Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Complete in Christ
Scripture: Colossians 2:10-15
Code: 2142

We have the privilege tonight of continuing in our series in Colossians. So if you'll take your Bible and look with me in Colossians chapter 2, verse 10 we'll get a start on what is a tremendous, tremendous portion of Scripture. Colossians 2:1015. I am going to read it to you so you have it in your mind and get the total impact of It. Colossians 2:10, "And you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power and whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands and putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism in which also you are risen with him through the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead, and you being dead in your sins in the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us which was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross and having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it." Now that passage is so loaded with theology and doctrine that it just oozes out of every phrase. And we are going to endeavor to at least get a careful overview of all that is here.

In our continuing study of Colossians we have been made aware as we have gone verse by verse that the apostle Paul in making repeatedly a tremendous statement regarding the person of Jesus Christ and his ability to save, and that is no less true in this section. Although this section is a rebuttal against the false philosophies and heresies which are right at the door step of the Colossians. As a rebuttal it comes out very positive, because Paul's approach against false systems is always the positive approach. You don't need to argue against the falsity of the system if you just present the truth of Jesus Christ, and that is precisely what he is doing as he argues against human philosophy.

Do you remember last time we began by looking at verses 8 & 9 and we saw that Paul says, "Beware, lest anybody spoil you through philosophy which is vain deceit." But Paul is here arguing against the four facets of the false heresy that was attacking the Colossians. And facet #1 was as heresy had as part of it human philosophy. And so Paul in digging into that, and in the midst of that he gets into this concept of who Christ is and what Christ can do and the idea is that you don't need any human philosophy, you don't need any human wisdom, you are complete in him. That's the great truth that he is signaling there in verse 10.

Now in order to introduce our thoughts tonight I want to just kind of draw your attention to something else other than this passage, and it in the healings of our Lord. Because I think the healing of our Lord illustrate a great principle relative to salvation, so take your Bible and let's go back to the

beginning of the New Testament in the book of Matthew. And I want to see if you all by yourself without making, me making much editorial comment, can pick out of the verses that I read to you a consisting pattern or principle. Matthew chapter 9, I am going to go pretty quickly so, there that's better.

Matthew 9:22, there went 42 tabs on the floor, I saw them. 9:22, "Jesus turned about and when he saw her he said," and I am going to, read you just the way the Old English has it because the translation I think given the complete meaning of the word. "Daughter be of good comfort thy faith hath made thee whole, and the woman was made whole from that hour." Matthew 12:13, "Then saith he to the man, stretch forth thine hand and he stretched it forth and it was restored whole like the other." Matthew 15:28, "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great in thy faith, be it unto thee then as thou wilt, and her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Verse 31, "Insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, the blind to see, and they glorified the God of Israel." The gospel of Mark, chapter 3, verse 5. "And when he had looked around about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other." Mark 5, verse 28, "For she said if I may touch but his clothes I shall be whole." Verse 34, he said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace and be whole of the plague." Luke 6:10, "And looking round about on them, he said, stretch forth thy hand, he did so and his hand was restored whole like the other." Seventh chapter, 10th verse, "They that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole, that had been sick." Luke 8:48, I know you are seeing a pattern here, very obvious. Luke 8:48, he said, "Daughter give good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace." And further on in the 17th chapter of Luke, the 19th verse he said to him, "Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." The gospel of John, no less a part of this same thought pattern. John 5:6, "Jesus said to him, wilt thou to made whole?" Verse 14, "Behold, thou art made whole." Verse 15, "Jesus had made him whole." John 7:23, "If a man on a Sabbath day receives circumcision that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with me because Ihave made a man whole on the Sabbath." And the new Scoffield has the clear meaning of that, it says, "entirely well on the Sabbath." Whole.

Now you have the same thing carried out in apostolic miracles as well. In Acts 4:9, "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to theimpotent man, by what means he is made whole. Be it known unto you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom youcrucified, whom God raised fromthe dead, even by him, doth this man stand here before you whole." You'll find it again in Acts 9:34, Peter said, "Anias, Jesus Christ makes thee whole, arise, make your bed, and he rose immediately."

Now what you see in all of those passages is the consistency in the styleof healing that Jesus did. When Jesus healed somebody he made them what, whole, entirely well, no missing parts. Now there are some synonyms used in those various things, but the dominant term inthe word hugiai, from

which we get the medical word hygiene. And it means healthy. Jesus made them well, healthy,sound. The best translation, 'entirely well'. the absence of any infirmities. Now listen, and we are going to see more about this next Sunday morning. All the healing miracles of Jesus made people completely healthy.There was no progression involved. They were whole instantly.

Now you say, "What in the world doesthat have to do with Colossians 2?" Just this, it serves at least in my mind, and I trust in yours, and a beautiful picture of the way Jesus heals spiritually.If Jesus heals physical illness and makes people entirely whole, then that is precisely what is meant by the apostle Paul In chapter 2, verse 10 when he says, "and ye are complete inHim." You can put the word 'whole' in there. Just as Jesus Christ did miracles ofhealing that made people entirely well, so when Jesus touches a life spirituallyand gives salvation, it is entire salvation, it in whole salvation. That person becomes spiritually entirely well. In fact if you want to choose another Pauline term, "if any man bein Christ, he is a," what, "new creation."I meanthat is brand new wholeness.

