

Title: **COLOSSIANS**
 “Christ is All”

Text: Colossians 3:11

Subject: *The Message of Colossians*

Date: Tuesday Evening—April 27, 2004

Tape # Y-15b

Readings: *Larry Brown — Bob Duff*

Introduction:

Three words are found in Colossians 3:11 that need to emblazoned upon the hearts of all who would seek to understand, interpret, and proclaim the message of Holy Scripture. Those three, simple, one syllable words are — “*Christ is all!*”

These three words are the essence and substance of all true Christianity. Christ is the foundation of all true doctrine and motive for all godliness. Christ is the message of all true preaching and the object of all true worship. In what sense does the Holy Spirit mean for us to understand that “*Christ is all!*”? How far are we to take those words? — In all things concerning our souls, eternity, the will of God, the knowledge of God, and the glory of God “*Christ is all.*” The book of Colossians is all about Christ, our all-glorious Savior.

This letter to the church at Colosse was written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, about thirty years after our Savior died at Calvary. Paul wrote this epistle about the same time that he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon.

We do not know who first brought the gospel to the city of Colosse. Though some in this assembly had never seen Paul's face (2:1), Luke tells us that some years earlier he and Paul went throughout the region of Phrygia (Asia Minor) preaching the gospel (Acts 16:6 and 28:23). While preaching in that region, many were converted by the grace of God and turned from their idols to worship the true and living God (Acts 19:11, 22, and 26).

After he had sown the seed of the gospel, Satan sowed his tares among the wheat. As it is now it was then. — Wherever Paul preached the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, work mongers came behind him preaching freewill/works religion.

When the pastor of the church, Epaphras (called Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25 and 4:18), came to visit Paul in Rome, He told Paul of the faithfulness of God's saints at Colosse and of his concern for their souls because of the heretics who sought to corrupt the gospel and turn the hearts of the saints away from Christ. They came in the name of Christ, pretending to be the servants of Christ, but they were in reality the messengers of Satan...

- Judaizers tried to mix law and grace, mingling Moses and Christ, teaching that works must play some part in salvation.

- Others sought to corrupt the gospel by mixing vain philosophy with the revelation of God, teaching for doctrine the commandments, superstitions, and reasonings of men.
- Some even taught the veneration (worship) of angels and saints, and taught for mortification the punishing of the body!
- Still others crept among God’s saints, teaching the proud Gnostic notion that salvation is to be attained by knowledge, teaching that men arrived at Christ by knowledge.
- They all preached righteousness. — They all called it the righteousness of Christ, but the message they preached was the righteousness of man, a righteousness that was ultimately gained by something man must do, experience, feel, or know. It was not that righteousness sinners have by faith alone.

Paul, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, wrote this epistle to confirm God’s elect in the gospel of Christ, to warn them of the heresies by which Satan’s messengers sought to pervert the gospel, and to urge them to *“continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”* (1:23).

AN ENCOURAGING SALUTATION

This letter, like most of Paul’s epistles, opens with a gracious, encouraging salutation (1:1-8).

(Colossians 1:1) “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother.”

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.”
— Paul refers to himself as “*an apostle of Jesus Christ,*” not “the apostle of Jesus Christ.” John the Baptist was the voice by which God spoke to men in his day. Paul was one voice among many; and he looked upon himself that way. In the beginning of this gospel age there were twelve apostles. Paul was the apostle born out of season, the one God had chosen to take Judas’ place.

1. The apostles were men chosen by Christ.
2. They saw the Lord personally.
3. They had infallible knowledge of the gospel as they wrote the words of Holy Scripture, being inspired by the Holy Spirit.
4. They were gifted to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine.
5. When the last of the apostles went to glory, the apostolic age and the apostolic gifts by which the apostles were identified as God’s inspired messengers, ended.

This was all done “**by the will of God.**” There are no apostles in the church today. There are many preachers sent as messengers of God to his people, but there are no apostles.

