

Series: *Colossians 2 – Truth Above All*

Title: "And You Are Complete in Him" (Colossians 2:9-10)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 6/5/2011

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Introduction

In the present part of our study of the book of Colossians, we have been focusing on the Apostle Paul's great statement about our need to put up, and keep up, a solid battle front against Satan's triple threat to the Christian and the church – and not only our need to do this, but also how to do it. Today will be our final message on this section, and I want to read these verses for you once again as we begin today. Colossians chapter two, beginning at verse four:

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 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. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Now in this chapter, the Apostle Paul outlines for us the three threats or weapons that Satan always uses against the church. Those three weapons are worldly philosophy, legalism, and man-made doctrines. If you take an objective look at the long history of the church, you will find that almost every time the

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church has gotten into spiritual trouble, the trouble has had to do with at least one of these three things, and often more than one of them in combination.

Christ the Way

Now if you have been following this series of studies you may recall that the book of Colossians breaks down into three major sections, or a three-point outline. And I have referred to that outline as a "John 14:6 outline". In that great verse in the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus Christ declares, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father, except through Me." And the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians emphasizes those same three tremendous facts about the Lord Jesus Christ. In Colossians chapter one, Paul declares to us in marvelous detail the fact that Jesus Christ is the Way, the only way for sinful man to be reconciled to a holy God.

Christ the Truth

In chapter two, the chapter we are dealing with at present, the Apostle Paul declares that Jesus Christ is the Truth, and that all these weapons of Satan – worldly philosophy, legalism, and man-made doctrines – all of these things stand in opposition to the Truth as it is found only in Jesus Christ.

And Paul is telling us that we need to put up, and keep up, a solid battle front against Satan's lying strategies and tactics that stand in opposition to the Truth.

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Imperatives for the Christian and the Church

And so Paul gives us five imperatives of the Christian faith that are absolutely necessary in the battle. Today we are going to focus on the last of these five imperatives, but I want to put all five of them before you once again, you so that you will have them clearly in your mind. All of these imperatives center on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ because He is the object of Satan's attacks. It is through worldly philosophy that Satan sows the seeds of confusion about the person of Jesus Christ. It is through legalism that Satan sows the seeds of denial of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. It is through man-made doctrines that Satan sows the seeds of denial of the lordship of Jesus Christ. And so, in Colossians chapter two, we have these five imperatives, all centering on Christ:

The first imperative, in verse six of Colossians chapter two, is this: Paul tells us that in order to meet Satan's triple threat we must walk an enlightened walk *in Christ*: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

Secondly, in verse seven, Paul tells us that in order to meet Satan's triple threat we must grow upon the firm foundation *of Christ*: "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Thirdly, in verse eight, Paul tells us that we must beware of the enemy's forces and the enemy's tactics that *oppose Christ*. "Beware," Paul says, "lest anyone

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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."

Fourthly, in verses nine and ten, Paul gives us a strong declarative statement that puts before us yet another imperative. He says that "in Him [that is, in Jesus Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you [believers] are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." And so the fourth imperative is that we must trust in the *true Christ*, the One who is the complete Savior – the One in whom "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", the One who "is the head of all principality and power."

We saw in our last message that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, existed before any other power or authority. We also saw that Jesus Christ is the creator of all other principalities and powers. We also saw that Jesus Christ, even at this moment, exercises His authority over "all principality and power."

We saw that the Word of God sums up all of this in four words: "Jesus Christ is Lord." "Therefore," Paul says, in Philippians chapter two, verse nine, "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

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Christ the Lord of Salvation

We also saw how this relates to our salvation. Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ means submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ in the matter of our sins.

We must recognize that the eternal Son of God created us. And because that is true, Christ has the right to exercise authority over us. And the exercise of Christ's authority over us must begin with His exercise of authority over the question of the nature of our sins, and the penalty for our sins.

