

The Sufficiency of Christ Alone

Scripture: Colossians 2:8-23

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The world can be very, very complex. Sunday night after Sunday night as we gather, we hear people talk about, "I tried this, I tried that, I tried to make sense out of this, make sense out of that," all the way from devout religion to no religion, all the way from believing in God in some unique and personal way to doubting that He even exists, trying this and that approach to truth, changing world views periodically, trying to sort it all out, trying to come up with some kind of amalgam of stuff that makes sense and satisfies a nagging anxiety of the human mind, trying to sort out the meaning of life. It's a complex world with almost uncountable options. And it does seem maybe bizarre, maybe a little strange, if not simplistic, to say that Jesus Christ is the answer and He alone and He is the complete answer and there isn't anything else. Is it really that clear? Is it really that simple? Is it really that straightforward?

Well that's exactly what the Bible says and that's exactly what Jesus claimed. I just read a survey that said the vast majority of people in America believe Jesus actually was God, more than three fourths of them. Well if they believe He was God, then they probably ought to take what He says as true. And what He said above all other things is that He's the only Savior. He is the answer and the only answer to the longing of every human heart. The Bible simply says, "In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It's all summed up in Him. That comes out of Colossians chapter 2. If you have your Bible there, or there's one handy in the pew, turn to the New Testament and maybe toward the back part, a little pass half way, there's a book called Colossians and in the second chapter of that book is this amazing statement concerning Christ, "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." That is a statement that is really bold. In fact, you might say in today's vernacular, that's over the top. Come on, all wisdom, all knowledge, all that wisdom and knowledge has to offer is found in Jesus Christ?

You say, "Well, are we really supposed to accept that? Isn't that just a religious viewpoint?" No, that's an authoritative statement in Scripture, that's in verse 3 of Colossians 2. And verse 4 says, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with a persuasive argument." Don't let anybody deceive you by trying to convince you that that is in fact not true. It is in Christ that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found. Everything that has value is summed up in Him, everything that has to do with meaning in this life and the life to come, everything related to life and death and eternity. And as we heard tonight again, everything related to joy and peace and fulfillment and putting your soul at rest, everything is found in Him.

The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament says that, "He made perfect forever those who are set apart to Him." In the tenth verse of Colossians 2 it is said another way, "In Him you have been made complete." It's all wrapped up in Him.

I suppose as a student in college I was fascinated by a lot of things. I have a very inquisitive mind. It's a good thing because I have to keep searching up new material to give to you every week year after year, and it suits me find. But when I was in college I was curious about a lot of things and one of the things that I was very curious about was the development of human philosophy, or human thought apart from the Bible and apart from God. And so I decided that I would take courses in advance philosophy.

Now having been raised by a pastor and having been exposed to the Bible growing up, I was a firm believer in the Bible by the time I got to college. In fact, my major was biblical studies and my minor, had a double minor in Greek and history, always fascinated by history. But I just had this particular interest in philosophy. And so I basically begged the school to allow me to take advance European philosophy without any appropriate under class man preparation, just let me leap frog, you know, the 101's and the 201's and get to the advance European philosophy...and I did. There were only two of us in the class...just two. And nobody could figure out why we're taking it and the other guy in the class named Fred was dyslexic. This is true. It's tough enough to sort through philosophy if you can read, but if you have a dyslexia problem, it is bizarre. I'll never forget that because this is an aside. Fred said to me one day because he liked me, we became friends in that class, he said, "You ought to run for student body office." I said, "I can't do that. I don't want to be an officer in the Student Body." You know, I was playing football and other sports and I was teaching a Bible study at my church and I had a full life and I said, "I don't want to...I don't want to do that."

Well, there was one day when the whole thing happened in our campus and on one day the campus was blitzed with signs and speeches and they voted, the kids voted at the end of that day for whoever was going to be Student Body officers. I came that morning to school only to see my name plastered all over the campus on signs. "MacArthur for Vice President." He had decided I could probably make it as Vice President. And the bizarre part is every sign had my name spelled a different way and it was so funny that I won in a landslide and I was stuck having to do that job for the rest of the year. So that was my buddy Fred in philosophy class. I think it was the only election like it in history. And everybody thought that we did it on purpose, just to draw attention.

