

Complete in Him

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Date: 06 March 2022

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- [0 : 0 0] Let us resume our public worship of God, and we shall begin by singing to God's praise from the beginning of Psalm 95.
- Psalm 95, verse 1. Come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.
- Let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice. Let us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise.
- For God, a great God and great King, above all gods he is. Depths of the earth are in his hand, the strength of hills is his.
- To him the spacious sea belongs, for he the same did make. The dry land also from his hands, it's for him at first to take. O come and let us worship him.
- [1 : 0 2] Let us bow down with all, and on our knees before the Lord our Maker let us fall. For he's our God, the people we of his own pasture are, and of his hand the sheep today.
- If ye his voice will hear. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us, everyone. O come, let us sing to the Lord.
- Come, let us, everyone. Come, let us, everyone. A joyful noise make to the Lord.
- Of our salvation. Let us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise.
- A joyful noise. For God, a great God and great King, above all gods he is.
- [2 : 5 0] Deaths of the earth, and in his hand, the strength of him is his.
- To him the spirit of God, a great God and great King, above all gods he is. To him the spirit of God, a great King, above all gods he is. For he belongs. For he the same did make.
- The dry and all so from his hands is for the first it take.
- O come and let us worship him. Worship him. Let us bow down with all.
- And on our knees before the Lord. And on our knees before the Lord. And on our knees before the Lord.
- [4 : 0 7] And on our knees before the Lord. For he is our God, the people we.
- Of his own pasture land. And on our knees before the Lord. And on our knees before the Lord. And on our knees before the Lord.
- We are blessed. Let us call upon the name of God in prayer.

Let us pray. to fulfill our calling this evening as we have been summonsed into your presence in the words of the psalmist to come and let us worship him let us bow down with all before the Lord our maker and is that not who we are calling upon when we call upon you our maker our creator God the one in whom we have our breath we have our life we have our being you gave us origin you gave us destiny you set before us life and you have given to us the opportunity to possess life without end through the gospel of your grace we give thanks for all who have enjoyed the privileges that the gospel affords us that allows us to dwell richly on the provision that you have made for us in Christ these gifts and graces that he has secured by his life of obedience even his obedience unto death we give thanks that he is the risen saviour that he is at your right hand that he ever liveth to make intercession for us as the great high priest of his people and that even as we meet here in this place as we stand before you calling upon your name in prayer we can believe that he is standing at your right hand with his arms lifted up in benediction over his own church praying pleading for the blessings of God to be bestowed upon his blood-bought people we give thanks for your word that draws us to him that reminds us of what he has done on our behalf may we have the eyes to behold and marvel at that which he has secured in his sacrifice for sin we pray that you would bless us this evening as we gather a congregation of people who are in your sight as one we may have divisions amongst us we may be divided as to who we are what family we belong to where we have originated we may have been born and raised in different parts of the world we may have experienced many different things we may have come to know Christ through the gospel in different ways we may have heard the gospel from different preachers and some may yet to have heard the gospel in a saving way we pray that whatever it is that divides us whatever it is that separates us that we would know the blessing of God that maketh rich and adds no sorrow we pray that you would bless us personally intimately in the depth

of our very being that we would know that you are God indeed that we would not doubt or question that you are dealing with us as God it is so easy for us to lose sight of the very things that you have given to us on the table of the gospel when we feed our animals outside we see the birds of the air ready to devour come down and devour that which is prepared for our beasts and so it is when we are fed good food on the table of the gospel we see the birds of hell itself coming and eating of that table or taking away from it that which we would not be allowed to partake of we pray that you would drive them away so that we would feast of the good things that you have prepared for us that we would devour with an appetite that you have given that we would hunger and thirst after righteousness that we would desire to see the God of heaven as our

[10:06] God the Christ who is the Son of Man as our Lord the Spirit of the Most High God dividing to us of the good things that he has left to his church here on earth remember your people remember them as they are met here remember to join with them remember as they are met in different parts of our island some even today remembering the death of Christ until he come we give thanks for the privileges that the sacrament brings to us and while we may be deprived of many of the good things that formerly were ours Christ is still a saviour who died and rose again who gave to us these remembrances of his broken body and his shed blood and as we seek to obey the commandment that is given to us as a people to do this in remembrance of me for all who have done that today wherever we pray that you would bless that and show your ownership of it by applying it to these trembling hands of faith remember

