

Why build on Christ, part 3

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[0 : 00] If you open your Bibles to Colossians, Colossians chapter 2, we're going to pick up in the middle of where we left off last time as we're looking at this little section here, this warning that Paul had given to the Colossians about the false teachers.

Brothers, don't build your life upon the false teaching that you're being encouraged to believe, but instead build your life on Christ.

And he gave three reasons for that, and we'll come back to that in just a second. But let's read our passage so that we can pray this morning, beginning in Colossians chapter 2, verse 13 through 15. And 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 that consists of decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

When he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through him.

[1 : 22] Father, we come to you and we thank you for your word. You've given us a perfect treasure of knowledge that we might understand and know who you are and what you require of us. And I pray, Father, that as we dive into your word here, that we would not forget to look at your word every day.

And those who have been seeking to read your word together as a family, taking up that challenge, we pray a blessing on them, that they would continue to grow in their faith.

They would continue to run after your word and see in time how reading your word together changes us. It helps us to think your thoughts instead of our own.

And now I pray you would open our eyes to your word. We need you. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Now, I've said this before and I'll say it again.

I have always struggled with anger. I know none of you have. I believe in what's called a besetting sin.

[2 : 33] I believe that there are sins that each of us struggle with more easily and more often than other sins. There's certain sins that we tend to fall to and mine happens to be anger.

And I've had anger issues since I was a kid. And I could tell you story after story, but the goal is not to glorify sin. The goal is to point out and ask a question about your own besetting sin.

As a Christian, the question is, is how do you deal with your sin? You're a Christian, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you still sin.

What do you do about that? How do you defeat that sin?

How do you keep living though there is a weight of guilt that rides upon you? How do you stop committing that sin?

[3 : 51] I think one of the reasons that Colossians was written is you'll notice down in verse 23 of this chapter, after he's dealt with the different false doctrines in verse 16, 17, and 18, he comes down here with this sort of final summary of this whole thing before he shifts topics in chapter 3.

And he says, The whole point of the false teachers is coming to these Christians who are young Christians and telling them, listen, you've got Jesus, but you also still have sin, we can help relieve your guilt.

We can help you fight that sin. We can help you live a full, abundant life. You just need to listen to us. We have the truth, the further truth, the secret truth that your pastor is not telling you.

It's as though they are being told Jesus is good, but not sufficient. If you really want your life to be a model of moral perfection, it's going to require something beyond Jesus to get there.

That's what the Colossians were being told. It's very similar to what we are told today in many quarters.

[5 : 21] I can remember a friend of mine who walked away from the faith, who after seeing some sort of post of mine about my own sin and my mourning over my own sin, writes to me privately and says, listen, I can help relieve you of that guilt.

You've just got to stop believing. And what we've said is that this third reason why you should build your life upon Christ is because he is the one who gives us the triumphant aspect to our life. He's the one that gives us the victory. When we build our life on Christ, what we're saying is that who he is, what he thinks, what he has done is the basis of all knowledge and learning. Because in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The first reason we were to build our life upon Christ is because he's fully God and fully man. And so because of that, only he knows the reality of things, the truth of things, and he is the only one who understands what it is to be us because he took on flesh.

The second reason is because he's fully sufficient. We need nothing but him, and he is fully sovereign. He's in control of all things. And then this third reason is because he's the triumphant Savior both in you, and that's what we looked at last week, and today he's the triumphant Savior on the cross.

[6 : 51] And so we want to look at his triumph on the cross from two aspects, two things that his cross work triumphs over.

And the first is our sin, and the second is our enemy. So the first one says this, He triumphed over our sin. There in verse 13, you'll notice that it describes our sinful state.

Our sinful state is that of being dead. It's a spiritual death. To be spiritually dead is to not have any spiritual power. To be spiritually dead is to have no spiritual ability.

We're dead. If something is dead, it cannot respond to any kind of stimuli. We were dead in our sins, and we could not respond to the grace of God because we were dead in our sins.