Now this is nothing new. God has always done that. when David cried out in the midst of his sin in Psalm 51:10 he knew what God would do, and he said "God create in me a", what, "a clean heart." Whole, no spot, no blemish. When God acts, against sin in his saving grace, there is a wholeness. In Ezekiel 11:19, "I will give them one heart, I will put a new spirit within you, I will take stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heartof flesh," and that is repeated laterin Ezekiel and you know. God says, a new heart, a new soul as it were. A new clean inside so that spiritual healing which is salvation, is as whole as is the physical. In John 1:16, it's a great statement. He is talking here about Christ, and John the Baptist says this, "Of his fullness have all we received." When you were saved you received of Christ's what, fullness. You receive the fullness of Christ; the wholeness of Christ became your wholeness, so that somebody who becomes a Christian is spiritually whole, and that's Paul's whole standard here. That's his whole point here.

He is trying to say to these people, look when you receive Christ, you were made whole. A healthy man doesn't need anymore medicine. You don't need human philosophy, you don't need Jewish legalism, you don't need strange pagan mysticism, you don't need abstaining aestheticism, you don't need anything when you receive Christ and his salvation. You were made whole, and that's his point. And John says here, John the Baptist in John 1:16, "Of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace." In Galatians at the end in the 6th chapter in the 15th verse he says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision," listen, "but a new creation." Same as II Corinthians 5:17, "a new creation." Listen to II Peter 1:3, "According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." You say, "But when do you get that?" Next phrase, "through the knowledge of him." When do you come to know Christ? At salvation. Then when do you get all things pertaining to life and godliness? The moment you believe in Christ.

And so I say if we can say the miracles of Jesus made people whole we can also say the spiritual transformation is salvation, makes them just as whole spiritually. So that when you become a

Christian you are a clean heart, a new heart, a new spirit, a soundness, a wholeness. You have become spiritually well and you don't need to add anything to that, nothing. Not legalism, aestheticism, mysticism or hum" philosophy.

Now let's look at Colossians 2:10. Colossians 2:10 says, "and you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power." Literally it says you have been made full. You have been made full in him. There is nothing missing. Christ fills you up. There aren't any other things to add to that. You have been made full with the fullness of him who fills all in all. Human philosophy based on the traditions of men as verse 8 says and the elementary marks of infantile human religion has nothing to add to what is already completed. When Jesus died on the cross the last thing he said is, "It is finished." and when he said it he meant it; not only in terms of his own deed, but in terms of securing the fullness of salvation by that deed. "And this one who rules all principality and power," that is all other beings, all created authorities, all created rulers, particularly referring here to the angelic ones. He rules them all. They have nothing to add to his work. These people who are influencing the Colossians are dead wrong. You don't need to get to God through a series of intermediary aons or angels. Listen good angels can't help make you complete, and bad angels can't harm you once you are complete.

And so Paul deals a blow to the heresy of human philosophy and religion which tries to deny that Christ has the power to give complete salvation. And we have discussed that enough to know that that was the basic heresy they were facing. The Colossians who have in Jesus Christ the fountain that never fails would be fools to listen to these false teachers who would have them hue out broken cisterns that hold no water. You don't need philosophy and you need angelic intermediaries. Christ in the completer. He makes anything he touches whole. All his healing miracles, whether physical or spiritual, instantaneous and complete these two things of physical and spiritual salvation are brought together I think beautifully in a statement of III John.

Verse 2. It's kind of tucked away there. This is kind of beautiful really. John in writing to his beloved Gayus whom he loved in the truth and he says in verse 2. Watch this, this is beautiful, "Beloved," beloved Gayus, "I wish above all things, that thou mayest prosper and be in health." Now watch this, "even as thy soul is healthy." He says, oh Gayeus, if your physical body could only be an healthy as your soul, would you be in terrific shape. Bow what's the implication? The im-plication is that because the guys is a believer, his soul prospers, his soul is healthy. Now sin plays a part in the practical aspect of this, but positionally a soul is healthy. And John is simply saying if your body could only know the health that your soul knows. Back to Colossians 2, "you're complete in him, you have been made complete."

Now what does that mean? You say, "Well what do you mean John when you say complete, complete what?" "What is the definition of that completeness" Well Paul can't just say it either, so he has got a preach a sermon on it just like I would. He's got to explain it, so he does in the nextverses

and he shown you three ways in which you are complete. These are just basic, beautiful thing. Three ways, three kinds of completeness, three aspects to our completeness. #1, complete salvation, #2, complete forgiveness, and#3, complete victory. Complete salvation, verses 11 & 12, complete forgiveness, verses 13 & 14, complete victory in verse 15.

Let's look first of all at the complete salvation. How are we complete Paul? #1, your salvation incomplete, verse 14 "In when you also are

circumcised with the circum-cision made without hands and putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcisionof Christ, buried with him in baptism in which also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who has raised him from the dead."

