

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE / Sunday School- February 10, 2013

Unifying Topic: FULL LIFE IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

- I. Receiving Christ Jesus As Lord (Colossians 2:6-7)
- II. Hollow And Deceptive Philosophy (Colossians 2:8-15)

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

Unifying Principle: We regularly try but fail to live up to human expectations and traditions. How can we overcome our failures and shortcomings? Through Jesus, God forgives all our trespasses and triumphs over all earthly rulers and authorities.

Lesson Aim: To help students see to see the dangerous nature of the false teaching that was working its way through the church in Colossae.

Life Aim: To help students cut through the web of human tradition that sometimes obscures the clear and pure message of the Gospel.

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- 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
 - 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
 - 2:8 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.
 - 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
 - 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
 - 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:
 - 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.
 - 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
 - 2:14 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;
 - 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

HISTORY:

Colossians 2:1-5

How Great A Struggle

2:1 For I would that ye knew that great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;—The need for a minister who will tirelessly labor for the church, that is, for the body of Christ was covered. Now we will cover the second need: The need for believers who will tirelessly labor for the church, that is, for the body of Christ; who are consistently growing (a mature believer) in the Lord. One of the great tragedies of today's society is the lack of consistency. Few people are consistent in their daily walk with the Lord. It has become a struggle. When Paul talks about what a great struggle; a great conflict, *Col. 1:29-2:1* goes hand in hand.

^{1:29}For this I labor [unto weariness], striving with all the superhuman energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me.

^{2:1}FOR I want you to know how great is my solicitude for you [how severe an inward struggle I am engaged in for you] and for those [believers] at Laodicea, and for all who [like yourselves] have never seen my face and known me personally (AMP).

Remember Paul had never seen the Colossian church personally; he was not the minister on the field, Epaphras was. Paul also wanted this letter passed on to the Laodicean church and all others, and he was counting on ties of love to bring the churches together to stand against this heresy, and to encourage each other to remain true to God's plan of salvation in Christ. He did not only write a letter, he labored in prayer.

POINT:

This says something of enormous importance: ministers are to wrestle in prayer for believers and churches all over the world so churches can be mature in the Lord. A half-hearted, half-committed minister can only produce half hearted, half-committed people.

Paul was struggling and striving against adversaries for the sake of Christians everywhere. He labored hard, toiled, strove, agonized, struggled, and wrestled in prayer. Prayer is not easy; it is laborious. This giving and striving is an example not only coming from Paul but originates from the One that placed it in him, our Lord Jesus Christ. Striving

for people that will never meet this side of heaven is a great calling. As you look at the usage of these words of agony throughout the New Testament, you begin to understand that Paul's battlefields were both spiritual and physical. The contests of struggle were fought both in prayer (Luke 22:44; Col. 4:12) and in earthly conflict (1Thess 2:2; Phil 1:30). And the reason for his struggle was that they would be kept on the right path, not following after false doctrine (Luke 13:24; 1Cor 9:25; 1Tim 6:12; 2Tim 4:7; Heb 12:1).

Be Encouraged

2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;— Paul hoped that the ultimate result of his struggle for them would be two things: (1) Encouraged (*comforted*) hearts and (2) full assurance of understanding. The word "*comforted*" (*paraklethosin*) means to be strong, strengthened, established, and braced. Where does such strength come from? Where is the spring from which such confidence and assurance flow?

- Strong hearts come from love—from being knit together with others in love.

A person who feels emotions of neglect, overlooked, ignored, without friends, left out, or by-passed seldom feel strong, confident, or assured; On the contrary, he feels weak unacceptable, and incapable of handling situations. He feels insecure, which either causes him to withdraw or react in a superior and boastful attitude. The point is this: the answer to a strong, confident, assured heart is love—being knit together in love with others. The church is to build love among everyone, not neglecting or overlooking anyone. This does not certainly come from religion, ceremony, ritual laws, or rules and regulations; it comes from love—hearts knit together in love.

- Strong hearts come from knowing that what you believe about God is accurate, and true.

2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Once God's Spirit infuses strength within the believer's heart, both assurance and confidence comes alive and gives absolute assurance that we truly know God and are adopted as His dear sons and daughters; that what we believe about God is accurate. The Spirit of God instills that confidence within our hearts. When a person has "*full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (v2-3), then that person has matured in truth and has the ability to apply and use truth wisely. The Colossians didn't need to go to the Gnostics and pay to learn secret knowledge of how to reach God. The *treasures of wisdom and knowledge* were hid in Christ. The teaching of Christ was open to everyone because He is a revealer when you seek Him. We never exhaust the treasures of knowledge in Christ, there is always more to learn.

