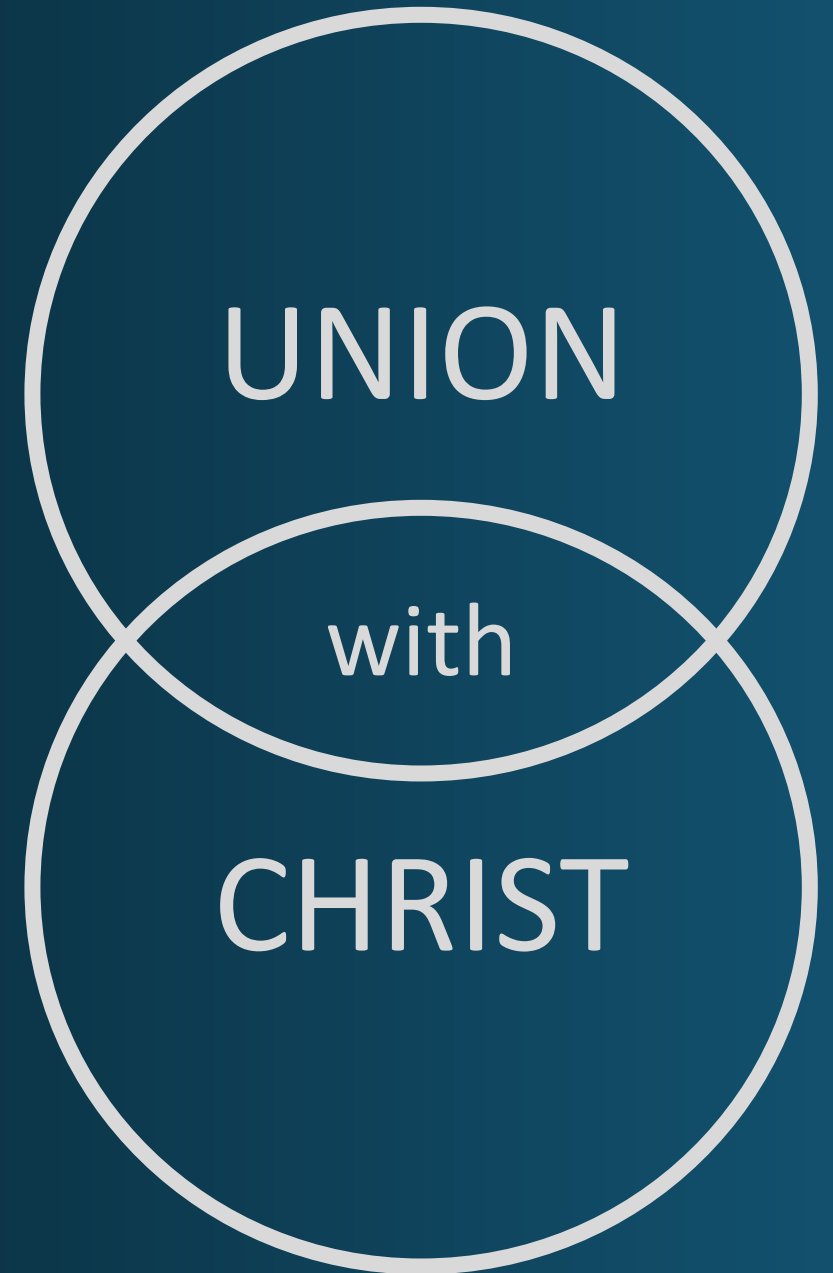


*Christ over All:
Paul's Letter to the Colossians*

“The Results of
Union with Christ,
Part 3”

Colossians 2:11–15



TEXT – COLOSSIANS 2:11–15

“and in Him you have been made complete [made full] . . .

and in Him you were also circumcised
with a circumcision made without
hands, in the removal of the body of the
flesh by the circumcision of Christ;
having been buried with Him in baptism,

in which [whom] you were also raised
up with Him through faith in the
working of God, who raised Him from
the dead.”

FOUR RESULTS OF UNION WITH CHRIST:

- I. **You Have Had Your Old Nature Removed (vv. 11–12a)**
- II. **You Have Been Connected to Christ's Resurrection (v. 12b)**

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

III. You Have Been Given an Unassailable Life (vv. 13–14)

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

IV. You Have Had Your Enemies Defeated (v. 15)

III. You Have Been Given an Unassailable Life (vv. 13–14)

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together** with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

- “He made you alive together” – the third chief result of *union with Christ*.
 - **2:11a** – “and in Him you were also circumcised ...”
 - **2:12b** – “in whom you were also raised up with Him ...”
 - **2:13b** – “He made you alive together with Him ...”
- Paul surrounds this assertion with *four qualifications*.

