

Abbey Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30am 10 May 2026
Jill Bird leading and Rev Zoltan Biro preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
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Our freedom in Christ



So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, strengthened in the faith and overflowing with thankfulness Colossians 2.6

Family time - thankfulness

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness;
Come before him with joyful songs. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations. **Psalm 100**

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all your sins and heals all your
diseases. He redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. **Psalm 103**

MP 1003

My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord there is none like You
All of my days I want to praise the wonders of Your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing, power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands. Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have In You

Nothing compares to the promise I have
Oh nothing compares to the promise I have
Nothing compares to the promise I have In You

Song Bethel music 2019

I love You, Lord Your mercy never failed me
All my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

All my life You have been faithful All my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able, I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice You have led me through the fire
In darkest night You are close like no other

I've known You as a Father I've known You as a Friend
Oh, I have lived in the goodness of God.

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me

Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now I give You everything
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me

Prayer Lord our hearts are overflowing with thankfulness for Denisa and her boys, for all your love care and compassion. Please continue to bless and settle them. But we particularly remember those in our Abbey family here today who find singing these songs difficult because of their life situations. Forgive us when we find it so hard to trust you and don't drink deeply of your peace and presence when times are tough. Forgive us when we don't reach out to our brothers and sisters going through hard times. We are one body here at Abbey – help us to really walk arm in arm with each other. AMEN

Song MP 254 during which offering will be taken

I am a new creation No more in condemnation
Here in the grace of God I stand
My heart is overflowing My love just keeps on growing
Here in the grace of God I stand

And I will praise You Lord Yes I will praise You Lord
And I will sing of all that You have done
A joy that knows no limit A lightness in my spirit
Here in the grace of God I stand!

Children leave for their classes

MP 1100

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You, I want to see You
To see you high and lifted up, shining in the light of Your glory
Pour out Your power and love as we sing holy, holy, holy
Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy
You are holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy - I want to see You

- Bible Readings** 1. Colossians 2. 6-15
2. Colossians 2. 16-23

Sermon: Our Freedom in Christ

Today we continue our journey through the letter of Paul to the Colossians, a message as relevant for us as it was for the believers in Colossae. As we've already seen, Paul wrote this letter because something was going wrong in the church. The message of the gospel was slowly being distorted. It was no longer Christ alone. It was becoming Christ + something else. Christ + philosophy. Christ + legalism. Christ + spiritual beings. Christ + ascetic practices.

Paul has spent the first part of this letter lifting our eyes to show us that Christ is enough. He reminded us that Christ is fully God, that He lives in us by His Spirit, and that following Him, even through suffering, is worth it, because He is who He says He is.

But now, in Colossians 2, the tone changes. Paul moves from encouragement to warning. He says if you start adding to Christ, you will lose your freedom.

A The definition of Freedom

Let's begin by asking: what does it really mean to be free in Christ?

In Colossians 2:10, Paul writes, “in Christ you have been brought to fullness.” That means nothing is lacking. When we place our trust in Jesus, our spiritual needs are entirely met. There is no deeper experience, no secret knowledge, no extra ritual that makes us more complete. Christ is enough. Full stop.

Think of it this way: imagine walking into a dinner party, with your lunch box. The table already set with every good thing, but you feel that won’t be enough. That’s the abundance of Christ Paul describes.

1. **Freedom from Shame:** Verse 11 says we are “circumcised not by human hands”, our old life is cast away. Christ has freed us from the grip of shame and the power of our sinful nature. You are not defined by your past mistakes; in Christ, you are made new.
2. **Freedom from Death:** Verse 12 and 13 remind us that through baptism, we symbolically share in Christ’s death and resurrection. Death no longer holds us captive; we are free to live with hope and purpose.
3. **Freedom from the Law’s Debt:** Verses 14 and 15 declare that Christ has cancelled the record of debt against us, nailing it to the cross. We owe nothing to the Law, no list of rules or rituals can add to what Christ has done. Paul’s message is clear: our freedom is found in Jesus alone; not in philosophy, not in tradition, not in our own effort.

B. Losing the Freedom

So why does Paul warn the Colossians, and us, about adding to Christ? Because “Christ-plus” teaching threatens to rob us of the freedom He won for us.

In verse 8, Paul uses vivid language, urging us to be on guard, like a watchman protecting against invaders. False teachers were sneaking in, offering a “Christ+” message: Christ plus philosophy, Christ plus legalism, Christ plus spiritual beings, Christ plus ascetic practices. Every addition is a chain, binding us to something other than Jesus.

1. **False Philosophy:** Some teachings look impressive, but Paul calls them “hollow and deceptive.” They’re built on speculation, not the solid truth of Christ. Imagine going on a trip with a map full of invented roads. No matter how detailed the map is, it won’t get you anywhere. According to Paul this philosophy is hollow and deceptive because it is based on three limitations. **Based on Human Logic:** using limited human rationality, because no human knows everything). **Based on Principles of the world:** using only the physical world to understand all aspects of the created world, including the spiritual. **It is not based on Christ:** it tries to unite Christ with other belief systems.
2. **Legalism:** The Colossians were told to observe strict rules. What to eat or drink, which days to celebrate. Paul says these are shadows. Think of a shadow on the wall; it only has meaning because of the reality it points to. The reality is Christ. So what Paul is saying is: don’t chase shadows.
3. **Angel Worship:** Some claimed special spiritual insight, even encouraging worship of angels. Paul exposes this as spiritual pride and mock humility. These are ideas that puff up but disconnect us from Christ, who is the true source of life.
4. **Asceticism:** Others insisted on harsh treatment of the body, rules like “do not handle, do not touch.” Paul says such rules look wise but are empty, human traditions that fail to lead us closer to God’s heart. Whenever we add anything to Christ, be it new philosophies, old traditions, or human effort, we risk trading freedom for bondage. The gospel is not “Christ +”, it is “Christ alone.”