But it goes even further. It says that we're dead in our transgressions. Now, transgressions is just another word for sin. However, it does have a bit of a nuance to it. That nuance is that of crossing a border, crossing a boundary.

[7 : 56] We walked across the line. It's much like when my older brother and I, we were kids, the property near us had a sign that said, no trespassing. We thought that meant, come on in. We crossed that line.

We transgressed the line. It's as though God, in his law, has drawn a line in the sand, and transgression is stepping across that line. It says we were dead in our transgressions.

It goes on and it says that we were dead in the uncircumcision of our flesh. The uncircumcision of our flesh. We talked about the idea of circumcision and uncircumcision last week.

I'm not going to revisit all of that. If you missed it, go back and listen to the sermon. But the concept and the idea is that if you are lost, not a Christian, you are also dead in your transgressions.

You are also dead in the uncircumcision of your heart. To be uncircumcised in heart is to be dead in your sins. You see, it all means the same thing.

[8 : 56] It's a person who is without Christ. And so what did Christ do for people in such a state? Verse 13 and 14 gives us the answer.

But there is something interesting about... Our English translations really struggle to capture this. So I just really kind of looked at several different translations and have put together kind of the way this works because it starts with who we are.

You were dead. But then it tells us sort of what it is that God has done. But the order is backwards. And so let me just read it kind of massaging the translation a little bit.

And I think this will help you. You were dead. But God the Father made you alive together with Jesus by forgiving your transgressions, by canceling out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which were hostile to us, by nailing it to the cross.

You see, it all starts with it being nailed to the cross. And once it's nailed to the cross, the debt is canceled. And when the debt is canceled, forgiveness is given.

[10 : 11] And when forgiveness is given, life is given. And those who were dead were now made alive. Hopefully that helps you.

But there's basically four pieces to this that I want to look at just real briefly. The first is that concept of being made alive. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, but God the Father made us alive.

The old King James word, He quickened us. He quickened us. It's this idea of a resuscitation. It's the idea of a first moves of life. It's the lungs taking in that first breath of air. It's not the full awake. It's not the full thing. But it is this life that comes and begins, this moment of resuscitation. He says that we're forgiven for all our transgressions. We're forgiven for all of our transgressions. I want you to see what it says. Literally, it says, all of them. All of them.

[11 : 16] Every sinful thing that you've ever committed. every sin that you are yet to commit.

He's forgiven all of them. Every sinful thought, every sinful word, every sinful deed, every sinful inclination, every sinful motive, every sinful desire, every sinful move of your heart.

He has forgiven. And in the Bible, the interesting thing about the word forgiven is normally it comes from the verb to loose. That is that this is on you and you are set loose from it.

But this word is not that word. This word has to do with adding something to you, not taking something away. In other words, this forgiveness has a grace gift aspect to it in which what is given to you in order to forgive you of your sins is grace.

There's a grace given to you and that is so that any sin that you commit that's out in front of you is also taken care of. Then he comes and he has this phrase.

[12 : 44] He says, canceling out the certificate of debt that consists of decrees against us that's hostile to us. How did he forgive us? How did that forgiveness come?

What is that forgiveness built upon? This certificate of debt is an IOU written in your hand. You wrote an IOU to God.

Now you might not think to yourself, well, I don't remember doing that. When did I do that? It's just there because of God's law. It's because you're human. It's because you're an offspring of Adam.

You have a statement that you have written in your hand that says, I will obey God fully. And every time that you have ever broken one of God's laws, every time that you have even thought about breaking one of God's laws, every one of His laws, He says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and every moment that your mind didn't love God, it was written down.

And it says to love your neighbor as yourself. And every time you didn't love your neighbor as yourself, it was written down. It says, have no other gods before me. Make no graven image.

[13 : 56] Don't take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Every moment that we have broken one of His laws in thought, word, or deed, an inclination, motive, and desire.

It has been written down on the IOU in your hand that says, this is against me. And He has canceled it.

That word cancel means weird things in our culture today. But I like what it means in the scripture better. It means to obliterate.

