

We Are Complete In Christ

In the first chapter Paul emphasized the fullness of Christ, and that this fullness is ours through Christ death. Now he is going to take that truth and he is going to apply it specifically to a couple problems which the Colossians were having. This is going to form the underlying foundation of his argument against some of the false teachings that were tempting the Colossian Christians. We are going to see him argue that the fullness and richness we have in Christ is so much better than the emptiness which are offered in the philosophy and religions of the this world.

Colossians 2:6-15 ⁶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 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. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 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, 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. 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, 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. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Verses 6 and 7

⁶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

We see here a Paul who lives in the scriptures. The picture he paints here is not anything new to Paul. We find these same images all over the Old Testament especially in the psalms.

Compare verse 6 "walk in Him" to Psalm 1 "walk not in the way of the ungodly" and "rooted and built up in him" to "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper."

Even though we find this same picture over and over in scripture it is always one we stop to think about and rejoice in. This picture of a tree digging its roots deep into the soil and even as it digs down deep it is able to grow strong and tall and proud. It is green and strong and vibrant even when all around the trees are dry and dying, because its roots are deep deep deep down.

So is the Christian who digs deep into "the faith as you have been taught." He isn't going to be moved easily. He isn't going to wither easily. When all around is failing and falling he will prosper. So we dig deep and as we dig deep we grow up.

Notice also "received," "rooted," "built," "established," and "taught" all five are passive verbs. That means they are done to you, not done by you. There are only two active verbs "walk" and "rejoice."

This is the fullness of our faith, that we know that Christ is working in us whenever we walk with Him. Even the rejoicing in faith is something Christ does for us. We pray every Sunday, "restore unto me the joy of your salvation." So even though the rejoicing is something that we do in the spirit, the joy itself comes from Christ.

Verses 8 -10

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. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

In verse 8 we have here what we call a TSKS construction. It's not important, but it just means that these are not two separate things but two descriptions of the same thing. The philosophy of this world is deceitful and empty.

I can think of no greater example of this emptiness in our present generation than Oprah Winfrey. Here is one who as Paul says elsewhere has a "form of godliness, but denies it power." Much of what Oprah says sounds good and inspiring but ultimately Oprah removes Christ completely and replaces Christ with you. You are the source of your own destiny. You make your future. You find meaning in yourself. This leaves her words empty and hollow.

So you can actualize your own future by your strength to achieve what you desire. This is the philosophy of Oprah. Or you can walk with Christ who is the fullness of God and let His forgiveness and His love which He demonstrated on the cross be the center of your life.

Paul goes on to talk about the traditions of men and the basic principles of this world. Tradition is not necessarily bad, elsewhere in scripture Paul urges us to "hold fast to the traditions which you have learned." The problem here is that these are the traditions of men and they are not of Christ.

Traditions that help us to keep Christ at the center of our life are good and useful, traditions that replace Christ with the basic principles of this world need to be gotten rid of.

What are these "basic principles of this world?" Paul tells us in verse 21 "do not touch, do not taste, do not handle." What he means here then is the basic underlying legalism of the religions of this world.

Here we have the example of Josh Harris. Josh Harris recognized there was a problem in the way that young people date. It very often lead to sin. So he decided we shouldn't date. He wrote a book, "I kissed dating goodbye." He came up with all these rules and methods for finding a wife without dating. He himself later retracted his book, apologizing for it, and saying this is wrong. A list of rules doesn't fix the inner sinful desires.

This type of methodological Christianity has nothing to offer us. Instead Paul says you are complete in Him. Put Christ and his forgiveness at the center of your faith. Yes I have failed and will fail again, but Christ died for me. His life for me. His death for me. He loves me. He forgives me even when I fail.

verses 11 and 12

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, 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.

Here we see one of the problems that was enticing the Colossians church. There were men that were trying to convince them they needed circumcision.

Paul points out to them why do you want to replace what you have, namely baptism, with this old tradition of circumcision. Look at the fullness of the promises which you have received in baptism. To make the comparison clear he refers to baptism as circumcision but a much fuller circumcision. It is a circumcision made without hands. It is the circumcision of Christ.

In our baptism we have

- the power of God at work
- we are buried with Christ
- we are raised with Christ
- the sinful flesh is stripped away

We have all these wonderful promises associated with baptism and yet so many people want to take baptism away and replace it with something they think is better.

Billy Graham had the altar call, and many talk about your decision for Christ. But such rituals of men cannot compare to the fullness of promises that are ours in baptism.

Verses 13 - 15

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

A phrase you hear all the time these days is, "I have to find myself." What are you going to find if you go out looking for yourself? You are going to find death, you are going to find sin, you are going to find this "handwriting of requirements against" you. That last phrase refers to a written list of charges or debts publicly posted. So the idea there is you go to court and you find this long list of what you owe.

This is what you find if you go searching for yourself. There is nothing good there. At best it is empty and worthless what you find. There is no great truth hidden inside your heart. There is only sin.

Study after study has shown that people who spend a lot of time on facebook are significantly more depressed? And the more time they spend the more depressed they become. This is because facebook is essentially a lie. What do you say when take a picture? "Smile." By and large what is presented on facebook are smiling happy people, regardless of what they are actually feeling. And other people looking at that think why is my life not "smiling, happy."

Of course I'm not saying you shouldn't use Facebook. Use it in moderation. Just don't let that become the source of your happiness. Don't allow the number of friends or likes that you have to become your source of meaning. This is emptiness. It is a self delusion that won't hold up.

Don't search for meaning in yourself. Christ is your fullness. He has made you alive. He has forgiven your sins. He has taken that list of debt and nailed it to His cross. When we remember this we can look at ourselves. We can remember what sinners we are and we can still rejoice in this that Christ loves me even though I am this ugly and terrible sinner.

He triumphed over all other authorities and made a public spectacle of them. All of the powerful, influential and famous people that we have a tendency to look up to. All of those whom we think I want their life. Christ has made them a public spectacle. That is He has shown the emptiness of their lives. Why would we want that?

Live in Christ and his fullness.

Amen