

Filled In Him

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning again to the book of Colossians. We are in chapter 2 this morning and our passage is chapter 2 verses 6-10.

We have made our way past the long introduction of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae and now we're getting into his body, the main section of the letter. Chapter 2 verses 6-10 is really a good summary of what Paul hopes to achieve in writing this letter to the church in Colossae. So when you found that, Colossians chapter 2 verses 6-10, let's stand together in honor of the reading of the Word of God. Paul says, Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. Grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

[1:30] Father God, we ask once more that would you reveal your glory through the preaching of your word. God, would you show us Christ this morning so that we would not be taken captive by every wind and wave of false doctrine.

God, would you make this church a pillar and buttress of the truth. We pray that we would hold fast to Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. A local area pastor shared a story earlier this week that he had pastored a church somewhere else years ago, and he said that many years ago a young man approached me to tell me that he was leaving the church that I pastored at the time. And he said that this young man came into his office and he beat his chest and said, the gospel, the gospel. I am so sick and tired of hearing about the gospel.

I need more. In other words, he needed more than just this elementary basic stuff. I've already heard about Jesus. I've already received Christ.

[2:42] It's time to move on now to bigger and better things. When can we finally graduate beyond Christ? And truth be told, that's not an uncommon experience.

I think if you exist in ministry long enough, you are bound to hear something along those same lines. You may have felt something like that yourself, if you're honest. The great reformer, Martin Luther, you may have heard this story from his ministry.

For 34 years, he preached at St. Mary's Church in Wittenberg, Germany. And of course, Martin Luther preached relentlessly about the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this was the soul of his ministry, that we are justified before God, meaning we are declared righteous in the sight of a holy God, not by virtue of anything in us, not by our works, but sheerly because of Jesus Christ.

He preached Christ in his life, Christ in his death, Christ in his resurrection, Christ in his coming again. He preached Christ. And eventually, some in his congregation came to him and asked, Pastor, when can we move on from all of this?

Why do you keep preaching the gospel every week? And to which he replied, because every week you forget it. One of the greatest and clearest signs of our weakness and our frailty as sinful men and women is that we can forget such an incredibly glorious message as the gospel.

[4:15] And we can grow bored of the most incredible person who has ever stepped foot on the earth. And we can grow tired of hearing about Jesus. And we can sometimes be easily lured away into a pursuit of something more.

You know, this boredom with Christ and this pursuit of more is exactly the issue that the Colossian church was facing here as Paul writes this letter to the church at Colossae. The Colossians had received Christ Jesus.

They had received the good news of the gospel. But now these false teachers have come in. They've crept in with this message of true spiritual fullness. And true spiritual fullness can be had outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have to move beyond all these basic things in order for us to get there. Paul responds to this dangerous false teaching by saying, no, no, no, no, no.

You have to remember that you are filled in Christ who is himself the very fullness of God. You have everything you need in him.

[5:27] This morning I want to ask the question, what must we do in order to live the full Christian life? What must we do in order to live the full Christian life?

And Paul gives us two very simple answers to that question. One, walk in him. And two, resist everything else. What must we do to live the full Christian life?

We must walk in him and resist everything else. First, Paul says the full Christian life is marked by walking in him.

We see this in verses 6 and 7 if you look there with me. And would you just notice here with me that this is the first command in the entire letter of Colossians. I mean, how many weeks have we gone through this letter unpacking Paul's first 34 verses here in Colossians.

He has spent 34 verses unveiling this glorious Christ and showing us who he is, how great he is, and what he's done. He lays that doctrinal foundation so that now he can begin to give us our marching orders here.

[6:34] And he says, You want to live the full Christian life?

Well, as you received him, so now walk in him. Far too often, someone may come to faith in Christ at some point in their life. And maybe they heard the gospel at a young age and they believed.

Maybe a friend or a neighbor shared the good news with them, but they heard it. And by the grace of God, they put their faith in Christ. But then years go by and nothing really changes in their life. They don't open up their Bible. They neglect time in prayer. They don't value the community of the local church. They start to realize they're falling into the same old patterns and the same old habits that they had before they put their faith in Christ.

