

Foundation, Fullness, & Freedom in Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 2. If you're looking in one of the few Bibles, it is page 984.

We're continuing through this little but dense and powerful letter of the Apostle Paul, written to what was probably a small church in a relatively insignificant city, but it's a letter that has resounded through the ages and that has been passed on ever since then and has strengthened generations of Christians in their faith in Christ.

So, let me read Colossians 2. We are reading verses 6 to 15 this morning. Hear now God's Word. 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.

[1 : 40] In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith, in the powerful working of God who raised Him from the dead.

And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him. Having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands, this He set aside, nailing it to the cross.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Him. About five years ago, the movie *Twelve Years a Slave* came out.

It tells the true story of an African-American man named Solomon Northup, who grew up in upstate New York in the early 1800s. He was an educated businessman. He owned a 50-acre farm. He was a talented musician. And he was a devoted husband and father. But one day, in 1841, two men who were coming through town invited him to go along with them to New York City as part of a traveling circus.

[3 : 02] They said they needed a violinist and wanted him. Work was scarce at the time. They promised him some good money. He always wanted to see the city, so he went. But when they got there, they didn't put on any shows.

They instead asked him to go further south. The circus was still in Washington, D.C. They said, come with us down there. And then once you get there, the circus will be ready to go north because it's getting towards summertime and the weather's growing warmer.

They paid him some money for the time he had given them already. They promised him more money. They flattered him, and he went along with them. Two days after he arrived in Washington, D.C., he was poisoned, beaten, chained, and shipped to Louisiana to be sold as a slave.

The two men who had seemed so generous and kind, who had flattered him and fed him, who had paid him and promised so much to him, had kidnapped him and sold him into captivity.

In the passage we're looking at today, the Apostle Paul is concerned that what happened to Solomon Northup physically would not happen to us spiritually.

[4 : 13] Verse 8, see to it that no one takes you captive. That word can mean kidnap or carry off as a prisoner of war. Paul is warning the Christians in Colossae against empty philosophies, against deceitful promises that only result in spiritual bondage.

And Paul is saying, just as much as you would keep your distance from someone who wanted to deceive you and kidnap you and enslave you physically, you should also keep your distance from

anything which would lead you into spiritual bondage and powerlessness.

And just as there are very real dangers to our bodies in this fallen world, Paul says, there are also very real dangers to our souls. And we should not be naive or unaware or living in denial of them. But Paul's strategy in these verses is not to list all the spiritual dangers that we can face and describe them and elaborate on them and give us specific instructions for how to face them all. There's some of that in other parts of the New Testament. But in this passage, Paul points us to three things we can count on, three things which will help us, that can protect us from being taken in by deceitful promises, by empty words.

[5 : 32] Paul points us to the foundation we have in Christ, to the fullness we have in Christ, and to the freedom we have in Christ. Foundation, fullness, freedom.

We're going to look at each of these themes one by one. So first, the foundation we have in Christ. This is verses six to seven. Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Now, this verse is really the hinge on which the whole book of Colossians turns. The whole book of Colossians, in a nutshell, is verse six. As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. In the beginning of the letter, Paul gave thanks for how the Colossians had received Christ. This is chapter one, verses three to eight. He said, the gospel has come to you. You heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

And then Paul went on to pray that they would walk in Him. That they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, verse 10 of chapter one. And then in chapter one, verses 15 to 23, Paul reminded the Colossians of who is Christ Jesus the Lord.

[6 : 39] He was not, He is the firstborn over all creation, the one in whom all things hold together, and the one who made peace through His blood that He shed on the cross.

Broadly speaking, all of Colossians that we've looked at so far focuses on the first half of verse six. As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord. And the second half of Colossians that we're starting to jump into from chapter two, verse eight, to chapter four, verse six, the rest of chapter four is closing greetings, but is about walking in Christ.

It gives specific warnings and instructions about how to live with Christ Jesus as our Lord. Martin Luther said, the life of a Christian is a life of daily repentance and faith.

That's actually, that's how you become a Christian in the first place, right? By repenting, that means turning from sin and faith, trusting in Jesus. And that's also how you grow as a Christian, is every day turning away from sin and trusting in Christ and living out of that trust.

