



Teaching Guide: “Rooted in Christ – Breaking Free from Accusation, Legalism, and Striving”

Fullness in Christ – Guarding Against Deceptive Thinking

Colossians 2:1–10

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy... rather than on Christ.” (v.8)

Paul warns that spiritual captivity can happen quite subtly, often it is through well-worded ideas that sound wise but are not centered on Jesus. In our times, it can look like:

- Mixing self-help or new age practices with Christian faith.
- Following influencers or ideologies that prioritise feelings, success, or inner power over truth.
- Over-intellectualising our faith to the point where we lose dependence on the Spirit.

To over-intellectualise your faith means to rely so heavily on theological knowledge, logic, or doctrinal precision that it diminishes or replaces the relational, experiential, and spiritual aspects of walking with God. It’s not that thinking deeply is wrong, God invites us to love Him with our mind (Matthew 22:37), but problems arise when:

Faith Becomes a Head Exercise, Not a Heart Journey

Instead of encountering God personally, faith is reduced to:

- **Reading, analysing, and debating Scripture:** This means treating the Bible like a textbook, focusing on facts, word studies, or arguments, without allowing it to speak personally or transform the heart.
- **Systematising theology without application:** Organising spiritual truths into neat categories (e.g., salvation, end times, grace) but never allowing those truths to shape your daily decisions, emotions, or relationships.
- **Defending doctrine but avoiding vulnerability:** Arguing for correct beliefs or proving others wrong, while staying emotionally closed off, using truth as a shield instead of letting it penetrate and soften your heart.

Example: Knowing all about forgiveness in Greek and Hebrew, but struggling to forgive someone in real life.

It Creates Distance from God

Over-intellectualising can become a way to control or buffer yourself from intimacy. It may:

Make you feel "in control" by mastering concepts
Help you avoid the mystery, risk, or discomfort of faith
Lead you to trust in your understanding more than God Himself

"Lean not on your own understanding..." (Proverbs 3:5)

It Can Breed Pride or Judgment

When knowledge becomes the goal rather than transformation:

- People may become spiritually arrogant or critical
- You may look down on those who are more emotionally expressive or less "doctrinally sound"
- It may feel safer to "study faith" than to live it

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:1:

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."

What Balance Looks Like:

Healthy faith uses the mind to deepen intimacy with God, not distance ourselves. We engage Scripture not just for answers but to meet the Author. True wisdom leads to:

- Humility, not superiority
- Obedience, not analysis paralysis
- Love, not argumentation

Reflective Questions:

- Am I more focused on knowing about God than knowing Him personally?
- Do I use study as a substitute for prayer, surrender, or listening to the Holy Spirit?
- Have I become defensive or critical rather than teachable and loving?

Key Insight:

Many of these philosophies appeal to our ego or our wounds. They promise healing or elevation, but without the surrender, cross, or transformation that comes through Christ.

Reflection: Are there ideas I've accepted as truth that don't align with the fullness of Christ?

Buried and Raised with Christ – Letting Go of the Old Self

Colossians 2:11–13

“Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ.” (v11)

Paul uses the image of spiritual circumcision - a cutting away of our sinful nature - not by human effort, but through faith in Jesus. Baptism symbolises this: the death of the old and rising into new life.

Many believers continue to live as if the “old self” is still in charge because they don't feel transformed. But Paul reminds us: the change is real and spiritual, and we grow into it by renewing our minds (Romans 12:2).

Reflection: Where am I still identifying with my old self? Am I rehearsing failure or walking in resurrection?

Cancelled Accusations – Christ's Triumph Over Judgment

Colossians 2:14 - 15

“He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us... He took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

Deep Dive into v.14:

Accusation, Guilt, and the Voice of the Enemy

Historical Context:

The “written code” (Greek: cheirographon) was like an IOU or a legal document listing debts, here symbolising the guilt, shame, and judgments due because of our sin. Often this is also the IOU still attached to generations before. This becomes a false verdict on our life. We need to deal with the generational transfer before we deal with our own verdicts.

Spiritual Insight:

The enemy (Satan means accuser) uses this “list” to torment us. Even when forgiven, we can still live under the echoes of accusation, statements like:

- “You're not a real Christian.”
- “You'll never overcome that sin.”
- “God may forgive others, but not what you did.”

- “You will never be good enough.”

These accusations become internalised as self-judgments, which form spiritual strongholds. The more we agree with them, the more they shape our behaviour and emotions.

In the same breath, when we accuse others, we are creating agreements in the spirit not only over their lives but over ours for the enemy to accuse us and them.

But Paul declares: God didn’t just tear up the list - He nailed it publicly to the cross. Every accusation and spiritual legal right the enemy had was disarmed.

Reflection: What judgments am I still living under that Christ has already cancelled?

Shadow vs. Substance – The Fruitlessness of Religious Performance

Colossians 2:16 –23

“These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality is found in Christ.” (v17)

Paul now addresses legalism and asceticism - strict rule-keeping, rituals, and self-denial that appear spiritual but have no power to change the heart.

Examples today might include:

- Trying to fast, pray, or “do more” to feel worthy.
- Creating checklists to feel holy, but with no intimacy with Christ.
- Practising harsh self-control (e.g., denying pleasures or punishing yourself) as a way to overcome sin.

Why doesn’t this work? Because external control can’t transform internal desire. Only relationship with Christ, abiding in His love and presence, reshapes the heart (John 15).

Reflection: Am I relying on behaviour to manage sin, or on intimacy with Jesus to transform my desires?

Summary of Key Themes

Colossians 2 Truth	Modern Application
You are complete in Christ (v.10)	You don’t need to prove your worth through performance.
Your sinful nature was cut off (v.11)	Stop identifying with the past – you’ve been made
The record of your sin was nailed to the cross (v.14)	Reject self-condemnation and silencing accusations.

Legalism is a shadow; Christ is the substance (v.17)	Pursue relationship, not rules, for true transformation.
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Final Reflection Questions

1. What types of “fine-sounding arguments” have you faced that tried to pull you away from Christ?
2. How do accusations from your past or the enemy show up in your thoughts?
3. What religious practices do you use to try to overcome sin - do they work?
4. What would it look like to truly believe “It is finished” for your own story?

Prayer & Prophetic Action

I invite you to:

- Bring a “record of debt” (write a fear, sin, or shame on paper). Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what the enemy is holding as an accusation against you.
- Pray into this by repenting, forgiving or whatever the Holy Spirit shows you, then symbolically tear or burn the paper as a reminder that it was nailed to the cross.
- Speak aloud God’s truth over yourself using verses from Colossians 2.

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