And they wonder why their spiritual life isn't very full. And so then they leave these things behind in pursuit of something else to fill that gap in their life.

[7:42] Paul sums up the solution pretty well here in just these few words. As you received him, so walk in him. Just as you received Christ, meaning just as you were taught of him, and just as you heard the truth about him from Epaphras, just as you received it with faith, that you heard it, you understood the word of God and truth, so now keep going in it.

Or to give another example, it's like a newly married couple. This couple gets married on their wedding day. They say their vows. And the pastor asks, do you commit to be faithful?

They say, yes, I do. Do you commit to love one another? Yes, I do. I do. Till death do us part. I do. I do. But then time goes by and for whatever reason, they grow distant.

They don't speak. They don't touch. They don't talk. They don't laugh. And they wonder why they don't feel this fullness in their relationship with one another. And so they begin to search for fullness somewhere else.

Paul says, your coming to faith in Christ is just the beginning of our lifelong walk with Christ. It's a lifelong oneness with Christ.

[8:59] So just as you received him, just as you said, I do, now do. Just as you received him, so walk in him. Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so now live under his lordship.

And you remember, Paul prayed exactly for this in chapter 1, didn't he? If you look back at chapter 1, verses 9 and 10, you see he prayed. From the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with all knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.

And this walk that he's calling us to is a whole manner of life. Our walk is our practice. Our walk is what we do.

It's wherever you go and whatever you do. The Christian is called to do it in him. And if we're wondering what that walk looks like, he gives us two images here to help explain what he means.

He says, for one thing, we are to be rooted in him. This is an agricultural image. Horticultural image. The full Christian life, he says, it's like a healthy plant that has its roots established deep into healthy soil.

[10:21] And this is where the life source comes from. If you uproot the plant from the soil, what's going to happen? It's going to shrivel up and die. If you transplant those roots from healthy soil into unhealthy soil, what's going to happen?

The plant is going to shrivel up and die. You have to remain rooted in him in order to live the full Christian life. Jesus says something very similar in John 15, doesn't he?

What does he say? I am the vine and you are the branches. Abide in me and you will bear much fruit. This walking is very similar, closely linked to this idea of abiding.

So church, we have to ask, are we walking in him? Are we abiding in him? Are we hearing from him daily in his word?

Are we speaking to him daily in prayer? Are we meditating on his word day and night? Are we setting our mind on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God?

[11:24] You might think of the image from the psalm that we read this morning, Psalm chapter 1. This blessed man who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. What does it say?

He is like a tree planted by streams of water. He's rooted in the Lord. He's established, as Paul says in verse 7, in the Lord.

The full Christian life is rooted in Christ. But not only this, second image he gives us, Paul says we're also to be built up in him.

This is now an architectural image. Christ isn't just a stepping stone on the way to something else. Christ is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of the church is built.

As I thought through this this week, my mind stuck on that agricultural image. So I want to stay there for just a minute. I went to Isaiah chapter 61. And if you know Isaiah 61, it gives this beautiful image of Christ proclaiming the good news to the end and the effect that his people may be, it says, oaks of righteousness.

[12:30] Oaks of righteousness. Now you think about an oak tree. That's a big tree, right? Now you think of that one that's out here in my front yard? People comment on that tree all the time.

Why? Because it is big. It's massive. It's healthy. It's sturdy. It's established. It's tall. It's flourishing. It's weathered storms. It was here for Hugo 37 years ago.

And every hurricane since. And the winds blew and it tossed it back and forth. But that thing is still there. Stable. Sturdy. Healthy. Established.

It's strong. Church. Church. I want us to be oaks of righteousness. Don't you want that for yourself? And we don't want to be just little shripplled up twigs on the ground that when the wind blows it just tosses them far away. We want to be anchored and sturdy and rooted and strong and healthy and thriving and established in Christ.

[13:32] So that when the winds and the waves come and they strike, we are still there unfazed. So that when people see us and they look at Sea Wee Bay, they ask, what is the secret to your strength?

What is the secret to your stability? And we can say we are rooted and built up in Christ. You notice how many times it says in him?