Lord the world in which we live we cannot but bring the cares and concerns of this sick world to your attention once again particularly we are so mindful of the plight of the nation of Ukraine as it is under the shadow of the adversary that would seek to destroy if at all possible the resistance that is still there against that wickedness we pray that you would preserve life that you would direct hearts and minds to a God who is king over all we pray that you would remind us of the fact that kings and potentates will rise and will fall they will fall to the dust while the one who has created the dust will reign as sovereign throughout the endless ages of eternity we pray for your mercy for your grace for your peace we pray for a unified church to be as one as they plead for the

God of heaven to intervene according to your own wisdom and the light and the light that will be done is what your people must all yield to so remember us Lord with all our needs remember those who are worried about their health we pray for them and ask that you would heal their recovery and enable them to go about their business as they once did if that is in accordance with your will remember the frail elderly amongst us we bring them to your attention and ask that they would be secure in the knowledge that the eye of the almighty is upon them always that you are the God who never slumbers nor sleeps may they be confident in placing their head upon the bosom of one who knows their needs temporal or spiritual remember the grieving and sorrowful amongst us we pray for your blessing to be their portion even as they gaze upon empty places that will never again be filled in the way they once were there are places in their heart that will never be empty such as the nature of the ties that bind us to loved ones here in the world we give thanks for that and we pray that you would mercifully undertake for all who are who are heart sick because of bereavement so here are our petitions bless your word to us we pray guard us keep us protect us and direct us in the path of life for giving sin in Jesus precious name amen we're going to read from the scriptures of the new testament reading from

Paul's epistle to the Colossians in chapter two Colossians and the second chapter chapter I will read the whole chapter for I would that he knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh that their hearts might be comforted being knit together in love and to all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and this I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words for though

I be absent in the flesh yet am I with you in the spirit joy and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith as ye have been taught abounding therein with thanksgiving beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ buried with him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead and you being dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him having forgiven you all trespasses blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross and having spoiled principalities and powers he made us show of them openly triumphing over them in it let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of unholy day or of the new moon or of the sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come but the body is of

[17 : 52] Christ let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels intruding into those things which he hath not seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increases with the increase of God wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances be ye the place going to sing verses from psalm 119 psalm 119 and at verse 57 thou thou my sure portion art alone which

I did choose O Lord I have resolved and said that I would keep thy holy word with my whole heart I did entreat thy face and favour free according to thy gracious word be merciful to me I thought upon my former ways and did my life well try and to thy testimonies pure my feet then turned I I did not stay nor linger long as those that slothful are but hastily thy laws to keep myself I did prepare bands of ill men me robbed yet I thy precepts did not slight I rise at midnight thee to praise even for thy judgments right I am companion to all those who fear and thee obey O Lord thy mercy fills the earth teach me thy laws I pray the section of

Psalm 119 thou my sure portion art alone which I did choose O Lord o' Tim oxidized For sin art alone, which I did choose, O Lord.

I have resolved and said that I would keep my holy word.

With my whole heart I didn't treat Thy face unfavorably.

[21 : 22] According to Thy gracious word, be merciful to me.

I thought upon my formal ways, and did my life well cry.

And to Thy test, till all is pure, my feet then tired and die.

I did not sing or linger long as those that saw full are.

But history, Thy law to keep, my self-righteous prepare.

[22 : 47] But so little man near all yet I, Thy priesthood did not slide.

I rise at midnight, be to praise Him for Thy judgment's right.

I am companion to all those who fear and be obeyed.

O Lord, Thy mercy fills the earth. Teach me Thy laws, I pray.

And we turn once again to Colossians.

[24 : 10] Paul's epistle to the Colossians in chapter 2. And we can read verse 9.

For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.

And ye are complete in Him. I'm sure most of you would have picked up, as we read the second chapter, that Paul is writing to Christians for the main part.

Christians who live in Colossae. Christian believers who have come to faith in different ways, no doubt.

Scholars tell us that the Apostle Paul had possibly direct contact with the church in Colossae.

[25 : 29] You will notice at the start of the chapter, I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea.

And, he says, for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. From that, the scholars argue that it sounds as if Paul had met the people who formed the congregation in Colossae and in Laodicea.

But there are others that he has not met face to face. Some suggest differently that there were those, there are a number of names that appear in the epistle.

And they met the apostle in Ephesus and came to faith in Ephesus as they heard the preaching of the apostle. But that's the kind of investigations that theologians are very often involved in.

Trying to establish the strongest possible links so that a clearer picture can be formed as to the progress of the gospel.

[26 : 49] And the kind of people that were touched by the gospel. It is, whatever we make of these investigations, it is plain, I would hope, that what Paul is trying to do in writing this epistle.