Read on — “And Timothy, our brother.” Though Timothy was not an apostle, Paul included him in this salutation because God’s servants are all brethren, fellow-laborers, and workers together in his vineyard. Commenting on this verse Pastor Henry Mahan wrote, “The highest office-bearer in the church recognizes even the least as being a brother and worthy of respect and recognition. In Christ we are one, and he that is greatest is but a servant.” They are not rivals! There is no such thing as “Big Me” and “Little You” in the kingdom of God.

(Colossians 1:2) “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.” — All believers are saints (sanctified men and women). All believers are faithful. And all believers are brethren. We are sanctified by God the Father in election, God the Son in redemption and God the Holy Spirit in the new birth. We are brethren because we have the same Father, because we are in one body and family and because we have one elder brother, Christ Jesus. All who are born of God are “in Christ.” We are saints, we are brethren, and we are faithful only because we are “*in Christ.*”

“Grace be unto you and peace.” — First grace. Then peace. Believers seek that which is best for one another and truly wish one another well. We cannot desire

anything better for anyone than this: “*Grace be unto you, and peace.*”

- Grace saves you. Peace makes you know that you are saved.
- Grace is the root of every blessing. Peace is the flower that makes life sweet and fragrant. I pray that God will grant you both grace and peace.—

“Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”— There is no grace for anyone and no peace except that which is freely bestowed upon needy sinners by God the Father through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Colossians 1:3-5) “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints, 5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”

“We give thanks to God.” — Because grace, peace, faith and love, and all things pertaining to salvation are the gifts of God, he alone is to be thanked and praised for them. It is right for us to recognize and commend these things in our brothers and sisters in Christ; but thanks and praise goes to our God alone (Ps. 103:1-5; John 3:37; James 1:17). Every gift of grace is from God through our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:27; James 1:17).

Faith, hope and love always go hand in hand. Where one is found, the other two are always present. All are the gifts of God’s grace.

- Faith is that gift of grace that unites us to Christ and gives us peace with God.
- Love is that gift of grace that unites us to one another and gives us peace.
- Hope is that gift of grace that unites us to eternity and gives us peace.

(Colossians 1:5-6) “...Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”

We do not know the grace of God in truth unless it brings forth fruit in us. We may know it in our heads, but we do not it unless it in truth, we do not really know it at all, if it does not affect our lives, and bring forth faith love, and hope: — faith, which lifts us above the world; — love, which preserves us from selfishness; — and hope, which keeps us up under all trials. A mere head knowledge is of no value. I want to know my Savior in my heart! When God the Holy Spirit makes the gospel we have heard sink down in our hearts, revealing Christ in us, then, we know the grace of God in truth and give thanks and praise to God!

“DEAR FELLOWSERVANT”

Now, watch this. **In verses 7 and 8, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to commend to this church their beloved pastor, thereby encouraging them to highly esteem him and hear him.**

(Colossians 1:7-8) “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.”

- He was Paul’s fellow-servant.
- He was a faithful minister of Christ.
- He loved and spoke well of those people whose souls he served.

When I read these two verses again, they did my heart good. How I rejoiced to read of Epaphras speaking well of God’s people and of Paul speaking well of Epaphras! Most, these days, seem to think godliness requires them to pick holes in the armor of others, point out their faults, and castigate them for their failures. Grace teaches men who experience it better. Grace teaches us to...

- Honor our brethren.
- Cover their faults.
- Extol their virtues.
- Forgive their offenses.
- And help them (lift them up) when they fall.

Paul made it his business to remind the saints at Colosse what a great blessing of God they had in their faithful pastor and promoted his honor in their eyes. Every preacher ought to follow his example when speaking of other faithful pastors (4:12-13).

(Col 4:12-13) “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (13) For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis.”

FIT FOR HEAVEN

In verses 9-14, the apostle Paul declares that the Lord our God has, by the almighty, effectual operation of his grace made us fit for heaven.

Lest you imagine that I have overstated what the passage says, read verse 12 for yourself.

(Colossians 1:12) “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Rejoice, my brother! Give thanks, my sister! Sing praise to God! He has made us fit for heaven! Now, look at verses 9-17 with me.

(Colossians 1:9-11) “For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; *10* That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; *11* Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;”

Pastor Epaphras spoke to Paul in glowing terms of the Colossian saints, of their faith and hope in Christ and their love for Christ, his gospel, and his people. Here, Paul tells these saints, “Since the day Bro. Epaphras came here and told me about you and God’s grace in you, I have not ceased to give thanks to God for you and have not ceased to pray for God’s grace ever to be upon you and work in you.”

