

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

TWO DEFENSES AGAINST SCAMMERS



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

From time to time, we hear and read warnings about scammers in our area. The police or consumer protection groups alert us to the danger, tell us what to look out for, and how to avoid being scammed.

But spiritual scamming is much more widespread and much more dangerous. Many have been taken in and taken away by various spiritual errors in doctrine, worship, and practice.

What should we look out for and how do we avoid being scammed? That's the question we will address today.

Effects

The Apostle explains the urgency of this question in Colossians 2:4-5.

- The scammers are extremely persuasive (4)
- Even strong Christians are at risk (5).

That's why he told them in verse 1 that he had "a great conflict for them." He was fighting for their faith, he was giving his all for their survival, he was agonizing for their comfort.

Solution?

Paul has two massive defenses for us, two pre-emptive measures that can defend us from spiritual scammers (1-3). Before we look at them, let's remember the background.

CONTEXT

Spiritual scammers (the Gnostics) had infiltrated the Colossian church. In chapter one, the Apostle gave the Colossians a number of warning signs to look out for, and several ways to counteract their strategies. These were emergency measures.

In chapter two, he's more focused on deeper long-term defenses, and describes the two most important ones.

APPROACH

In the first part of the sermon I will explain and apply what these two defenses are, but I want to address the children especially when we get to the application of the second defense. So, kids, if you can hang with me for ten minutes or so, I think you'll find the second part of the sermon easy to follow.



What is the first defense against scammers?
It's Christian love.



1. CHRISTIAN LOVE DEFENDS US (1-2A)

(1) For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh (2) that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love.

Christian love strengthens: Paul's goal is that they may be "encouraged in heart", that courage would be put in their hearts. He associates this with being united in love. We are strengthened in heart by love in our hearts.

Christian love unites: "Knit" literally means "welded." Love welds people together. When believers stand shoulder to shoulder rather than as isolated or divided individuals, they are much stronger.

Notice the fighting language Paul uses here. He has "a great conflict," he's engaged in a mighty battle for believers to be united and strengthened in love as a first line of defense.

APPLICATION



Although love seems like a "soft" grace, it is grace on steroids. It unites believers and defends them from the worst scammers. But if we let our love cool, divide from one another, engage in endless conflict, we are prime targets for scamming.



How can you give and receive Christian love today? You need both if you are to build your's and others' spiritual defenses. Loving words, loving touches, loving hugs, loving gifts, loving acts, all build defenses that spiritual scammers hate.

SCAMMERS ATTACK LOVELESS
AND DIVIDED CHRISTIANS,
BUT CHRISTIAN LOVE UNITES
AND DEFENDS CHRISTIANS.



Is love for one another enough to protect me from scamming?
No, but it's the essential foundation for what will – knowing Christ's riches.



2. CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE DEFENDS US (2B-3)

(2)...and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, (3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Apostle doesn't contrast love with knowledge. Knowledge produces love and love produces knowledge. Theology cannot grow without practice and practice cannot grow without theology.

Full knowledge (2b): "All riches of the full assurance of understanding." There is nothing lacking in the knowledge of Christ. Its fullness will fill you up. Christians are already full and don't need what the Gnostics offered. This can be translated as "resulting in a full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ."

Confident knowledge (2c): "The full assurance of understanding" ("the full riches of complete understanding" NIV). When it comes to God and the Gospel, doubt is dangerous, certainty is safe.

Hidden knowledge (3a): "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "Hidden" implies that it takes some effort to find, that such knowledge will not be found by half-hearted students. But, unlike the Gnostics who boasted of hidden knowledge that very few could ever find, here the Apostle tells the Colossians where they can find it – in Christ. Calvin said that "hidden" here is a reference to how the glory of Christ was concealed in his earthly life and especially at the cross.

Rich knowledge (3b): "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If you dig up this knowledge, you will find inestimable and invaluable riches. You will value it higher than anything else in your life.

Vast knowledge (3b): "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Everything you can possibly need is in Christ. If all you know is Christ, you have all you need to know. Nothing extra is required. You're wasting your time looking anywhere else. Faith in Christ is the key to all of God's treasures. He is the only way to access the wisdom and knowledge of God.

SCAMMERS THRIVE IN IGNORANCE,
BUT KNOWING CHRIST DEFENDS THE SOUL.



Do you see how Christian love and Christian knowledge defend you?
The next couple of pages are to help the children understand this.





Invitation to a Treasure Hunt

Man hunting treasure from poem 'found dead' in New Mexico

© 20 June 2017

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1. Treasure Tragedy

Forrest Fenn, a millionaire, hid a treasure chest in 2010 and wrote a poem he claimed led to the treasure. 65,000 people have searched the area in New Mexico for the 22lb bronze chest containing gold and jewels. Many have been injured in the pursuit and this man is the fourth to die trying to find it.

2. The Invitation

I want to invite you to a treasure hunt that results in life. Jesus was more hidden in the Old Testament. He has now been fully revealed in the New Testament and invites people to find him and the treasure hidden in him.