Is to encourage believers so that they may grow in their faith. That they may be firmly established in the Christian beliefs that are necessary for their salvation.

That they may continue to develop as Christians. And that's not something that was rare in Paul's teachings. It was something that he consistently wanted to do.

Encourage those who had come to faith to deepen their faith. And to develop in the knowledge that their Christian faith, that it depended upon.

And the same is true for every one of us, whoever we are. If we're Christians tonight, we need to realise that however long we live in the world, there is always the possibility for our faith to grow and to deepen.

[28 : 25] For our relationship with Christ to further develop and to further deepen.

We can see from what Paul is writing that he is interested in seeing that take place. And at the same time, he wants people to understand that their faith, because of its existence, is often what will introduce into their experiences challenges to that faith.

There will always be tests placed upon the faith that we possess.

We will always find that there are temptations that are put in the way. We will find that the world in which we live in is openly hostile to the profession that we make of an interest in Christ.

I don't know if it's true for you, but it may be the case that if ever you have declared an interest in Christ, made it known, made it known, made an open declaration of it, however you have chosen to do that as a Christian, it would not, and it does not take very long, to find that there will be somebody who will want to see if they can pull the rug from under your feet.

[30 : 03] They will want to expose your Christianity as something that is not really worth having.

And Paul, in his day, he was concerned to speak to the church in Colossae and remind them that there were people there and they were solely interested in undermining the Christian church.

They were wanting to do all in their power to divert attention from Christ and to distract them by various means, sometimes overtly, sometimes blatantly, so that the Christian believer would be drawn to supposedly strengthen their faith by resorting to other means, by believing that doing something different or looking in different places, that they would in some way be able to strengthen their faith.

But here, what Paul is saying is that he wants them to be persuaded of the headship of Christ over all things, spiritual and temporal, and to warn them against the errors that exist that defy such a belief.

One writer says it was no new thing, and it certainly has not changed one whit. The Christian is up against humanistic, worldly philosophies which are designed to take from them what they have in Christ.

[32 : 06] Now maybe you don't believe that. But if you are a Christian, I very much doubt if that is what you believe. That that is at the heart of all the opposition that is directed against the Christian in his faith.

Any form of slavish ritualism or legalism which suggests that they will have more actually means that they will have less.

And they do not need to do anything more than what they are already doing if they are believing in Christ. They are already, as this verse that we are looking at, says.

They are already complete in Christ. They are positionally perfect in Christ, which is what verse 10 seems to be suggesting. Professor Finlayson speaking about verse 15, I think it is.

He is looking at the doctrines that Paul teaches as a whole. He says that the cross of Jesus Christ secured for them a personal triumph which had a wider and deeper significance than their personal salvation.

[33 : 29] You think that the personal salvation of the believer is all important and in a sense it is. But that is not everything. It is not all there is to it. The hostile princes and rulers, she says, he shook off from himself.

Christ did that. And boldly displayed them as his conquests when by the cross he triumphed over them. And the believer needs to be persuaded of that fact.

Not only are they saved by grace, but the means by which they are saved was not just applicable to them as those who are saved, but also applicable to the enemies of the cross and all the minions of the devil that are arrayed against them in the world and in the netherworld.

That Christ has triumphed over them and the victory that he has secured will see them paraded as the vanquished.

But I want us to think more particularly about this verse that we are looking at here. And just state what I hope are obvious truths to each one of us.

[35 : 00] First of all, the importance of being in him. You'll notice he says in verse 10, you are complete in him.

You are complete in him. And just in case you don't know who the him in which the believer is found, we'll need to just say a word about that.

The completeness of which he speaks. The completeness of which he speaks. And the source that he directs our attention to from which that is possible.

You are complete in him, he says, which is the head of all principality and power. I hope you don't mind me reminding you of the importance that is to be aware of the necessity of this relationship with Christ.

The necessity of being in Christ. Do you remember the words that we have in Galatians? And the apostle there in chapter 2 and verses 20 to 21.

[36 : 33] He describes to us something of the nature of the in Christ relationship. And it's almost something that we take for granted without really taking time to think about how truly important it is for us.

Not only to be acquainted with it, but to be acquainted with the outcome of that relationship being in existence.

The divine, the Christian teacher, teacher, who wants us to think about these words.

I can't even remember the name. It will come to me. But when he's looking at these words, he says, you have to remind yourselves that verse 20 and 21 in Galatians there.