A. Despite Your Radical Unworthiness (v. 13a)

“When you were dead in your transgressions
and the uncircumcision of your flesh . . .”

- The state in which God *made us alive* together with Christ.
- “**You were dead**” – speaking of *spiritual death*—the state of *inability* to act and *unawareness* of one’s condition and its consequences.
- “**In transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh**” – the two-fold sphere of this spiritual death:
 - 1) “transgressions” = specific *acts of disobedience* → SINS
 - 2) “uncircumcision” = the *sin nature* (see 2:11) → SINFULENSS.

“Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

—Romans 5:12

“For the wages of sin is death.”

—Romans 6:23





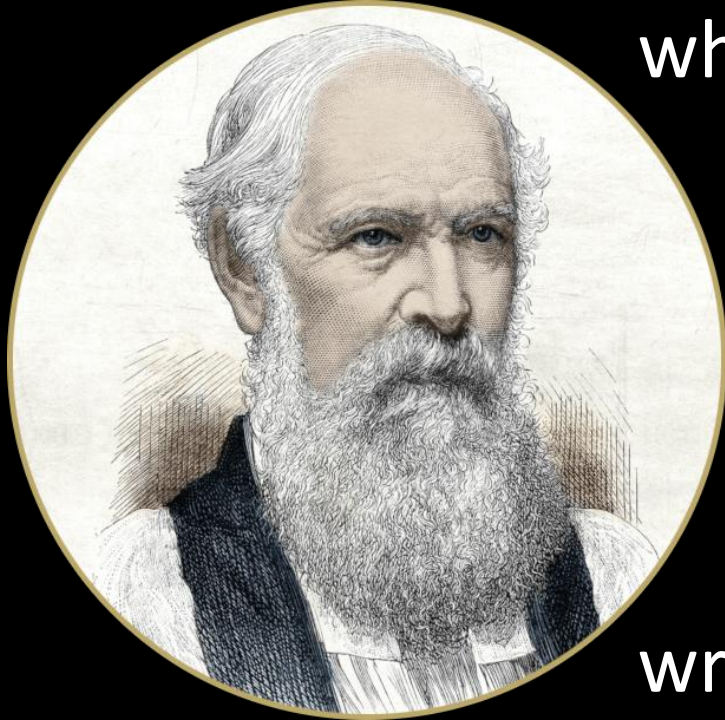
“The teaching of Scripture, after all, is not that every human lives at all times in all possible actual sins and is in fact guilty of violating all God’s commandments. It only refers to the deepest inclination, the innermost disposition, the fundamental directedness of human nature and confesses that it is not turned toward God but away from him”

(Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3.120).

“Late one night—having prolonged our games in the streets until then, as our bad habit was—a group of young scoundrels, and I among them, went to shake and rob this tree. We carried off a huge load of pears, not to eat ourselves, but to dump out to the hogs, after barely tasting some of them ourselves. Doing this pleased us all the more because it was forbidden. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart—which thou didst pity even in that bottomless pit. Behold, now let my heart confess to thee what it was seeking there, when I was being gratuitously wanton, having no inducement to evil but the evil itself. It was foul, and I loved it. I loved my own undoing. I loved my error—not that for which I erred but the error itself. A depraved soul, falling away from security in thee to destruction in itself, seeking nothing from the shameful deed but shame itself.”

—Augustine, *Confessions*, 2.4





“There are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of the disease will always bring with them wrong views of the remedy. Wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand antidote and cure of that corruption” (J. C. Ryle).

B. Because of His Inexhaustible Graciousness (v. 13c)

“having forgiven us all our transgressions”

- The cause by which God *made us alive* together with Christ.
- “**Having forgiven**” – not the usual word for “forgive”; the root of this verb is the word “grace” (χάρις, *charis*), “to give freely, undeservedly.”
- “**Us**” – Paul changes from “you” (Colossian Gentiles) to “us” (all believers, including himself).
- “**All our transgressions**” – “all” as in “all,” not “some,” “most,” “almost all,” “the least atrocious,” “the ones you committed to this point,” etc.

“Grace is God’s free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.”

—Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 21–22



C. Through His Unilateral Absolution (v. 14a)

“having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us”

- The means by which God *made us alive* together with Christ.
- **“Having canceled out”** – “to erase, remove so as to leave no trace.”
- **“The certificate of debt”** – a hand-written IOU, which acknowledged indebtedness and the terms of payment.
- **“of decrees against us . . . hostile to us”** – the IOU stipulated the penalty clauses for failure for both the Colossians and Paul; that penalty was *damnation*.