But I took that philosophy class and I dug deeply into the foundations of western philosophy in particular and the flow of western philosophy. It was very helpful to me to sort of be able to sort that out. Later on I became even more fascinated by it. Read a very important book in philosophy written by a guy that I think is the most insightful and effective and impactful student of philosophy in its

historical setting, a man by the name of Paul Johnson who wrote a book called *The Intellectuals*. And in that book I looked not only deeply into the thinking of the people who were the architects of western theology but even more deeply into the life of these people and found them, without exception, to be base and immoral to the core and coming up with a kind of philosophy that accommodated their own personal immorality. So human philosophy from my vantage point didn't offer anything that moved me one inch from my biblical convictions. In fact, everything it had to offer only solidified me in those convictions. And I am very content to say that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all that really matters, all that has value, all that you would call a treasure is truly found in Christ. And I found that to be true long ago, and it was tested during those days of my education and here I am decades later telling you that it is still absolutely and unequivocally my conviction that I have found completeness in Christ.

The Apostle Paul writing in the book of Ephesians put it another way. He said, "You are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," that is that come from God, "in Christ." You have a lot of superlatives when you talk about what comes in Christ. The Apostle Paul again in Philippians chapter 3, and by the way, he was an educated man. Not only was he educated in Jewish theology, but he was educated in philosophy as well. And he says this in Philippians 3, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish." And he used a very gross word, one of the most gross words in the Greek language to describe all human knowledge and all false religion. He had in school and educated not only in Judaism as a Pharisee, he was...he was educated to the max in Judaism but he was also educated in the Gentile world where he had been raised. And he understood it all and he said it was all rubbish. Everything he ever knew could be set aside and counted loss compared to Christ. These are really monumental statements.

What the Christian gospel is, is simply this, all the answers you need for time and eternity are in Christ. All the answers for your soul, all the answers for your sin, all the answers for your hope for the life to come, they're all in Christ and only in Christ. There is no other authority in the Bible, there is no other Savior than Jesus Christ and you will find everything you could ever desire or need in Him. That's why, again going back to Colossians 2 and verse 10, "In Him you have been made complete." You have been made complete.

We often think today that Christ is a part of our lives. He's maybe an important part but not all. We need Christ plus philosophy...we need Christ plus psychology...we need Christ plus ritual...Christ plus ceremony...Christ plus some miraculous experience or Christ plus some mystical intuition...or Christ plus some bodily self-denial or immolation. We need to do something to hurt ourselves in order to gain merit with God, or we need to do something to transcend this world to have some kind of mystical experience to really know God, or something like that. Or somehow we need to have an angelic visitation, or somehow we need to live a life of conformity to certain ceremony and certain

ritual. But the Bible says it's all in Christ and it's all in knowing Christ.

This whole epistle, really, focuses on Him because if you go back to chapter 1 verse 13 it says, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness," that is, God did, "and transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son." Everybody lives in a kingdom. Everybody has a king. There are two possible kingdoms, two possible kings. You can live under king Satan, or King God. You can live in the kingdom of darkness, or you can live in the Kingdom of light. You can live in the kingdom of evil, or the kingdom of righteousness. God by His grace delivers us from the kingdom of darkness, the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. And when you come into the knowledge of Christ and He becomes your King, that's how you enter His Kingdom and immediately the Bible says you have redemption, you are bought back from judgment. You are bought back from punishment. You are bought back from hell because Christ paid the price. You have the forgiveness of sins, all the sins you have ever or would ever commit are forgiven because their penalty was paid by the death of Christ. Everything comes down to Christ, everything. It was through Him that sinners are reconciled to God. It was through Him that we are transformed and converted and regenerated and born again. Everything comes through Him.

