

Complete: You've Already Won – Colossians 2:8-15

Around 20 years ago I remember having this very clear-headed and distinct moment regarding my life as a sports fan. This game that I am so emotionally invested in is taking place thousands of miles from where I live. I literally don't personally know anyone playing in it. So, why do I so deeply feel a sense of defeat and frustration when the team I'm cheering for loses and a sense of having won something awesome when the team I'm cheering for wins? It's weird right? I probably had that clear-headed moment because the team I was cheering for was sure to lose, but regardless, the moment was had.

I think having lived in Detroit now I would answer that a bit differently. There's a connection to teams that is stronger just from living nearby, attending games, and feeling the economic impact on our city. We feel a connection to the team where we rejoice in wins and suffer agony with losses. The team wins and we benefit and experience the win along with the team.

Ok, take that idea of participation in victory and now amplify it and solidify the real and genuine connection to the triumph won on your behalf and that's what you get with the language Paul uses of "in Christ" and "with Christ". Listen to how Paul uses language of "in" in 1:27-28 to make sure we understand that our connection to Christ is real. "Christ in you" and "everyone mature in Christ". He is in us and we are in Him. This is the Christian teaching of our Union with Christ.

This is why Paul spends so much time in Colossians telling us about Christ and then connecting us to Christ with this language of "in" and "with". He wants you to know that you are connected to Jesus and you receive all the victories He has won. So, let's spend a little bit of time this morning pondering these victories of Christ and what they mean for you and for me. Here's what we will see in Colossians 2:8-15. **5 Victories We Receive Through the Sufficiency of Christ.**

1. Over Religious Confusion (v. 8)

Let's make sure we understand where we are in the letter and why Paul is talking about Christ's triumphs. Remember, at least one of his major goals in the letter is to warn the Colossians about false teaching threatening the church. They are

being told that they need a higher knowledge of spiritual powers to be spiritually complete. They are being tempted to mix cultural religion and beliefs with Christianity in syncretism. Paul directly warned them about this in 2:4 and now after a strong and positive exhortation to walk in Christ and be rooted in Him in 2:6-7, Paul turns to the false teaching in 2:8. Look there.

Notice the command here, "See to it". This word is translated all sorts of different ways throughout the NT. Consider, take heed, take care, look at, watch out, look into. In other words, pay attention. Why? So that you aren't taken captive or kidnapped. Paul doesn't want them carried off as plunder. Think about the picture Paul is using here in the context of how we are victorious through Christ. He's basically saying, you have already won in Christ, and you have all you need in Him, so don't give in to these false beliefs. Don't get taken captive by something that has already been overcome, exposed, and defeated. He spells out two features of this false teaching. Continue in verse 8.

Paul isn't saying philosophy is bad and that's it's wrong to read Plato and Aristotle. He's saying we have to pay attention, so we aren't captured by a system that is presented as wise and true but is actually empty deceit.

What ultimately causes false teaching to be vain and empty? Look further in verse 8. When you put both of these together you basically get a system of teaching that ignores God's revelation of Himself through Christ and is based solely on human reasoning, tradition, and spirituality.

When you get down to it, this is every other expression of belief and religious and philosophical system in the world, except for the one with Jesus Christ as presented in Scripture at the center. Humans have been manufacturing our own systems and spiritualities for thousands of years. We leave God out and try to make sense of wholeness and satisfaction and the after life and morals and all of it on our own. The Colossians built a system on local spiritual gods who they said could provide insight and wisdom and you could sort of add Jesus to that mix.

But Paul says here, don't be deceived or taken captive by this or any other manmade belief system. They are all empty if they don't point to the glory and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Notice the end of verse 8.

You can often tell when you are headed down this road of religious confusion when you start to add things to the simplicity of Christ. Our Friday morning men's group is close to finishing up *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. If you aren't familiar, these are a fictional series of letters written from a seasoned demon to a novice demon tempter. So, you have to read them from the opposite perspective. What they call good, we call bad and what they want, we want the opposite. Here's what the experienced demon said about what they are looking for with Christians. *"What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call 'Christianity And'. You know - Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring."* - C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters*

We can be tempted to move away from Christ and to Christ and in all sorts of directions. But returning to the core truths of Christ articulated in Colossians keeps us growing according to Christ as Paul says at the end of verse 8.

And so, verse 8 is a warning and now in the rest of verses 9-15 Paul explains what it means to live "according to Christ" and not be taken captive. And here we will move quickly through 4 victories Christ has achieved for us. Notice the language of "in Christ" and "with Christ" throughout these verses.

2. Over Every Authority (vv. 9-10)

Look at Paul's immediate explanation in verse 9. It's a point Paul has made before in 1:19. God's fullness came to us in a body in Jesus Christ. The idea of "dwells" is of the temple. God comes down among Israel in the temple in the OT and in the incarnation He comes among us and lives with us in a human body. Continue into verse 10. We have been filled in Him. We share in His dominion and victory

because of our connection to Him and this dominion is over every other authority. Spiritual powers, earthly powers and therefore our ultimate allegiance is to no other power. Why would we invest final allegiance to an earthly power or another spiritual power when we serve the one in whom all the fullness of deity dwells?