All through chapter 2. Walk in him. Verse 6. Rooted, built up in him. In him. Verse 9. In him. Verse 10. In him.

Verse 11. And then it shifts to with him. Verse 12. With him. Verse 13. Back to in him. Verse 15. Do you get the idea here? The full Christian life is all about life in Christ.

We thrive and live in him and with him and for him. It is about him. For from him and to him and through him are all things.

[14:37] To him be all the glory forever and ever. Amen. Is this how you see it? Is this how you see it? Or are you tired of hearing about Christ?

And do you want to sink your roots down deeper into him? Or do you wish that I could just move on and talk about something else for a little bit? One way to check your heart here is to ask, am I abounding in thanksgiving for who he is and what he's done?

I love how Paul connects these truths here. In verse 7. He says, walk in him just as you were taught. Don't move past it. Abide in him.

Think on the gospel. Remember the glory of Jesus. Don't move on past it. Sink your roots down deep into the fact that you are justified by faith in Christ.

Be built up by the truth that you are adopted as a son or a daughter of God. By faith in him. Be anchored and rooted and nourished and strengthened by the fact that his blood has washed away all of your sins.

[15 : 48] And by faith in him you are forgiven of all of your sins. You are loved by God. You have been reconciled to God by his blood. Sink your roots down deep into the fact that you are redeemed by Christ.

And in Christ you have a certain hope ahead of you that no matter what comes today or tomorrow or next week or next year. You have glory ahead of you because you are in Christ. When you consider what it is that you've been given in Christ.

Church, how can your heart not abound in thanksgiving? And when your heart abounds in thanksgiving, when you're full of thankfulness for Christ and what he's done, you will have no appetite for any who would lead you astray with a promise of more beyond Jesus.

The full Christian life is a call to walk in Christ. And second, it is a call to resist everything else. We see this in our second point this morning here in verses 8 through 10.

Look there starting in verse 8. And this is the second command that he gives in the letter. He says, walk in him and second. See to it that no one takes you captive. See to it that no one takes you captive.

[17 : 08] He's shifting now to war language, isn't he? This is battle language. Church, do you realize that we are not in peacetime right now? Do you understand that we are at war?

Peacetime will come when Christ comes. Right now we are in a very real spiritual war. J.C. Ryle, in his book on holiness, he says, True Christianity is a fight.

And the Christian is a soldier from the day of his baptism until the day of his death. He has to fight against a world that loves error, against a devil who is a master of deception, and against his own fleshly heart.

If you think that you can float down the stream of time into heaven without a struggle, you are terribly deceived. William Gurnall, 17th century Puritan.

He wrote a series of sermons on Ephesians 6, which calls us to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. He says, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

[18 : 23] He wrote a series of sermons on this passage that eventually became a classic book on spiritual warfare called The Christian in Complete Armor. I would recommend any and all of you to take it up and read.

In it, he says this, The Christian's life is a continual warfare. The peace of the soul is a garrison peace.

It is maintained by a constant guard. We must not expect to be kept from our enemies, but rather to be kept in the midst of them. He says this war is a spiritual holocaust.

Either you destroy the power of Satan in your life by putting on the whole armor of God and keeping it on, or Satan will destroy you. Do you realize the severity and the seriousness of this, church?

We are not in peacetime. Every single one of us is in the midst of a spiritual battle. This is how Paul understood the issue here in Colossae. And so, Paul says, We must see to it that no one takes you captive.

[19 : 31] Literally, that word means to be carried off as a slave, to be hijacked, taken away like military plunder, to be stolen.

But just think about that image for a minute. If you knew that someone was trying to take you captive, what would you do? I mean, you would do everything in your power to keep that from happening, wouldn't you?

If you knew that someone was coming to take you away from your home, take you away from your family, take you away from your job, take you away from your possessions, what would you do?

You would fortify your defenses, wouldn't you?

You'd probably buy some guns and ammo, wouldn't you? Some of you live like this already. And you would stock up. You might learn some self-defense. You would seal up the doors.