Now let's look at chapter 2 for a minute, and I just want to show you a few things that Paul directly speaks to, the tend to clutter this simplicity in Christ. Paul wrote, you remember, to the Corinthians and He said, "I'm worried about you. I...I'm very concerned about you," because false teachers were coming in and confusing them. And he says this, 2 Corinthians 11:3, "I'm afraid that in the same way that the serpent in the garden deceived Eve by his cleverness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity that belongs to Christ." We're talking about something that is pure and simple, Christ is everything. And apart from Him there are no answers either for time or eternity.

There are four points that Paul wants to make in chapter 2 of Colossians that assault the simplicity of Christ and the sufficiency of Christ. Four of them, philosophy, legalism, mysticism and asceticism...and we'll talk about what those mean.

Let's talk first about philosophy. Verse 8, Colossians 2, in this context of saying that in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that you're complete in Him, that He is the one who is the image of the invisible God, as chapter 1 verse 15 says, He is the one by whom all things were created, He is the one who is the supreme authority, He is the one who is before all things and holds all things together. He is the one in whom all the fullness of the Father dwells, He is the one and He alone who reconciles all things to Himself, who made peace by the blood of His cross, He is the everything. In response to that Paul says in verse 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." Don't let anybody distract you from Christ. Don't let anybody take you captive and pull you away from the single commitment to Christ.

Verse 9, "For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form and in Him you've been made complete." This refers to whatever systems men invent, whatever ideologies, philosophies, psychologies, theories, religions. And they're innumerable, aren't they? Cults and isms and chisms abound all over everywhere. Everybody's got his own little hip-pocket idea of God and truth and Christ and how the Bible fits in, etc., etc., etc. Philosophers, authors, playwrights, novelists, academicians, movie producers, talk show hosts, psychologists, sociologists, religious leaders ad infinitum, ad nauseum have their opinions about everything. There is this endless verbosity, isn't there, streaming across our radios and our screens and in the literature that we read from books all the way to newspapers and everybody has his view of life and everybody has his view of morality. And no matter what view you espouse and you put it in the column in the newspaper, there's going to be a stack of letters to the editor and you're going to have at least 15 people spinning their own thing in response to yours. No wonder people find it difficult to know where to land, to know what to believe in a world with so many opinions. And, of course, we now live in a post-modern world which means that there really is no truth, no true truth, no absolute truth. Everybody comes up with his own idea of what truth is and you've got your truth and you've got your truth...that's great, I'm so glad you have your truth and I'm so glad I have my truth. And it's just everywhere. And so, Paul says, "Look, see to it that no one takes you captive."

It's a rare word, *sulagogeō*, it means to carry you off like plunder. *Sulais* the word booty, treasure; *ogō* is to carry away, don't let anybody haul you off, take you captive. It was used in later Greek writings, it's rare around the biblical times, but it was used in later Greek writings to refer to kidnaping, or plundering a house, or seducing a maid, or taking people captive in a war. Don't let anybody kidnap your mind, kidnap your soul, seduce or plunder you by philosophy, the study of wisdom, human reason. Don't let anybody move you away from Christ by viewpoints, world views, values, morality, principles that come from human wisdom. He says this philosophy is empty deception. You could read it this way, "See to it that no one seduces you, plunders you, robs your soul through human wisdom, even empty deceit." Philosophy is empty deceit. It is an empty lie. It is a delusion because it sounds good, it attracts the mind, it seduces the mind, it has certain properties of rationality, but it has no spiritual value at all. Why? Because verse 8 says it is according to the tradition of men. It's human. If you want to know divine truth, if you want to know supernatural truth, don't go to a human source. It's that simple. Because all you're going to get out of a human source is human wisdom. And human wisdom does not transcend time and space. It is just inadequate human thinking and, 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, the natural man understands not the things of God. How can he know them? They're spiritual. They're not in his dimensions.

It's amazing how often people will say, "Well, I think this about God, and I think that about God." Well just why would I believe what you think about God is authoritative? How did you, by the way, get out

of your time/space environment to say that about God and think that you actually knew the truth? We're talking about transcendent God, we're talking about a God who is outside our world. I'm going to have to have information about God that He Himself has delivered. We live in a box, time/space box. We bang around in here and we draw all kinds of conclusions. But nobody ever gets out and God is on the outside. The only way we will ever know God is not that some of us can crawl through a hole somewhere and say, "Oh, you know, there He is," it's not going to happen. The only way we could ever know is if God invaded the box from the outside, and He did. And He gave us a revelation in Scripture, and then He gave us a revelation in human flesh, Jesus Christ. And that's God bursting into our world.