We must recognize that we have sinned against Him. We must say, with David in Psalm 51, "Have mercy upon me, O God... Against You, You only, I have sinned, and done this evil in Your sight" (Psalm 51:1 & 4).

We must recognize what we deserve for our sins. We must say, with the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:23, "Yes, I understand that 'the wages of sin is death' " (Romans 6:23), eternal separation from God in Hell. And I bow before God's righteous judgment that I deserve to die that death.

And, we must recognize that Jesus Christ is the only Way of salvation. And so we can say, "by the grace of God I also understand the rest of Romans 6:23, that 'the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' " Jesus came to earth, "all the fullness of the Godhead in a body," in order to go to the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. He is Lord, and He has said, This is how you must come. There is no other Way. There is no other Truth. There is no other Life.

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The Fifth Imperative: We Must Rest in a Complete Salvation

So those are the first four imperatives. And this brings us now to the fifth and final imperative, which we also find here in Paul's strong declarative statement about Jesus in Colossians chapter two, verses nine and ten. The fifth imperative is this: We must rest in a complete salvation, because we as believers are complete in Christ. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Paul says, "and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

I want you to notice something very interesting about Colossians chapter two. In the verses with which we are dealing, Paul is constantly reminding us of the fact that we Christians, we believers, are "in Christ" – "in Christ". Paul repeats this in various ways throughout the chapter.

In verse five, he commends the Colossian believers for "the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." In verse six, he says that we are to "walk in" Christ. In verse seven, he says that we are to be "rooted and built up in" Christ. In verse ten, he says that we are "complete" in Christ. In verse eleven, he says that in Christ "you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." In verse thirteen, he says that God the Father has made us alive together with Christ, having forgiven us all our trespasses. And in verse twenty, he says that we "died with Christ from the basic principles of the world."

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What Does It Mean to Be Complete in Christ?

This, dear friend, is complete salvation. We are "in Christ" in all of these ways, and many more. Paul says that "you are complete in Him." What does it mean to be "complete in Him"?

Well, in order for you to understand this better, I want to explain something to you about the original language of verse ten. The order of the words in the original Greek is different from the order that we have in our English Bibles, and the meaning is much richer. A literal rendering would be that "you are in Him complete" instead of "you are complete in Him."

Now, why is that important for you to know? The reason is that in the Greek language, word order is very important. And so in this case Paul is placing the emphasis where it belongs. Let me give you the full sentence with the word order as it is in the Greek: "For in Him [in Jesus] dwells as the fullness of the Godhead in a body, and in Him you are complete, who is the head of all principality and power." You see, the emphasis is not merely on the fact that believers are complete. The emphasis is on the fact that it is in Christ, and in Christ alone, that we are complete.

Now, this brings us to a second question: "What is the definition of the word that is translated "complete" in this verse? The word in the original language has to do with fullness. It is the verb form of the same word that Paul uses in verse nine when he says that in Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in a

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body. Paul is saying that in Jesus dwells not just some aspect of God, not just some glimmer of God, but the entire fullness of the Godhead. Jesus Christ is fully God. And so Paul then uses the verb form of the same word in the very next phrase, "and in Him you [believers] are complete". An expanded translation of the phrase in the Greek would read like this: "And you are in Him, having been filled full, once and for all, with the present result that you are in a state of fullness" in Christ.

Just as the fullness of God has made His home within the body of Jesus Christ, we partake of that fullness because we are in Christ. It is an accomplished fact. It has been done once for all. And it has been done *for us*, it is not something that we did for ourselves, or that we could do for ourselves.

And what is this fullness, this completeness, which we have because we are in Christ? It means that everything that we need, for this life and for the life to come, we have in fullness and abundance in Christ.

We have a salvation that is absolutely perfect and complete. As Jesus shouted from the cross, "It is finished." Fully accomplished. Paid in full.

Ephesians chapter one tells us that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit as the down-payment of our ultimate redemption.