Now we'll look at this. He says, "Look, your salvation is absolutely complete. There is no need for you to be circumcised, you have been baptized." Now remember, the heresy which the apostle in combating is the somewhat baffling mixture of the pagan beliefs of these various intermediaries and Jewish beliefs of legalism. And along with it they are trying to propagate the idea that you have to be circumcised, and this isn't anything new, the Judaizers did it in Galatia didn't they? So that's fine that you believe. That's wonderful thatyou believe but you have to get circumcised, you have to have this operation, surgical salvation. And he says, "look," verse 11, "in whomalso you are circumcised**."** Don't let anybody come along, whuff you about some circumcision. You have been circumcised. Oh really, how? How could these Colossian gentiles be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands?

We are not talking about surgery here, we're talking about putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision which Christ did. We're talking about a spiritual operation not a physical one. And all through the history of Israel there were two views of circumcision. Every little Hebrew boy was circumcised the eighth day after he was born and that was the sign of his belonging to the nation of Israel. And it became a controversial thing and there were two schools of thought on it. One, there was the view that circumcision in, itself was enough to save. Surgical salvation If you just got circumcised you were in the covenant people and that was it. The physical in all that was required and you know many in the history of the church picked that up and that's whoreinfant baptism came from. You just baptize all the babies, that was Constantine's idea. we'll make everybody a Christian, we'll just get all the babies and baptize them and they'll be instant Christians. And the Israelite believing this would argue it didn't matter whether an Israelite is good, it didn't matter whether he was bad, all it mattered was that he was circumcised.

That was the typical view of the Jews in Jesus' day, the typical view of the Jewish leaders of Paul's day as well. That's why in Romans, chapter 2 and verse 25 he says, "circumcision profits if you keep the law." It's fine if you keep the law, but if you break the law circumcision is just like uncircumcision. My Dad used to always tell the story about the fighter that went in and before every fight he crossed

himself. And the says, "does it help?" Somebody else said, "It does if he can punch." If he can't it won't do him any good at all. Same thing with circumcision. If you keep the law it's fine, if you don't it doesn't help. Therefore he says, even if the uscircumcision keeps the righteous in the law," in other words people who haven't had the operation, obey the law.

That'll be like being circumcised. They'll move into the covenant blessing. Verse 28, "He is not a Jew who is won outwardly, neither is that circumcision outward in the flesh, he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart. You see that's what we are getting at, but this was the typical Jewish view that if you just had the external operation you were in good shape. But there was another view. And there were some true spiritual Jews, there were some remnants all through Israel's history, and they believed that circumcision was only an outward mark of a man inwardly committed to God. And they believed right. They believed that it just realty was simply a symbol on the outside, and what really mattered was the heart. And this had always been what God told them anyway. You can go clear back to Exodus when God was first laying down the rules. Exodus 6:12, "Moses spoke before the Lord saying the children of Israel have not harkened to me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me who have of uncircumcised lips." And here you see Moses at the very beginning is using the concept of uncircumcision in a metaphorical sense, showing that what God is really after, God is really, after, is somebody who has a circumcised heart. That is heart dedicated to God, circumcised lips, lips dedicated to God, not simply the act of surgery on a child. But that the real issue was the heart. In Leviticus 26, I think it is verse 41 and, "that I also have walked contrary unto them andbrought them into the land of their enemies, if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled and then they accept of the punishment of their iniquity." God is talking to them. He says, they are uncircumcised hearts, and that is always what God has been after. He has always been after the fact that the heart would be set apart unto him and that that outward sign was simply a symbol of that. In verse 7 of Ezekiel 44, "Uncircumcised in heart, uncircumcised in flesh, are drawn on two different things." That's exactly what God has been saying all along. You can check Deuteronomy 30, verse 6, and Jeremiah 6:10 you find the same thing.

Now we know then what physical circumcision was, but here in Colossians 2:11, it says, "you are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." You have had a special circumcision. What is it? It is the cutting away of the body of the sins of the flesh. When you became a Christian, Christ out away everythingsinful from your life. The cutting away of the sinful things. Now I want you to stay with me because I don't want you to extract out of that till I am done.

In Romans chapter 4 in verse 11 it says, "And he received the sign of circumcision." Abraham, "a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." You know people say, "well Abraham was circumcised," yeah 14 years after he believed God and was saved. So circumcision didn't save him. He was circumcised as a sign of a righteous heart, and that's the message. And what is true circumcision? Listen to me. It is cutting away everything from the life but the will of God. And Paul's message in Colossians 2:11 is this, it is the spiritual surgery, the cutting away of self and sin,

and only Christ can do that. I love the New International Version translation of verse 11, this is what it says, "In him you are also circumcised in the putting off of your sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with a circumcision done by Christ." What kind of circumcision? The putting off of your sinful nature. When you became a Christian your old nature was taken away and you became a new creature with a new nature. Ok?