There is this certificate of debt that you have and it has been obliterated. All of the crimes that you've committed, all of the cosmic treason that you have committed, if you are in Christ, that debt against you has been obliterated.

There's nothing left. It carries on it. Past, present, and future sin.

[15 : 15] It has been obliterated. How was it obliterated? It's the next phrase.

He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. Nailing it to the cross. He took the certificate of debt against you and when He was nailed to the cross, so was your certificate of debt.

Your debt was nailed to the cross. It's because in 2 Corinthians 5.21 it says that He made Him, that's God the Father, made Jesus the Son, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.

He who knew no sin, He was tempted as we are, yet He was without sin. And yet, God laid on Him and made Him to be sin on our behalf.

God imputed to Jesus Christ our sin. He imputed. That's a strange word. It comes from the Old Testament sacrifices that if you had sinned, you would walk into the temple, tabernacle area with a lamb and you would put your hand on its head and you would confess your sins and your sins are transferred to Him, imputed to the Lamb and the Lamb becomes sin and then you sacrifice the Lamb.

[16 : 54] That death is a death that you deserved. Jesus had placed upon Him all of our sin by His Father.

The Father imputed to His Son the sin that you and I are. And He nailed it to the cross. He obliterated it when He was nailed to the cross because He dies once for all.

I want to read a passage to you. I don't normally read this long of a passage. It's only seven verses, but I try to keep things short because I think sometimes when you go off into another passage you lose focus on what you're talking about.

And so I go sparingly just to keep us on task here. This passage I think explains very clearly what I'm saying. So that's why I want to read it. It's Hebrews chapter 10 it's verse 11 through 18.

[17:55] It says in verse 11 every priest stands daily ministering and offering and offering time after time the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. What he's talking about there is the Old Testament priests.

If you had committed a sin you were to bring a sacrifice and sacrifice it for your sin you would go out you would commit the same sin so you'd have to bring another sacrifice again.

Right? So that's why it was a daily sacrifice not a moment by moment sacrifice because you'd be out of livestock pretty quickly. He says in verse 12 he says but he this is talking about Jesus having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time sat down at the right hand of God.

So what is it that Jesus has done? Jesus has done his work. It's fully finished. It's completed. It's paid in full. There's nothing left to do.

It's like somebody who works all week long and they've worked hard all week long and Friday evening comes and they come home and they find their recliner and they sit down and they prop their feet up because they're done.

[19:06] It's all done. Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father because it's done. Fully done. Not another thing needs to happen in order for that sin to be atoned for.

He sacrificed for sin for all time. And he sat down at the right hand of God. Verse 13 waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet.

He's just waiting for the spoils of victory to roll in. He's defeated them by the cross and as he sits there at the right hand of the Father enemy after enemy is shuffled under his footstool.

And you almost think to yourself it's like okay so yeah he's paid for for all time. That sounds great but I'm still struggling sometimes with sin.

Hmm. Verse 14 For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

[20:26] What he means by that is the word sanctified you need to read it as set apart those who've been set apart by the Father those for whom Christ has died he is perfected for all time with his offering in other words his death perfects us for all time so while we still in this life in the experience we struggle with our sin from God's perspective it's a perfected done deal you're not struggling with your sin anymore from God's perspective because it's done it's all been paid for he says in verse 15 and the Holy Spirit also testifies to us for after saying this is the covenant that I will make with them after these days says the Lord I will put my law on their hearts and on their minds I will write them and then he says verse 17 and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more this is the new covenant where God doesn't forget your sin right if

God forgets he's got a mental problem we don't want God having mental problems we have a God who chooses not to remember our sin he chooses not to bring it back up he chooses!

not to hold it against you this is the promise of the new covenant when we take the Lord's supper it's one of the things that I say all the time when we come to the Lord's supper what we talk about when we come to the cup is that it's the cup of the new covenant in his blood and in that cup he's purchased the promise that says I will remember their sins no more and then he says this in verse 18 now where there is forgiveness of these things where there is forgiveness of these things there's no longer any offering for sin what does that mean it means that if Jesus is death if Jesus is death pays for my sin if it's done and he's sitting at the right hand of the father and I've been perfected for all time because of the offering that he made by his own sacrifice then