Often, we get overwhelmed by our own circumstances, and become convinced that God will never get us out of this mess, that this trial will never be over, or that we'll never have victory over our sin. But then God brings someone like Paul across our path, who has a testimony of victory, of deliverance, of God's faithfulness. It encourages us that God is still working, still on the throne, and still paying attention to us. You can recognize people that God brings to you for encouragement, because He makes a supernatural, spiritual connection between your hearts. They become knit together in love.

2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

- The church needs mature believers who will resist seduction and deception.

Now this is the point I need you to comprehend: "...lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." The word "*beguile*" (*paralogizetai*) means to mislead, delude, deceive, cheat, seduce, and lead someone astray. The need for believers:

- Believers can be seduced by the persuasive and eloquent words of false teaching.
 - The creation of the world by God.
 - The virgin birth or the incarnation of God in human flesh.
 - The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
 - Salvation by grace through faith etc.

The arguments can be against any of the major teachings of Scripture. If they are persuasive enough, some persons are led astray. They begin to question the truth and to wonder and doubt. The very reason Paul has proclaimed that all wisdom and knowledge exist in Christ is to protect believers against false teaching. Believers are to know that all truth is in Christ, and they are to seek all truth in Christ.

- Believers can be seduced by the enticing and appealing words of those who live after the lusts of the flesh. Human nature is easily influenced by...
 - appearance
 - attractiveness
 - charisma
 - thoughts
 - insinuations
 - suggestions
 - imaginations
 - desires

Therefore when some idea is made in an appealing way, people are enticed and led astray from Christ. Again, the truth and the wise course of behavior for the believer is found in Christ. The course of wisdom is to turn away from the

Arguments

seduction of enticing words and suggestions.

2:5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

- The church needs mature believers who will maintain discipline—order and steadfastness.

The word "order" (*taxin*) means to maintain military discipline, array, and arrangement; to hold a solid front. The word "steadfastness" (*stereomē*) means to stand fast and persevere; to be immovable, steady, and unyielding; to never crack, give in, or back up. This too, is a military word. **AND THE BELIEVERS WERE RESPONDING LIKE A VICTORIOUS ARMY.** They were maintaining their discipline and holding their order and standing fast, even as Paul was writing this letter. Even during withstanding, a minister's encouragement is still needed. Paul says that he was with them in spirit, joying, and watching them gain the victory over the false teachers.

LESSON:

Colossians 2:6-7 Receiving Christ Jesus As Lord

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

- The church needs mature believers who will walk in the Lord.

This means at least two things for believers:

1. First, believers walk justly as they have received Christ—by faith.

There is a continued walk with Christ by faith. When you received Christ, you trusted His righteousness, His death to cover your sins and to make you acceptable to God. Therefore, our lifestyle continues to trust His righteousness and death. It is all of that that continues to cover our sins and make them acceptable to God. We have nothing within ourselves to earn, merit, deserve, or make God accept us. We can do nothing and we can possess nothing that will secure the approval of God. The believer is only acceptable before God in Christ—trusting His righteousness and death by faith.

2. Second, believers received Christ as Christ Jesus the Lord.

That is, when believers received Him, they accepted Him as the true Messiah and Lord from heaven; you accepted Him as the Lord of your life. Therefore, we are to walk before Him as Lord; we are to continue walking and serving Him as the Lord of our lives.

2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

There are three particular things the believer is to do in verse 7:

1. The believer is to be rooted and built-up in Christ.

There are two pictures in this statement. The picture of being rooted is that of a tree. The other is the picture of being built or constructed—that of a building. The point is this: the emphasis is upon a strong attachment and a flow of nourishment and life from Christ to the believer. That means, the believer is so nourished because of strong roots in the soil of his Word; so built up upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, that his walk is continuously strong and unbroken. His life and mind are focused upon Christ without interruptions, drawing all nourishment and strength from Him. This is critical, for there is no other permanent nourishment or strength—not that lasts forever and imparts eternal life to the human soul.

2. The believer is to walk established in the faith just as he has been taught.

The word "established" means to be firm, stable, holding fast and not letting go. This shows the utter necessity for strong teachers in the church. When believers have strong teachers, they are to learn all they can about the faith and hold fast to it. They are not to let it go!