Now listen, any old priest or any old anybody can circumcise a man's foreskin, but only Christ can circumcise a man's heart, and that means cut away the old sin nature. So, Christian he says, you don't need any right of circumcision. You have received from Christ a spiritual surgery of which that old right was only a picture and a symbol. You know you look at that symbol in the Old Testament, it's kind of interesting. It pictured the removal of sin, and listen to me, and by it's association with the organ of generation it stressed the sin inherit of our fallen nature as the offspring of Adam. But even the Old Testament constantly emphasizes that an inward change is the real issue. The insistence in the Old Testament, check it out, Jeremiah 4:4, Jeremiah 9:25, it says it there. The insistence is that the inwardness, the heart be circumcised. But that picture, and the fact that it is the organ that produces life, it must be circumcised, pictures the influence of that old sin nature on the next generation, how it's passed down. And so the actual form of the right emphasizes that it was human nature that needed to be dealt with, that it was prodigy that was the problem, that it was a thing being passed on from father to son to son to son, and all the way down the line and that this nature had to be dealt with.

You say**,** "are you trying to tell me that when you become a Christian God takes away the old nature?" Yes I believe that. I believe it. I believe he gives you a new nature, all new, brand new, and that's what he is talking about in verse 11. Look what he says. "This in made without hands," and what is it, "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." You say, but wait a minute John, if we have had our fallen nature put away, if we have put off the body of the sins of the flesh, human nature and it's fallen condition, and we have a new nature, how come we still sin," right? Fair question. The answer is this, because you not only have a new nature but you have an old body. You have a new inside and an old outside. Look with me at Romans 7.

First sermon I ever preached at Grace Church , I was preaching here, I didn't know it at the time, but they were going to talk to me about being the pastor, I preached on Romans 7, never forget it. Afterwards they told me I preached an hour and twenty minutes. So they knew what, they were getting long ago. Romans 7:15, great chapter. Paul says, "For that which I do I understand not, for what I would that do I not, and what I hate that do I." Sounds like me, right? Sounds like me. "If then I do that which I don't want to do I consent to the law that it is good."

Now then "it is no more I that do it but sin that dwells, in me." He says, look, it is not my new nature doing this , it in the old flesh that is in me. I know verse 18, "that in me that is not in my new nature but in my flesh dwells no good thing." He makes a distinction, verse 20, "If I do that I would not, it is

no more I. it is not my new nature, it is sin that dwells in me" "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me, I delight in the law of God after my inward man." He says, my new nature just loves God. My new nature wants to do all kinds of good things. My new nature wants to obey God. My new nature wants to respond to God, but I see another principle, verse 23, "in my members, warring against the, law and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my," what, "mymembers." The law of God is in my what, mind, but sin is my members.

The new nature that is in me has been purified, but the body that it lives in is a mess. That's why when I go to heaven, I don't get a new inside, I get a what, a new outside. If I could just get my good inside out of this bad outside, I could really go. So he says in verse 24, "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so then with the mind I serve the law of God." My new nature in Godward, "but my flesh serves the law of six." So he says even in my new creation life that new nature that is there, surrounding it is the flesh.

But I believe people it's a new nature, all brand new. I don't believe when you become a Christian you get kind of whitewashed, I believe you get brand new from inside on the very moment you believe. Six is still there because of the flesh because of the body, because we are the sons of Abraham, and the sons of Adam, and they were sinners. But the internal nature, the new heart in there. God promised I'll give them a new heart, didn't he? That's the covenant promise, the new covenant.

So when you receive Christ, that was the end of the old nature positionally but sin is still hanging around, but what equal is saying here in he is not getting into the fact of sin here, he is not dealing with that. He is simply saying, "hey, you don't need anybody to get you more saved." People come along and say, "well I was saved but later on I got more saved." Not you can't get more saved. That's like saying I was married and now I am more married. No, you are either married or you are not married. Same thing in true of being saved. You are not more saved, you are just either saved or not. And you do not need anything to be added to the new nature that you have been given, except to bring your behavior into harmony with your new nature. And Paul learned how to do that. He didn't know how to do that in Romans 7, but what did he do in Romans 8. He learned how to do it by doing what, if you walkin the spirit you will not fulfill, what, the lust of the flesh. So he learned how to obey the spirit.

Now Paul says you have now life it's been given you in the way that Christ circumcised your heart, by taking away the old nature. You don't need any outward sign. That's absolutely irrelevant. That is superfluous. And he goes a step further in verse 12, look at this, after all you have had your own rite, you have had your own ceremony, and it is baptism. "You were buried with him in baptism in which also you are risen with him to the faith of the operation of God who has raised him from the dead."

Now, there is no water in verse 12. Verse 12 is very dry. Some of you say, "you see Paul in teaching baptismal regeneration." Folks, Paul would never do that. Do you think he would get rid of one

ceremony just to bring another one? If he does have spiritual reality in mind in verse 11 you can believe he has it in mind in Terse 12. He would never say the change from spiritual death to spiritual life is dome by water. That would make him as much a ritualist as those whom he was condemning. He is the champion of spirituality, not ceremony. You may, "well what is he talking about here, what in this baptism?" It Picture the union of a believer with Christ. The word simply means placed into. You were placed into Christ and of course water baptism is the beautiful picture of it." The terminology became synonymous in the early church and still is often. When you became a Christian it is as if you were buried, you died and you rose again in new life, through the faith of the operation of God who raised him from the dead, just as Godraised Jesus, so he raised you from the dead when you believed in Christ. Your old life died and was buried and you rose a new life.