“That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will.”
— His Revealed Will! — His Purposed Will! — His Providential Will! — His Redemptive Will! — Paul prayed not only that they might have a knowledge of these, but that they might be “*filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*”

“That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” — This is talking about our godly conduct and behavior in the church, in our homes, on the job and on the street. Let us seek to live, and walk and talk as

those who are in Christ, seeking to please and glorify God.

“Being fruitful in every good work.” — Believers are trees of righteousness, planted by the Lord to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to walk in good works in the kingdom of Christ (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 2:10).

“Increasing in the knowledge of God.” — We honor God by believing him and by living for him as we grow in the knowledge of him. We cannot grow in grace if we do not grow in knowledge of Christ. And we cannot grow in the knowledge of Christ without growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18).

“Strengthened with all might according to the glorious power.” — We do not and cannot attain these things or do these things by our own strength and power, but by his (2 Cor. 12:9).

Now, look at verse 12 again. How I wish I could expound the marvelous wonders of grace here declared!

(Colossians 1:12) “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The Lord our God has, by his almighty, free, saving grace in Christ, qualified us, has made us fit, to enter into and possess heaven itself, the bright and glorious

inheritance of the saints. By nature we are fit for hell. Grace has made us fit for heaven! (Read 1 Cor. 1:30.)

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Read verses 13 and 14, and you will see how he did it.

(Colossians 1:13-14) “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.”

WHAT A GREAT SAVIOR

Now, having just mentioned God’s grace and God’s great salvation in Christ, Paul seems to go off on a tangent. He seems to go wild with excitement. He was

so enthusiastic with regard to Christ and his great atoning sacrifice that the very thought of Christ's blood stirred his blood. If you read the chapter as it ought to be read, observing its grammatical structure, it seems that Paul wrote verses 15-29 like a man whose hand was on fire. He could not write fast enough or express himself adequately. He was enrapt in his subject, raptured in his soul, as he began to write about Christ.

Having barely declared what Christ did for us at Calvary, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to extol, magnify, honor and praise him as our all-glorious Savior and Lord (1:15-29).

Several years ago Bro. Bob Poncer read these fifteen verses in my office one night before we had prayer together. As soon as he finished reading them, Bro. Merle Hart quietly exclaimed, "What a great Savior!" That is as good a summary of the passage as I have ever seen or heard. Here Paul is showing us what a great Savior our Lord Jesus Christ is. Throughout the chapter, he plays a symphony on just one string—"HE!"

- **Christ is exactly what God is, for he is God. And he is that One, the only One in whom God is seen and known.** He who is "*the image of the invisible God*" (1:15) and "*the express image of his person*" (Heb. 1:3) is himself God (John 1:1-3). — "*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. 2:9)

- **He is the firstborn of every creature** (1:15). That is to say, he is “*the Beginning of the creation of God*” (Rev. 3:14). We know that is what this means because the next verse, verse 16, tells us so...

(Verse 16) “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

- **He is the Creator of all things.**
- **Our Savior is eternal, the eternal God.** — “*He is before all things and by him all things consist*” (1:17).
- **He is the Head of the Church.** — The Beginning Of All Things! — The Firstborn From The Dead! — The Upholder of All Things! — **That He Might Have The Pre-Eminence.** — “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*” (1:18).
- **Christ is Fulness** (1:19) — “*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*” — All Divine Fulness (Col. 2:9). — All Mediatoral Fulness! — All Covenant Fulness! — All Saving Fulness! — All Everlasting Fulness! — Undiminshable Fulness!

- **He is Reconciliation** (1:20-22). It is Christ who has reconciled all the elect to God in redemption and who reconciles them to God in conversion, and who shall reconcile all things to the glory of God in eternity. That is to say, he will cause all things to show forth the praise of God forever (Rev. 5:13-14).

(Verse 20) “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.”—.