What are you going to find out of philosophy? I've often said this about philosophy, philosophy is the search for the truth but you never find it. If they ever found it, class would be over. It would be over. So you get a degree for looking. It's inadequate. You can't get there from here. It is...he says further... "According to the elementary principles of the world." It's...it's earthbound. It's just this system talking to itself. It's not transcendent. It's not from the outside. Rudiments means ABCs, it's baby talk. It's amazing to think about that. But you talk about a philosopher and usually you're talking about the elite minds of any age, or any society, those who are the philosophers are usually considered to be the great brain trust, you know, the people who are off the chart on the IQ test, the geniuses who think in levels of complexity that stagger most of us. But the truth is, no matter how intelligent they are, no matter how capable they are of processing information and retaining it in their heads and sorting it through and drawing conclusions, they may stagger us with that, they're still in the box and it's nothing but the ABCs of the world. In a sense, it's baby talk, the kind of thing you hear the mumbling, stumbling baby talk of one who hasn't the capability to make any connection with the rational world. They think they're advanced, they're not. They're primitive. They're not advanced, it's just the opposite, they're retarded when it comes to truth. Human wisdom may be an exhibition of brain power but it has no ability to grasp the truth which is beyond human capability. And so what happens is, it's proud about its baby talk and it is truthfully nothing more than the infantile musings of poverty-stricken minds. You can't know the truth about eternity, you can't know the truth about origins, you can't know the truth about consummation of the ages, you can't know the truth about heaven and hell, you can't know the truth about the world of God unless God comes and tells you...and that's what this is, a supernatural book.

And He came not only in the truth written, but in the truth incarnate in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philosophy does not advance man, it goes the other way. It regresses him, it keeps him ever increasingly infantile. So beware of philosophy.

There's a second issue here and if you would drop down to verse 16, I'll talk about this one for a minute. Here's another thing that intrudes into this simplicity of knowing Christ, "Let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day,

things which are a mere shadow of what is to come but the substance belongs to Christ." You're complete in Christ. In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found. He is the substance and all that mentioned in verse 16 is just the shadow.

What he's talking about here is external religion. What he's talking here about is ceremony, ritual. And, I mean, it's characteristic of religion that it has its rituals. It was a characteristic of Judaism which Paul is primarily addressing. You see, they wanted to sit in judgment on people as to what they ate. Were they kosher or not in their diet? And did they observe the appropriate festival? And did they...did they maintain the Sabbath day? And then those special new moon Sabbaths? That was their big issue. Ritual, did they bow down? Did they genuflect? Did they participate in the mass? Did they light the candles? Did they say their beads? Did they go through whatever ritual they needed to go through? Did they have fastings? Did they go through ceremonial washings? Did they participate in rites and duties and behaviors that are intended somehow mechanically to convey some kind of divine connection? Paul says, "Don't get led astray by that. Don't think for a minute that some external activity, some external event in which you participate is necessary." The Jews were even saying that, and some of them claimed to be Christians in the time of the New Testament, that look, if you're a Christian, God's not going to accept you even though you believe in His Son unless you're circumcised. And they were making issues out of being circumcised, as verse 11 in this passage mentions. They were saying, "Well, God's not going to accept you unless you've been circumcised." And Paul in other places says, "Forget circumcision, that had a place in the past, that was a picture, that was a shadow. Sabbath had a place, it was showing you something to come. Dietary laws had a place, they separated you from the nations around you to protect you from the intrusion of their false religious systems. All that God gave you had a place of protecting, preserving you and depicting the reality to come but the reality is here, Christ is here, set the shadow aside, the substance is here, you don't need the ritual."

