

THE VICTORY OF CHRIST

Colossians 2:11-15

Intro: The Apostle Paul made two grand statements of truth about Christ and salvation in verses 9 and 10 of chapter two. If we could get every child of God to believe these in the depths of his or her heart, we would never have to be worried about false teachers and false doctrines. And, on the other hand, as we seek to lead others to Christ, if, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we can lead them to understand these two great truths, they would need no other truths to convince them that salvation is in Christ, and Christ alone.

What are the two truths?

The first is that in Christ bodily, that is when He became a Man, dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.

The second is, “and ye are complete in Him.”

If the Apostle Paul was trying to convince them of the error of the false teachers and their teaching, what could he do that would be more important than to show them there could be no greater person than the Lord Jesus Christ, and that what we have in Him is all that we need to become fully acceptable to God? Why look elsewhere when we have all that we need in Christ? When I was teaching Colossians in the Tuesday Class two years ago, I asked them, “Can you think of any world religion, or any present-day cult, which can possibly add to the completeness that we have in Christ?” This is what the Apostle Paul was dealing with in the five verses of my text for today. This is probably the most difficult section of this epistle, but when we get through today I hope that you will see that it is probably the most important!

There are five statements of truth. And let me call your attention to the fact that they all have to do with God’s work *in* or *on behalf of* those who are trusting in Christ.

The first is called here:

I. THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST (Col. 2:11).

This is not the circumcision of Abraham. Nor is it the circumcision of

Moses under the Law. But it is “the circumcision” of Christ, that is, the circumcision administered by Christ! That is why it is called “the circumcision made without hands,” meaning human hands, the hands of men. It is a work of Christ.

We all know, or should know, that circumcision in the OT was a rite, a ceremony, or what we might call an ordinance, performed on men and boys. But all rites or ordinances do not in themselves have the power to change lives. In OT times they were to be performed in faith, and it was the faith that transformed. But with many it was not more just an outward ceremony that they went through. Moses rebuked the children of Israel by the Word of God often on this account. He told them in Deut. 10:16 to “circumcise the foreskin of your heart.”

In Deut. 30:6 we read:

6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

In Jer. 4:4 we read what Jeremiah told the people of Judah from the Lord:

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

The Apostle Paul made the same truth very clear as he wrote to the church at Rome describing one who was a true Jew:

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Rom. 2:28-29).

In our text here in Col. 2:11 the Apostle Paul described the true spiritual significance toward which the rite of circumcision pointed. And that is “putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” “Of the sins” is not in the better MSS, but surely sins are included.

“The body of the flesh” means all of it, not just certain sins. “Putting off” is a Greek word not found elsewhere in the NT, but it may be related to “spoiled” in verse 15 which means *to disarm*, or *to strip off*, rendering it powerless. Our Lord Jesus Christ has done this by His death on the Cross and evidence of His victory was seen by His resurrection.

None of us could have done this for ourselves. The Law could not do it for us. The rite of circumcision by itself was not enough. It took the work of our Savior on the Cross to do it. Circumcision is meaningless unless it is the evidence of an inner change of heart through faith in Christ.

But let us go on to verse 12.

II. IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST (Col. 2:12).

Involved here is another ordinance, the ordinance of baptism. But Paul was not dealing with water baptism here, but with what water baptism pictures.

The Gospel of the grace of God is the message of the death and burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus did not die because He was a sinner. He died as our Substitute. He died that we might live, but not live like we have lived as sinners, but live as saints, live to please God, live to glorify Him.

Water baptism pictures our union with Christ in His death. He took the penalty of sin which should have fallen on us so that we might live. Our sins were laid on Him, so He died for us and we died in Him, and He was raised for us, and we were raised in Him, raised to walk in newness of life.

This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 6:1-4:

- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Those who know the Lord have been baptized into Christ. That means we have been put into Christ, and that is where we are, and will always be! Water baptism pictures this. But water baptism alone does not accomplish this. If you are not saved when you are baptized, you go

down a dry sinner, and come up a wet one. But the water hasn't changed you, and it never will. But if you are a believer in Christ, water baptism pictures your union with Christ in His death and His resurrection, and that you are telling people that they can expect you to live a new life.

But let me add to the message of water baptism. I have been in the ministry for many years, and I have baptized a lot of people. But I have never seen anyone baptize himself. That is an impossibility! And it teaches us that it is even more impossible for us to save ourselves. Christ is the Savior, and only He can save.

III. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (Col. 2:13).

Here Paul continued to speak of our salvation, and yet he introduces a different aspect of it.

The hopelessness of our condition by nature is that we are “dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh.” “The wages of sin is death” – spiritual death, setting our hearts at enmity with God, rendering us unable to hear the Gospel. But we have been made alive, “quickenened,” by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, which all includes the forgiveness of “all trespasses” – not just some, but “all.” We learn from Heb. 10:17 that this includes God’s promise that “their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” All charges against us have been dropped in the court of heaven, not because we deserve it, nor because we have earned it, but only because Christ died for us and God has accepted His sacrifice as a full atonement for all of our sins.

