

Week 6

Complete in Jesus

Paul is admonishing the Colossian believers to take heart, all wisdom is in Jesus Christ and the mystery has been revealed; all believers are one in Him. He warned them to avoid being deceived and that the culture was full of empty promises whereas Christ contained all the fullness of Deity and we are complete in Him. Jesus is all we need to know.

Colossians 2:11-12

All Jewish males were circumcised as a sign of their covenant with God. It symbolized a "cutting off" of the old life of sin, purifying the heart and dedicating oneself to God. Paul uses this metaphor; all believers are circumcised, but it is not a physical act. It is a spiritual act on all believers; Christ does the cutting away of the sinful nature, and it occurs when a person believes in Christ as their Savior and LORD. Deuteronomy 30:6 God promised to circumcise the hearts (that is cut away sin) of believers in order that they would love the LORD their God with all their hearts and minds and soul, and that they may live. When Stephan was giving his defense before the Sanhedrin he said: Acts 7:51; "You men who are stiff-necked (hard headed and obstinate) and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting (opposed) the Holy Spirit; you are doing just what your fathers did". I hope this does not describe you; stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and resisting the Holy Spirit meaning God is calling you and you are obstinate and opposed to Him. Do you imagine you can perform some ritual or do some good work, which will change this? He is not interested in what you are doing to please Him, if you have rejected His plan, He is calling you to bow your knee and accept His offer of eternal life. Are you determined to do it your own way? It will never happen. If you are hearing this message and are being prompted from inside to respond to God calling you to give yourself up to Him, do not resist, today is the day of salvation. There may come a time when God will stop nudging you, as He says; I will not always strive with man. You have no idea whether He will give you breath for even another hour. Today is the day of salvation.

If you have agreed with God that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and submitted yourself to the Lordship of Christ then you are 'in Christ' according to Paul. You are baptized into Christ, baptized is a Greek word meaning immersed. All this ties back in with the verses at the beginning of the program.

Colossians 2:13

The Colossians were Gentiles and therefore were uncircumcised, but that was not the cause of their spiritual death, it was their sinful nature. They needed to go beyond physical surgery; they needed to submit to God in their hearts as well as their bodies. Paul said when we are unsaved we are dead in our sin and restates the previous verse. He gives another metaphor; that we have been made alive as we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ.

Christ defeated death, He rose and is alive and God made us alive in Christ, because Christ was raised from the dead, all who believe in Him are raised as well. Christ defeated the power of sin and death over us at the cross; you see He was a warrior; He did redeem Israel, and the whole world. Look what else happened;

Colossians 2:14

When we were made alive we were forgiven all of our sins or transgressions. Have you ever wanted to start over with a clean slate? Here is the chance to have all the sin of the past canceled and the debt

we owed God because of all our past sin against Him, which is the certificate of debt, has been paid. Jesus knew every sin I would ever commit and the wages or consequences of sin are death, and He took my penalty and died. Yes, my debt certificate was nailed to the cross and when the precious blood of Jesus ran down over it and covered it; all that transgression was washed away. The debt was paid and the account was closed. Christ set us free by His death on the cross and remember, "Those who the Son has set free, are free indeed". He came that we might have life.

Colossians 2:15

The word "disarmed" means stripped; He stripped Satan of his power over us. When we are in Christ Satan has no power over us. In Christ is the only safe place to be

Colossians 2:16-17

Jesus cancelled the written code-the ceremonial law of foods, rituals, holy days, etc. All these were pointing to Him; He was the fulfillment of all those symbols and rituals. He said He came to fulfill the law and He did. The moral law, which He also fulfilled, remains our guide. Don't give up your freedom for legalism; rules for clothing, length of hair, and food all were abolished.

And we are warned to not condemn others and keep them from the fellowship because they don't conform to certain rules. False teachers always have rules and they love to tell you what to do and they also love to tell what they don't do. If Christ has set you free, you are free indeed. The Christian life is internal, not external.

Paul did not condemn the Jewish believers for keeping their dietary laws; he condemned the idea that they could reach salvation by their good deeds and rituals. Keeping rules may make people feel self-righteous. The ceremonial and civil regulations of Judaism set God's people apart from the world as He was planning on a new covenant and a worldwide family. If we are in Christ we have been set apart, (holy) we have what we need to please God.

Colossians 2:18-19

Keeping in mind Paul is still refuting the heresy of Gnostic religion, especially the ideas of the Stoics who specialized in self-denial or self-abasement as a way to please God and achieve salvation. Remember too there were teachings about emanations or angels as a way to reach God and so Paul is again warning about this. I also want to warn you concerning the current emphasis on angels. There is nowhere in the bible where an angel is referred to as a blond female, all mentions of angel encounters, and they are few, are males who are apparently overpowering and frightening. What do they always say? "Fear not". There is a reason for this. Don't get caught up in angel fascination, keep your eyes on Jesus.

What about visions? There are any number of religions, which are based on some person's vision. It usual includes a book or information, which are in addition to the bible and portray Jesus incorrectly as not divine. You can see the comparison of these religions with Gnostic religion in the idea of some extra biblical revelation, given to certain special people. All you need to know is in this bible don't be deceived by extra biblical revelation or New World Translations. Often those who say they have had a vision are proud of this and inflated or arrogant.

False teachers are not connected with Christ; He is not their Head. As believers we are joined together in a body or group and Jesus is the Head of this body or the leader. The body of believers needs to be connected to their Head and to one another in order to grow as God desires.

Colossians 2:20-22

Paul has told us earlier that we have died with Christ and have been raised to new life and we don't need those old rituals and beliefs, we are free from these. So he is saying if they are dead to the elementary or rudimentary rituals why go back to them again. Dying to them is the recognition that they are not part of the new life in Christ; so don't try to include them.