The believer then, when you put your faith in Christ, you are buried with Christ. It is as if you go right to the cross and you are hanging there on the cross, literally as if God propelled you two thousand years backwards in history. It his timeless mind and slams you into that cross and you die there and you are buried there, on the third day you come out of the grave with Christ, a new life. We are so identified by faith with him that we are in his death. We are in his burial, we are in his resurrection. Tremendous, tremendous truth. And it is all done by the operation of God.

Notice this; the word is 'energy'. God's energy, God's resurrection power, God who raised Him from the dead, raises you from the dead, so that when you receive Christ, you are buried, your old life died and you have become alive. And listen folks, there are only two things you can be, either dead or alive. And when you are alive you are alive, and that is precisely what happens. There is one little footnote to notice in there, in the middle of verse 12 it says, "through faith," through the faith and the operation of God. We who believe in God's power, we who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead will also be raised with him. Is that right? Romans 10:9 & 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus in Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath." what, "raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." When you believe that and confess with your mouth your old life dies, is buried and you rise in newness of life, a spiritual miracle. And you know what you experience and I experience the same power with which he raised Jesus from the dead.

Look with me in Romans 6 because we have to compare Romans 6. Sometimes we read this at our baptismal services. Romans 6. Verse 3, great, great chapter. "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death," Again when you were enteredinto a union with Christ, I think Romans 6 is dry too like Colossians 2. He is talking about the spiritual baptism, not the water. "As you were placed into Jesus Christ, you died with him," verse 4, "you were buried with him by baptism into death and as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father so we also walk in newness of life." We died with him, we rise with him. Verse 6, watch it, "Knowing this, that our old man," what in the old max, what is anther term for it, the old nature, right? Self, the old self, the old nature, **"that'** our old nature is crucified with him," here is the same terminology, "that the body of sin might be, "slightly altered. Is that what in says? Might be what,

"destroyed." The old nature was wiped out, "that henceforth we would no longer be the slaves of six, for he that is dead is freed from six."

You say, "But John in what way are we freed from sin?" We are not freed from never doing it again. No, that is not what he is saying. What he is saying is, you are free from its consequences. "The wages of sin is," what, "death." How many times can sin kill you? Once, all right. If you are a Christian it already has done it. You've already died. Sin comes along and says 'MacArthur I am going to get you because you have to die.' I say, "I've died already thank you." You can only kill me one time and that's it. You say, when did you die? I died in Jesus Christ. The moment I put my faith in him I was crucified with Christ, "nevertheless I live." I died once, it's your tough luck I rose from the dead. And now sin has no claim on me because I died in Christ. Every man will die for his sin, either alone, spend eternity in hell, or in Christ and spend eternity with God. You say, "well what does death mean for us then when we die physically? That's just getting rid of the problem, so the good part can be released. Big deal. that's terrific. And so what he is saying here in Romans is, "look, the old man is done away with, the old nature **is destroyed and** now you are free from sin's bondage."

Oh you are going to mess around and goof up because of the problem of the flesh that is there, but sin cannot lay a claim on you. Look at verse 10, "For in that he died he died unto sin." how many times, "once in that he lives, he lives unto God." Verse 9, "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death hath no more dominion over him. He dies once that's the end of death's dominion. Verse 11, "Likewise reckon you yourselves to be dead unto sin." How many times do you have to die to it then? Once, and you have, and sin and death and hell and Satan have no claim on you. Tremendous truth.

So we summarize the verses in Colossians this way. You believers, you have no need of external circumcision. You have already received the true circumcision of the heart and live. Your whole sinful nature has been cut away. You received it by virtue of your union with Christ by faith. When he was buried you, your former wicked selves were buried with him. When he was resurrected as new creatures you were resurrected with him. All by the power of God when you believed. It is done. It is complete. The old nature is dealt with, new life has begun, complete salvation in yours, you don't need anything else. So when somebody comes along and says, "Well I know you have to believe, but also you have to keep the Ten Commandments." No. "But also you have to do this or **this.** No. "If you don't you are going to get it." No. I already died once and that's all there is. He died once, and he dieth no more. And that's the stand, complete salvation. It's fantastic isn't it?

Second, in what way in our completion in Christ seen here? Complete salvation, secondly complete forgiveness. This is so great, I love it. Complete forgiveness. I don't know about you but probably the most exciting doctrine in all the Bible is forgiveness to me. I mean let's face it, knowing what I know, if I felt guilty all the time for my sins, and felt like they weren't forgiven, I'd be a basket case. Complete forgiveness. This approach is the same reality from another aspect. The first one emphasizes the

complete of salvation apart from ritual, and this emphasizes the completeness of forgiveness apart from any work.

Look at verse 13, "And you in debt in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh has hemade alive together with him having forgiven you most of your trespasses." All, all, "blotting out thehandwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us, took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." This is so rich, I don't know whether I can give it all it deserves, but boy, spend some time on these verses. These are just loaded.

So notice the he and the him in there. Contrasted with the you, "and you dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh." Doesn't sound too good, "hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." You are in bad shape, but he conquered it all. You share his resurrectionlife. You were dead in your sins. You know what it means to be dead in your sins? You know what it means to be dead in six? Well I have illustrated it many times. The word 'dead in you sins' is also used, that phrase is also used in Ephesians 2:1 and it appears there I think in the very same form here. It's what you call a lockotive of position. It's speaking about a positional thing. You are dead in sin. I mean when you were born you were born dead spiritually. And what does death mean? It means an inability to respond. You see dead people and you can do whatever you want and they don't react. Dead people can't respond. That is the signal that somebody is dead. They don't respond.

