

February 12, 2023

Full Life in Christ

Bible Background • COLOSSIANS 2:6–15

Printed Text • COLOSSIANS 2:6–15 | Devotional Reading • ROMANS 8:31–39

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE Paul’s message describing a full life in Christ; EXPRESS thanksgiving for God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ; and REMAIN rooted in faith by continuing to pursue an understanding of life in the fullness of Jesus Christ and be thankful to Him.

In Focus

Tamika heard that all religions lead to God and even if you did not accept Christ into your heart, you are still saved because Jesus saves everybody. At least, that’s what she’d heard.

One day, Tamika was at a Bible study class at church when someone raised a question about salvation. In the midst of the discussion, she said, “Everyone is saved already and no one will go to hell. Therefore, you don’t have to confess Jesus as your Lord, or study the Bible, or be concerned about living for Him; just be a good person.

No other religion believes in hell like us, so some Christians must be wrong.” Tamika’s feelings emanated from the death of her very close friend, and she knew that he had not accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. Tamika had never shared her faith with her friend. Therefore, because her friend was such a good person, she refused to believe that he would not go to heaven because he had not made Jesus the Lord of his life.

In today’s lesson, Paul deals head-on with traditions and philosophies that threaten to unsettle the budding church in Colosse. Like this church, we, too, need to be exhorted.

Keep In Mind

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. Rooted (Colossians 2:7) rhizoo (Gk.) – Rendered firm, established.

B. Godhead (v. 9) theotes (Gk.) – Supreme deity, the essential being of God, the Supreme Being; the whole nature and attributes of God.

Say It Correctly

Circumcised. sir-kuhm-sized

Spectacle. SPEK-ta-kuhl

KJV

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

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

NLT

Colossians 2:6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him.

7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

8 Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

9 For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.

10 So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

11 When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.

12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.

14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

The People, Places, and Times

Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge." The Gnostics separated matter from thought. They concluded that matter was evil and formulated the idea that the possession of knowledge was the only requirement for salvation. This is why they did not want to attribute humanity to Jesus Christ because to them, material things were evil. Paul stresses that in Him (Jesus Christ as He appeared on Earth) "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (from Colossians 2:9, KJV). Jesus was truly God in the flesh (John 1:14). As a result of their philosophical concepts—that the body is evil, for example—the Gnostics ignored or diminished the significance of the historic facts of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ because it was so apparent. To them, all the secrets of God were in the mind or only appeared within an immaterial identity.

Circumcision. Circumcision is the cutting off of the foreskin. Jewish baby boys are circumcised at 8 days old. Mosaic Law mandated this. (Leviticus 12:3). Circumcision marked males as a belonging of God, and it was supposed to be more than an outward sign, signifying complete devotion to God

(Deuteronomy 10:16). When Gentiles began turning to Jesus, a big discussion arose as to whether Gentile Christian men needed to be circumcised. Paul pointed out that uncircumcised Gentiles had come to Christ simply by grace through faith. No one came to Christ through anything else. Because no one was able to keep the law to perfection, it was obvious that the law, including circumcision, did not save anyone. Today, many baby boys are circumcised though not necessarily for religious reasons. Studies have shown the circumcised males are less likely to get sexually transmitted diseases when exposed to them and other potential conditions. As a result, circumcision is sometimes done as a preventative measure.

Background

Throughout his ministry as the spiritual father of the Gentile church, Paul wrote letters of correction, gave instructions, and built up the faith of the body of Christ. It was especially important for him to do this in locations whose congregations had not yet met him. In the letter to the Colossians, his purpose was to refute heretical teachings (including a form of Gnosticism) that were influencing believers and thereby causing confusion. Paul's references to circumcision, food regulations, and feast days indicate that this heresy involved Judaistic tendencies. Instead of refuting the false teachings point by point, Paul gives encouragement in laying out a clear argument that all things are fulfilled in the person of Christ. He stresses that all wisdom and spiritual understanding can be found in the God-Man, Christ, who redeemed them and now holds authority over all things.