So when you say to someone who says, "Well what does it mean to be a Christian? Does it mean that I...that I need to go to this event and that event? Is that how I guarantee my...my place in heaven? Do I need to do these rituals and say these prayers and recite these things and light these candles, etc., etc., whatever the rituals are?" Paul says no. You'll want, as you heard in testimony tonight, you'll want to be with God's people, you'll want to be with the body of Christ, the church, you'll want to worship the Lord because you're going to love Him, you're going to love His people, You're going to love His Word, you'll want to do all that. But no external activity contributes anything to you that somehow Christ hasn't done. When you give your life to Christ, that's it. That's the full package. And you come like today because your heart brings you because you want to sing and you want to fellowship and you want to rejoice and you want to share and you want to enjoy the ministry that goes on because you love the things that Christ has given you. There are always those legalistic people who say, "Well Christ isn't all, you have to do this and you have to do that, and you have to do the other or you're not going to make it True spirituality is based on externals." He says in verse 16, "Don't let anybody act in judgment on you on that stuff. It's Christ...it's Christ and only Christ."

And there's a third issue here, down in verse 18, very interesting, mysticism. This historically, and even today, we don't have time to develop all of it, but historically and even today is always played into religion. You know, mysticism and religion kind of go together and there is this idea that when you're religious...people talk about it today, "I'm very spiritual." You hear people say that? "I'm very spiritual, I really work on my spiritual side." Who knows what they're talking about? But they're generally talking about some kind of mystical thing. And by mysticism you mean the idea that somehow you can connect with God through some elevation of your mind, some intuitive experience, some feeling, some longing somehow lifts you up and you connect. Somehow there's a higher spiritual experience, you know. Some people think they can stand on the shore and look at the ocean and touch God. No. You can say there is God because look...but you're not going to have an experience with God there. Some people think that when they see beauty or feel the breeze or get in the woods, they're feeling God. No, they're just feeling the breeze.

So he says in verse 18, "Let no one keep defrauding you..." See, people want to attack the truth, the simplicity in Christ. They want to attack it with philosophy. They want to attack it with legalism. Now they want to attack it with mysticism. "Let no one defraud, steal your prize by delighting in self-abasement." And this is one of the ways in which mysticism works, self-abasement. These are people who think that somehow if they just take a vow of poverty, you know, strip themselves of everything, "I'm not going to be married, and I'm going to own nothing and I'm going to go into a cave and contemplate my navel for the rest of my life. I will some how by this self-abasement rise to a higher level of spirituality." There are people who go around their whole life with little needles and things in their shoes and rocks, some of them wear belts that have tacks on the inside just to irritate their flesh and cause it to bleed cause somehow they think that this is going to induce some transcendental connection to God.

And there are those who get involved in worshiping angels. The Essenes did this. They were one of the sects of Judaism in the day of the New Testament. Roman Catholicism has been involved in that. And there are many...Roman Catholicism has a whole section in their theology on the veneration of angels. Somehow you can transcend this life and touch the throne of God by connecting with angels. I remember listening to the testimony of one Charismatic woman who said that their plane was wobbling coming into Chicago one night, which anybody who flies into Chicago has experienced. And she looked out the window and there was a big angel holding up one wing. Personally I only drink the 7 Up, you know. And so this makes her somehow transcendent. This is a woman who's got a mystical experience. This is someone...look, I've flown a lot of times, I've never seen a big angel holding up anything. You know, this is a very intimidating thing for just us poor people who are counting on nothing but Christ. And then there are those people, not just angels, but verse 18 says, "Who take a stand on visions, on things they've seen, secret revelations." I had a woman say to me one time, "I

don't really care what the Bible says, I know what Jesus told me." Boy, that's a bizarre statement. You don't care what the Bible says, you...you know what Jesus told you? That's very intimidating to those of us to whom He's never said anything. Jesus never said a word to me in my whole life, never heard Him. God's never said a word to me. The only time God ever speaks to me is in His Word, the Scripture. Doesn't God lead you? Sure. But I don't have any...I don't have any way to know that. I don't have a red light on my head that when God's prompting me it goes around. It's Me...and yet you have a whole movement of people today who take their stand on their so-called visions, their so-called secret revelations, their trips to heaven, their visions of God, their encounters with Jesus, encounters with angels. Paul says, "You know what? That defrauds you." That's strong language. Stay away from that, that will rob your spiritual life and your reward. Why? Because it will cause you to trust in something that cannot be true and you will then give to that a greater authority than you give to this. And you've been defrauded.

