

# You Were Raised Right

Studies in the Book of Colossians

Text

Colossians 2:6-23

Topic

Paul illustrates your Christian life as if you are on a voyage home in a fully-supplied ship

Title

*“You’ve Been Ordered to Abundant Ship”*

The Swiss Army knife is advertised as the ultimate multi-tool. Whether you need a magnifying glass to read fine print, or a metal saw to cut through iron, the Swiss Army knife has your back.

The model we are most familiar with, the Swiss Champ, features 33 separate tools.

There’s a model that features 81 separate tools, including a digital clock in the handle. They promote it as “the ultimate companion for indoor and outdoor life.”

Then there's the Giant, manufactured by Wenger. The Giant is the world's largest Swiss Army knife, packing 141 functions into 87 implements. It is 9" wide and weighs 32 ounces. It sells for \$8,500.00 on Amazon.

Theoretically, carrying a Swiss Army knife, you are ready for anything you might encounter in your daily life.

What if I told you that if you are "in Christ," you are spiritually ready for anything you might encounter in your daily life?

The apostle Paul thought so. In verse ten you read, "and you are complete in Him." That word, "complete," is a nautical word, used to describe a ship totally fitted and supplied for its voyage.

You are totally fitted and supplied for your voyage home, to Heaven. You simply need to draw from your supply by faith in Jesus.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Be Confident That You Are Complete In Christ, and #2 Don't Become Convinced That You Are Incomplete In Christ.

## #1 Be Confident That You Are Complete In Christ

(2:6-15)

I said that the word "complete" was used of a ship fully supplied. All illustrations fall short.

It's Thanksgiving weekend, so let's discuss the provisions on the *Mayflower*. One historical record I read said this:

The passengers and crew ate different things at different stages of the voyage. In the beginning, when there was fresh food and calm seas, they most likely ate stews made of meat and vegetables.

When the storms came, no one could light cooking fires. Then, people ate hard biscuits, dried meat and fish, and drank ale or water if there was any left. Because the journey was longer than expected, food supplies were very low when the ship anchored.

During the months when the passengers lived on the ship while they built their houses, many people died of malnutrition.

We think of a fully supplied ship as running low, or out, of supplies over the course of its journey. But our voyage home never lacks for spiritual supply. It can't, because the supply comes from our being in Christ.

Colossians 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord...

How do you “receive” Jesus? God the Holy Spirit frees your will to respond to God’s gracious offer of salvation. Then you simply believe, by faith.

Colossians 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

You believed God to save you for eternity. Now believe Him to supply you for the voyage home.

Paul first describes Jesus as our Supplier. He used three illustrations. The first is *walking*. You're to believe that the Lord is with you every step of the day. *Think Footsteps in the Sand*. The first supply, then - and it's huge - is Jesus Himself.

Colossians 2:7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

“Rooted” refers to a tree’s roots. You are rooted in Jesus and thus every spiritual nutrient, all spiritual life, is available to you.

From agriculture Paul moved to architecture when he said, “built up in Him.” He’s an unshakeable, immovable foundation.

Then Paul said, “established in the faith, as you have been taught.” Now honestly, they hadn’t been taught that much - not as far as doctrine. But they **had** been taught to continue by faith - trusting in God’s supply.

Paul told them to be “abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

Since you are “abounding” with spiritual resources, you can always be thankful, in all things.

Colossians 2:8 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.

This verse, and these false teachings, will be expounded upon in verses sixteen through twenty-three. “Cheat” is the word *spoil* used of plundering. These false teachings would cut them off from their abundant spiritual supply.

Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

“Godhead” means *deity* and encompasses what the Bible teaches about God.

There is only one God. But the Bible also says clearly that there was a man, Jesus Christ, who claimed equality with God, and there is Someone called the Holy Spirit who is also equal with God.

The Father is God; Jesus Christ is God; the Holy Spirit is God.

Paul said the “fullness of the Godhead” dwells in Jesus bodily. He isn’t just super-spiritual. He isn’t just tapping into divine power sources. He isn’t just a great teacher or an insightful philosopher. He *was* and He *is* fully God.

This fullness of God “dwells” in Jesus “bodily.” Jesus did not surrender His deity in the incarnation, nor did He surrender His humanity in the resurrection.

