city jail and I said Philip 'how did this come to be?' He said, 'I turned my back on God. I started listening to the lies of my friends and my life is ruined.' He was convicted of five life sentences and he is still in prison to this day.

If Philip was saved when he was a young boy as he claims to have been, he is still saved today. He will find a home in heaven, but he has lost his freedom, which is one of the most powerful things we can have as God's people, particularly our freedom in Christ, to see the power of God resting upon our life and to see Christ moving in your life, touching other people.