(Verse 21) “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled”

(Verse 22) “In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”

- **Christ is our hope of glory** (1:27). — Christ is the One “*whom*” we preach, because he is the revelation of the great mystery hid in ages past under the types and shadows of the law, and hidden from all unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:3-4), but is revealed in every believer as our only and all-sufficient hope of glory.

(Col 1:23-29) “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am

made a minister; (24) Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: (25) Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; (26) *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: (27) To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (28) Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (29) Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

In chapter 2 Paul shows us that Christ is a complete Savior. In chapter 2 he shows us that every believer is complete in him.

Many had crept into the church who denied the gospel of Christ and, with great subtlety, endeavored to turn the people of God away from “*the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Cor. 11:3). **In Colossians 2:1-15 Paul communicates his concern to the Colossians and instructs them to be steadfast in the faith of Christ.**

The instruction Paul gives in these verses is most applicable to the church today. Many today would turn

us away from the simplicity that is in Christ. They tell us that we must have more than Christ, do more than simply trust Christ, experience more than the grace of God in Christ, and seek more than the fulness that is in Christ. Any **doctrine that turns you away from Christ, any doctrine that turns your eyes away from Christ, is not of God.** I admonish you to flee from such doctrine as you would flee the plague. **That doctrine that turns you away from Christ will land your soul in hell!**

“In (him) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). — God has put all the riches of grace and glory, all the treasures of divine wisdom and spiritual knowledge, in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Do not look for God's mercy, grace and righteousness anywhere but in Christ. All the knowledge of God, and everything pertaining to salvation, is in Christ (1 John 5:12, 20).

1 John 5:12 “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

1 John 5:20 “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”

“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words” (2:4). — Satan tries to sow seeds of error wherever the gospel of Christ is preached. His

messengers do not openly deny Christ and salvation by grace. They mix the work of Christ with the works of men. They mix law and grace. And if Satan can get you to look to yourself and trust your own works, experiences, feelings, or emotions even partially he has ruined your soul altogether (Gal. 5:2, 4).

Though Paul was absent from them physically, his heart was with the people of God. Their orderly manner of life, orderly worship, and steadfastness in the faith of Christ caused him great joy (2:5). These men and women had not yet been moved away from the hope of the gospel. And Paul was very concerned to do what he could to promote their continued steadfastness. His instructions are very simple and clear, but vital to the interests of their souls.

“AS” AND “SO”

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (2:6). — How did you first receive Christ? You received him by faith alone, without any works whatsoever of your own. You had no experiences, upon which to lean, no works, no feelings, no resolutions. You had nothing to bring to Christ but your sin. You received Christ alone as the sum and substance of all truth, the fulfillment of all promises, the fountain of all grace, the singular object of faith and love, and the only foundation of your hope before God. You trusted his blood alone for atonement, his righteousness alone for acceptance, and his intercession alone for salvation.

In exactly the same manner as you first received Christ, now walk in him.

Continue living by the same faith, as a sinner trusting Christ alone for all things. If you get above this, you will forsake Christ altogether! We do not begin with Christ, and then go on to perfection in the strength of the flesh. The true believer begins by faith, lives by faith, and dies by faith, trusting Christ, only Christ, and nothing but Christ, all the way from the gates of hell to his entrance into glory. If you would live in faith, constantly trusting Christ, you must be...

“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (2:7). Like a tree, deeply rooted in the ground, faith takes hold of Christ, draws all strength, nourishment and life from him, and bears fruit by the constant supply of his grace. As a building is built upon and shaped according to its foundation, the believer is built upon Christ alone, and his life is molded to Christ. **Child of God, see to it that you abound in this faith.** Never forsake it. Never weary of it. Never look for any other source of comfort, strength, hope, or assurance than faith in Christ. Trusting Christ alone, you have abundant reason for thanksgiving before God. But there are many who would turn you away from the simplicity of the faith.

BEWARE

“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” (2:8). Do not allow anyone to turn you away from Christ by a show of intellectualism, philosophy and human reason. Our faith must be ruled by the Word of God alone. We build our doctrine only upon *“Thus saith the LORD.”*

Let no one impose upon you the traditions of men, no matter how impressive and popular they are. There is no place for human tradition in the worship of the living God. Exactly in proportion as we receive the traditions of men, we depart from the worship of God. (Infant Baptism — Baby Dedications — Religious Entertainment — Christmas Plays — Easter Rituals, etc.)