So chapter two of Colossians gives us three warnings. Verse eight, see to it that no one takes you captive. Verse 16, therefore let no one pass judgment on you.

[8 : 05] Verse 18, let no one disqualify you. Then in chapter three, we'll see some more positive instructions. Seek the things that are above. Chapter three, verse one.

Chapter five, put to death what is earthly in you. Verse 12, put on as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, really the qualities of Christ. And he goes into a long list there.

Compassion, kindness, patience, and love. And so on. So we could zoom out from verse six and see the whole of the book, but if we zoom back in to verse seven, Paul gives us four pictures of what it looks like to walk in Christ.

Or as we might say, to build on the foundation that we have in Christ. First picture, rooted like a tree. This verb is in the perfect tense, which often indicates the ongoing result of a completed action in the past.

In other words, what that means is that by receiving Christ, we have already been rooted in Christ. We read, our first reading was John chapter 15, where Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches.

[9 : 18] Right? You're already connected to Jesus in a life-giving way if you're one of His disciples, if you're one of His followers. We've already been rooted. So the New American Standard translates, walk in Him having been firmly rooted.

Now the rest of the verbs in this sentence are in the present tense, which simply indicates an ongoing process. Being built up, being established, abounding in thanksgiving. But rooted is sort of the beginning of that, having been rooted.

But there's an ongoing result of having been rooted in Christ is that our roots are to grow ever deeper in Him. We've been connected to Christ and we're meant to be, to grow down into Christ more and more.

One verse in the Bible that goes with this image is Jeremiah 17. It said, Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green. It is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. That's the picture of someone who has received Christ and who is walking in Him, whose roots are growing deeper every day.

[10 : 32] But the second metaphor is sort of a contrast. We're not just growing deeper, we're also growing up. We're being built up like a house. Most often in the New Testament, the metaphor of a house or a temple is used to describe the church.

Not only the individual Christian, but the community of God's people. So Ephesians 2.20, Ephesians and Colossians, Ephesians sort of expands on a lot of the things that are in Colossians. So often some of the, many of the ideas that are in Colossians, you'll find a parallel in Ephesians, partly because Paul was probably writing these letters around the same time. He was writing to churches that were closely located to each other.

Anyway, we could go into more of a relationship between Colossians and Ephesians, but we won't do that now. But Ephesians 2.20 says this, you are members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

You also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. You see, being a Christian isn't just a private endeavor. It's not just sort of quietly growing our roots down deeper into Christ.

[11 : 46] It's also a public project that we're engaged in together, a community project that we're being built up to be a display of God's glory to the world.

Now, I hope that many of you will stay after church to hear our presentation of the proposed building project, but that's not an appropriate application of this verse. The primary application of this verse is that we would be looking for ways to build each other up in faith and hope and love. And honestly, the building project will only bring glory to God if we're constantly building one another up spiritually and building on the foundation of Christ and building each other up in the truth and in the grace of Jesus.

All right, third metaphor, right? We've seen rooted like a tree, built up like a house, established in the faith just as you were taught. Now, that word established was often used to describe legal contracts or judicial verdicts.

Established, confirmed, settled, verified, proven valid. All of those would be similar ideas. Paul wanted his hearers to have a confident assurance that the Christian faith, which they had been taught, is true and reliable so that they wouldn't easily be swayed.

[13 : 02] Again, he expresses the same idea in Ephesians 4, 14 to 15. He says, so that we may no longer be like little children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Christ. So let me ask you this question. Practically, are you seeking to grow in your understanding of the foundations of your faith in Christ so that you won't be quickly swayed when someone else expresses a different opinion? In the Middle Ages, the Christian philosopher Anselm began his most famous treatise with the concept of faith-seeking understanding. He said, on the one hand, you can't insist on understanding everything before you believe anything.

That's not how human life works. Every one of us came out of the womb and the only way we stayed alive was by trusting someone who we didn't fully understand, by latching onto the breast or the bottle and trusting that what came out of there would nourish us instead of kill us.

It's the only reason you are alive today. It's because you trusted, you lived by faith, without much understanding. But of course, as you grow up, the natural process of growing up involves growing in understanding and eventually learning not only to eat solid food but also to cook your own food and to cook food for somebody else.

