

In Him

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. If you have a Bible there, then grab it and turn to Colossians chapter 2. This is where we're going to be this morning, verses 6 to 15. And God has so much to teach us this morning as we turn to his inspired word.

So why don't we just, as you're turning there, let's just pause our hearts and let's just still ourselves and let's pray as we come to his word this morning. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that what we have in our hands is no ordinary book.

This is your inspired word. It is your word. And so, Father, we ask that your spirit would come now and he would help keep our minds' attention. And that he would stoke our hearts' affection for your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

So if you've got chapter 2 there, let's read verses 6 to 15. This is where we are this morning. Verses 6 to 15 of chapter 2. So Paul, writing to these Colossian Christians, he writes this.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness.

[1 : 1 7] See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And in Christ, you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

In him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us.

He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross, and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

[2 : 3 9] Amen. This is God's word to us this morning. So, to kick us off, when was the last time you grabbed a real bargain? Right? A real bargain. This kind of comes part of the territory of being Scottish.

We love a bargain. Nothing excites me more than a discount aisle in Tesco, and I'm not exaggerating there. When was the last time you grabbed a bargain? Because I was reading this week about a woman who bought this bowl at a car boot sale in America, and I think you'll agree that's a pretty ordinary looking bowl.

Now, I don't know what was going through her head as she bought it. Maybe she was thinking it would be nice on her mantelpiece, or it would be good to chuck her keys into, or something like that. Whatever she had in mind, she managed to haggle a deal, love a haggle, haggle a deal, to get this bowl for \$3.

A few years later, someone else looked at that bowl and uttered the words, do you know what you've got there? Because that was a rare, a thousand-year-old Chinese bowl dating back to the time of one of China's most distinguished dynasties.

In actual fact, that bowl that she bought for \$3 was worth \$2.2 million. Now, why do I tell you that? Because as I've been hanging out with Paul this week in these verses in Colossians, they've reminded me of that lady who's paid \$3 for that bowl.

[4 : 0 0] Because here is Paul, and if you like, what he's doing in these verses is he's saying to these Christians that he's writing you to, do you know what you've got here? Do you know what you've got here?

Look at verse 6. Do you see it? They have something. What does he write? Just as you what? Received. They've got something.

As in, they've been given and they've taken hold of this great gift that God has given them. And the great gift that God has given them is not possessions. The great gift that God has given them is a person.

They've Christ. That's what they've got. True for every single believer here this morning, and ever since this letter was written, we have Christ. Now you may have picked it up as we read it through there, just how many times Paul uses that phrase, in him.

Did you get that in the reading? In him. In him. In fact, let me hit you with just some key Colossian stats. Okay? That phrase, in him, is used 15 times in this letter, as I count them, and seven of them, that's just under half, come in these ten verses.

[5 : 1 2] Track with me. In him, verse 6. In him, verse 7. In him, verse 9. In him, verse 10. In him, verse 11. With him, verse 12.

With him, verse 13. Seven of them. Now why? Why does Paul do that? Two reasons, I reckon. So that their eyes would be directed off of themselves to him, to Christ.

Do you not know that to be true in your own life? That's what I pray for more than anything else, that God would help me take my eyes off myself and fix them on Christ. So that they would see him. But more than that, in him, is what they are.

Do you see? Paul is drawing their minds to their new identity that they have in Christ. Jesus has made them his own.

This is what he's saying. He has, as it were, he's taken you into himself. This is the new you. This is who you are. And probably more accurately, this is whose you are.

[6 : 1 9] You are Christ's. Do you see what he's saying? This is your identity. Now think about it. There are all sorts of places that you and I can look to for our identity in life.

We can look to any number of things in life that we want to define who we are. Our jobs, our relationship status, our gender, where we go to school, where we went to university, our first job that we've got, the whereabouts of the house that we live in, the catchment area that we live in, our kids go to that school, the kind of car that we drive, all kind of things that we can look to to define us in life, who we are.

But whoever you are here today, and whatever you think about this God, let me give you something to chew on as we travel through these verses, okay? This is the identity that you and I were made for, right here.

A life lived in relationship with the God who made us, the God who loves us, and the God who knows us. Right here, this is the identity that you and I were made for.

Our little girl, Grace, she's got a wooden train set that she loves to play to. This is the toy of the moment, wooden train set, and on the train set she's got a little battery-powered train that goes round and round this track.