And you must never allow anyone to bring you back under the “rudiments of the world,” Mosaic ordinances. The rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law: circumcision, abstaining from certain meats, sabbath observance, and all such things, were altogether typical. Christ has fulfilled them all. Any observance of such things today is sinful. All true worship is spiritual. God is not worshipped where dead men and women observe dead, carnal ordinances. There is absolutely no need for men to observe these things, seek any other foundation of hope before God, or look anywhere else for acceptance with God. Christ is all we need!

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9). — Oh, how I wish I could communicate this one blessed truth to you! All that God is is in Christ, for he is himself God. All that God requires of sinners is in Christ. All that God gives to men and women is in Christ. And all that we can need, or desire, for time and eternity, is in Christ. All grace, all mercy, all love, all peace, all wisdom, all righteousness, all redemption, all sanctification, all salvation, all life is in Christ alone! And it is all in him in all fulness. You cannot add anything to his fulness! Now get these next words...

“And are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (2: 10). — The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of all things. By virtue of his obedience to God as our Mediator, Christ has been given the place of supremacy, dominion and rule over the entire universe. And all who believe are complete in him. **As all the fulness of the triune Godhead resides in Christ our Mediator, so all the fulness of Christ, the Mediator, is ours by faith; and we are complete in him.**

IN HIM

What does it mean to be in Christ? Many answers are given to that question in the Word of God. We who believe are in Christ by God's elective purpose. We are in the heart of our Savior's love, in the hand of his protective power, and in the eye of his constant care.

Here Paul tells us what it is to be in Christ experimentally.

- **To be in Christ is to be born again, by God's sovereign grace** (2: 11).

Colossians 2:11 “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.”

Here the new birth is represented by the picture of circumcision. Circumcision was instituted by God as the token and seal of his covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:10-13). It was a mark by which Israel was distinguished from all other nations. And it is a picture of what happens in a man's heart in regeneration (Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3). **In the Old Testament a child was named at the time of his circumcision** (Luke 1:59; 2:21). And in regeneration we have been given a new name. We have been made the sons of God (Gal. 4:6-7; 1 John 3:1-3). **Circumcision gave the children of Israel the right to eat the passover** (Ex. 12:48). **But this spiritual circumcision is made without hands**. It is altogether a matter of the heart. It is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

- **To be in Christ is to trust him** (2:12).

Colossians 2:12 “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.”

All who are born of God are given faith in Christ. The one certain mark of the new birth is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And faith in Christ is publicly confessed by believer’s baptism. Baptism is the ordinance of God by which we confess the faith of the gospel. It is **described by Paul as a burial and a resurrection** (Rom. 6:4-6).

In baptism, we confess to the world our faith in the finished work of Christ and our allegiance to him as our sovereign Lord. And this faith in Christ, which we confess in our baptism, is the gift of the operation of God (Eph. 2:8), the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and the effectual work of his omnipotent grace in regeneration (Eph. 1:19).

- **To be in Christ is to be the object and recipient of God's immutable, saving grace in him** (2:13-15).

Colossians 2:13-15 “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 show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

When God raised his Son from the dead, he was raised as our Representative. Christ lived, died and rose again as the Representative and Substitute of God's elect. And, as the result of his finished work, the blessings of God's saving grace have been effectually secured to his people. We all by nature are born dead in sin, because of our sin and fall in our father Adam (Rom. 5:12). But God has been gracious to us through Christ. Look at what he has done for us.

He quickened us, gave us life and raised us up, together with Christ. That means two things: (1.) When Christ arose from the dead, we rose in him representatively. And (2.) In the new birth, we were raised from spiritual death to spiritual life by the power of Christ, our risen Savior.

God has freely, completely forgiven us of all sin, through the merits of Christ's righteousness and shed blood. All our sins, past, present and future, all our sins, sins of youth and old age, sins of omission and sins of commission, sins of deed and sins of heart, all are freely and eternally forgiven by God through the merits of Christ our Substitute.