[14 : 45] And so that's meant to be a picture of the progress of a growing Christian, right? As a new Christian, sometimes you just got to start by drinking in the Word of God as it's being fed to you, as someone else is explaining and distilling it for you and trusting that God is there and God is real and God is wiser than any of us and that He loves us no matter what we feel.

But you know, growing Christians don't just stop there. They don't just stop with believing something that they don't really understand. Anselm said this, he said, I do not endeavor, O Lord, to penetrate your transcendence for in no way do I compare my understanding with that.

But I long to understand in some degree your truth which my heart believes and loves. So are you seeking to grow in your understanding of the God that you have come to trust and believe in?

You're seeking to grow in your understanding of God's ways and God's will. Are you dealing with the hard questions that other people ask you or you ask yourself rather than avoiding them out of fear?

Are you getting to know the Bible better so that you're not just able to receive someone else's teaching from it but that you can pick up the Bible and read it and benefit from it?

[16:06] You can cook a meal for yourself as well as coming to church each Sunday and receiving the Word as it's fed to you. Are you growing in discernment so that you can listen to different people teaching the Bible and you can compare it with what it actually says and be able to say, hmm, there's a difference here.

I need to eat the meat and not the bones. I need to grow in discernment. So rooted like a tree, built up like a house, established like a legal contract, forth, abounding in thanksgiving.

That word abounding could refer to something that was overflowing like a fountain or it could refer to a surplus, an unexpectedly large profit from a business.

All right, a whole bunch of leftovers from a feast. Paul says, we have received Christ Jesus the Lord and so our expressions of thankfulness to God should be overflowing and abounding.

Seven times in this short little book of Colossians, Paul emphasizes the importance of thanksgiving. Chapter 1, verse 3, we always thank God when we pray for you.

[17:22] Chapter 1, verse 12, with joy giving thanks to the Father, here abounding in thanksgiving. 315, and be thankful. 316, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 317, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

42, being watchful in prayer with thanksgiving. Seven times Paul's reminding us of the importance of thanksgiving. Now, there's a lot that could be said about thanksgiving.

But in the context of this sermon where Paul's warning them against spiritual dangers that could take them captive, a heart that is abounding in thanksgiving is a safeguard against all kinds of things, all kinds of negative thought patterns that can quickly take us captive.

It's a safeguard against envy. It's a safeguard against jealousy. It's a safeguard against self-pity. It's a safeguard against entitlement. It's a safeguard against arrogance.

It's a safeguard against discontentment and grumbling. Thankfulness drives all those ugly things away. And thankfulness doesn't let them gain a destructive foothold in our soul.

[18:35] That's why so many of the Psalms begin with the psalmist speaking to himself and saying, praise the Lord, O my soul. And all that is within me, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. So being rooted down and builded up, being established securely and abounding freely with thanksgiving, that's what it looks like to build on the foundation of Christ, to be strong and secure in our attachment to the foundation that we're building on.

But that's the first point. But the second thing, which we see in verses 9 to 12, is that we not only have a solid foundation in Christ, we also have a wonderful fullness in Christ.

Verse 9, That's a profound verse. And you know, you can't really get any clearer than that if you want to say Jesus is fully God.

All the fullness of deity dwells in him. There's no ambiguity there. Jesus isn't sort of filled with some divinity.

[19:53] He isn't just deeply connected to God. He isn't just a human being who achieved closeness to God. All the fullness of deity dwells in him.

There's nothing missing. And by the way, this was not just Paul's idea. Some people want to say this was just Paul's idea. But Jesus said, Matthew 11, 27, All things have been handed over to be by my Father.

And no one knows the Son except the Father. And no one knows the Father except the Son. And anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Jesus, again, very clear, saying he has this intimate and close and unique relationship with God the Father.

Over and over throughout the Gospels, Jesus claims to be and do what, according to the Scriptures, only God can be and do. And so you have to wrestle with that and ask the question, is he telling the truth or not?

And if he's not telling the truth, then he's not a wise man and he's not a prophet you should trust and he's not a teacher you should follow. Because you shouldn't follow someone who claims to have the fullness of deity dwelling in him and claims to have an exclusive and unique connection to God if it ain't true.

[21 : 12] So it's really one way or the other. But Christians believe that Jesus is fully God. Christians believe that if you want to know God, you need look no further than the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is God's presence and his very self. Again, this is one of the main differences between Christianity and every other religion in the world.