[7 : 45] But what she's done recently, it's her new favourite thing to do, is to take the little battery-powered train off of the track and let it run its course. Honestly, the number of times that I've collected that train from under the sofa, I could not tell you, okay, but this is her favourite game at the moment.

Take it off the tracks and let it run. Now, you could argue that that train is free, yeah, because it's off the tracks, it's doing its own thing, it's no longer constrained by the tracks, it's free to go.

Or, you could strongly suggest that when the train's on the tracks, it's doing the very thing that it was made to do. Friends, right here is the identity that you and I were made for.

These verses tell us about life on the tracks. Or as the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it, let me get my geek on for you, okay, question, what is the chief end of man?

Answer, man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. There is life's purpose, right there. Paul wants these Christians to see the enormity of what they have in Christ and he says, do you know what you've got here?

[8 : 59] And in terms of what they have in Christ, there are two big things that he wants them to grasp from verse 9. But before we get there, see the appeal that he makes to them in verses 6 and 7, which I think is a big imperative of this letter.

It's a big thing that he wants them to do. And if you wanted to sum it up in a phrase, this is what I try and do, this is how my mind works, okay, the phrase that stays is that the way in is the way on, okay, the way in is the way on.

Look what he writes. So then, just as you received Christ as Lord, continue, as in, keep going, keep on going, doing what?

Living your lives in him. Or if you've got an ESV Bible there, it says, walk in him, doesn't it? Walk in him. I love that word, walk, because it's a just keep on, keeping on kind of word.

Keep on, keeping on. It's an everyday word. Keep on living your lives in Christ. Everyday, everyday. So the everyday stuff that you and I do in our lives, the school run, the big shop, the homework, the downtime, the gym regime, do it all conscious of your new identity in Jesus Christ.

[10 : 14] Walk in him. Do you feel it? Walk in him. Every day of your life, walk in him. Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.

So put the roots of your life deep down into Christ. Get grounded in him. Get anchored in him. And as you do that, draw nourishment, be transformed, and grow in godliness as the sap of the Spirit works its way through your life.

And what will be the overflow of that? Thankfulness. Thankfulness. It's a wonderful word, is it not?

I was thinking this week, how much joy in the Holy Spirit do we miss out on because we're not a very thankful people? Thankfulness. Friends, is that not the fruit that you want to see in your life?

Thankfulness. Thankfulness. Thankfulness. Well, key to this, if it is, is for us to see the natural order. In other words, how this change comes about because this is not an outside-in kind of change.

[11 : 24] It's not an outside-in kind of change. This is an inside-out kind of change. And this is the only change that will work. Why?

Because the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. We need new ones. That's the problem. We need new ones. We need changed ones.

We need cleansed ones. And praise God, that is what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. We have new hearts. Praise God for His grace.

We have new hearts because of what we saw last week at verse 27. God lives in our hearts from the very moment that you and I received Jesus Christ.

That's mind-blowing that He has taken up residence in the hearts of His people. And He's changed us. And He's committed to changing us from the inside out.

[12 : 24] Friends, the way in is the way on. And so good is what they have. I think this is why Paul warns them so strenuously at verse 8 about entertaining those who would say to them that the way in is not the way on.

These false teachers, remember we've seen them over the last few weeks, are somewhere in the background of this church. Paul says, don't let them take, don't let them take you captive. He's getting them to think about a ship.

What you don't want is people smuggling on board your ship and robbing you blind of your precious cargo. Don't let them take you captive. And that's what these teachers will do if you listen to them and if you take to heart what they are saying.

People perhaps who are peddling a special kind of circumcision, a special kind of baptism, a special kind of outward act that if you did it then it taps you into some kind of spiritual fullness of an experience.

But whatever it was, I think the heart of their message is that true spiritual change and growth is to be found outside of Christ. And what does Paul call it?

[13 : 33] Do you see the word there? Hollow. It's hollow. As in, there's nothing there. It's empty. Remember that experience when you were young and the first time you ever got given a big giant chocolate egg?

Do you remember that? Remember thinking to yourself, that whole thing is chocolate. And then you bit into it and boy, had Cadbury's let you down. Hollow.

Hollow. This is what he's saying. It looks great on the outside but there's nothing to it when you get to the inside. Why? Because I think the things that they are promoting are simply human ways of thinking.

Do you see what he says? Worldly philosophies dressed up in spiritual clothing. And the reason that these things can't work, the reason that these philosophies can't work is because they've got the order wrong.