3. The Map

Thankfully, there is a map to help us find Jesus. It is the Bible and as it was written by God, It is 100% accurate. It's now available in hundreds of different languages.

4. The Hunters

Despite the treasure being revealed and the Bible being such a good map, the treasure hunters don't really know what they are looking for, are easily distracted, and have limited time.



5. The Danger

On top of this are the dangers that treasure hunters face in looking for this treasure. There are many evil forces trying to trap the treasure hunters and stop them finding the treasure.

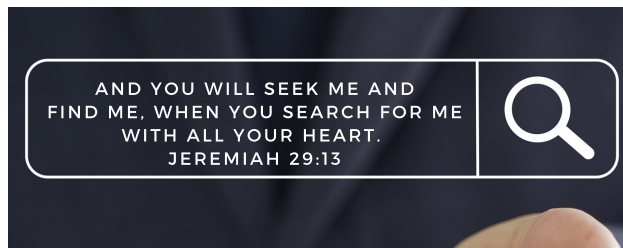
6. The Clues

Thankfully God has provided us with clues to help us find the treasure. Every time the Gospel is preached we get clues as to where the treasure is and how to find it. Christian fellowship also helps us because, amazingly, when people find the treasure of Jesus, they want to share it with others.



7. The Promises

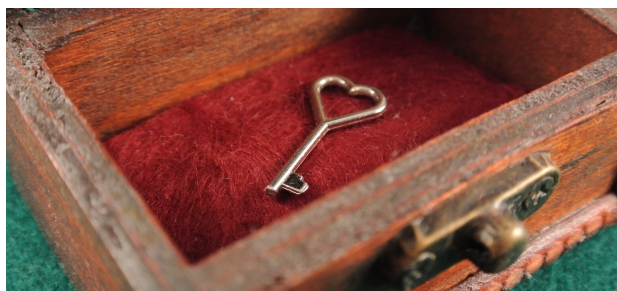
When we lose something, we sometimes don't try too hard to find it because we are not confident of finding it. But God has given us a great promise about this treasure: "Seek and you shall find." Maybe you haven't found it because you haven't really looked for it yet (Matthew 7:7).



8. The Treasure

Jesus is filled with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge about the most important subject. He can give us reliable answers that are worth more than gold. What must I do to be saved? How can I know God? How do I get free from sin? How do I get to heaven?

Christ is the greatest treasure, unsearchable treasure, inexhaustible treasure, unfathomable treasure.



9. The Key

The key that opens the treasure is faith in Christ. Faith is the gift of God but it must be picked up, used, and exercised by the treasure hunter. Remember that in a dangerous world full of scammers, the way to be spiritually safe and happy is through believing Christ.

10. The Joy

If you find this treasure it will change your life. You will enjoy years of unpacking and discovering new jewels of knowledge and gold of grace in unlimited supply. So much so that you will say with the Queen of Sheba, "The half was not told me" (1 Kings 10:7).



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [The Treasure at Your Fingertips](#) by Douglas Sweeney
- [Treasuring Christ when your hands are full](#) by Gloria Furman (Video)
- [14 Kinds of Seeker](#) by David Murray
- [Christ the Treasure](#) by John Piper

Books

- [Treasuring Christ When Your Hands are Full](#) by Gloria Furman

Commentaries

- [Philippians: The Supremacy of Christ](#) by Kent Huges
- [Philippians: So Walk in Him](#) by John Woodhouse

Discussion Questions

1. Give some examples of spiritual scammers in our own day.
2. How does love defend us from spiritual scammers?
3. Name a person and think of ways to love them this week.
4. What's the connection between love and knowledge?
5. What do you value most about Christ?
6. How has knowing Christ helped you to know God?
7. What handicaps do we have as treasure hunters?
8. What dangers do we face in hunting for spiritual treasure in Christ?
9. What promises have encouraged you in seeking Christ?

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COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

TWO DEFENSES AGAINST SCAMMERS

CHRIST, IN WHOM ARE HIDDEN
ALL THE TREASURES
OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.
COLOSSIANS 2:3.



Spiritual scammers

- Extremely persuasive
- Strong at risk too

Biblical answer?



Christian love defends us

- Christian love **unites**
- Christian love **strengthens**

SCAMMERS ATTACK LOVELESS
AND DIVIDED CHRISTIANS,
BUT CHRISTIAN LOVE UNITES AND
DEFENDS CHRISTIANS.

Is love enough to defend me?



Christian knowledge defends us

- **Full** knowledge
- **Confident** knowledge
- **Hidden** knowledge
- **Rich** knowledge
- **Vast** knowledge

SCAMMERS THRIVE
IN IGNORANCE,
BUT KNOWING CHRIST
DEFENDS THE SOUL.

Children?



Treasure Hunt

- The tragedy
- The invitation
- The map
- The hunters
- The danger
- The clues
- The promises
- The treasure
- The key
- The joy

Action?



Defend yourself from
spiritual scamming
with the treasures of
Christian love and
Christian knowledge.