Evangelicalism is filled with people being defrauded by false visions. Also he says in verse 18, "You become inflated without cause in your fleshly mind." You get proud. I think in some ways, and I'm not trying to pick on people, but I watch these televangelists and I think if there's anything about them that is hard for me to accept, it is their pride. It's just over the top sense of importance, self-importance. I mean, you must think you're pretty important if God talks to you just about every day. Gives you visions, revelations, sends angels to do all these things. The problem is, you see, verse 19, "These people do not hold fast to the head." Who's the head? Christ. He's the head. Back in verse 18 chapter 1, "He's the head of the body of the church. He's the beginning. He's the one." All of a sudden Christ isn't the issue anymore, you are with all your visions and all your mystical experiences. You cannot exalt Christ and you at the same time, it doesn't work.

So watch for those who want to corrupt the simplicity of Christ with human philosophy and wisdom and psychology and all that. Watch those who want to corrupt the simplicity that's in Christ with legalism and rules and rituals and external ceremonies and quote/unquote sacraments that somehow are necessary in their minds to connect you to God. Watch those who want to exalt mystical supposed supernatural experiences that are nothing more than the imaginations of their own mind, designed in many cases to manipulate people into thinking they are some great ones from God and thereby making them, in many cases, wealthy.

And there's one other one, asceticism. That's a word you don't hear used much. Asceticism. This takes me back to something I said earlier. Go down to verse 20. "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, if you..." Let me tell you what happened when you come to Christ. You die to this world. You do. I mean, it's over. You're out of this world, it's behind you, it's in your past and you now live in a new world, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God's dear Son, the realm of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, you're complete in Him, you have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So, if that's true, why as if you were still living in the world do you submit yourself to

decrees such as "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch?" What is this? This is asceticism. This is back to the monk in the cave. This is back to the people who take an extreme view. You have people today, Rastifarians(???) would be one group who don't wash their hair. That is some kind of transcendental religious conviction that takes them to another spiritual level. That's not new. Did you know in the Middle Ages there was holy vermin? Yeah, that's right. Holy vermin, how did you get that? You never bathed your whole life and you had vermin and they decided it was holy vermin. Why would you go back to that kind of stuff? Why would you go back to some level of ridiculous self-denial? This is just verse 22, he says, "Destined to perish," and it's just more of the commandments and teachings of men.

Now verse 23 tells you why people do this. "They have the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion." You see some times flagellating themselves and it has the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion and humility. It has the appearance, he says actually in verse 23, severe treatment of the body and they're oh so religious, severely treating the body, flagellating the body, having holy vermin. You can even read in church history about men who had themselves castrated in order to eliminate lust and they paraded themselves as eunuchs for God. And the truth of the matter is, that was severe treatment of the body, but look at the end of verse 23, it has no value against fleshly indulgence. It is worthless.

Asceticism is worthless. Anything you do to your body is worthless in terms of spiritual benefit, other than submitting your body in obedience to the truth of God. And you can only do that if Christ is alive and you've been transformed. Everything you ever need is in Christ, everything...everything. And don't you allow yourself to be corrupted by the thought you can have Christ but you have to also have human wisdom, you have Christ but...you need more, He's not enough, you have Christ but you need to keep all the external rules. I lived a portion of my life under that and it just kills your love for Christ. Oh you have Christ, that's good, but oh if you only had Christ plus transcendental experiences and if you only spoke in a heavenly language, and if you only had visions, and if you only interacted with angels. Oh you have Christ, but are you inflicting pain on yourself? Are you abasing yourself? Are you shaving your head? Living in some self-denial? Paul says you don't need any of it, all you need is Christ and Christ alone. All is in Him, complete transformation, complete forgiveness, complete victory and you can't do anything to add to Christ.