You would lock them well at night. You would probably put alarms in your home. You would be mindful of your surroundings. You would be mindful of who was near you. You would pay attention to their mannerisms.

[20 : 35] You would listen closely to what they had to say. You would be on guard. You would see to it that no one took you captive, wouldn't you? Paul says, in fact, there are some who would take you captive.

The threat is very real. There are some who would take you captive out in the world who would very much like to steal you away and take you as their slave.

But they don't come by force. They don't come knocking down your door. They come to take you captive not with weapons, but with words. With ideas.

With false systems of thought that are, as Paul says, not according to Christ. The enemy would seek to take you captive by lying to you and leading you to believe any system of thought that is not according to Christ.

Meaning, any system of thought that belittles the glory of God. And Paul says, see to it that no one takes you captive with philosophy and empty deceit.

[21 : 53] This word philosophy, this isn't like philosophy in general, like what you might have studied in school, like Plato and Aristotle. This is a word that's used in Paul's day to refer to any system of thought, any system of teaching.

And again, he's contrasting this system of teaching with the faith that they received. The truth that they were taught by Epaphras.

This false teaching is not according to the tradition. It is according to human tradition. It's not according to Christ. It's according to the elemental spirits of the world.

And there's a variety of understanding and opinions on what that phrase means. I think most likely he's referring to demons here. But most importantly though, here's the key, it is not according to Christ.

And do you notice the irony here? These false teachers promise fullness by their teaching, but how does Paul describe it? It is empty deceit.

[22 : 59] False teaching promises fullness and joy apart from Christ, but at the end of the day it can never deliver. We must see to it that we are not taken captive.

John MacArthur preached a sermon on this text and I'm thankful that he did because he identified several components of this particular false teaching that's happening here in Colossae.

Again, we don't know exactly what it was specifically to be able to put a label on it, but he identified four key components of it. For one, he says, this false teaching has hints of humanism.

It has in it, it's rooted in human tradition, human wisdom, love of human ideas. And for another, it involves legalism, this extra-biblical commands of do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, these extra-biblical rules and regulations, all of which were rooted in Jewish teaching, by the way.

Third, it involved mysticism, this worship of angels, obsession with the spiritual realms and authorities. And fourth, it involved asceticism, harshness to the body, cutting the body to enhance the spiritual.

[24 : 20] This is what the Colossians were facing and all of it sounds convincing enough and all of it looks impressive enough, all of it on the surface looks appealing. Paul says, none of it is according to Christ.

These false teachers, maybe they mean well in their own mind, I don't know, I'm sure that they're convinced that they are right, but they're playing a role in a demonic agenda to undermine the purity of the church and to take people captive to lies.

Do you realize we still face these same threats today? We face our own isms. They may not be the exact same things that the Colossians were facing, but the enemy is not done trying to take people captive and undermine the purity of the church, is he?

How tempted is the church today to pursue legalism? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. It is unbelievable how quickly a church can develop a culture of legalism, adding rules and expectations that have nothing to do with Christ and the gospel, but what must be followed in order to be in.

That's legalism. How tempted is the church to pursue modernism? To reject this whole doctrinal thing, this whole truth thing, and to reject church tradition in order to appeal to a new generation, to be modern and to be fresh.

[25 : 52] I went to a church years ago in a different city and all I remember from that service was they played a Rocky clip on the screen and a Taylor Swift song from the stage. I don't remember what was preached. How tempted is the church to pursue modernism?

How tempted is the church to run after theological liberalism? Do you realize that entire denominations are falling apart because they have embraced the lie, the idea that the atoning work of Jesus Christ is somehow secondary to affirmation and acceptance of things that the Bible clearly calls us to understand are sinful.

How tempted is the church to obsess over political activism? Insisting that real Christians must vote this way, do this thing, promote this candidate in order to be truly faithful to the Lord.

I mean, be engaged all you want. That is wonderful. But when a church looks more like a political rally than a worship service, we have a problem. How tempted is the church to chase reactionarianism?

That's not a word. I made that one up. You won't find that in a dictionary. I can't tell you how many times I have seen or heard someone say something like, if your church doesn't talk about fill in the blank this Sunday, you better find a new church.