Now I don't want to get into all the technicalities of that, but when you see the little thing going, bleep ... bleep...bleep...bleep....hmmmmmm, it's all over. When you go to the funeral and everybody moves but the one in that casket. Dead. Everyone files out but him. Can't respond. No ability to respond. That's what spiritual death is, to be dead in sin. It means to be so looked in sinthat you are unable to respond to God. You see? The Bible makes no sense, spiritualtruth makes no sense, you are lost in the sinfulness of the world and the flesh and the devil and you can't react to God because you are dead andyou do not respond to stimulus**.** You are a spiritual corpse.

Now if it wasn't bad enough that you are dead it your six, he also saysyou uncircumcision of your flesh**.** Now what does that mean? That in a reference to Gentiles. He says you are dead in your sinsand your Gentile situation. You say, "What's so bad about being a Gentile?" I don't know why you want to say that. Gentiles were uncircumcised. Do you know what that meant? Outside the covenant. They did not have the truth of God. It's bad to be dead in sin. It's double bad to be dead in sin and not have any hope, because you don't have the truth, right? The Jew might be dead in sin, but at least he was in an environment where the covenant of God was operative.But a Gentile was dead in sin and he was outside of that.

Listen to Ephesians 2:11, **"**Wherefore remember that you in past time were Gentiles, uncircumcised." Verse 12 he definesit, "and at that time you were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth

of Israel, strangers from the covenance of promise,having no hope and without God in the world." That's pretty sad. One thing to be dead in sin, but it is doubly serious to be dead in sin outside the covenant, out side the promise with no hope, without God in the world, because you have no information, you have no revelation. So he says, God looks down on you people, dead in your sins, without him, without hope, without information, without revelation, and what did he do? What's the one thing a dead man needs the most? Life! So what does it say in 13? "Hath he," what, "made alive together with," whom, whom, Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." He says you Gentiles, outside the covenant, outside the promise. And I think too there is a symbolicimplication in the uncircumcision of your flesh**,** in which he is saying, that's an apt symbol of the fact that they were still subject to the old nature. You are dead in sin and subject to your old nature, until he came along and made you alive.

Fantastic. That's precisely what it says in Ephesians 2, verse 5, "God who in rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in sins hath made us alive together with Christ." What do you mean together with Christ? I mean this people, and I don't know how it works, in some mysterious divine way. When you receive Christ God fires you back two thousand years, put you on the cross with Christ and the grave with Christ and raises you with Christ. I don't understand that miracle, it's fantastic. He says, Ephesians 2:5, "made us alive together with Christ." Colossians 2:13, "he made alive together with him." Somehow we are in union with Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Corinthians 6:17, when he rises we rise. So you see dead men, utterly defeated, utterly dominated by sin, powerless to break the chains of sin that binds them, powerless to discover the truth of God without hope, without God, without any choice, looked into the sinful nature and all of a sudden God makes them alive.

Now you tell me who initiates salvation. Then you hear people say and they say it meaningfully. "I found the Lord.' No, he found you. You have no more power to overcome your win than a dead man does to overcome his ova death. But in Jesus Christ by his complete work he freed them from sin, its power and consequences gave them new life, so new and so vital and so liberated that it can be described only by the term resurrection life. And even to the Gentiles he gave it apart from any ceremony like circumcision. You **say, "this** is fantastic, You mean it is possible for somebody to be completely restored to God completely given a new heart and a new nature; to have a complete new relationship with God and eternal life?" How, how?

Watch this. Beautiful, watch this. Verse 9, two little words, "in Him," Are you ready? Verse 10, two little words, "in Hint." See them? Verse 11, two little words, "in whom." Verse 12, two little words, "with Him." Verse 13, two little words, "with Him." How do you get all this? By being what, in Christ. That's the key. You put yourself in the hands in of Christ, you receive him by faith and it all becomes yours. And then he says, here is the first major benefit, the end of verse 13, "having forgives you all trespasses." Past tense folks, it's already been done. People ask me this all the time. "John how many of our sins have been forgiven?" What's the answer? All of them! "Having forgiven all

trespasses." That's miraculous. And I'll tell you, I agree with Psalm 32:1, it says, "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is removed," or covered. That's a happy man isn't it? That's happy to be forgiven. I like it. I don't like to be guilty about things. I am so happy I am forgiven. And if I thought there were two sins that weren't forgiven I'd be a miserable wreck. I'd be down doing something, counting beads or doing something. You know what I like? I like Isaiah 1:18, this is what it says, remember this one? "Come now, let's reason together, saith the Lord, thou your sins be a scarletthey shall be as white as snow, thou they be red like crimson, they shall be an," well how much forgiveness is there there? Total. White as snow, as wool. It's Isaiah 1:18. Isaiah 55:7 is a good thought on that, "Letthe wicked forsakehis way, the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him," listen, "and to our God forhe will abundantly pardon." That's great. Listen to Acts 13:38, again thecompleteness of forgiveness. Acts 13:38, "Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The forgiveness of sins. This is Paul preaching, and listen to verse 39. "And by him," listen to this, I love it, "all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." All that believe, that's simple enough, are justified from what, all things.