At-A-Glance

1. Warnings Against Strange Teachings (Colossians 2:6–8)
 2. Fullness of Life in Christ (vv. 9–10)
 3. Believers Are Complete in Christ (vv. 11–15)

In Depth

1. Warnings Against Strange Teachings (Colossians 2:6–8)

Paul warns members of this part of the family against deception: Arguments that may sound rational on the surface run counter to what they had accepted by faith in Christ. When the Colossians encounter arguments that oppose Christ, he does not want these children of God to lose heart or abandon their grounding. Therefore, Paul affirms that they have received Christ Jesus as Lord and should live their lives planted, rooted, and established in Him alone. As Paul told the church at Ephesus, their spiritual growth needs to develop so they are not “tossed to and fro ... with every wind of doctrine” (from Ephesians 4:14, KJV). As Peter does in 1 Peter 5:9–10, Paul implores the Colossian and Laodicean churches to stand firm, stick to what they have been taught, and continue to have a thankful heart. Sternly but lovingly, he warns them not to be captivated by philosophy and rhetoric fashioned in human traditions and seated in worldly ideology. Paul then alludes to what he has heard from Epaphras and Timothy concerning the messages disseminated among these congregants. The information is believed by scholars to be a mixture of Jewish tradition and Gnostic philosophy. One of the enemy's greatest tricks is to distort the truth of God by planting a seed of doubt. If the devil, through strange doctrine and heresy, can catch members in isolation, he does his greatest damage. Thus, to help them assist in each other's spiritual growth and to stay grounded in the faith, Paul tackles the issues by encouraging believers to remain faithful and stay connected.

2. Fullness of Life in Christ (vv. 9–10)

Paul continues this discourse with his church family in Colosse by reemphasizing what he said in chapter 1 in a slightly different manner. In Colossians 1:15–20, he details that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God and that all things in heaven and on Earth were created by Him and for

Him. In doing this, he emphasizes the supremacy of Christ over any other religious figure or ideology. He places Christ in His rightful position as head of the church and explains that it pleased the Father that all the fullness of God dwell in Him (1:19). Paul revisits this point in chapter 2 by informing believers that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and is fully divine (2:9). This church family is exhorted to stand firm and know that because of its faith in Jesus Christ alone and because people in that family live for His glory, they are complete in His fullness. He alone is above all rule and authority in heaven and on Earth. Because of their connection to Christ, they have access to the fullness of God the Father by the Holy Spirit. Ministry is at its best when a leader can point the way through the power of the Word to build a community of believers confident in the Son of the Living God.

3. Believers Are Complete in Christ (vv. 11–15)

Every Jewish male was circumcised to show devotion to God. But although a man may have been circumcised as a baby, he may not try to please God when he is an adult. Just as Deuteronomy 10:16 says, God desires real devotion, not just an outward sign. When we put our complete trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, Paul says we have hearts that are circumcised. Circumcision cuts off a piece of flesh, but receiving Jesus Christ as Savior means Jesus Christ has cut away our old sinful nature. Paul says the rite of circumcision is something like baptism. When we are plunged into the water, our old sinful selves are buried with Jesus. Then we are raised to life by the power of God, through our faith in Him. Paul says it's also like a piece of parchment containing a list of a person's debts. When the debts are paid, the writing is erased. Again, this is just like what Jesus did for us. Imagine all of our sins written on parchment and Jesus erasing them all. In fact, the record of our sins has been nailed to the Cross and no longer exists. The physical act of baptism is not what washes the sins away, just as physical circumcision does not make a man good. Instead, it is our trust in Jesus for His death on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Colossians 2:15 gives us one more picture. When a Roman general had an especially great victory over his enemies, he held a parade. The general and all his proud soldiers marched in front. In the back, pulled by a rope, were the vanquished enemies.

Search the Scriptures

1. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so _____" (Colossians 2:6).
2. "_____ up in him, and _____ in the _____, as ye have been _____, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (v. 7).
3. "For in him _____ all the _____ of the _____ bodily" (v. 9).

Discuss the Meaning

1. What does it mean to walk in Christ Jesus as you have received Him?
2. What can we do as believers to keep ourselves from getting caught up in vain deceit and traditions that have nothing to do with Christ?
3. If Jesus is the Lord of your life, and He is acknowledged as the supreme authority in your life, what does it mean for you to be complete in Christ?

Liberating Lesson

1. Seek in your own life to draw closer to the Lord by further study of what it means to be complete in Christ, who is the fullness of God.
2. God may be on your team, but do you have Him actually playing in the game of your life? Examine areas where you need to give Christ supreme authority.