I don't have to be running to God going like God I know I sinned against you but look I'll go do this because of my sin I'll go do this because of my sin I need to pay you back because of what I've done because I know you saved me once but the rest of it's on me yeah you saved me and I get to go to heaven but I got all this sin and I'm going to do all these things I need to do to make up for all this stuff that I've done in my past listen there's no offering you can give to God that is going to perfect you because the sacrifice of Jesus perfected you for all time it's paid for it's done and at the risk of being offensive that is why the catholic mass is a horrible defamation to the name of Christ because it reoffers the blood of Christ again and again and again but we don't need to offer it again it's once for all and when he was on that cross and he died his blood covered you in that moment fully perfected and so as a

Christian your triumph over sin is found in Christ triumph over your sin in the cross and you don't have to carry around the guilt it's already been paid for on the cross and so if someone wants to come to you and tell you that they can help you relieve your guilt they're a false teacher because your guilt is taken away in Christ and if you tomorrow sin you run to Christ and know that forgiveness is ready and waiting and this ought to help our hearts this ought to help our hearts I've been in ministry long enough that I know there are many Christians who because of their sin get frozen in their behavior they ought to be sharing the gospel with these people they ought to be praying more they ought to be more diligent in fighting against sin they ought to be more diligent in sharing truth with other

[25 : 02] Christians and encouraging one another but they get so locked into their sin they begin to feel so guilty! about their sin that they and they become of no kingdom good at all because they're so afraid that they've lost their salvation they're so afraid that they've done something to throw it all away there's so many Christians I know that you you need to understand that what you need to do is run to the cross see that it's forgiven and stop being frozen in your behavior had a father that was caught in a sin he had been pretty diligent in reading the Bible to his family and sharing the gospel with his children and with his wife but he was caught in a sin and from that day forward for years neither he nor his wife wanted him to leave the devotions for the family anymore because you've sinned you've transgressed and you're not fit to be the leader of our family any longer he wasn't fit to begin with none of us are fit to begin with only way we can do anything is by the grace of

God there is a flip side to this however because there's a lot of people who are going to hear this idea and say you mean I can commit any sin I want to and it's paid for huh I would say that if you're inclined to think that way then you've never really been truly saved at all and you cannot think that and be a Christian at the same time so what do we need to do two things one you need to pray for forgiveness daily for your sins because forgiveness is available and secondly you need to remember the cross nothing is more debilitating!

for the Christian than to get stuck in our sin not remembering the forgiveness that is yours in Christ Hebrews tells us for consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself so that you will not grow weary and lose heart!

It's easy to want to lose heart it's easy to want to give up the cure for that is to go back to the cross he has triumphed over our sin but he has also triumphed over the enemy verse 15 starts exactly the way verse 14 does that's with this idea of having it's not really a new sentence it's the continuing of a sentence and it's having disarmed so when he nailed to the cross the IOU of our debt in that cross he also disarmed and it speaks about who he disarmed and it talks about rulers and authorities who is he talking about here these rulers and authority and what they could be called the sons of God the divine council the host of fallen angels in John chapter 12 verse 31 it says now judgment is upon this world and now the ruler of this world will be cast out John 14 30 says I will not speak much more with you for the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in me in both cases he's speaking about the God of this world who is Satan and his fallen horde that's 2 Corinthians 4 4 in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God that's what he's doing in this world is blinding the minds of unbelievers to keep them from believing as best he can this is why Paul says that in Ephesians that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers and against powers and against world forces of this darkness against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places and this is why John tells us in 1