Some religions and philosophies would say that the fullness of deity is inherently unapproachable. That humanity and deity are like oil and water. They don't, they cannot mix, they cannot inhabit the same space.

But if God is truly omnipotent and beyond our comprehension, wouldn't that be limiting God's power to say that he can't fully inhabit one of his creatures?

that he couldn't become a human being? How can you say that God can't do that because that's impossible? Isn't nothing impossible for God if God is truly transcendent and wise beyond our understanding?

[22 : 29] Now, other religions go the opposite way and they say God is everything and everything is God. They would have no problem with verse 9, in him all the fullness of deity dwells, but they would say sure, all the fullness of deity dwells in you and me too or like drops in the ocean.

But if God is everything and everything is God, it becomes very hard to make any ultimate distinctions between good and evil or even between a human being and a piece of dirt.

Isn't that important to make such distinctions? Christians. So, Christianity says that God is fundamentally different than us, that we cannot approach God on our own because of our sin, our corruption, but in his mercy and wisdom, God has made a way.

God chose to enter into our space and our world and our flesh in the person of Jesus Christ so that we might know him, so that we might be reconciled to God, the Father through him, so that we might be filled with the presence of God.

That's the amazing message of Christianity, that yes, there is that amazing transcendent God who's not just in and out of each one of us, and yet we can connect with him.

[23 : 59] We can be reconciled with him, and we can even have God dwelling in us through his spirit. Verse 10 goes on, not only is Christ, not only does the whole fullness of deity dwell in Christ, Paul goes on to say, you have been filled in him.

You see, some people were coming to the Colossians, and they were saying, okay, you believe in Christ, that's fine. Maybe he's even necessary, but he's not sufficient.

In order to really thrive and really flourish, you need something more than Christ, something other than Christ, something outside of Christ. Next week, we'll get into more of the details of what exactly they were offering and why it would have seemed so attractive, but here the details are not that important.

Paul wants to remind them that all that they need is found in Christ. Paul says, live out of the fullness that is in Christ and that's been given to you as you've been united with Christ through faith. Don't be taken captive by an empty and deceptive philosophy. Now, Paul is not demonizing the discipline of philosophy in general, nor is Paul rejecting logical argument and reasoning.

[25 : 10] If you translate the Greek of verse 8 literally, it says, see that no one takes you captive by the philosophy and empty deceit. Paul's warning against the specific philosophy being taught in Colossae, which he describes in the rest of the verse.

So, if you're considering being a philosophy major, this verse is not saying that it is a sin to do that. At the same time, philosophy will never save you. As one of my philosophy professors once said, philosophers say they love wisdom, but most of the time they just love arguments.

A little bit more seriously, like many other academic disciplines, philosophy is perhaps most useful when we're humbled by it. In other words, when we allow it to show us how much we don't know, how much is out there in the world that is beyond our limited comprehension.

How limited our reason can be and how far it gets us. But getting back to the text, verses 11 to 12 show us in some rather graphic imagery what it means that we have been filled in Christ.

Again, continuing with this fullness theme. Now, 11 and 12, I think, are the most dense verses in this passage. This whole passage, 8 through 15, is one long sentence in the Greek. So, Paul is just piling metaphor upon metaphor, image upon image, to paint, again, this powerful picture.

[26 : 35] He's using this rhetorical style to sort of paint a picture of the fullness and later on the freedom that we have in Christ. But 11 and 12 are pretty dense, so let me go phrase by phrase.

In him, you are also circumcised. Now, where does this image of circumcision come from? It comes from the Old Testament. The Old Testament, God required the male descendants of Abraham to be physically circumcised as a sign that they belong to God's covenant people.

So, circumcision represented cutting off or putting away everything that displeases God and dedicating oneself fully to God for the task ahead. But verse 11 is not talking about physical act of circumcision.

It continues, in him you are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. When the Bible talks about something made without hands, it's talking about something that's done by God and not by human beings.

In other words, you were circumcised by God. That is spiritually cleansed and set apart. Paul's drawing on an Old Testament idea which is sometimes expressed as circumcision of the heart.

[27 : 45] God spiritually, not just a physical act that sort of symbolically represented something, but God spiritually cleansing His people and setting them apart for His service.