3. Over Your Sinful Nature (vv. 11-12)

Look at verse 11. Circumcision was something done in OT Israel as a sign that they were participating in the covenant with God. But Paul says that here the Colossians were circumcised without hands by the circumcision of Christ or through Christ.

Even in the OT, Moses expected that one day God's people would experience a circumcision of the heart. Listen to Deuteronomy 30:6. What would this mean for them? It would mean, according to verse 11 that their sinful nature would be cut off or conquered. They would no longer be slaves of sin. But instead, look at verse 12. In these verses Paul is describing the movement from the old sinful way of life to the new life because of Christ. This is pictured in baptism as we are buried with Christ and raised with Christ to new life. The old sinful nature is defeated because Christ defeated it. Listen to Romans 6:6-11.

How does this circumcision of the heart happen? How are we joined to Christ? Not through baptism. Baptism is a picture of what happens in our union with Christ. Look again at verse 12. Through faith in the powerful working of God.

What does Christ's victory over the sinful nature and your circumcision of the heart mean for this coming week? You no longer are enslaved to sin. You now have the option to obey. And you have the Spirit in you to motivate obedience. And you can look to Christ when tempted and say, "Jesus defeated sin and so I don't have to sin anymore because I have new life because He rose from the dead." How did he defeat sin for you?

4. Over Your Sin Debt (vv. 13-14)

Look at the beginning of verse 13. To be dead is to be spiritually dead. It's to be under the thumb of the sinful nature that we just talked about. It's to have no

option but to sin. You can see that through the language of “uncircumcision of your flesh.”

Let me just say that we cannot lose the concept of sin or the language of sin. We have to be clear that our human problem is sin, both our own sin and the sin of others around us. Without this we end up managing self-esteem and always dealing with surface issues rather than the core problem. We were dead, under the dominion of sin and simply living according to it.

But, notice in verse 13 that God made us alive together with Christ. Sin brings death with it. Death is the result of sin and so to be made alive requires that sin be dealt with in some way and that we be made free from sin.

But here’s the problem: living dead in our sins and in the uncircumcision of our flesh means violating God’s commands and living hostile in mind toward him. It means accruing debt against God. We owe him obedience but have not given it to Him. We owe Him love but have only given rebellion.

But God made us alive spiritually by forgiving us all our trespasses. The end of verse 13. How can he do this? Does he just slip a switch and give us life? Well, in order to give life, he has to forgive us our sins, but how can God do that? He is just and can’t just overlook them. He is righteous and cannot ignore them. Look at verse 14 as Paul explains how this victory came about for us.

The record of debt that our sins built up was canceled by being nailed to the cross. Here’s the picture I think Paul is getting at with this image. Pilate nailed the accusation or crime above Jesus that He was crucified for and all it said was "The King of the Jews". This was no crime since Jesus actually was the King of the Jews. If this is true, and it is, then in God's purposes Jesus must have been sent to the cross for some other crime.

This is where you and I come in. The infinite and complete Savior took our crimes and sins on Himself and received the penalty of death for those sins and trespasses. He died for them and our crimes and sins were nailed to the cross with him. Our debts were there. All our sins sent Him to die.

But as He dies, we are freed from the debts we owe and the sins that caused death for us. And so, as we are connected to Christ and found in Him, we are made alive to God. This victory is yours because of Christ's work and your connection to Him. He won this for you. But this isn't all He won on the cross.

5. Over Spiritual Powers (v. 15)

This may not seem to be a big deal to us today but think about what Paul is saying to the Colossians. They were being told to trust in an array of spiritual powers in addition to Christ. They were being told they needed wisdom from these other sources and completeness through these lesser gods. Essentially, they were offered other avenues of salvation.

But Paul says that when Jesus died on the cross, he disarmed these potential saviors and triumphed over them. He uncovered them as being insufficient for any spiritual benefit because He is the fully sufficient one. And he exposed them publicly for all to see.

The picture Paul gives here is of a Roman general returning to Rome with His army and the captives he has taken. If you were in Rome, you would have heard reports of the victory, but you didn't necessarily know for sure. But as you watched the general and his army parade through the streets with their captives in chains, you realized that they had won.

The point here is that Christ's victory over sin and death on the cross and in His resurrection shows the weakness of any other potential savior for the Colossians as well as for us.

Don't be taken captive. Consider all the victories you have in Christ and let these build your faith and bring you closer to Christ and Him alone. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 4/26/26

- Do you consider yourself a competitive person? What's the most intense competition you have ever been a part of?
- Which sports team victories and defeats impact you the most emotionally?
- How does 2:8 relate to what has come before it in chapter 2?
- What is the basic concern Paul has with the false teaching he mentions in verse 8?
- What are some things we are tempted to add to Christ today that give us "Christianity And"?
- How do verses 9-15 relate to verse 8? In other words, what's the logic at work here?
- What is the circumcision without hands that Paul mentions in verse 11?
- Why does it matter to your daily life that your sinful nature has been defeated? Does this mean you won't sin anymore?
- What is the picture Paul gives us in verse 14 of our record of debt being nailed to the cross?

- What are some practical ways that our forgiveness of sins changes actions and beliefs?
- Why does it matter to Paul that Jesus triumphed over spiritual powers in verse 15?
- What possible alternative saviors could we be tempted with?