Application for Activation

Make a list of personal difficulties and the way you have handled them in the past. Make another list of challenges you are facing. What changes are you going to make in your outlook? Your attitude? Your actions?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Colossians 2:6–15

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

This is Paul's thinking: If Christ is sufficient for the believer, then he or she should draw closer to Him. This should not just apply to the believers' entry into the Church, but throughout a believer's lifetime. Paul pairs two concepts in his exhortation: "received" and "walk." Paul's use of "received" mirrors his use of Greek word *paralambano* (par-al-am-BAN-know) elsewhere in his letters. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, he writes about the Gospel in this way: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." In his epistle to the people of Galatia, he uses the word "received" to describe how he came to know the truth of Christ: "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). The way to know Christ is to believe the wonderful message about Him. On this basis, the Holy Spirit is granted to the believer. The word "walk" (Colossians 2:6) refers to the believer's daily life and habits. When paired with the word "received," it refers to a daily resolve to believe the truth about Jesus as proclaimed in the Gospel. What Paul is saying in this verse is, "Believe what we have told you about the Lord, and continue to believe it." As we will see in verse 8, this kind of "receiving" and "walking" is the antidote to deception by those who would lead the believer away from Christ.

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

How is the believer to "walk" in what they have "received" concerning Christ? The KJV translates Paul's words into three agricultural terms that paint a picture of the ongoing Christian life: "rooted," "built up," and "established." In the Greek, the first verb "rooted" is *rhizoo* (hrid-ZO-o), and it means "rendered firm," "fixed," "established," or "having caused a person or thing to be firmly grounded." Other usages of this term appear in Psalm 1. This also brings to mind the seed in the parable of the sower. The plants that withered represent the person who "has no root in himself and does not endure; when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away"

(Matthew 13:21, NET). This is not the case for the believer who is grounded in the truth of the gospel. Such a believer's "walk" remains tied to what they received. The word translated "built up" is epokodomeo (ep-oy-kod-om-EH-o) and it means "to give constant increase in Christian knowledge and in a life conformed thereto." This word refers to how the believer's spiritual understanding develops through communion with Christ and strengthening in His Word. "Established" in the Greek is bebaioo (beb-ah-YO-o), and it means "established," "made firm," or "made sure." This word echoes the concept of being "rooted" and adds the qualifier "in the faith." This faith is the Gospel tradition, which was passed down to the Colossians and sound teaching. Such teaching is described elsewhere as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). "Rooting," "building up," and "establishment in the faith" happen because of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in another reference that combines agriculture with architecture: "Ye are God's husbandry (field), ye are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9b). Then, in his letter to the Colossians, Paul identifies the final element of what it means to walk in Christ: "abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:7). A heart filled with gratitude is a central theme of Paul's instructions to the Colossians. The contentment that enables the believer to remain rooted and established in Christ grows through the disciplined practice of giving thanks. The result is joy!

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The word "spoil" can also be translated "take captive." The danger of the false teaching that enticed the Colossian believers was that it could enslave them to a way of thinking that wasn't grounded in Christ. When Paul refers to "philosophy," he refers to a philosophy that sets itself up as a sort of "special knowledge" that is acquired apart from Jesus. This sort of "philosophy" was called Gnosticism, which claimed that knowledge of the divine could be attained from a variety of gods and spirits. The forerunners of this kind of thinking were clearly already present in Paul's day. The word "vain" in the Greek is kenos (ken-OS) and means "fruitless," or "of no purpose." The Greek word for "deceit" is apate (ap-AT-ay), and it means "delusion," "misinformation" or "falsehood." Such was the "vain deceit" that undermined true Christian piety. This vanity brought nothing of value, and it falsely convinced the believer that Christ was not necessary.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The word "fulness" in Greek is pleroma (PLAY-ro-mah), and it means "that which is put in to fill up," or "abundance." The Greek translation of the phrase "of the Godhead" is theotes (theh-OT-ace), and it means "deity." Why should it be such a tragedy for the Colossians to be "taken captive through philosophy and vain deceit" (v. 8)? In verse 9, Paul answers: Christ possesses the very fullness of God, and therefore any system not founded on Him has missed the very things it seeks to provide. This includes wisdom, virtue, access to God, and life-giving power. All of these are to be found in Jesus, for only in Him does the very life of God dwell. Verse 9 references the redemption that Paul has written about in verses 11–15. Christ's dual nature as God and human makes Him uniquely able to satisfy the righteousness and justice of God and uniquely able, through the Cross, to identify with fallen humanity. Paul is concerned with vain philosophy in that they negate Christ as the foundation of all wisdom and truth. He cares most deeply about the redemption of the world. And for this reason also, he preaches to the Colossians the glories of Christ, considering how their captivity to a different philosophy could mean the loss of their very souls.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Here is the final answer to counter the temptation to follow empty philosophies and ways of life that oppose Christ: "Ye are complete in him." What more does Paul need to say to the Colossians? For everything they are tempted to seek outside of Christ is found in Him. Paul knows this because of the