[30 : 15] John 4 4 so that we are not afraid that greater is he who is in us the Lord than he who is in the world there are spirit beings there are fallen angels in this world how long they've been here the Lord only knows but it is their goal to harass and to keep people from believing in the truth and to try to lead you into false doctrine as best that they can the father made a spectacle of the enemy that's what it means to disarm them he's disrobed them is what it means it's the idea that they have been stripped of any power any ability they were made a public display of them that is he ridiculed them and he mocked them and it says that he triumphed over them and this word triumphed is this idea of a Roman general who's been out to behind him in chains as he drags them through the city for all the people to see that the enemy was not strong enough to defeat the general

God has triumphed over the enemy through the cross of Christ what looked like a defeat was actually victory so the Colossians they're being told that they ought to go worship angels you'll see that in verse 18 when we come to it next is true abundant life that they can have maybe they need

to worship angels or mistreat the body but surely all of the doctrine that comes is demonic doctrine and as Paul is saying this it's as though Paul is looking at the false teacher stumming his nose at them and he's saying to them listen the gods that you serve the principalities that you serve the authorities the rulers of darkness at this age that you summon by your dark arts your ghouls your goblins your witches and your spirit beings anything and everything that might be out there in one form or another that calls for people to come to them Christ has ridiculed them Christ has disrobed them

Christ has led them in a procession wearing chains defeated and he has triumphed over them by his cross this is why we as Christians worship the Lord as Jehovah Nisi the Lord our banner the scriptures tell us that because of this no weapon formed against us can prosper greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world and when you look at the world around us and you see you see the things that are going on politically culturally socially there is coming a day persecution of Christians there is coming a day it reminded me of the story from the first century gentleman by the name of Polycarp Polycarp had been a disciple of Paul the apostle and he was in Rome at the time that they were capturing Christians people who would not recant their faith and they were putting them to death he had the chance to run but he didn't the story goes that as he entered the stadium several Christians reported hearing heaven say be strong Polycarp and act like a man and because of his age the Roman proconsul gave him a final chance to recant his faith he said all you have to do is swear by Caesar saying take away these atheists now at that time a Christian was an atheist right because they didn't believe in the Roman gods and the Greek gods so Polycarp actually looked at the crowds!

take away the atheists and the proconsul continued he said swear and I will let you go reproach Christ Polycarp turned to the proconsul and he declared this 86 years I have served him I just want you to take in that age and let that sit with you 86 years I have served him and he has done me no wrong how can I blaspheme my king who saved me the proconsul sought to get him to recant he didn't want to put him to death but when he finally rejected the idea of turning against Christ they built a pyre and they took him out to the pyre and they were going to light the fire as they were about to light the fire he said to them he said you threaten me with a fire that burns an hour and is soon quenched for your ignorance of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment stored up for the ungodly why do you delay do what you want so they lit the fire but the fire arched around his body and wouldn't touch him they couldn't understand and so the executioner was told to go and he went up and he took his sword and spear and stabbed him and in his death as his blood flowed it put out the fire and he bled to death there on the pyre even in that moment there was victory because the victory comes not because he could avoid death the victory comes because he doesn't recant his faith in

[36 : 50] Christ Christian Christ has triumphed over the enemy and there is nothing there is nothing that this world the culture the hatred of Christians can do and can happen to you that can separate you from Christ Jesus and what the enemy doesn't know and those who follow after him is that their days are numbered and judgment is coming and so you don't need you don't need another God because he's fully God and you don't need another person to be sympathetic and empathetic towards you because he was fully man and you don't need anyone else to save you because he was fully sufficient and you need no other ruler because he is fully completely sovereign and the way to deal with your sin is through nothing else but

Jesus Christ but perhaps perhaps it's possible that as I'm going through this there are some here today who don't know Christ you're religious maybe and you know a lot of religious things but the question is if you were to stand before God and he asked you why should I let you into my heaven what would you answer because you see you've broken his law whether you know it or not you've broken his law you have disobeyed him and there stands against you a certificate of debt and how are you going to pay that back how are you going to pay that off what are you going to point to that says no God I should be led into your heaven because this has paid off my debt your only hope is the blood and the righteousness of Jesus Christ and my prayer my pleading with you is come to him