[27 : 19] Give me a break. Now, I'm not saying turn a blind eye to the culture. Of course, pay attention to the culture. But there are always cultural issues to obsess over.

There's always a cultural emergency to respond to. Can we just be busy talking about Jesus? One more. Have I stepped on any toes yet? One more for our denomination in particular.

How tempted is the church to run after pragmatism? Chasing a whatever works mindset and philosophy of ministry over what has God said?

Philosophy of ministry. Choosing rather to do whatever will fill empty seats than to trust the word of God to do the work of ministry. See, the forms of the lie may look a little different from generation to generation.

Our isms may be different than the isms that the Colossian church faced. But church, the essence is the same. The playbook of the enemy has not changed.

[28 : 23] He wants to take you captive with the idea that something beyond Christ is what we really need to obsess over.

Do not let them do it. See to it that no one takes you captive by any teaching that is not according to Christ.

Why? Because church, Christ Jesus is all that we need. Haven't we seen who Jesus is?

And Paul reminds us once again who Jesus is here at the end of our passage. I want to show you two breathtaking truths here as we close. Where Paul shows us in verses 9 and 10 he brings us back to where we need to fix our eyes.

He brings us back to the glory of Christ. He says first truth in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily. Who is Jesus?

[29 : 30] He is the fullness of God in the flesh. You remember that issue of asceticism? We need to be hard on the body and put away the body and eliminate the body in order to emphasize the spiritual.

Paul says y'all got this all backwards. No, no, no, no, no. Jesus is God incarnate. He is God in the flesh. Jesus took on a body.

He entered into skin and flesh and blood and bone and he is even now in glory. He lives and reigns and rules in a resurrected body, the same exact type of body you and I will have when we join him in glory.

This is check and mate for these false teachers. The problem isn't the body. Jesus came in the body to redeem the body. Your body is very much a part of God's plan of redemption.

The whole fullness of deity dwells in him bodily. And he says second truth, you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority.

[30 : 37] So why would I worship an angel or submit to the teaching of a demon when I can worship the one who is the head of all rule and authority.

He is God in the flesh and you have been filled in him. This is what it means to be a Christian church. You have been filled in him.

So what could anyone else add to you that Jesus is not already for you? You have been filled in him who is the very fullness of God.

Are you filled in Christ? If not, then friend, the call of this passage is to put your faith in Christ, to shun and turn away from the empty deceit of the world and to come to Christ to find full satisfaction in him, to put your faith in him and find what it means to be truly spiritually satisfied.

Charles Spurgeon, in his book *The Soul Winner*, gave some advice for Christian preaching, good Christian gospel preaching. He said this, he said, I believe that those sermons which are the fullest of Christ are the most likely to be blessed to the conversion of the hearers.

[31 : 59] Let your sermons be full of Christ from beginning to end crammed full of the gospel. As for myself, brethren, I cannot preach anything but Christ and his cross, for I know nothing else.

And long ago, like the apostle Paul, I determined not to know anything else save Jesus Christ and him crucified. People have often asked me, what's the secret of your success?

I've always answered that I have no other secret but this, that I have preached the gospel, not about the gospel, but the gospel, the full, free, glorious gospel of the living Christ, who is the incarnation of the good news.

Preach Jesus Christ, brethren, always and everywhere, and every time you preach, be sure to have much of Jesus Christ in the sermon. You know, that's not just advice for good Christian preaching. that is advice for good Christian living. Let your life be full of Christ from beginning to end, crammed full of the gospel.

[33 : 13] Know nothing else save Christ and him crucified. And when others ask you what your secret is, always have the answer to give that you have received Christ, the full, free, glorious Christ.

And so you walk in him and resist everything else. Let's pray. Father, we ask would you root us and build us up and establish us in Christ.

Christ. We ask would you fill our hearts with thankfulness to Jesus for who he is and what he's done so full that we have no room to listen to the lies of the enemy.

Would you guard this church from every false system of doctrine that would undermine the glory of Jesus? Would you help us constantly to look to him with joyful faith for who he is and what he's done?

We love you, Father. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.