fullfledged authority that the Father has given to His Son. Jesus is “the head of all principality and power.” This means that the promise of Christ’s fullness is not an empty promise made by an impotent ruler. There is a sharing between the Lord of the universe and those who are in union with Him. In Him are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge according to the mystery of the Gospel, to all who call upon His name.

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Many Jewish men thought of circumcision as merely a mark of their ethnicity. But even from the beginning, Moses told the people that they must be circumcised in the heart as well as the flesh (Deuteronomy 30:6). This was to be a sign of complete devotion to God. Now that Gentiles were coming to Christ, the question arose as to whether they too needed to be circumcised. No, Paul said. Christ Jesus circumcised the hearts of all people when they came to Him. It did not matter whether they were circumcised in the flesh. Jesus Christ circumcised them by cutting out the sins within them. This is what Jesus has done for us. Jesus has cut out that part of us that delights in sinning. We may still sin, but now when we do, it is very painful or uncomfortable and leaves us with guilt and perhaps regret. Instead of circumcision, the Christian has the rite of baptism. Going down into the water symbolizes death, just as Jesus Christ died on the Cross. Our old sinful self is now dead. When we come up out of the water, we are raised with Christ. We are all brand new, sharing this experience with our risen Lord. No rite can save a person, not circumcision or baptism. Baptism is only a symbol, and we pray that the experience is true in the life of the one baptized. William Barclay paraphrases it this way: “The only true circumcision is when a man dies and rises with Christ in baptism, in such a way that it is not part of his body which is cut away but his whole sinful self which is destroyed, and he is filled with newness of life and the very holiness of God” (The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, 140).

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Without Jesus Christ, we are truly dead in our sins. We have no hope for eternity. We have no power to overcome sin today. And we are dead because we are punished for all the sinful things we have said, thought, and done. We were as dead as the dry bones of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1–10). Though we were dead in our sins, Jesus Christ has raised us to life. He has forgiven all our sins—past, present, and future. Now we see another picture (v. 14). A merchant might write on parchment all the debts a person owes. The Greek word for “handwriting” is cheirographon (khi-ROG-raf-on) and is similar to the modern phrase “I owe you.” All of our sins are listed on this document, and we have signed it to acknowledge that we have done everything listed. Jews had the Law to show them their sins. Gentiles have a conscience, the Holy Spirit, and Creation to clarify right from wrong (Romans 1:18–32). We all know that we have sinned against God, and we must acknowledge this in order to be saved.

Along with “handwriting” we read the phrase “blotting out.” The Greek for this is exaleipho (ex-al-l-fo). Ancient merchants often wrote on papyrus or the skin of an animal. Both were expensive. So when someone’s debt was paid, the merchant usually took a sponge and wiped it away as if the debt never occurred. This is what God does with our sins. Because of Christ’s death on the Cross for us, God in

His amazing mercy wipes away the record of our sins as if they never occurred. Then Paul gives us one more picture to show the magnitude of God's grace. The list of our sins is not just erased; it is nailed to the Cross. It is Jesus who has received the punishment for the wrong we have done, and we walk free.

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

But Jesus is no longer on the Cross. He is the victor over powerful beings in the unseen world. Despite the forces that are determined to scandalize us, Jesus has overcome them and triumphantly leads with the conquered beings trailing behind.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Those Touched by Jesus
(Matthew 8:1-4)

TUESDAY

Those Called by God
(Acts 2:37-42)

WEDNESDAY

Those Who Are in Christ Jesus
(Romans 8:1-5)

THURSDAY

Those Who Live in the Spirit
(Romans 8:6-11)

FRIDAY

Those Who Love God
(Romans 8:26-30)

SATURDAY

Those Kept in Christ's Love
(Romans 8:31-39)

SUNDAY

Those Who Have Received Christ Jesus
(Colossians 2:6-15)