

在基督里得完全——歌罗西书 2:9-15 Made Complete in Christ -- Colossians 2:9-15

Introduction, Outline

- Scripture Reading: Colossians 2:9-15, Roman 6:1-11, 1 Corinthians 15:17-26; 50-57
- Reflection: What kind of people are more likely to be deceived? A satisfied person or a dissatisfied one? Someone who has urgent needs to be met, or someone who lacks nothing? Who is more likely to be deceived? [Illustration: the scammers who sell prepaid phone cards would target foreign students (who live far away from home)]. It's the same with Christians living. If you're living in the fullness of life in Christ, Satan's schemes will not pose any threat to you.
- Theme: In this passage, Paul wants us to **see what an abundant and complete life we have in the Lord!**
- Context: In the preceding text, Paul gave two basic exhortations for the Christian life: walk in Christ (v. 6-7) and watch for traps (v. 8). Verses 9-10 gives the reason for verse 8, showing the absurdity of heresy lies in the fact that you have already been made complete in Christ! The following text then, verses 11-15, expands on it and describes the fullness of life in Christ.
- Outline
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 - B. Explaining the Complete Life (vv 11-15)
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 - a. Circumcision of Christ Removes Fleshly Desires
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 - a. The Need for Forgiveness
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 3. Complete Victory (v15)
 - a. The Identity of the Enemies
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Summarizing the Complete Life (vv 9-10)

- “**The fullness of Deity**”: Christ has complete divinity; “In bodily form”: In human flesh, Christ possesses complete humanity. Christ is both fully God and fully human.
- “**The head over all rule and authority**”: Rule and authority are spiritual forces. The false teachers say that Jesus alone is not enough. You have to know how to please these forces in order to have a complete life (see "worship of angels" in verse 18). It's like the Chinese traditional beliefs where you have to worship the land god for farming, the money god for

business, the health god when sick, and some other god for the college entrance exam... Paul says, ridiculous! Christ has the fullness of God! Having Him, why are you seeking to be made complete from elsewhere?

- **“Fullness”**: In Chinese, the word seems like “you have a lot, but you can still have more”. But the original text means "completeness, perfection, lacking nothing." It means to be completely filled and there is no room to add anything else—this is your life in the Lord Christ, complete and lacking nothing!

Explaining the Complete Life (vv 11-15)

1. *Complete Regeneration (vv 11-12)*

- **“Circumcision.....baptism”**: These external rituals themselves do not have any spiritual effect. The reason why God ordained them is to depict invisible spiritual realities in visible forms so we can see what has happened on the spiritual level. Details are as follows:

a. Circumcision of Christ Removes Fleshly Desires

- **About circumcision**: It was originally a sign of the covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham (Genesis 17:10-11). The making of the covenant came first, and then God asked them to circumcise as a sign of the covenant. God chose Abraham first, and circumcision was established later. He did not make a covenant with God through circumcision, but was first chosen by God before taking circumcision as a sign to remind them of their distinct identity in the world.

The **spiritual reality** depicted in circumcision: **removing the filth in the heart** (Deuteronomy 10:16 “So remove the filth in your heart” is literally “so **circumcise your heart**”; but man is not able to do it on their own, so Deuteronomy 30:6 says “*the Lord your God* will remove the filth in your heart and the heart of your descendants,” literally, “God will circumcise your heart”. See Ezekiel 36:26).

- **“were also circumcised.....in the removal of the body of the flesh”**: Passive voice, this circumcision is made without hands. Man can only cut the flesh; only God can circumcise the heart. “The flesh” symbolizes all kinds of sinful desire, and “the body of the flesh” emphasizes what God removes for us is the whole body of all sinful desires, and not just part of it. It is the removal of the whole body of sinful desires in order to follow Christ (unlike the young rich ruler) — This is complete regeneration!

“The cutting away of the male foreskin on the reproductive organ was a graphic way to demonstrate that man needed cleansing at the deepest level of his being. No other part of the human anatomy so demonstrates that depth of sin, inasmuch as that is the part of man that produces life—and all that he produces is sinful.”

b. Baptism of the Spirit Grants New Life

- **About baptism**: Water baptism (e.g., Matthew 28:19) vs. spiritual baptism (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:13) — The latter is an invisible spiritual reality, and the former pictures that invisible spiritual reality in a visible form.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.....and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

- **“Buried with Him.....raised up with Him”**: die to sin and live to God together with the Lord — This is the spiritual reality pictured by water baptism!

Application: Why is it more biblical to baptize by immersion than by sprinkling? Because immersion pictures the reality of being buried and raised up together with the Lord, which cannot be pictured by sprinkling.

Romans 6:4, 10-11, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” – Die to sin, to be freed from the lust of the flesh; live to God, to pursue a life that pleases God. Complete regeneration!