- **Deuteronomy 27:10, 26** – “You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today. . . . Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’”
- **James 2:10** – “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.”
- False religion is the effort on the part of adherents to *erase* this “certificate of decrees against us” (to find absolution) on the basis of their own works.
- But Paul states it is done *unilaterally*, by God alone, *when we were dead* in sins and sinfulness.

D. By His Righteous Imputation (v. 14b)

“and **He has taken it out of the way**, having nailed it to the cross”

- The *method* by which God made us alive together with Christ.
- “**He has taken it**” – “to remove, destroy”; a completed, decisive act, creating a new reality. Not only has God *erased* the certificate of indebtedness, but He has *removed it*!
- “**Out of our way**” – literally, “from the middle, from our midst.”



- But how? How can God remain absolutely righteous, and erase/remove our certificate of indebtedness?

“and He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross**”

- “having nailed it to the cross” – the Romans posted the crimes charged above the head of the one crucified.

- Pilate wrote the script that hung above Jesus’ head (see John 19:19–22).



- But God nailed a different script above Jesus’ head—the certificate of debt with all its decree against us.
- **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.”

- The concept of imputation finds its basis in the Old Testament sacrificial system, and particularly in Isaiah 53.



- **Isaiah 53:5–6** – “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”
- **Isaiah 53:11a** – “As a result of the anguish of His [the Suffering Servant’s] soul, He [the LORD] will see *it and* be satisfied.”



“It pleased our heavenly Father, of His infinite mercy, without any of our desert or deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ’s body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and His justice fully satisfied.”

—Thomas Cranmer, *First Book of Homilies*, 130

His robes for mine: O wonderful exchange!
Clothed in my sin, Christ suffered 'neath God's rage.
Draped in His righteousness, I'm justified.
In Christ I live, for in my place He died.

His robes for mine: what cause have I for dread?
God's daunting law Christ mastered in my stead.
Faultless I stand, with righteous works not mine,
Saved by my Lord's vicarious death and life.

His robes for mine: God's justice is appeased.
Jesus is crushed, and thus the Father's pleased.
Christ drank God's wrath on sin, then cried, "'Tis done!"
Sin's wage is paid, propitiation won.

His robes for mine: such anguish none can know.
Christ, God's beloved, condemned as though His foe.
He, as though I, accursed and left alone;
I, as though He, embraced and welcomed home!

—Stanzas 1–4, "His Robes for Mine"

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought:

My sin—not in part, but the whole
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

—Stanza 3, “It Is Well with My Soul”

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

—Stanza 4, “O For A Thousand Tongues”

IV. You Have Had Your Enemies Defeated (v. 15)

“When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

- **“When He had disarmed”** – literally, “to take/strip off” (see Col 3:9); here speaks of *disarmament*—the removal of weapons.
- **“Rulers and authorities”** – spiritual beings created by Christ and for him (Col 1:16; 2:10), who have rebelled against Him and enslaved mankind (Col 1:13–14; Eph 2:1–2).
- **“A public display”** – literally, “to disgrace, make a spectacle, humiliate.”
- **“Having triumphed over them”** – “to lead in triumphal process.”

Roman Triumphal Procession

The enemies of
Christ and our souls



GENTI BELLO
CAE

CORONÆ A PROVINCIIS
IMPERATORI TRIVM
PHANTI DONATÆ

LICTORES LAVREATI

SVAVISSIMORVM
ODORVM SVFFI
MENTA



in Vita PAVLI Æmilij APPIANVS Alexandrinus in 9 Lybico

“Men are afraid to have good thoughts of God. They think it is a boldness to eye God as good, gracious, tender, kind, loving. I speak of saints. They can judge Him hard, austere, severe, almost implacable, and fierce (the very worst affections of the very worst of men, and most hated by God). Is not this soul-deceit from Satan? Was it not his design from the beginning to inject such thoughts of God? Assure yourself, then, there is nothing more acceptable to the Father than for us to keep up our hearts unto Him as the eternal fountain of all that rich grace which flows out to sinners in the blood of Jesus.”

—John Owen, *Works*, 2.35

Application



- ✓ Christian, *in Christ* you have been given an immortal, unassailable life against which there is no condemnation.
- ✓ Christian, *in Christ* your sin problem was decisively and righteously dealt with; there is no need to run the treadmill of endless penance.
- ✓ Christian, *in Christ* you need no longer to fear your old spiritual enemies; don't let them steal your identity.
- ✓ Christian, don't be distracted by cheap, imitations promising transformation.

Your blood has washed away my sin
Jesus, thank You
The Father's wrath completely satisfied
Jesus, thank You
Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table
Jesus, thank You!

—Chorus, “Jesus, Thank You”