Philippians 4:13 tells us that in this life, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And that is Paul's theme in Colossians chapters three and

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four, as we shall see, the Lord willing. There is no area of our life or conduct for which Christ has not provided the ability for us to live in a way that is entirely pleasing to Him, and glorifying of Him.

Second Peter chapter one tells us that "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3-4).

And First John chapter three tells us that when Christ is revealed at His Second Coming, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"Complete In Thee"

You know, friends, there is a hymn that was written back in the 19th century that has Colossians 2:10 as its theme. The title of the hymn is "Complete in Thee" and it was written in the 1850s by an American Presbyterian preacher named Aaron Robarts Wolfe. Wolfe wrote this hymn out of his own life experience.

Here is what happened. In the 1850s Aaron Wolfe had been ministering in a Christian school in Florida, and he was preparing to leave for New York, which was to be his next place of ministry. And so he packed up all of his possessions, and he had them put on board a cargo ship that was sailing to New York. After he did that, Wolfe made the trip to New York by stage coach and by train. He kept

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just one small suitcase with him for the journey. All his other possessions were on the ship.

When Aaron Wolfe reached New York he went to the place where he was supposed to claim the things that he had sent by ship. But he found out that while the cargo ship carrying his belongings was on its way to New York, it was struck by lightning, and it burned to the water line. All of Aaron Wolfe's possessions, everything of this world that he valued, had gone up in smoke. He lost everything, except the few things that were packed in that one suitcase.

But as time went on and Aaron Wolfe considered this great loss, he saw that God was using it to impress upon him the fact that Jesus Christ is sufficient for everything. There is fullness, completeness, in Christ, for both time and eternity. And not long after that personal disaster, the Lord opened new doors of opportunity and ministry for Aaron Wolfe that more than compensated for his material loss, and that ministry produced great spiritual fruit. And so out of his experience came this hymn titled, "Complete in Thee." I want to read that hymn for you. It goes like this:

Complete in Thee! No work of mine
May take, dear Lord, the place of Thine;
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And I am now complete in Thee.

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Complete in Thee — no more shall sin,
Thy grace hath conquered, reign within;
Thy voice shall bid the tempter flee,
And I shall stand complete in Thee.

Complete in Thee — each want supplied,
And no good thing to me denied;
Since Thou my portion, Lord, wilt be,
I ask no more, complete in Thee.

Dear Savior! when before Thy bar
All tribes and tongues assembled are,
Among Thy chosen will I be,
At Thy right hand — complete in Thee.

And then the refrain goes like this:

Yea, justified! O blessed thought!
And sanctified! Salvation wrought!
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And glorified, I too, shall be!

We Must Rest In A Complete Salvation

Dear friends, we must rest in this complete salvation. Why has the Apostle Paul emphasized this so strongly, in the passage we've been considering?

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The reason is this: The principle focus of Satan's triple threat, in each of its three manifestations, is upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ

The focus of worldly philosophy is on the lie of a false Christ, on another Jesus instead of the Christ of the Bible.

The focus of legalism is on the lie of an insufficient Christ, on something that legalism says you must add to the all-sufficiency of Christ in order to please God and have eternal life.

The focus of man-made doctrines is on the lie of an impotent Christ, on something in place of the lordship of Christ, as though anything else, anyone else, could cause us to be filled to overflowing with all of the good and perfect gifts of our great God and Savior.

Don't be deceived, Paul says. Don't let down your guard. Put up, and keep, up, a solid battle front against these wiles of the Devil.

Jesus is exactly who the Bible says He is, and nothing less. Jesus has done exactly what the Bible says He has done, and nothing less.

His finished work is totally and absolutely sufficient for your salvation from sin and from the wrath of God, totally and absolutely sufficient for your life in this present world, and totally and absolutely sufficient to deliver you from this present evil world into the world to come, in which there will be no sin but only

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righteousness, no death but only glorious life, no suffering but only eternal joy, and no spiritual darkness but only the light of Christ forever.

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