As Paul went on to speak of our salvation it is increasingly clear that the false teachers were intruding where they were not even needed. Besides, no man, no church, no teacher has any authority to tell us that there is forgiveness of sins except in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son,” God’s Son, “cleanseth us from all sin.”

But there is still more.

IV. THE LAW SATISFIED (Col. 1:14).

Whose handwriting was the Apostle speaking about? It is God’s! Two passages in Exodus will confirm this: Ex 24:12

12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them (Ex. 24:12).

And we also can refer to Ex. 31:18:

18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Why would Paul say that the handwriting of the Law of God was against us? He explained this in Rom. 3:19-20:

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

So the Law cannot save; the Law only condemns. It is no wonder that many of our school officials refuse to have the Ten Commandments posted in their classrooms or in the halls of their schools. And it is James who reminds us in James 2:10 James 2:10 that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” And the Law contains more than just the Ten Commandments. The Lord said that the greatest commandment in the Law was, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . .” And then he went on to say that the second greatest was, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” There is no one who cannot be charged with violating both of these commandments.

Historians tell us that it was the practice of the Romans in putting a criminal to death by crucifixion, that his crime, or crimes, were printed out and nailed to the cross on which he was crucified. Here in Col. 2:14 the Apostle Paul borrowed from that practice saying that “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,” that is, of which we were guilty, was nailed to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, indicating again the Gospel, that “Christ died for our sins.” By His death He fully satisfied the charges that were against us, so we no longer have to face them. He took our penalty and fully took upon Himself the sentence of death that was against us.

Bishop Moule in his very helpful commentary on Colossians, wrote:
And never shall we understand the true glory of the Example

(Christ) till we have seen the necessity and awfulness of the Propitiation, and have found in it, or rather in Him Who “is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2), our rest and life (p. 157). Our debt to God has been cancelled, but only because of the horrible suffering and death of our Savior, who died in our place, taking the penalty that should have fallen on us.

So again the Apostle Paul brings us to the Cross.

But one point remains, at least here in our text. And it has to do with:

V. THE DEFEAT OF OUR ENEMIES (Col 2:15).

No salvation could be complete without the defeat of our Enemy and all of the Satanic forces of evil. Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians,
11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:11-12).

Lightfoot in his commentary on Colossians says that the Apostle Paul used a word here which was very unusual, and maybe “wholly new,” which he said was “prompted by the desire to emphasize the *completeness* of the action” (p. 255). What looked like a final triumph for Satan and his forces of evil, turned out to be his doom under the mighty work of our Savior. Temptation and sin and death were divested of their power, and believers were forever set free from the tyranny of the Evil One. And where was the victory won? On the Cross of Christ. “The world,” the place of Satan’s dominion since Genesis 3, likewise fell under the mighty hand of God through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Lenski says that this “was victory, more than that, an absolute, final triumph” (p.121). The Lord “led captivity captive” (Eph. 4:8). And “He,” our Lord, “made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Just as the Roman army would bring their captives back to parade them in the city to their complete disgrace, Paul used this figure of speech to show that probably somewhere in the heavens, there was a triumphal return of the Lord “openly” declaring His glorious victory to the eternal shame and judgment of His enemy forces.

Concl: Now before we go, let me review what we have learned about
THE VICTORY OF CHRIST.

- 1) From verse 11 our Lord has broken the power of sin over us. This is the reality of which circumcision was a type.
- 2) From verse 12 we can say that having been raised with Christ, we have a new life, a life of victory over sin, enabling us to live to please God. Baptism typifies this according to Romans 6.
- 3) From verse 13 we can say that through the death of Christ all of our trespasses have been forgiven. And the Scriptures teach us a further amazing truth, that when our sins are forgiven by God, He forgets them.
- 4) From verse 14 we can say that through the death of Christ God's Law has been satisfied, the charges against us have been dropped, and so they are no longer on the divine regard against us.
- 5) From verse 15 we can say that our Enemy and all of the forces of evil have been defeated. Judgment against them is still to be executed, but they are defeated. We are no longer in bondage to temptation, sin, and death. Romans 8:37 tells us that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Paul had said "beware." If it were possible, why would we trade what we have in Christ for what we can get supposedly in anyone else, or in any other religion. Has our Lord left anything out that needs to be added to what He has done in providing victory for us?

Yesterday I listened to one of Jerry Bridges tapes in which he was explaining the grace of God. And he brought out, as only Jerry can do, that grace not only means that we get what we do not deserve, but that we do not get what we do deserve. There is nothing in our text that we deserve. Certainly nothing that we could ever earn, or pay for. It is ours by the sovereign grace of a loving God. Let us all beware lest anyone come along who claims they can give us more than we have in Christ. They are a part of the forces of evil that would have us think more of them and less of Christ. Our Lord is the Victor, and we are the ones who profit from His victory. Let us never be guilty of ever at any time be guilty of trying to claim even a part of the glory for ourselves. In the words of the Holy Spirit through King David, let us "give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name," and let us "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2).