

Colossians 2B

- Often an epistle doesn't have the same study appeal as some of the other books of the Bible, but this is where our faith gets into the trenches
 - It's about studying the real life of the body of Christ – and the constant issues of faith
 - The problem of the Collosae church was they were being incorrectly taught what it means to be a Christian
- Paul is now in the midst of defending this faith, from afar, to a group he'd never met
 - Let's back up in the chapter to begin with our context
 - Before this, Paul was teaching on one principle point: Add nothing to what they had received in the beginning
 - As you were saved, so continue

[Col. 2:6](#) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, [Col. 2:7](#) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

- Remember that a simple childlike faith was enough in the beginning to give us the joy and assurance of a new life in Christ
 - Having nothing to show in the moment except the freedom of having been freed from a life of sin
 - Why would we believe someone who tells us that now more is necessary?
 - That if works didn't make you right with Christ, how can they keep you right with Christ?
 - But the behavior and attitude of the Collosae church in what they were being taught and were willing to accept, brought this into question
- He says in verse 7 we are to be rooted in Him, built up by Him, established in our faith
 - Rooted means that we were planted by His power in our faith

- Build up means anything we achieve in our walk is accomplished by Christ's work in us
- Established is *bebbaioo*, meaning secure – in our faith
- And then in verse 8 Paul makes the comparison that sets up the rest of the chapter

Col. 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- The word captive can make us think of a cult, something that wants to take us away from the mainstream – held captive by false teaching
- But first let's think about the context of Collosae
 - It is evident that there were false teachers in that church, that wanted people to believe there were additions to Christ
 - They brought deceptive human philosophy dependent on traditions and worldly principles
 - Paul warns that either we follow that kind of teaching or we depend on Christ alone
 - In the verses that follow, Paul explains what each side represents
 - But he reverses the order and talks first about what it means to depend on Christ
 - Followed by a description of what are additions, the human philosophies that were corrupting the Church
- Verses 9-15 are a concise description of what it means to depend on Christ

Col. 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Col. 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Col. 2:11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

Col. 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Col. 2:13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

[Col. 2:14](#) having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. [Col. 2:15](#) When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

- Paul begins by describing the salvation process as it is accomplished by Christ's work
 - All of the work required for us to be saved is done by Christ
 - Paul begins with a play on words
 - Christ is God in bodily form – and He is all God (the fullness)
 - The word for fullness (*pleroma*) comes from the root Greek word *pleroo*
 - Used in verse 10 meaning complete
 - So Christ was completely God in physical form
 - Just as Christ was completely God, we are made complete in Christ
 - There is nothing more to be added to Christ to make us complete before God
 - An unbeliever has no prospect of spending eternity in God's presence, only eternal judgment
 - To make sure an individual does not end up in Hell, there are several things that need to be "fixed" – of which Christ fixes all of them
- The first way we are complete in Christ is that He has dominion over all rule and authority
 - The authority Paul is talking about here is the rule of the enemy and his forces over fallen man
 - When Adam fell, he placed fallen man under the authority of the enemy
 - Consequently, we shared in the judgment reserved for Satan
 - In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes that we are all born as "sons of disobedience"

- Born in the nature of Adam, we inherit his condition and the judgment on the world
- Only by faith in Christ do we move to under His authority
- We no longer share in the enemy's future, we are now "sons of God"
- Consequently, we no longer fear death

Heb. 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Heb. 2:15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- For an unbeliever, this is as good as it gets – after death is gets worse
- For a believer, this is as bad as it gets – at death it gets better
- So the first way Christ has made us complete, is that He has taken done away the fear of death and our dominion under the enemy
- Secondly, the believer is complete in Christ by having undergone a spiritual circumcision in Christ – not of human hands
 - A circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit
 - Paul makes an interesting comment at this point in verse 11
 - Christ has removed the body of flesh
 - Paul seems to be referring to the eventual replacing of our sinful body with our new body
 - In other words, just as physical circumcision removed a part of the flesh, the circumcision of the heart means that God will remove all our flesh
 - So that it may be replaced with a new body upon our resurrection
 - So we are complete in the sense that nothing else is needed to ensure we escape the corruption of the sinful body