What these people are promoting is an outside-in kind of change. And it just doesn't work. And friends, we might not be facing the same philosophies, the same human tradition, challenges that these Colossians are facing, but that way of thinking still rings true today in every single one of our lives as we live our lives in this world.

[14 : 50] When you see that Jet 2 advert that tells you that going on that holiday break will bring you that inner sense of peace, the inner sense of calm that you so desperately need. And I remember in the office I used to work in, people used to come back from holiday and they used to use the same phrases again and again and again, so much so that I just created a little game called Back to Work Bingo.

Okay? What do they used to say? That break seems like a distant memory. Dick. Back to the coal face. Tick. Another day, another dollar, or as I like to call it, another round, another pound.

Tick. In other words, that did not deliver lasting change. I've climbed the ladder, I've hit the snake and I'm right back to where I was before. And I think down where we live, the charity shops are stocked with designer clothes.

Why? Well, presumably because somebody saw them online and bought it thinking this will do nicely, wore it for a while and a while later just got bored of it and thought, do you know what? Charity shop.

Previous generation, you had one job for life. Today, it's not uncommon to have multiple careers, let alone multiple jobs because we think if we just change the external, if we just change that, then that will bring lasting inner change.

[16 : 04] ways of thinking based on the faulty hope that the external will change the internal. And the thing is that the outside-in kind of approach, it cannot deliver on what it promises.

And maybe not in ways that we would immediately think about, nor by the means that we would immediately care for, nor to a time scale that we would immediately subscribe to, the inside-out change that God brings by his indwelling spirit.

It can and it does bring lasting change and one day that change will be eternal. Little wonder that Paul says continue to live your lives rooted in him.

Little wonder he says do you know what you've got here? And so in the time remaining friends, I just want to pick out the two F's that Paul uses to help them see what they have in Christ. These will be really quick, okay?

Firstly, what do they have? Nine to twelve. They have fullness. They have fullness. He draws their attention to who Jesus is. Who is he? He is God in the flesh. The deity dwells in him.

[17 : 13] In other words, if you want to know what God is like, you look to Jesus. And what is he? He is the supreme. He is the head over every rule and authority.

And in him is fullness. Now follow the logic here. You see, you see, God is not in the business of saving us to shortchange us.

What would be the point of him doing that? He has set us apart for himself. I think that's what the circumcision language there is about. He has set us apart for himself.

And he's identified himself with us and us with him in his death and resurrection. That's the baptism language there. And he's made us his own in order to display the glory of his transforming grace to the world in us as he transforms us by his grace from the inside out.

Therefore, because of who he is, right, who he is and where he is, God will supply the wisdom that we need to live the Christian life.

[18 : 32] God will supply the power that we need to live the Christian life. God will supply the resources that you and I need to live the Christian life. The goal of the Christian life, which is to be more transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

You see, friends, making us holy is God's unwavering agenda until he takes us home to be with him. And so the question that would come at us today is stemming from our union with Christ, right, we're in him, is do we know the communion with Christ that stems from our union with him?

Friends, do you know him? Do you know him every day? Walking in him every day, going to the storehouses of his grace, asking him that he would help us to know him more.

See, these false teachers are telling you, says Paul, that you lack. Paul says, in Christ, Christ in you, you have fullness of life. You have everything that you need.

There's the first F, fullness. The second F, what do they have? Verses 13 to 15, they have forgiveness. Spiritually speaking, in their previous life, they were dead.

[19 : 44] Do you see that language? They were dead. Dead person, what do they need? They don't need resuscitation. Okay, I don't care what kind of first aid badges you have, or the course that you've been on, or the mouth-to-mouth that you've learned, none of that is going to work on a dead person.

What does a dead person need? Resurrection. Resurrection. Resurrection. And God, who spoke life into being in the beginning, spoke life into their beings and gave them life.

And what does it say? And he made them alive with Christ. Alive with Christ. And how was he able to do that? Because Jesus dealt with our biggest problem. Now follow with me this language because it is so vital for us to see.

Verse 13, he forgave us. Do you see it? If you're struggling with guilt here this morning, all of us, I'm sure that is. These are the verses for us. Verse 13, he forgave us.

Of what? All of our sins. Do you feel the totality of that word? All of our sins. Not some of them. Not the wee ones. Not the majority of our sins. All of our past, present, and future sins.

[20 : 52] He paid for them. He paid for them. All the things that you and I have done wrong. First and foremost against this holy God. All of them. Get your head around that sum in your head.