And God's forgiveness of our sins is a just and righteous forgiveness. He does not simply ignore or excuse our sins. He removed our sins from us entirely by punishing them to the full extent of his own justice in Christ (Rom. 3:24-26). The oracles and ordinances of God's holy law, being broken by us, were against us.

The law of God demanded our execution. But Christ, by his blood, blotted out the law's accusations, and blotted out all our sins, nailing them to his cross (Isa. 43:25; 44:22). Blessed be God! *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1).

Are you, or are you not in Christ? If you knew the value of your soul, if you knew the riches of his grace, if you knew the love of Christ, you would give no rest to your eyes until you found yourself to be in Christ. God help you to seek him. If you seek him with all your heart, you will find him. If you are in Christ, it is all because of God's free grace toward you. And if you are in Christ, **“Ye are complete in him.”**

COMPLETE IN HIM

What does it mean to be complete in Christ? The word “*complete*” means “entire, finished, made full, perfect.” Essentially, it is the same word used in verse 9, where Paul says, *“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* As all the fulness of the eternal God is Christ's, all the fulness of Christ as the Mediator and for sinners is yours and mine. This is astonishing grace indeed!

Now, let me briefly show you from the Word of God a little of what it means to be complete in Christ. I cannot begin to explain the full meaning of those words. But if

the Lord will enable me, I hope to give you great cause for faith, joy and praise.

- **If I am complete in Christ, I have in Christ all that God requires of man** (1 Cor. 1:30).

1 Corinthians 1:30 “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”

Whatever God, in his holiness, righteousness, justice and truth, requires of fallen men, we have in Christ. God cannot require more than he has given us in Christ. When he gave us his dear Son, our heavenly Father freely gave us all things in his Son.

- **If I am in Christ I possess all that God can or will bestow upon man** (Eph. 1:3).

God is the Author and Giver of all blessings. He alone can bless. If he blesses not, none can bless. But if he blesses, we are blessed indeed. And Paul tells us plainly that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Note the word “*all*” in Ephesians 1:3. Nothing good, nothing of real spiritual value, nothing we require is

omitted. All the fulness of grace, all the blessings of the covenant, all the sure mercies of God, all things pertaining to life and godliness, in this world and in the world to come, have been bestowed upon all who trust the Son of God.

This is what it means to be complete in Christ. In him we have been given justification, sanctification, peace, pardon, eternal life and title deed to heaven. And all these blessings were given to us irrevocably, by the gift of God's sovereign grace in Christ, before the world began!

We are members of Christ. He is our Head and Representative. We are members of his body and partakers of him. We are blessed in him, through him, and for his sake. And Christ himself is the Substance of all blessing and blessedness.

- Christ received the blessings of grace in our name in the covenant of grace.
- All the blessings bestowed upon us are dependent upon Christ's obedience, not ours.
- And we already possess every blessing of grace in Christ (Rom. 8:28-30).

We may not yet enjoy all the blessings of the covenant experimentally, but they are all already ours in Christ. And as surely as he has received them for us, we shall in time receive them from him.

This is the glorious heritage of the sons of God. **“Ye are complete in him!”** There is nothing lacking. Everything God can or will give to man he has from eternity given to all who are in Christ. And every blessing of grace in Christ is secure to all God's elect forever.

- **If am in Christ, I am complete in him. That means I have in Christ all that I need to carry me through this world and bring me safe to heaven** (Isa. 40:29; 2 Pet. 2:9).

Isaiah 40:29 “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”

2 Peter 2:9 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

I do not know what lies ahead, what forces of darkness lay in wait for me, what trials or temptations shall meet me. But this I know — **my Lord's grace is sufficient!**

- No matter what I need of earthly good, my God shall supply my need (Phil. 4:19).
- No matter what temptation I meet, my God shall give me grace to escape it (1 Cor. 10:13).
- No matter what trial I face, my God shall sustain me with grace to endure the trial (Isa. 41:10).

(Isaiah 41:10) “Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I

will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

- No matter how I may fail him, sin against him, and dishonor his name, as I often do, my faithful Savior shall not fail me.