3. The believer is to walk overflowing with thanksgiving.

Christ Jesus has done so much for the believer—so much that flows on and on, never ceasing, not even for one moment of any day. Therefore, the believer learns to walk in an unbroken spirit of thanksgiving—a thanksgiving that overflows in praise to the Lord moment by moment throughout the day.

Colossians 2:8-15 Hollow And Deceptive Philosophy

As we have learned, the Gnostics were trying to pull the Colossians away from the simple teachings of Christ and back into the slavery of a human system of rules that could not help them. The importance of this passage is clearly seen in the meaning of scripture.

2:8 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 "beware" (*blepete*) means to take heed, look out, guard yourself. Why? Lest any man spoil you through philosophy. The word "spoil" (*sulagogeō*) means to lead into captivity or slavery. Being continually watchful for false teaching does not come naturally. Paul is not encouraging a "*critical spirit*" but a "*discerning spirit*." We will know Christ and His truth well, anything false is revealed immediately by the light of Christ's Spirit. When we are

filled up with Christ and His blessings, there is no emptiness in us looking for something else to fill it. See that no one takes you captive through philosophy.

2:8b¹Philosophy (*philosophia* from *phílos* = friend/lover + *sophía* = wisdom) is literally a love of wisdom, and came to mean "tenets" (*doctrine*) of heathen Gentile philosophers. The Gnostics were fond of "*philosophia*." The love of human wisdom is a product of human mind and that produces human tradition which is followed down through the ages. It is not God's revelation; rather it was speculative, mythical and misleading. This was hollow and deceitful philosophy. That means it sounded good but there was nothing inside. Instead, men should love Christ, Who has made true wisdom unto us and in whom are stored all the treasures of true wisdom and true knowledge. Only Christ's truth carried a real reward.

2:8c²The word "*rudiments*" (*stoicheion*) refers to parts of a systematized, regulated arrangement. What is represented is something that is in itself is only "*elemental*" and thus less than complete. Paul contrasts these limited elements with the fullness which is put on display in the Person of Christ. That is the theme of this chapter -- the contrast between limited, elemental things, and the completeness that is found only in Jesus Christ. We end up concentrating on all the little bits and pieces and forget the big picture. It doesn't matter if the systematized approach to faith is built up from worldly philosophy, science, religious doctrines and rituals, etc. It doesn't matter what rituals you perform, food you eat, festivals you keep, or day you worship on, since all of those things are elemental types and shadows that reach their fulfillment in Christ. The purpose in all these is to lead to spiritual understanding and it is not in themselves righteousness. To assign them a place of importance equal to faith in Jesus is to then take away from and diminish the completeness of Jesus.

To concentrate on the "*rudiments*" can result in capture of the person. The person can become more concerned with these limited elements than with the fullness of unity with Christ. And thereby, can never reach unity in Christ because they are always trying to add something to Him, that is, of their own will-power; to build up knowledge bit by bit or act by act. People trust their own talents and "*careers*" for material provision and become captured by material things. All of it can capture the mind to the point where it directs the heart away from the fullness that is only in Jesus Christ. Anyone who seeks to add on to or replace Jesus with anything else is using vain philosophy and deceitful speech for the purpose of capturing the heart, mind and soul of others. I could go on and on; however, the point has been covered.

2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The word "*fullness*" (*pleroma*) means that not a single part of God's nature is lacking in the nature of Christ. The word "*dwells*" (*katoikei*) means to be at home, to be permanently settled and present. This tells us that the fullness of God has always dwelt in Christ, even before He came to earth; that the fullness of God was not just a temporary gift to Jesus. What does all this mean to us in a day to day living? It means two wonderful things:

1. First, God is not far off in outer space someplace. God is not unconcerned with the world. As His fullness dwells in Christ, it dwells in us who have accepted Him.
2. God is love, not evil. Only a God of evil would leave man in the dark where he would have to grope and grasp and stumble. His fullness directs us as Christ is in us.

The Gnostics believed Christ was not the supreme God but only one of the lesser emanations from Him; one of the angels. They claimed to know the secret and the only way to God, but actually it was and is the Christians who know the way. The answers to the world and life are not found in a philosophy, nor in human ideas, but found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think for a moment: if the "*Person*" (God) really created the world, then the answer to life and creation (truth and reality) are bound to be wrapped up in Him. Christ is not just a partial representation of God, like an angel sent as God's representative. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. And those who worship Christ are worshiping God, since Christ has the fullness of Deity. For in Him dwelleth (*inhabiteth; continually abideth*) all the fullness of the Godhead. In Jesus of Nazareth, God was uniquely and bodily among us (Emmanuel). The incarnation was real. Here, our Lord Jesus Christ was one Person with two natures: the God-man.