All of them. Gone. Dealt with. Settled. How? Because Jesus Christ, as we were singing earlier, paid for them. Friends, I don't know about you, but when it comes to my sin, I know that I have racked up a pretty whopping bill.

I mean, it is a whopper. And truth be told, I have got no idea how big that bill really is. And the one thing that I do know is that it is only going one way.

And Paul says rightly that your sin bill has stood against you. It condemned you to justly having to face God's wrath, that is his righteous anger against our sin.

And you had no hope and indeed you had no desire ever seeing that bill paid back. I think we're meant to feel the gravity of this here. Our sin is serious against this holy God.

[22 : 06] But incredibly, Jesus stepped in and if you like, he took our bill of sin and he said, let me get that. Let me get that.

Let me take responsibility for that. And he took it with him all the way to the cross. And your bill and my bill of sin was nailed to the cross with him and now it says all over in capital letters, not guilty.

It says written in his blood, paid for. Paid for, dealt with, cancelled. I remember singing a song when I was growing up by a guy called Tim Hughes and it was called See His Love.

And one of the verses went, greater love no one could ever show. Mercy so undeserved, freedom I should not know. All of my sin, all of my hidden shame died with him on the cross, eternity one for us.

Such love, such love is this for me. You see friends, God doesn't say to us in his word, he doesn't say to us in the Bible, guess how much I love you.

[23 : 14] Go on, have a guess, guess how much I love you. He says in his word, look at my son on the cross dealing with your sin and see how much I love you. I'll just pause there for a minute friends.

Do you need to soak that in that all of your sin, that the devil would shout in your ear this morning accusing you that you have no right to stand before this holy God and you don't were it not for Jesus?

Those accusations that almost stopped you coming here this morning in the first place. Do you need to pause and just to think on the forgiveness that God offers you through his son this morning? those words from Ezekiel 36 that we read earlier, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, all your sin paid for.

And don't miss verse 15 as we come to a close. I was trying to think how people today celebrate their victories. If you remember Hibs, if I can say that word in here. Remember Hibs when they won the Scottish Cup a few years ago had this massive open top bus parade down Leith Walk if you were here when that happened.

[24 : 39] Well on this day how an army celebrated their victory when they returned from the battlefield. What they used to do is to ride into town and display their victory to the watching world by having their prisoners of war ride in front of them and they would parade into town with the prisoners of war walking in front of them and the message to the world was that we won and they didn't.

We won and they didn't. And here is Paul saying to these Christians picture Jesus after the cross he's riding back into town and who's at the front? The devil's at the front.

And he's declaring to the watching world that I won and he didn't. I won and he didn't. Friends Jesus has made you his own.

In him do you see what Paul's saying? You have fullness of life and in him you have forgiveness of sin. He has given us the greatest power and he has dealt with our greatest problem. We have everything that we need in Christ.

Let him transform you from the inside out says Paul. Friends that bowl was worth 2.2 million dollars. Imagine the joy of the seller and most likely their bank manager when they found out just what that was truly worth.

[25 : 58] But consider how the person that sold it at the car boot sale for three dollars must have felt when they found out that that was worth 2.2 million dollars.

I'd imagine that whoever that person was and their bank manager was pretty devastated. I never knew what I truly had. Well the truth of these verses for the Christian is that in Christ in Christ the Christ that we have received we have something infinitely more and eternally valuable in him.

Paul Tripp puts it like this and with this we close. It is amazing to be tolerated by God. It would be an honor simply to be invited to the wedding but it is beyond comprehension to be the beloved bride of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Christian do you know in Christ what you've got here? Let me pray. And so friends just as we close there was two people I was thinking about as I was preparing for this message this morning.

Firstly if you are here today and you need to come to Jesus and to receive the forgiveness that he offers and to ask him to continue to transform you from the inside out.

[27 : 18] And the second person is if you are here today and the devil is beating you up seriously because of your sin in the quietness now do you need to come to the cross and to know really know the forgiveness that Jesus has won for you as he declares to you that he won and the devil didn't.

So maybe just in the quietness now maybe offer your own prayer to the Lord. This is Jesus in his glory King of Heaven dying for me it is finished he has won it death defeated heaven beckons me.

So Father thank you for your word this morning where would we be without your word thank you that you love us enough to tell us these truths so Father help fix our minds this week and our hearts on the glory of your son Jesus Christ may he be more precious to us this week than anything that the world can offer us and it's in his name that we pray Amen Chao Chao chimp Ch working by