Now to close, look at verse 11. "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." You know what circumcision was, and what it is. Among the Jews it was symbolic, it indicated that they needed to be cleansed. They needed to be cleansed. There was wickedness in their very nature. And you might think, well that's such strange operation for God to choose, why did He choose that? Because it pointed to the wretchedness of man at the most dramatic in the most dramatic way. If you want to understand that we're sinners, how would you understand that? Well you say we can listen to what you say and we know you're going to manifest sin when you speak. We can watch what you do and

you're going to sin when you do things.

Well...but you can pretty well guard your mouth, right?, if you want to. You can hang around somebody a long time and maybe they would guard their tongue and you really wouldn't know how sinful they were. You can hang around somebody and if you were there and they knew you were there, they might not conduct their lives in a sinful way. But if you really want to know how sinful we are as human beings, then you only have to see one thing and that is what kind of children do we produce? Sinners, and sinners, and sinners and sinners, and sinners and sinners. The most profound illustration of human sinfulness is in what it reproduces, and that is what the whole point was in circumcision. God was simply saying you need a cleansing at the very basic root of human nature. And the actual physical surgery was only a symbol of what God knew you needed in your heart. You need a profound cleansing at the very core of your nature. And that's what Paul is saying. We receive that when we come to Christ, a real circumcision, the removal of, this is wonderful, the body of the flesh, the removal of that condemning power of the flesh. Also, when we come to Christ we are buried, verse 12 says, with Him in baptism. This isn't talking about water, water symbolizes that. But we're buried with Him literally in His death. We die with Him on the cross and we rise with Him, it says. This is a complete transformation. When you come to Christ, there is a deep cleansing and that's why you heard these people in the testimony saying, "I used to be like this and I used to be like this and this is what I did and this is what I wanted, and this is what I desired, and now all of that is changed." Why? Because there's been a real cleansing and there's been a real death of the old life and they have risen through their faith in Jesus Christ. It's as if they died on the cross with Him and their sins were all punished and they rose from the grave with Him to new life. And verse 13 explains it another way, you used to be dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, but He made you alive and He's forgiven all your transgressions. This is it, you come to Christ, takes you through the grave. The old dies, you rise in new life, all the past is gone, all your sins are forgiven and you have a new righteous desire.

Verse 14 adds, "He canceled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." You know, when they nailed a criminal to the cross, they would put the crime on the cross. On the top of the cross they would put the crime and so everybody would know why he was executed. And when they nailed Jesus on the cross, Paul says, they wrote your sins up there and then canceled it because the penalty was paid. Satan has no more any power over you either. Verse 15, "Because Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities," meaning the demonic powers, "triumphing over them."

You come to Christ, you receive the forgiveness of sins. You come to Christ, you receive a new nature, a new disposition, a new heart that loves righteousness. You come to Christ and you die to the past and you rise to new life. You come to Christ and you're delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. You come to Christ and you literally come to the truth that

transcends, the truth you'll never find anywhere except in the Word of God and even this truth you'll never understand until the Spirit of God takes up residence and becomes your teacher, and then you know the deep things of God. It's all in Christ. All truth, all wisdom, all knowledge, all understanding, all peace, all joy, all value, all fulfillment, all satisfaction, all purpose, all deliverance, all strength, all comfort, and all eternal hope is in Christ. To have Him is to have everything. Not to have Him is to have nothing.

The Bible calls these the unsearchable riches of Christ. And indeed they are. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for a wonderful time tonight. Certainly thinking about Christ is the pinnacle of the exercise of our minds. His glories never cease to stagger us. The wonder of His person as we've been considering Him the last couple of Sunday nights, He is God, He is in fact the eternal I am, the creator of the universe who came into this world to save sinners such as we are, that we are just in awe of Him. And I pray right now, Lord, that You would be gracious to those who are here who have not yet seen the majesty and the glory of Christ and the simplicity of knowing Him in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found and being made complete in Him. We need nothing but Christ, the Christ revealed in Scripture to be our Savior, our Lord, our Deliverer, or Redeemer, our Friend and the source of all we need in this life and the life to come. May You be pleased, O God, to reveal Him to many hearts even now, we pray in His name. Amen.

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