- Third, our sinful nature itself has likewise been dispensed with, having been buried with Christ
 - Our spiritual burial is pictured by our water baptism
 - And our new spiritual awakening was brought about by God's hand (verse 12) in the same way that God's power raised Christ from the dead
- So, in those three ways we are complete in Christ
 - We have nothing more we need to do to escape the enemy, to remove the sinful flesh or to receive a new spirit
 - You can see where Paul is leading here, right? You can't add anything to something that's complete, can you?
- Now Paul really turns up the pressure
 - He reminds the Colossians that all of this was done on their behalf even before they knew it was happening
 - While they were still dead in their trespasses
 - The word for dead, *nekros*, literally means a dead body – a corpse
 - They were literally a walking corpse
 - They had no life without God
 - Just as it is impossible for a human being on their own to decide they want to believe in God, a dead body cannot choose to raise itself
 - God made the Colossian church alive in Christ
 - Paul then says, while they were yet still uncircumcised in the flesh
 - Refers to their sinful nature, the sin nature of the flesh
 - They were not only sinning (transgressions), but they had a sin nature that left them dead to God
- At that point, God forgave us for our transgressions
 - All our sins for all our lives were instantly and permanently forgiven in the moment we were saved

- We are complete in that forgiveness
 - There is nothing we need nor anything we can do to add to that forgiveness
- Next, He cancelled our debt
 - The word for cancelled in Greek literally means smearing away the impression made in wax
 - Creates the picture of making the decree against you no longer valid
 - In Paul's time, when a prisoner was crucified, they would take the charges against the accused and nail them to the cross
 - Jesus' accusation was King of the Jews
 - But our debts were nailed to the cross at the same time
 - So Christ's execution paid our debt under the Law
 - There is nothing more to pay, no more debt to erase
- Finally, Paul says this is why those rulers and authorities have been disarmed against Christians
 - The demonic realm has nothing left to accuse of before God
 - Whatever accusation the enemy might use, God turns around and answers him that debt has already been paid
- Now, what does it mean to be taken captive by empty, human philosophies? We read examples of that in the next verses:

Col. 2:16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

Col. 2:17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Col. 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

Col. 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

- Now Paul moves to the issue of human philosophies and human traditions

- The first word to note is the opening – Therefore
 - If the audience had accepted what Paul's taught up to verse 15, they need to be prepared to accept the necessary logical consequences of it
 - Because we are complete in Christ (v 8)
 - Because we know there is nothing more we need to do to accomplish salvation
 - Then we should know these things
- Paul starts with saying, let no one act as your judge
 - Men can only be our judge in these ways if we allow them
- The first example is food & drink
 - In the day of this letter, the issue was mainly one of Jewish dietary restrictions
 - Men who wanted to bring the church back under the rules of the law
 - Particularly odd when Collosae was a Greek church who did not originally hold to these laws
 - Judaizers followed Paul from city to city trying to convince new Christians to live under the Jewish dietary laws
 - But there was also considerable debate over eating meat sacrificed to idols
 - Today we see it as a restriction to avoid meat
 - In Paul's day, meat was a luxury, so it could be avoided fairly easily
 - Most meat was given to gods even before it was sold in shops, so eating meat often meant risking eating meat sacrificed to idols

[1Cor. 10:23](#) All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.

[1Cor. 10:24](#) Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

[1Cor. 10:25](#) Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;

- The concern is for our witness to our neighbor
 - There is nothing the Bible prohibits us from eating (spiritually speaking)
- Let's be clear, that it is not unlawful to set up restrictions of our own making
- But it is wrong to try and transfer those convictions to somebody else
 - That is legalism
- So when are corporate rules something we should follow?
 - So long as they are not being applied as a means of establishing or maintaining salvation
 - The rule itself is irrelevant, the meaning and purpose behind it is what's important
- The second issue was with festivals
 - In the time of the church it would have been the annual 7 Jewish festivals observed on the calendar
 - Today, Halloween can be a festival which individuals may be convicted on differently
- If we are living according to the Holy Spirit, there will be things we feel comfortable doing/not doing but it will be because of what God has taught you – not because of what someone is trying to impose upon you
 - And in all of this decision making we have the Word as our guide
- The final issue was the Sabbath, and particularly which day to observe (Sat or Sun)
 - The Sabbath was given to the Jews as a picture of Christ – work, but then rest
 - But where the shadow was incomplete is that you had to go back to work, our rest was not permanent
 - A shadow is useless once the real thing has arrived
 - Now if we rest in Christ, we are at rest perpetually

- So are we to keep the Sabbath? Only if God leads us that way, but not as a requirement of Scripture
- In v.17 Paul is making the comparison that once the real thing (Christ) appears, we ignore the shadow
- If we continue to pay attention to the shadow – restricting foods, festivals, keeping the Sabbath – then we disrespect the truth, the thing it pointed us to
 - This is the real freedom we have in Christ
 - We no longer have a list of rules to keep in order to be holy
 - We are made holy by Christ's work (in terms of salvation)
 - Now we have an obligation to be obedient to the Holy Spirit and grow more in our behavior so it catches up with our position before God
 - This is the work of sanctification