2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:—The word "*complete*" (*pepleromenoi*) means to be made full. We seek no other source of grace and truth; we show no allegiance to anyone else; and we submit to no other authority. Christ is the head; He is the source of life; and He is sovereign over life. God did this in connection with Jesus Christ. And believers have complete (full life) in Christ. There is no rule, authority, or power standing between Christ and man, for He is the Head; head of all principality **and** power. Since the power of God rested in Jesus Christ, and Christ alone, He overcame all other powers; therefore, His authority ruled as head of all principalities and powers.

¹ http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_28-15.htm

² <http://www.pheugo.com/faithmatters/index.php?page=FaithMatters.Avoidcapture>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands;— Some in the Colossian church were stressing the ritual of circumcision. They said that a man had to be circumcised to be saved, that God would not accept him unless he was circumcised. Giving his heart to Jesus Christ was not enough. Circumcision was the ritual of faith to the Jews. It symbolized two things:

1. First, circumcision was a sign or testimony of his faith in God, declaring to the world that he and his family were going to follow God.
2. Second, circumcision symbolized the cutting away of the body of sins that were in the flesh. When the foreskin was cut off and removed it was a picture of sin.

This was the true picture of circumcision, what God had intended until Christ came. Let me say that again, "*Until Christ came!*" But what happened was that man corrupted God's purpose for circumcision. Man began to say that a person became acceptable to God, not because he trusted God, but because he was circumcised. False teachings and religion have always tended to add to God's laws. That's why God had to send Christ. The true religion stresses Christ and Christ alone. Real religion is spiritual and not physical; and it's wrought in Christ not by hands of men. It's the inward circumcision, not outward. What the law could not do, Jesus Christ accomplished for us. The extent of this circumcision is the whole body not just one organ. Christ is the author of this circumcision, not Moses.

Jews	Believers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• external surgery• only a part of the body• done by hands• no spiritual help in sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• internal—the heart• the whole body of sins• done without hands• enables them to overcome conquering sin

2:11b ...in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:— It is letting Christ cut away the sin out of our flesh. How? - By death. When He died, He died for our sins. He cut away both sin and guilt and throws it away. The flesh is removed from the throne and the Christian is set free from his sinful nature. The sinful nature is not eradicated, for we can still sin (1Jn.1:8), but its power is broken, as we yield to Christ and walk in the power of His Spirit. The old nature (the body of sins of the flesh) was put off rendered inoperative—so that we need no longer be enslaved to its desires. Our physical members are to be instruments not of unrighteousness unto sin, but of righteousness unto God (Rom.6:11-14). This allows us to stand before God without sin.

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. This means we are jointly entombed with Christ; sharing in His experience. The literal meaning is "to dip, to immerse." the figurative meaning is "to be identified with." The Jewish nation was "baptized unto Moses" when they went through the Red Sea. There was no water involved in this baptism because they went over on dry land. In this experience, the nation was identified with Moses. Paul used the word "baptism" in a figurative sense in this section of his letter—for no amount of material water could bury a person with Christ or make him alive in Christ.

When a person is saved, he is immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ and identified with the Head, Jesus Christ. This identification means that whatever happened to Christ also happened to us. When He was buried, we were buried; when He died, we died, and when He arose, we arose with Him—and we left the graveclothes of the old life behind. All of this was through the faith of the operation of God. Baptism symbolizes our experience of death to the old life and resurrection to the new life (Rom.6:3-5). It is the power of God that changed us, not the power of water. We are therefore raised from the dead because of Christ's resurrection. Although water Baptism, is an outward expression of an inward experience. Without saving faith, water baptism is an empty, meaningless ceremony. It is through faith, we receive Christ (Jn.1:12-13), and faith that He was raised from the dead.

2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;— "Dead" means lifeless or useless. Man's idea of death involves either the denial of a life hereafter or else the giving of another chance to work oneself into the favor of God. Man's view of death varies according to a person's background and beliefs; environment, training, and heritage. The verse is saying that man is already dead; man was condemned to eternal death before receiving life in Jesus Christ, turning to the deadness of the law was not the answer? "*The uncircumcision of your flesh*" means the body of the sins of the flesh (Col 2:11) —the sinful desires; the old fleshly nature were not yet put off. The penalty for sin is death. The word "quicken" (*sunezoopoiesen*) means to make alive; to bring to life. The believer is brought to life from the dead with Christ by God, for when he has truly trusted in Christ, knowing Christ died for his sins, God identifies us with what Christ has done, therefore we never have to die for our sins. The penalty for our sins has been already paid. Christ paid the price; He bore the guilt, the judgment, the condemnation, and the punishment for our sins. Consequently, we are forgiven all trespasses. How wondrous is that?