And in chapter 2, verse 20 and 21. In the English versions, there are two verses. In the original Greek, there are two verses. In the original Greek, there are two verses. In the original Greek, there are two.

[37 : 56] In English, we have two verses because the numbering always needs to be remembered as something that came afterwards. But in the Greek, originally, maybe the sentences are something that came about when the translations were carried out.

There are two verses. In the Greek, there are two verses. In the Greek, there are two verses. It is one verse. And if you take one verse by itself, verse 20, for example. If you take that verse by itself, it means one thing.

I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me and then he goes on to say I do not frustrate the grace of God for if righteousness came by the law then Christ is dead in vain if you take that as one it makes clearer sense to us in what the apostle is saying to us verse 20 on its own would suggest that we just sit back as Christians and let Christ give us whatever ability or power that we need to live in his name whereas if we look at verse 21 by itself it would mean that the exact opposite of that we would have to do everything by ourselves but with the one sentence the combination the two sentences we have them in English coming as one what we see is that in Christ we are as free as we ever could consider ourselves to be because of not just who he is but what he has done on our behalf as this theologian puts it in Christ I am as free from condemnation before God as if I had already died and been judged as if I had paid the debt myself and I am as loved by God as if I had lived the life Christ lived now maybe when you read that or read that conclusion you're thinking

I think this person is saying too much or he's making Paul say too much but that is really at the heart of our understanding or should be at the heart of our understanding of what it means for a person to be in Christ by faith when you are in Christ your sins have been dealt with you are righteous you are made righteous by faith the condemnation that was due to you as a sinner has been removed it is no more but without being in him that cannot be true and we always need to keep before our mind that this is what makes a Christian this is what makes a person a Christian it is not what the Christian does by reason of that relationship but the relationship itself it seems you know we often look at the fruit of it and conclude it is the fruit that makes me a Christian no the fruit is the evidence of the relationship the fruit is the evidence of being in Christ the fruit is the evidence that the relationship exists

I'm not I'm not saved because of that fruit I am saved because of the relationship that there is between myself and that saviour and of course we need to look at the fruit of course we need to do everything that we can in light of what God is saying to us with regard to that relationship it is an encouragement to us it is a a bolster to our faith it is something that enables us to live as Christians in the world because we want to see evidence for the reality of it it is not enough for us to say well a Christian is somebody who believes that is true a Christian is somebody who is in Christ by faith and I am in Christ by faith so therefore it must all be ok with me but if it stops there without fruit without evidence without the proof positive that the relationship is there in the first place then the confidence the assurance the belief that you are where you should be will not exist so in him it is important that we begin there this is where in him dwelleth all the fullness of the God head bodily and you are complete in him you know it almost if you put that back to front you are you are you are reminding yourself of the nature of the relationship the nature of the relationship with this person who is God himself in him dwelleth the fullness of the God head bodily and because of who he is because of what he is because of what he possesses because of what he has done because of the sacrifice for sin that was carried out at his father's behest that God the father gave this role to God the son and by the spirit applies it to the lives of men and women in this world there is this satisfaction in knowing that being in him is what makes all the difference the second thing that we have here is this the completeness of which he speaks and here in this version you are complete in him if you use the

[45 : 13] ESV you'll notice and some other modern versions that the translation differs to this it's just two different translations which are equally valid I suppose but the second translation is you have been filled by him or you have been filled in him you are complete in him or you have been filled by him essentially what Paul is saying to us is that if you have Christ you have everything it's not an oversimplification if you have Christ you have everything there's a song that came to mind as I was looking at this and the song was there's a line in it anyway love is all you need love is all you need well however much truth that conveys to you the truth that needs to be at the heart of that statement is this if anything it is the love of

Christ whatever loves we experience in the world and there may be many of them it is only the love of Christ that can be spoken as spoken of as the love that you need more than any and only this one that you need writing to the Ephesians Paul again makes this statement which confirms I suppose it's not surprising when you think about or you study what Paul is saying in his lecture it's not surprising if you have statements that are equivalent in other writings because he needs to return to the same truths again and again writing to different parties different bodies different congregations the same truth in more or less the same format stated and writing to the

Ephesians he says it comes in the form of a prayer that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you might be filled with all the fullness of God knowledge is important to know in order to be filled to be filled or to I seem to remember Professor Don MacLeod speaking at one point of this filling that the believer experiences it is not a filling that results in the vessel being full but an ongoing filling as if it's an effervescence as you would see in a glass of sparkling wine which seems to rise to the top but going on like this the effervescence suggests that it's continuing to rise it's not overflowing