Fantastic. Total, complete, forgiveness. Instant, the moment you believe God forgave the sins you have committed and were to commit. I love this. Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believes and does penance," no, "whosoever believes in him shall receive forgiveness of sins." You receive forgiveness for believing. You say what about confessing? No, for believing. Confessing does not relate to forgiveness, it relates to acknowledging your sin and repenting of it. Forgiveness is already a settled matter. If you have problems with 1 John 1:9. Get the tape on it. Hebrews 8:10 is good, "For this is the covenant that I'll make with the house of Israel after those days saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their minds, write them in their hearts, I will be to them a God and they shall be to be a people, and they shall not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, no the Lord for all shall know me from the least to the greatest for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I," what, "remember 3:11 how long, "no more." I am always amazed at the fact that there are many Christians who continue to remember what God has forgotten. I used to call it a God complex. Listen, the highest court in the universe is God, and if God has forgiven me the only thing that would justify my holding myself guilty for sin is if I am a higher authority than God. If I am not, then I might as well forgive myself.

What are the characteristics of God's forgiveness? Did you ever think about that? What are the characteristics? Let me just fire these at you quick. First of all it's gracious. God's forgiveness is gracious, you didn't earn it. You didn't earn his forgiveness, it is a gift of grace. Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his." what, "grace." Justified freely by his grace. Titus 3:4, "After the kindness and love of God our Savior, not by works or righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us. By the washing of regeneration, renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Justified," verse 7, "by his grace." God's forgiveness is gracious.

Secondly, it is complete, absolutely complete. Nothing missing. Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," listen to me, "according to the riches of his grace." You say, "How much forgiveness is there equal to the riches of his grace?" You want to know how much forgiveness you have? Figure out how much grace he's got? I'll help you. "Where sin abounds grace does," what, "much more abound." So however much sin you have piled up, he's got a lot more grace. Complete forgiveness. I John 2:12, "My little children I write unto you because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

Thirdly, God's forgiveness is not only gracious and complete, it's eager. You don't have the idea of God up there saying, "Oh boy, why did I ever get into this, now I have to keep forgiving these people." Psalm 86:5 says, "He's ready to forgive, he's eager to forgive." II Corinthians 5:19, "To wit that God was in Christ, reconciled in the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Here is God, and he says I want to reconcile you and I don't want to hold your sin against you, I want to forgive your sin. And so he says he committed to us the Word of reconciliation and sent us out as ambassadors to tell everybody that God is just waiting to do this. Isn't that fantastic? He is just up there waiting to do it. Gracious, complete, eager.

Fourth, God's forgiveness is certain. You can count on it. Absolutely certain. No questions, no doubts. In Acts 26:18, Paul says, God sent him to preach Christ. to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satanto God that they mayreceive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among then who are sanctified by faith that is in me. In other words it's based on his promise. It's based on God's promise. Paul says, and I have seen these things, and as I have heard Christ, and as he told me what to do and promised to do it, I go out to preach. Verse 25 he said, "I am not mad noble festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness." God has said it, and I preach it. It's certain, based on his promise.

And I would add fifthly it is unequal. If you are looking for forgiveness, try God, you'll never find any other kind like it. I love this. "Who." remember this one, Micah 8:18, "who in a God like thee, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. Have you ever known a God like that? The pagans have never invented one. Who is a God like that who pardons so much? Further, the forgiveness of God in not only gracious, complete, eager, certain, unequal, but it is motivating. You say, "what do you mean motivating; John?" Ephesians 4:32 helps us on that.

This is what it says. "And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, doing," what, "forgiving one anothereven as God for Christ's sake," what, "has forgiven you." Listen to me, if God has not totally forgiven us, that principle gets all messed up. He says, "forgive totally and completely an God has forgiven you." Listen, be clear on this. Forgiveness is total, complete, forever for the Christian**.** There is no such thing as unforgiven sin in the life of a Christian. It is all forgiven.

Now let's look at verse 14, this a marvelous verse. "Blotting out the handwriting ofordinances against us**,** contrary to us he took it out of the way nailing it to his cross." I want you to look at two words here that will give you the picture. Two Greek words on which the whole idea hinges. #1, the handwriting which was against us, it wasblotted out. The word is cheitographon, literally autograph.Blotting out the autograph.The technical use of this word is interesting. It was a handwritten note of a debtor acknowledging his indebtedness" You know what it literally was? An I,0,U. I, John MacArthur owe you $500, signed John MacArthur. That is a cheirographon, a handwriting. You know what happens? A signed confession of debt. Your sin and mine, piled up, a debt to God, right? We owed God for that. We had to pay. And it is against us, notice it, against us, it was against us. In other words it would destroy us, it would condemn us, we couldn't pay it,& it is a selfconfessed recognition of those debts. But when you are willing to go up there and sign it and say it's true, I will sign my name on that line. This is true, these are my debts. It is the minute that you sign it and confess it that God blots it out.