Colossians 2:10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

You are fully supplied by virtue of being “in” Jesus. All that He has as resources are yours.

He is “the head of all principality and power.” These are supernatural beings, and can be benevolent or malevolent, depending on the context.

Here Paul meant to remind you that Jesus is in charge; He is the “Head,” having all authority.

You never need think He is unaware of you and your needs, or that His resources are insufficient. Think “abundant,” not “abandoned.”

Some of our abundant spiritual supplies are listed.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

If you are a Christian, then you “were,” *past tense*, “circumcised.” The moment you trusted Jesus as your Savior He circumcised you. Not physically, but spiritually. It was a spiritual “circumcision made without hands.”

He does it by “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” You get saved and you find that within you still dwells the “flesh.” The “flesh” is your unredeemed human body with its propensity to sin by gratifying itself.

**Your flesh has already been circumcised; it’s already been cut away.**



**You therefore do not need to yield to its influences and desires. You can always say “No” to your flesh.**

Next on the supply list is baptism:

Colossians 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

We immediately think of water baptism, but there are many ‘baptisms’ listed in the New Testament that do not involve water.

Paul was talking about a spiritual baptism that occurs the moment you are saved. It means that God sees you as if you, too, were “buried” and “raised” with Jesus from the dead.

You appropriate this truth “through faith in the working of God.” You simply believe it.

What this provides you for your journey is the understanding that you have new life in Jesus Christ.

It's not just that you can say "No" to sin, as great as that is. You can also say "Yes" to God and surrender to Him moment-by-moment.

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Paul was writing to Gentiles. Their condition before the Gospel was hopeless. They suffered from the proverbial double-whammy:

1. They were first of all "dead in... trespasses." They were physically alive but spiritually dead. It is the condition of every human born into the world.
2. Secondly Gentiles found themselves in "the uncircumcision of [their] flesh." This **is** a reference to physical circumcision. Gentiles as a group came to be called "the uncircumcision" because they were not a part of God's chosen people. Before the resurrection of Jesus, if you wanted to approach God you needed to convert to becoming a Jew.

Ah, but Jesus rose from the dead and changed all that. In Him Gentiles now find forgiveness of their trespasses without converting to Judaism.

Not only that, “He has made [Gentiles] alive together with Him.” The word Paul used means you are “quickenened.” It’s a reference to the fact that when you get saved God the Holy Sprit takes up residence in your heart.

Colossians 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Paul called God’s Law “the handwriting of requirements.” The words literally mean, *a certificate of debt*. When you read God’s Law, summarized by the Ten Commandments, you find yourself owing God a debt. If you are honest you’ll see that it is a debt you can never hope to pay.

Paul said God’s Law was “against” you. Staying with the image of a debt, this means it has gone to collection. “Contrary” means the debt collector calls upon you to pay it in full.

The debt of sin was death. You were a sinner and God's Law demanded death - **your** death. But the moment you are saved you discover that Jesus did three things for you:

1. He "wiped out" the debt. It means He erased it by paying it for you.
2. He has "taken it out of the way." He has permanently separated you from any further obligation to keep God's law.
3. He "nailed it to the cross," meaning it was all fully and finally accomplished when He substituted Himself in death for you on the cross at Calvary.

How is this a provision for your voyage? You no longer labor under God's Law, trying to keep it. No, instead you find that your love for God encourages you to walk with Him in a manner that is pleasing to Him as your heavenly Father.

The last supply Paul listed is in verse fifteen:

Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

The context here is the Cross, making it clear that Paul meant the vast array of evil and malicious spirits who make war against the people of God.

Jesus made “a public spectacle” of them on the Cross.

This is the stinger. **The abundant supply we are promised for our voyage home often involves our suffering and our endurance.** It mostly is God giving sufficient grace for Him to show His strength in our weakness.

A.W. Tozer said, “The Cross is the suffering the Christian endures as a consequence of his following Christ in perfect obedience. Christ chose the Cross by choosing the path that led to it; and it is so with His followers. In the way of obedience stands the Cross, and we take the Cross when we enter that way.”

Choose obedience, knowing it means the Cross, but then be confident in God’s abundant spiritual supply.

## #2 Don't Become Convinced That You Are Incomplete In Christ

(2:16-23)

On our voyage, we can indeed behave as though our supplies are rationed, or that we are unable to light a fire. We can suffer spiritual malnutrition.