Did you notice his reference to the "teachings of men"? This is another reference to extra biblical revelation, meaning some person has had some experience which they believe gives them special insight and knowledge more important than scripture. Jesus said in Matthew 15:9 "But in vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the precepts of men". He was quoting God from Isaiah 29:13. Are there any doctrines your church or teachers have taught you that are doctrines of men and not of God? You can easily find out, check your church doctrines with the bible. I once attended a church that taught me that if I were a member of that church I would go to heaven when I die. I believe many churches teach this. Is that right? How does that compare with what the bible teaches about the way to eternal life?

Colossians 2:23

As we have observed before, there can be a certain arrogance and self-righteousness in observing rituals, holy days special diets. This we must avoid. Jesus warned the disciples that their righteousness had to exceed that of the priests and Pharisees. What did He mean? That these observances are wholly on the outside of a person and have no effect on the sinful nature. My observing a holy day or certain diet will not deal with my coveting or lying or gossiping, all of which originate in the heart. The other danger is to focus so completely on these outward observances so that you are not even aware of the sin in the heart. Just think about how perfectly the Pharisees kept the law but were seething with anger at Jesus and murdered Him. Paul says this in a different way; you can perform all these rituals of self-denial or rule keeping but it has no effect on fleshly indulgence. Why? It often results in pride and it brings no cure to the sin nature. No religious rules can change a heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do this. Did you ever notice how critical Jesus was of self-righteous religious people and how patient and loving He was with those who knew and admitted they were sinners and needed a Savior?

Chapter 3 is going to tell us how to avoid worthless religion and empty rituals. Paul knew there were people in Colossae and I know there are people in Loudonville who are sincerely seeking God and eager to serve Him and live a life of purpose, which honors Him.

Here is how to do that;

Colossians 3:1

Raised up with Christ, remember Paul told us we had died with Him, now Paul reminds us we have been raised with Him and we are a work in progress. They did not need to do anything to attain salvation, it is a free gift. Salvation is the work of an instant, sanctification or maturing in faith is the work of a lifetime. It must be my constant habit to seek the things above. How does this work out in my life? Each of us has temptations and the best way to avoid them is to make a clean break with them. Take the focus off the world and put it on Christ. I think of that wonderful song; "turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth grow extremely dim, in the light of His glory and grace" That's the answer.

Colossians 3:2

Have a point of reference for perfection; Jesus is the focus, not the things of earth. This does not mean you don't have to wash dishes or sweep the floor, but the question is; where is your heart and mind while you are doing these things?

Is heaven filling your mind? It takes effort to keep your mind on the things above, but we are in Christ, He will help you.

Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "fix, or ponder or let your thoughts dwell on whatever is true, what is admirable, honorable, lovely, and pure". We are not to live as some mystic or visionary but we are to live on earth a life pleasing to God moving forward the kingdom of Christ. We must be intentional about this.

Colossians 3:3-4

This is saying we died with Christ that means our sin nature died and then like a seed planted in the garden, we are hidden with Christ. Our spiritual life in Christ is a hidden inner life, although it ought to show on the outside. The exact nature of it will be revealed when He returns. Someday it will be obvious that we belong to Christ.

Paul is going to tell us how we should act or live our daily lives in view of all we have gained by being in Christ.

Colossians 3:5

There are two types of sin mentioned here; one is sexual sin; immorality is any illicit relationship. The Greek word is "pornia", immorality, I am sure you can see we get our English word pornography from this. Impurity, moral uncleanness; crudeness and insensitivity in sexual matters. Passion/Lust; excessive immorality leading to perversion.

Then there is greed; defined as relentless urge to get more for yourself. This is described as idolatry because it is a focus on fulfilling yourself instead of honoring God.

Again, this describes our entertainment on TV and the movies all day and night, not to mention the ads on the news at 6. We are surrounded by sin, evil and darkness all the time. We don't have to go somewhere to find it; we have to make a conscious effort to avoid it. And it is having a grievous affect on our younger generations.

The sense of this verse is "once and for all" we are to avoid this list of sin. Yes friends sin. I know that our culture has no condemnation, yes, often glorifies immorality and greed in entertainers and actors. It's still sin, this is what the bible says; it is not my opinion. If this has been your lifestyle, there should be a 180-degree turn. There is no room for this in the believer's life. Paul saw the temptations of the sinful culture in Colossae, it's still with us.

Colossians 3:6-7

Here is the reason to choose to avoid these sins; God wrath, or "hot anger" against them. God's perfect holy nature will not allow sin to go unpunished. Yes, God is love, that is why He has provided a way for your sin to be forgiven. Friends, if you do not take His offer for the wonderful free gift of life eternal, then His wrath will be the alternative. There is no plan B. There will be a future and final punishment of evil and those sons of disobedience are all those who refuse to believe on Christ as Savior. Again, Jesus has already suffered this wrath against sin in your behalf on the cross; it is completely unnecessary for you to face it yourself.

Colossians 3:7

Paul reminds the believers that they were once immersed in a sinful lifestyle but have made a decision to turn to Christ for forgiveness and a new life.

I am reminded here of Paul's writing in Ephesians 2:1-9

This is chilling; the picture painted here is of a blind person walking in the dark toward a cliff from which a fall would be fatal. I was once that person, but by God's grace, His rich mercy and His great love I have been made alive, saved from the emptiness and ignorance of my sin and given new life in Jesus.

Friend you can have this new life, it is available for the asking. If you have never bowed your knee; now is the time, pray with me; Father, I understand I am a sinner, I realize I can do nothing to save myself, and you have done all that is necessary through your Son Jesus Christ. I ask you to forgive my sin, circumcise my heart, and give me new life in Christ. I want your will to be done in my life. Thank you for eternal life in Jesus Christ, which begins this very moment.