Let me take you to the second word, and we'll put it together. It says, "That which was against us was contrary to us, he took it out of the way." Literally, he wiped it off, like erasing a blackboard. This is the forgiveness of God. The day you walked up to God and signed your confession, is the day he erased it, totally. And what were you confessing? Sin. To give you the idea of this. The substance on which ancient documents were written was a papeiros. And papeiros was a kind of paper made of the bull rush. There was another thing that was used, velom, which was made from a animal's hide, and both were fairly expensive and wouldn't be wasted. And since no ancient ink had any acid into it, the ink never bit into the papeiros or the velom anyway. But it lay on the surface. If nobody fussed with it, it would remain there, because it didn't bit Into the surface, it had no acid. And sometimes the scribe in order to preserve his paper, because he didn't have too much money, would simply take a sponge and wipe the ink off the papeiros or the velom and use it again. And that is exactly what he is saying. When you receive Jesus Christ, and you walked up and signed your confession, that's whom God nailed it his cross, paid the penalty and wiped it clean. A great thought isn't it? So God by our faith in Christ took that indictment, nailed it to the cross, we signed it, and he erased it.

You know what's left? Not one trace, and he remembers it, what, no more. Complete forgiveness. Oh, the wonder of that grace. Fantastic. Lastly, complete salvation, complete forgiveness, third, complete victory. Verse 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of then openly, triumphing ever them in it." He in saying to those Colossians, "for goodness sake don't piddle around with those eons and intermediary spirits. They were all decimated at the cross. When he dies he spoiled principalities and powers. He made a public demonstration over them, triumphing over them. Where was it that Jesus bruised the head of Satan? At the cross. Where was it that he broke his power? At the cross. Where was it that he took away the power of death? At the cross.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14, "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part, of the same that through death he might destroy him that had the

power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan's dominion wax broken at the cross. As Christ was suspended on the cross, no doubt the demons were having a carnival, seeing him bound hand and foot to the wood in apparent weakness and defeat, they imagined he was their victim, but how wrong they were. He mastered them even in death. And 1 Peter 3:18 says, "When his body went into the grave his spirit went into the place where the demons were bound," and it says "he proclaimed his victory over them right there to their faces in that place."

Read 1 Peter 3:18. Christ descended and proclaimed to the spirits in prison. Who are they? Bound demons. He proclaimed his triumph and they were disabled and they were dethroned. So the cross and the resurrection to the answer in the heresy beguiling the minds of those living in the valley. There is no point in pa-ying tribute to principalities or powers that have been vanquished by Jesus. What a victory. But for the gospel beloved, man is a puppet in the hands of fate. G.H.C. McGregor says this. Listen: We are still con-scious that apart from the victory of Christ man is a helpless victim in a hostile cosmos. It is little comfort to us that the inexterable

fate which was once expressed in terms of the influence of the stars, conceived his personal demons, is now expressed in terms of psychological

or economicaleterminism. We still ask how a man is to triumph over an evil heredity or how can he be free and victorious in a world of rigid from gid law and scientific necessity. We still astronomical intimidation, terror of this insignificance of man and the vastness of the material universe encompassing him." And man has this fear of being crushed, sooner or later by an intimidating universe and cosmos that he can't explain. And there is only one message of hope that comes firing through, and it is this: Jesus Christ crucified, Jesus Christ risen, is Lord of all, and the forces of the universe are subject to him as its creator and its conqueror. They in that day feared the demons and they feared the angels, and they feared the stars, and because of Jesus Christ we fear nothing. What a confidence. The death of Christ was a transformation. The death of Christ was a pardon, and the death of Christ was a triumph, and that makes for a complete salvation.

Lord thank you again for what you have done. No wonder Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory saving the cross of Christ." Father for this complete salvation we give you praise and thanks from the deepest part of our hearts. Thank you for what you have done in us, because of Christ. May our thanks be manifest not just in our thought, not just in our word, but in our acts. May we live thankful lives.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment would you meditate and just between you and the Lord zero in on your own life. Let me say this in closing, we'll close in just a minute. I know that there are some here tonight who have never come to the completeness that Christ offers. You don't what it is to be complete in Christ. You don't what it is to have complete salvation, forgiveness and triumph

over Satan and all of this terrible fear and intimidation that man in our universe knows. You don't know what it is to have peace in the mid** of the storm of life, but you'd like to know. I can promise that you can come to Jesus Christ and he'll not only give you what you are looking for, but more than you ever dreamed. What have you to loose in trying? If the desire of your heart is to know Jesus Christ, why don't you just whisper that to God and say, "God I don't know all about this, but if it is true I want to know. If it is true I want to know." And Jesus said, 'If you seek me, and really will to do the Father's will, you'll know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.'

Thank you Father for our fellowship tonight. We thank you for what you are doing in all of our hearts.Thank you for the great sense of gratitude I feel inside for what you have done for me in this wonderful salvation. Help me to speak it to others, to be that ambassador to proclaim the eagerness of your forgiving spirit. Take us from this place Father this week to with open hearts and open mouths and open minds, be your servants, in this world that so desperately needs you. We will praise you for what you are going to do, in Christ's Name, AMEN.

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