

Sermon Text: Colossians 2:6-15

Theme: You Are Full In Christ!

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Dear Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts always be pleasing in your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer.

It was simply a great privilege and wonderful blessing to spend lots of time this week studying and wrestling and meditating on the portion of God's Word before us this morning. All of God's Word is absolutely wonderful, but this section is a great encapsulation of the main message of the Bible. We will look at it in more of a verse-by-verse fashion later in the sermon, but right now, listen as I read God's words to us from Colossians chapter 2. Listen to the words, digest them, take them to heart, marvel at them, and rejoice in them.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

I heard another pastor say this about a different section of Colossians, and so I can't take credit for this thought. But he said, "I think for the sermon today it would be fantastic to just read those words to you 10 times, so you just keep hearing them and letting them simmer in your mind and heart." I agree with him! I would love to do that—you can never ever read these words too many times! But this morning, we are going to try to focus our thoughts on one big idea from these words. Our focus is: **"You Are Full in Christ!"** We'll see that we are full in Christ **By His Cross** and **By Our Baptism**.

Paul wrote these words to a specific group of people—the Christians living in the city of Colosse. As we've heard over the last few weeks, it seems that there were people trying to lead the Colossians away from Christ by false teachings. Paul never directly identifies what or who those false teachers are, but from the way he speaks we can learn what some of the false teachings were. One way people were trying to drag these new Christians away from Christ is shown verse 8—**"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."** The proper way to look at everything in the world is through one lens—Christ. Your lives are guided by Christ, you live in the joy of Christ, and you see other people with the love of Christ as well. But with a worldly lens—that hollow and deceptive philosophy, everything gets turned upside down. Instead of being centered on Christ, you become self-centered.

What are the "elemental spiritual forces of the world?" Another way to understand it would be "basic principles of the world." What are those? "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die! I'm going to do whatever I can to make myself and those close to me happy!" And when we get trapped and taken captive into thinking primarily about ourselves, we end up feeling hollow. It's been demonstrated that money doesn't create happiness. Some of the most miserable people in the world are those who have won

100s of millions of dollars in the lottery. You don't have to look far to see all the personal problems that movie stars, recording artists, and professional athletes have. All worldly philosophy leaves us empty—we're grasping for something that we can't find.

Paul alludes to another attempt to lure the Colossians away from Christ in verse 11—**“In him (Christ) you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands.”** In some of the cities to which Paul wrote, there were Jewish people called Judaizers who said to Gentile Christians, “Don't think that you can so easily be a Christian! There is more you must do!” One thing they required was circumcision. In the OT circumcision—the removing of a small piece of flesh—did in fact mark the Israelites as God's people. It separated them from all the other pagan nations. More on this later, but for now I'll just say that since Christ had come, circumcision was no longer necessary! But the Judaizers still tried to require it of new Christians.

In verse 14 Paul mentions one more idea that had a tendency back then (and still has a tendency today) to keep people away from Christ: **“the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us.”** You see, there was this record—this list—of everything that we owe to God. A list of all of our sin, and boy, do they pile up quickly. You know what I mean—how all of my imperfections just eat away at me. When I lay in bed at night and my sins flood into my head. I forget all the wonderful blessings of the day and instead remember the way I wasted so much valuable time, the way I ignored my friend who needed a word of encouragement, the way I hurt my wife with spiteful and dismissive words. All the things I should've done and I didn't...and all the things I shouldn't have done but I did. You can form your own list. And these charges brought against me—they make me think... “How do I get rid of these debts? There is no way. I am too terrible.” This legal certificate of debt—it keeps people away from God! Away from church. “I'm not the kind of person who can go to church—they surely don't want me.”

And so people are stuck feeling full of regret because of debt, but empty of any comfort. Most people in the world know something is wrong with them *and* with the world, but they don't think there is anything to fill that dark void in their hearts. But Jesus said, “I came into the world not for the healthy, but for the sick. Not for the righteous, but for the sinners!” Jesus didn't come into the world for people who think they are full and complete all by themselves. He came for people who know they are empty and need someone to make them full.

The solution to spiritual emptiness is not the hollow philosophy and tradition of the world. It is not in any outward acts like circumcision. Paul spoke the solution for all who are stuck in the emptiness of spiritual debt in verses 9 and 10. **“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.”** Christ has made you completely full! The same Jesus who is completely and totally God, who is head over all the different powers in the universe, came to this earth as a human being for no other reason than to fill you up. And although we could talk about a dozen or so pictures in this text of how we are completely full in Christ, we will focus on two. Christ has made us full by *his* cross and by *our* baptism.

First, by his cross. **“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”** Remember that legal debt of sin that we all had? Christ canceled it—he made it so it is no more! The word “cancel” could also be translated “obliterated” or “destroyed.” Jesus completely paid our debt—it is no more and there is absolutely no chance any debt reappears in our ledger. Do you know why? Because it was nailed to the cross. Every nail that drove through Christ's flesh into that piece of wood on a dark hill outside of Jerusalem on that Friday almost 2,000 years ago—those nails weren't just nailing Jesus on the cross to die. Those nails also nailed all our debt to the . All our debt died along with our Savior. When Jesus cried “It is finished!” he meant that his saving work was

complete—and that included completely wiping away our debt to God. He took our trillion dollar debt that we could never possibly pay, and he ripped it up right in front of the devil’s face.

A cross was the last thing you’d expect someone to use as a tool to defeat an enemy. The cross was a sign of shame and embarrassment—there was no more humiliating way to die. But Jesus used the cross to triumph over his enemies. In ancient times, after a victorious army returned home, it would parade through the streets proclaiming to everyone that it had defeated its enemy! When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, he publicly proclaimed, “I have defeated the devil and all his evil ones. My death on the cross defeated the devil.”

Jesus not only made us full through an event from his life—he has also made us full through an event in our life. Baptism. Verses 11 and 12 tell us, **“Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”** In the Old Testament, God marked out and identified his children by circumcision. But now he identifies his own by Baptism. Baptism is a way that God creates and strengthens faith in people. When the water of Baptism flowed over your head it accomplished two things. Baptism drowned your sinful flesh and it raised you to a new life of faith in Jesus as your Savior. Baptism isn’t something that you do to identify yourself as a Christian. Baptism is what God did to identify you as a Christian!

What a blessing that God gave us Baptism—which is water and God’s Word together. When you’re lying in bed at night, feeling totally empty because that day’s sins are making your stomach turn over, remember, “I am baptized! I am a child of God!” As soon as you wake up in the morning, think, just like Martin Luther, “I am baptized! I am a child of God!” Whenever you wash your hands or take a drink of water, whenever you see a river or lake, or whenever you come into contact with any water at all—remember your Baptism! Christ drives away emptiness and reminds us that we have complete fullness in him through our Baptism.

Paul, in addition to giving us complete assurance that we are full in Christ, gives us a very important encouragement right at the beginning of our lesson. **“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.”** How do we continually live our lives in Christ, rooted and built up in him, growing stronger in the faith? We continually go back to the where our faith finds its roots and receives its strength. We go back to Christ! And where do we find him? The Bible. For the sermon this morning, I didn’t simply read this section of the Bible 10 times, but I’ll tell you what—when you go home today—it would be fantastic for you and your family to do just that! My challenge and encouragement for you this week is to read the book of Colossians every day. It’s not long—just 4 chapters. Take 15 minutes a day and read the whole book every day. Digest it. Mull it over when you wake up, when you’re eating your meals, and when you’re lying in bed at night. Remember your Baptism and keep going back to the one who makes you completely full. Keep on going back to Christ. Keep on reading the Bible. Amen.