2:14 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;— "*Blotting out*" means erased, wiped away, obliterated, cancelled the note. This explains the forgiveness. "*Handwriting of ordinances*" were the crimes of the criminal written and placed at the location of execution; a legal note or debt. Three expressions describe the law:

1. It is written in ordinances, expressed in decrees and commandments.
2. It was against us, had a valid claim on us.
3. It was contrary to us, because we couldn't meet the claim.

³So here the law became our enemy because it openly showed us that we were guilty of breaking God's law. But when Christ went to the cross, He had fulfilled the demands of God's righteous law and because we were in Christ, being baptized unto His death, we were found not guilty of the violation of God's law. As this verse states it, Christ completely obliterated the charges against us. Note three things:

- Christ "*blotted out the handwriting of the ordinances*."
- Christ "*took the law out of the way*" for man. He lived a sinless life thereby becoming the higher standard or the higher law for man, keeping it and fulfilling the law perfectly.
- Christ "*nailed the law to the cross*." That is, Christ bore the judgment and punishment passed down by the law upon man.

To receive what Christ has done, man has to come to himself to the list of charges against him (sin). And he should sense the wrong he has done in his life, for it is his violation of God's laws that condemns him to eternal death. Only as he senses or comes to himself and acknowledges his transgressions will he ever turn to God to be saved. This has to happen, for you can't be contrary to God and have sins blotted out. This was a once and for all removal. In the East, a bond is cancelled by nailing it to the post. So we see our bond of guilt was nailed to His cross. Hallelujah!

2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

⁴Usually principalities and powers are speaking of the power of darkness. "*Spoiled*" meaning striped away, disarmed or renounced. It was Satan, who Jesus destroyed on the cross. Satan was defeated. He even lost the keys to hell. Jesus took them away from him and went into hell, and brought out many captives with Him. ⁵Satan had no power to stop any of God's Elect from becoming saved. Just as the victories of the ancient conquerors resulted in a great homecoming parade, normally the conquered people were paraded before the cheering crowds of the victorious ones. The way Christ shows us openly is the fact that we have become saved and we begin to start working in the Kingdom of God to bring others into the Kingdom, that is, to evangelize the lost and train the saved. Just like a great parade for the victors, Christ is showing us to the powers of darkness which He triumphed over and which we triumph over through Christ.

SUMMARY:

The Colossians received Christ by grace. Paul tells them since they have received Christ, now continue to walk (live) by His standards, being permanently rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith. This is what they've been taught to do. This is an ongoing process because they will experience an abundance of thanksgiving (vv.6-7).

⁶The word "Beware" in verse eight summarizes the rest of the chapter, in which Paul warns them of the dangers of "*The Colossian Heresy*". These dangers include being cheated through philosophy and vain deceit, and defrauded of their reward by those who appeal to false humility, the worship of angels, false visions, and strict regulations according to the commandments and doctrines of men which really have no value against the indulgence of the flesh. In Christ they are made complete, having undergone a circumcision not made with hands, in which God made them alive together with Christ. Since Christ has also nailed to the cross the "*handwriting of requirements*" that was against them and taken it out of the way. Satan's power was stripped. Christ triumphed at the cross where the sins were taken away and nailed. He openly put Satan to shame (vv.8-15).

APPLICATION:

All God has done for man to live in this world was accomplished through Jesus Christ to give us an expectant end. When you read this lesson, our roots are to be built in Jesus Christ, living by what we've been taught, not veering into another philosophy. Our full life is in Christ which makes it a wonderful world. Without Him it wouldn't be so. In spite of all that happens, God sees and knows. But He has already put His plan in motion. The hard work has already been accomplished through His Son Jesus Christ. But, for us, it's still a process to not get in the way or forget He's in charge. It is complete!

³ http://www.scionofzion.com/colossians_2_11_15.htm

⁴ <http://www.lovethelord.com/books/colossians/03.html>

⁵ http://www.scionofzion.com/colossians_2_11_15.htm

⁶ http://executableoutlines.com/colo/colo_02.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>