C. Modern Deceptions

Now, you might be thinking, “Surely, we’re cleverer in our age of information. We’ve got podcasts, books, social media, how could we fall for such deception?” But subtle chains are still forged today. Let’s look at some current examples:

1. **Speculative Theories.** Some ideas build on what we don’t know. From conspiracy theories to spiritual speculation, like believing demon possession can be cured by drilling holes in the skull. These teachings distract us from the plain gospel and draw us into confusion. It’s tempting to chase after secret knowledge, but true freedom is found in trusting what God has revealed in Christ.
2. **Christian Legalism.** Even now, many Christians regulate behaviour based on man-made traditions: rules about what foods to eat, how to dress, or how to worship. It’s easy to confuse cultural customs with spiritual truth. If we’re not careful, tradition can become a law that binds rather than a guide.
3. **Spiritual Elitism.** There are those who claim their eyes have been opened to see what others cannot. Evelyn Underhill described 5 stages required to mystic enlightenment. But later in her life she realised that too much emphasis on individual enlightenment can lead to spiritual pride that separates rather than unites. So in her later works she moved towards a more corporate view of worship. Because, true worship always connects us to Christ and His body, the church.
4. **Modern Asceticism:** Some teachings say we should always choose suffering, or that health and fitness outweigh spiritual growth. There’s value in caring for our bodies, but not at the expense of time with God. Spending hours at the gym or thousands on treatments, while neglecting prayer, is missing the point. God desires relationship, not ritual or routine, but a heart that seeks Him.

Deception is often subtle. Think about the way certain fast-food restaurants engineer their products. Studies show that the combination of smells and flavours is designed to trigger cravings and override your sense of fullness. Even after a good meal, the scent makes you feel hungry. That’s how deception works, it appeals to our senses but leaves us unsatisfied. In the same way, spiritual deception attracts us with promises, but only Christ can truly satisfy us.

So, what do we do with all this? Deception will always try to creep in, whether through clever philosophies, rigid traditions, or subtle temptations. But Christ has set us free. Let us guard that freedom; don’t let anything steal the joy and fullness found in Him.

Paul calls us to be vigilant, to guard our freedom, so that no one takes it away. Here’s how we can respond:

- **Stay Rooted in Christ:** Make Him the centre of your faith,
 - **Discern Teaching:** Ask, “Does this draw me closer to Jesus, or does it distract?”
 - **Value Relationship Over Ritual:** God wants your heart, not a checklist.
 - **Celebrate Freedom:** Remember what you’re free from, shame, death, and debt.
- So, live confidently in the fullness Christ offers. Amen

Song MP 1000

King of kings, Majesty, God of Heaven living in me
Gentle Saviour, closest friend, strong deliverer, beginning and end
All within me falls at Your throne

Your Majesty, I can but bow I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve Your Majesty

Earth and Heaven worship You, Love eternal, Faithful and True
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls, Brought this sinner near to Your throne
All within me cries out in praise.

Prayers of intercession Anne and Nigel

In the freedom we have in Christ, we bring our prayers before God.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer.*

We pray for the leaders of the world:
that they may seek justice, act with humility, and work for peace rather than division.
Free them from fear and self-interest and guide their decisions for the good of all.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer.*

We pray for refugees and asylum seekers.
For all who live with displacement, uncertainty, or loss, may they find safety, welcome, and freedom from fear.
Help us to respond with compassion and generosity.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer.*

We pray for students preparing for exams.
Give them calm hearts, focused minds, and confidence.
Free them from anxiety, and help them trust in their worth beyond results.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer.*

We pray for those struggling with mental health and wellbeing.
Bring rest to weary minds, hope to heavy hearts, and moments of light in difficult days.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer.*

We pray for our emergency services.
Protect those who serve in times of crisis, strengthen them when they are tired,
and grant them peace and renewal.
Lord, in your mercy *hear our prayer*

Merciful Father, accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Song MP 387

Jesus, we celebrate Your victory. Jesus, we revel in Your love
Jesus, we rejoice, You've set us free. Jesus, Your death has brought us life

It was for freedom that Christ has set us free
No longer to be subject to a yoke of slavery
So, we're rejoicing in God's victory. Our hearts responding to His love

His Spirit in us releases us from fear
And the way to Him is open, with boldness, we draw near
And in His presence, our problems disappear
Our hearts responding to His love

The Blessing

If the son JESUS sets you free, then you are free indeed. It is for freedom that Christ has set you free.
So go in the fulness of that freedom to love, live and work in God's world and for God's glory and be thankful. Amen

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, **Amen.**

Events to highlight this coming week:

Sunday 10	12.15 After church	Church meeting ALL welcome
Wednesday 13	10:30 12:00 2:00	Renew Café Bible study God loves you and First Steps course
Thursday 14	10:30 10:30	Toddlers Bible Study
Friday 15	4:30pm	Table Tennis
Sunday 17	10.30 After service	Sunday Worship Cantonese bible study and First Step course

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