Fail him, I often do. Fail me, he never shall! He will lift me up when I fall. He will pray for me when I am tempted. He will plead for me when I sin. He will preserve me and keep me to the end and bring me safe to heaven. If left to myself, I know, I would forsake him. But, blessed be his name, Christ will not leave me to myself! (Jer. 32:38-40).

Jeremiah 32:38-40 “And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

- **Once more, being complete in Christ, I shall have all that I need to satisfy my heart in the world to come** (Pro.10:24).

Proverbs 10:24 “The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

Child Of God, what do you desire?

- Do you desire to be free from all sin? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to be perfectly obedient to Christ? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to know, love and worship Christ perfectly? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to be like Christ entirely? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to be free of all fear? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to be free of all trouble? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to see the glory of God your Savior? It shall be granted.
- Do you desire to glorify your beloved Lord? It shall be granted.

Whatever it is that your renewed, sanctified heart desires, shall be granted to you in heaven's eternal glory. If even one small desire were left unfulfilled, would not be complete in Christ. But *“ye are complete in him.”*

PRACTICAL RESULTS

What are the practical results of our being complete in Christ? Are you in Christ, united to him by a living union of faith? If you are, you are complete in him. I want you to know that before God, in the sight of God, you are complete, perfect, full, and entire. You lack

nothing! Let no man set as judge over you, beguile you with false doctrine, bring you into bondage, move you from your steadfastness, or turn your eyes away from Christ.

- **If we are complete in Christ we are entirely free in him** (Col. 2:16-23).

Colossians 2:16-23 “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

- We are entirely free from the curse of God's holy law (2:14).

- We are entirely free from the rule of the Mosaic law as a system of life government or motivation for service to God.
- And, being in Christ, we are entirely free from the traditions, commandments, and doctrines of men (2:20-22).

We are complete in Christ. What do we care for the opinions of men? Christ is our only Lord, Master, and Lawgiver. We obey none but him. Christ is our only Prophet. We get our doctrine and practices from no one but him. Our religion is the religion of Christ. We have no regard for the religion of men.

- **If we are complete in Christ, we should be steadfast in him** (2:8-9).

Colossians 2:8-9 “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.”

Though others are carried about with every wind of doctrine, seeking new, deeper, more emotional experiences, we are content to seek the old paths and walk in them (Jer. 6:16).

Jeremiah 6:16 “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the

good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”

Nothing is more exciting to our hearts than that which is most substantial. Only those who have no sure foundation for their souls need to be constantly seeking some new experience.

- **Being complete in Christ, we have a settled assurance of our acceptance and eternal salvation in him.**

Our assurance before God is not based in any way upon anything done, felt, or experienced by us. We delight in times of reviving, in the sweet manifestations of Christ to our hearts, those blessed times of spiritual communion with our God. We delight in those times when the Spirit of God comes upon us enables us to worship and serve him with exceptional liberty. There is no experience on earth so delightful to my as that of being enabled to preach the gospel with the power of the Spirit, or worship God in the Spirit. But our hope and assurance rests in none of these things. Our assurance is Christ alone (2 Tim. 1:12).

HEARTS SET

All believers are one with Christ; “*and ye are complete in him.*” He is our hope. We are dead, buried, and risen with him. Therefore, Paul admonishes us to put off the old and to put on the new (1:27; 2:10, 12; 3:1-11),

setting our hearts upon those great, glorious things above, which he has been declaring to us in chapters 1 and 2, realizing that “*Christ is all and in all.*”

(Col 3:1-4) “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (4) When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

As was his custom, Paul concludes the book of Colossians (chapters 3 and 4) by giving us very practical applications of gospel doctrine. Our union with Christ demands that we set our hearts on him, devoting ourselves to his honor in our daily lives (3:1-8; Rom. 12:1-2), in the church of God (3:9-17), in our homes (3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9), and in the world (4:2-6).

Let no one imagine that God’s boundless, free grace in Christ leads to licentiousness. It is the love and grace of God that we have experienced that constrains both to love and serve one another and to love, serve, and honor him. It is precisely Paul’s argument. Because “*Christ is all and in all*” we are inspired and motivated to these things to the glory of God our Savior (3:11-17).

(Col 3:12-17) “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13)

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. (14) And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Amen.