It happens when we let false teachings interfere with our abundant supply.

Colossians 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

The first century church was plagued by a false teaching that a Gentile believer must, in addition to receiving Jesus, convert to Judaism.

1. "Food" refers to the particular prohibitions of the Old Testament dietary laws.
2. There were fewer laws regarding "drink," but there were some involving prohibitions on alcohol, e.g., for priests and Nazirites.

3. “Festival” is the requirement that all males make a pilgrimage to the Temple at Jerusalem during the major feasts.
4. “New moon” means they wanted everyone to observe the Jewish ceremonial calendar generally.
5. “Sabbath days” would include all the scriptural and extra-scriptural teaching about resting from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday.

Colossians 2:17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

The purpose of all these things was to prepare you for the coming of Jesus Christ. They all prefigured and typified Him. He is the “substance” that they all pointed towards. Now that He has come we are out of their shadow and in His light. Don’t go back to the shadows.

Colossians 2:18 Let no one cheat you of your reward...

Don’t give in to their judgements and thereby lose your joy now, and your future “reward” in Heaven.

Colossians 2:18 ...taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

1. “False humility” happens when you let people know how early you rise and how much time you spend in prayer and how often you fast.
2. “Worship of angels” seems to refer to the thinking that you cannot approach God directly but must go through a mediator, like an “angel,” who is close to God. Today this would apply to praying to Mary or to deceased saints.
3. “Intruding into those things... not seen” is the claim to having special visions or revelations from God. While we believe the Bible teaches there is the gift of prophecy and that we can still have dreams and visions, they must always be measured by what is already written in the Bible.
4. “Vainly puffed up by [your] fleshly mind” relates to those who are proud of their intellect, or who think knowledge makes someone more spiritual.

These four things could be loosely summarized by the word *mysticism*.



Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

In a normal, healthy, growing body the head directs everything. Disconnect the head and the body will deteriorate.

All these practices thus far listed, and those to come, put distance between you and the Lord. They disconnect you. They introduce something that stands between you and the Lord - a technique, a mediator, a set of rules, etc.

Colossians 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ...

“If” means *since*. Paul was stating a fact. You “died with Christ.”

When you become a Christian, the moment you are born-again God sees you as if what happened to Jesus happened to you.

There are a lot of advantages to being dead:

- You wouldn't have to be worried about paying your taxes if you were dead.
- Any pending litigation against you would cease.

OK, you're not physically dead so those things still apply. But you are spiritually dead and resurrected. Therefore you can live in the material world from a spiritual perspective, in the power of a resurrected life. And that is what Paul next described.

Colossians 2:20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations -

Colossians 2:21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

What Paul destroys in these verses scholars call *asceticism*. Think monastery.

Asceticism involves rigorous self-denial on the physical level in order to achieve a spiritual result.

Bottom line: *You are already "dead" and don't need to do any of them!*

Paul's conclusion regarding ascetic practices is in verse twenty-two:

Colossians 2:22 which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

“Perish with the using” is a good description of physical things like food and drink. Sin occurs when we abuse things, but spirituality cannot be achieved by their non-use.

Paul called things like this “the commandments and doctrines of men”:

- “Doctrines” refers to what they believed.
- “Commandments” refers to the specific rules and they established.

Colossians 2:23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

This might be a summary of this section:

- “Self-imposed religion” sounds like what the Judaizers were promoting.
- “False humility” marked and marks mysticism.
- “Neglect of the body” sounds like asceticism.

None of these things have any “value against the indulgence of the flesh.” **You can’t fight the “flesh” with flesh!**

As one writer put it, “You don’t need *laws* on the outside because you have *life* on the inside.”

Another said this:

Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order. Our natural reason says, If we do not walk, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we get anywhere if we do not move? But Christianity is an [odd] business! If at the outset we try to do anything, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE.

We've been talking about the Big Done. Whether you get saved today, or you have been "in Christ" for decades - **you each have the same supply for your voyage.**

How would you describe the seas you're on?

Whether you are enjoying calm seas and making progress; or are stuck in the Doldrums, seemingly going nowhere; or are riding out a fierce storm... **You are supplied.**

Your Captain is constantly telling you to "Abundant Ship."