2. Complete Forgiveness (vv 13-14)

a. The Need for Forgiveness

- **“Dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh”**: “the uncircumcision of your flesh” refers to the total sin nature before becoming a believer, and “transgressions” refers to the actual sins committed. Spiritual death is not only due to sin nature, but also the record of actual sins. The circumcision mentioned above solved the problem of our sin nature. What about the record of sin? We need complete forgiveness of our sins.

b. The Grace of Forgiveness

- **“Made you alive..... having forgiven”**: Without forgiveness of sins, we cannot have spiritual life. There is no way to come before God with a guilty conscience. Example: Adam and Eve hid after they sinned, afraid to see God.

Hebrews 10:22 “let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

- **“All our transgressions”**: Complete forgiveness! Clean conscience! If conscience is still lacking, you’re still incomplete, and you’ll be vulnerable to false teachings. Paul wants the Colossian believers to see that their sins have been completely forgiven in Christ!
- **“Forgiven”**: Derived from the root word “grace”, this word is sometimes translated as “freely gives” (Romans 8:32) or “freely given” (1 Corinthians 2:12). There are two words in the New Testament translated as “forgiveness”. One emphasizes taking away sins, and the other emphasizes freely giving grace. Here is the latter—emphasizing that it is unworthy of sinners to receive the forgiveness of sins, but God freely gives this grace to us to show His own mercy and love. Knowing His love, we will respond with a life of thanksgiving and worship

c. The Result of Forgiveness

- **“Canceled out certificate of debt”**: This metaphor helps us to understand the grace of forgiveness. “The certificate of debt” is equivalent to what we call the IOU document, that is, a proof of debt. This word is related to “decrees”, that is, the law of God. It means that every

time you violate any decree in the law of God, you will have a certificate of debt on your IOU. In the final judgment, God will condemn sinners justly according to all that is written in these records. So they are "against us, hostile to us".

Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

- **"Has taken it out of the way"**: The original text is "has taken it away from the middle." Middle of what? Of God and Man. There is a huge IOU standing in between God and man, written all over with the shameful things that embarrass us, not only evil words and deeds, but also all kinds of dirty thoughts. This IOU standing between us and God completely separates us from God, and our soul is completely dead in transgressions... Paul said that God's grace to forgive sins is to take away this whole IOU from the middle!
- **"Nailed it to the cross"**: How did God take away the IOU? Nailed it to the cross! We know the body of Jesus was nailed to the cross. Paul says, take a closer look! What else do you see on the cross? Did you see your IOU there? Jesus took your IOU to the cross with all your guilty records written on it. He Himself is perfect and sinless.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Everyone's IOU is either nailed to the cross or nailed to himself. The only way to take it away is by nailing it to the cross through faith. Or else, it will be nailed to the sinner himself in the eternal punishment of hell.

3. Complete Victory (v15)

- **"Disarmed"**: The original meaning is "take off". It is their power that God has taken off from these rulers and authorities. These forces that bind people and are hostile to God have been disarmed, and they no longer have the power to bind believers.
 - a. The Identity of the Enemies
- "The rulers and authorities": broadly refer to all spiritual forces (1:16), here refers to the devil and evil spirits, that is, fallen angels. Their being disarmed does not mean that their power has been completely abolished. They are still "working in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), and believers must put on the full armor of God to fight against them (Ephesians 6:11-12). They are still exerting their residual strength in the world, but don't forget, the Lord Jesus has won a complete victory for us through His death and resurrection!
 - b. The Defeat of the Enemies
- **"Made a public display of them, having triumphed...."** A military metaphor. In ancient Rome, when a general returned triumphantly from a battle, he would lead his own army along with the captured enemies and trophies, to march through the city to show off his victory. The captured enemies here are the evil spirits who were in power. Upon Christ's victory, they were taken captive and paraded in the streets to publicly display their failures. —This is demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ!

2 Corinthian 15: 3-8 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” --Each appearance is a triumphant display, proving to believers that Christ has completely conquered the power of evil spirits, and those who are united with Christ also have victory over the power of sin.

Note: It does not mean that believers will no longer be attacked and influenced by Satan. The New Testament repeatedly requires believers to resist Satan (e.g. James 4:7; Ephesians 6:11-12), which shows that Satan can still attack us. But the reason why we are asked to resist Satan shows that we have the ability to do so, because we have the victorious life in us. Those who have not been united with the Lord by faith have no way to resist, because they are completely bound by the power of Satan.

In the end: According to Roman custom, the end of the parade is usually to take the prisoners of war to execution. So--

1 Corinthians 15:23-24 “But each in his own order: then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.” — This is the final ending of these evil spirits. When believers are raised at Christ's return, they will be completely destroyed! Paul wants us to see that in Christ we already have a complete victory!

Summary Application: How to live out the complete life in Christ? 1. It begins with genuine faith; 2. Abide in the Lord by reading the Bible, praying, and obeying His teaching; and 3. Prioritize church life so as to be connected to the body of Christ. The more you live by these basic principles, the more you will see that you really have complete regeneration, complete forgiveness of sins, and complete victory in the Lord. Your spiritual life lacks nothing, and will not be deceived by any of devil Satan's tricks.