I think a lady who belonged to this congregation was asked once if she was full of the spirit and she says well I am not full but I can overflow a lot in other words there was an experience there that was ongoing and Christ filling the believer which is what is spoken of here you are complete in him you are experiencing the filling that Christ brings in a way that Paul suggests here that they may know the love that Christ has for them that they may visualize its greatness that they may experience it for themselves if that is at all possible I'm still trying to remember the name of that commentator one commentator gave this illustration

James Montgomery Boyce and he tells of what happened during the Napoleonic war Napoleon was using a prison for his own prisoners of war and it was an old prison that had been used during the time of persecution of Christians and in one of the dungeons that was in that prison they discovered the body the skeletal body of a person tied by chains to the wall it was during the time of the Spanish Inquisition the Inquisitors they treated Christian believers with great wickedness and anyway this person had been chained to the wall and when

[51 : 24] Napoleon's army came to use the prison they found his remains still chained but yet scratched on the wall in Spanish first of all a cross a cross was edged in the wall in the stone and in Spanish written in each at each corner at the top of the cross at the bottom of the cross at each limb of the cross the words were written height depth breadth and width and it was just a witness to the truth that this person believed a Christian believer who was persecuted to death and there he witnessed to the power of

Christ even in chains because he wanted people to say persecutors to say this may happen to me but the greatness of the love of Christ cannot be measured and that is what the apostle Paul is reminding us of here in this passage he's teaching us something about the nature of the relationship that exists between a Christian believer and his saviour those who are in him lack nothing because he is the one that fills them and when he fills them out of his own resources there is an ongoing filling I was trying to think about which word would I prefer the finished article is suggested by completeness you are complete in him you don't need anything other than

Christ which is a truth that this verse tells us being a Christian means that you lack nothing as far as the salvation of your soul is concerned everything is in Christ but more than that he is someone who is with you all the days of your life and Paul is reminding us of this that we are being filled by him in this world in Christ we can have all that our soul requires war between

Russia and Ukraine one way that countries such as the UK and America are trying to influence that war is by placing shackles upon the financial resources of the oligarchs which there are plenty in that nation wherever they got their money from there was always more than enough of it to go round they could buy their yachts they could buy their football teams they could buy anything at their leisure but now the shackles are on but that is never going to be true about the resources that are placed at the believer's disposal there are reserves you can call them reserves there are resources there that is ever open to the believer which is what

Paul is saying about this Christ and he's saying it about this Christ beware he says lest any man spoil you take from you what you already have and they're going to do that by telling you things that are not right how can they take from you what Christ has made your own what he has given you access to liberally and with the assurance with the promise that none of these resources will ever be exhausted there will not be a supply chain that is broken there will never be a pipeline that will be fractured there will never be a moment when your way of access to Christ is anything other than what it always is opened because he is the one who opened it there are times when the believer may experience feelings of insecurity there are times when their sin may hide the face of

[56 : 58] Christ from them there are times when they may be made to believe that things are not what they should be but if they are in Christ as Paul is teaching here that dislocation can never happen that separation must never happen that interference that results in not being able to possess at all times what Christ has secured for the believer it can never be allowed to be anything other than what Christ has promised because he is the head of all principality and power there is no power on earth there is no kingdom on earth not in the world to come not in the underworld that has a power equal to his by which he has secured the salvation and the redemption of all who are his own may

God enable each one of us to believe that no matter what comes our way to test us and to try us let us pray Lord oh God as we think of these words we pray that you would remind us of the privileged position the believer possesses by virtue of your grace you have secured them in Christ you have insisted that in him that they will never suffer loss that they would seek it at your hand you are the one who places us in this very privileged position so make us alive to the to the gospel that we may plead for your mercy in

Christ forgive us our sins in him amen the closing psalm is psalm 63 psalm 63 for thee my god I rarely seek my soul doth thirst for thee my flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no water be that I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face as I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place since better is thy love than life my lips thee praise shall give I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live even as with marrow and with fat my soul shall filled be then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee Lord thee my God

I rarely seek Lord be my God I rarely seek my soul doth thirst for thee my flesh long stand
out my heart slump where they no waters be that I thy mother may behold and brightness
of thy face as I have seen thee here to all within thy holy grace since better is thy love the
life my best decrease shall give

I in thy name where my hands and bless thee why I live even as with my hope and with
heart my soul shall live and be then shall my mouth withdraw from this thing graces unto
thee may grace mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit rest
and abide with you all now and always Amen,