Going on, by putting off the body of the flesh. Now, if you look down at verse 13, it says, you were dead in the uncircumcision of your flesh and God made you alive.

And if you look down at chapter 3, verse 9, the same verb put off appears. You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. So, the image is when we come to Christ, it's like we're wearing a full-body suit that is dirty and stinky and stained and we've worn it forever and it's never been washed.

And God strips it off of us. He removes our uncleanness and our inherited corruption. And He does it, this verse goes on, by the circumcision of Christ.

Now, that phrase could mean one of two things. It could mean the spiritual circumcision that Christ Himself performs, right? Christ is the one who removes our inherited corruption and sort of cleanses us spiritually.

[28 : 59] But more likely, I think this phrase, the circumcision of Christ, actually refers to the crucifixion of Christ. Christ, circumcision was both an act of devotion to God and a bloody mess.

And I think Paul's using this metaphor to remind us of the greatest act of devotion to God, which was also a bloody mess, the death of Jesus on the cross.

Through and through the death of Christ on the cross, our uncleanness, our corruption can be removed and stripped off of us. One other reason I think Paul's referring to Christ's death on the cross here is that the next phrase refers to His burial, having been buried with Him in baptism.

Christian baptism means we've been identified with the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, it's a sign that we've experienced what verse 11 describes, the circumcision of the heart.

Christ died for our sins. He was buried. On the third day, God raised Him from the dead. And now, if we have faith in Christ, we can say, my old self died with Him on that cross.

[30 : 12] Christ took my stinky, dirty, stained bodysuit. He took all of my sin on Himself.

And our sins were then buried with Him in the grave, and through faith in Him, we've been raised to new life. That's what baptism celebrates, that we've become a new creation in Christ by His mercy and grace because of the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Not only has God stripped off our stinky, dirty, stained clothes, He's washed us clean, and He's given us a whole new wardrobe. He's given us the righteousness of Christ.

He's raised us up with His mighty power, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

And so Paul says, the fullness of deity dwells in Christ, and in Him you have fullness.

Fullness of cleansing. Fullness of all of your sins being removed. Fullness of regeneration of a new life in Christ. Paul says, what more do you need?

[31 : 16] You can't get any more cleansed than that. You can't get any more empowered from something else. No. You just need to go deeper into Christ.

Don't need to run away anywhere else. There's nothing else you're missing. There's nothing else that any other philosophy or religion can give you that you cannot find in Christ. So that's the second point.

Paul says, live into the fullness of Christ. Third, verse 13 to 15, the freedom we have in Christ. Foundation, fullness, freedom.

In these last three verses, Paul points us to the freedom we have in Christ because of His work on the cross. Freedom from the guilt of sin. It's verse 13 and 14. And freedom from the powers of darkness.

That's verse 15. And if you think about what kinds of things can spiritually take us captive, those have to be at the top of the list. Right?

[32 : 19] Guilt and shame and the powers of darkness. Guilt and shame can enslave us. Look at the imagery Paul uses in 13 and 14, the record of debt that stood against us.

Verse 14, that word can mean an IOU, signed by one's own hand, or a legal bond. Some people even think that Paul was referring to a common idea in his day that there was a heavenly register of deeds in which a record of your wrongdoings was kept.

And there's a list in the presence of God. You see, this is something we can't simply overlook or ignore. It's something that doesn't go away just because we forget about it or choose not to think about it or live in denial of it.

As God's image bearers, we owe Him full obedience and none of us have come anywhere near that. If we measure ourselves up against the standard of God's holy law, we have all transgressed. We owe God a debt. There's no way we can pay it off. Even if I did not sin for an entire year, guess what?

[33 : 43] I would simply be doing my duty to God because He made me in His image and that's what I owe Him. I owe Him everything. So there's no way you can pay anything back because obedience to God is not paying God back for our sins.

It's simply what we owe Him already. We're in a hole. We have no way out. And some of you know very well what that feels like. The fear that grips us, the sense of hopelessness that overwhelms us when we think of the debt that we owe to God and the record of our past sins.

The vain attempts to cleanse ourselves and hide our shameful failures from others. The anger and despair that fills us when the futility of those efforts is exposed and the underlying feeling of worthlessness that haunts us.

But verse 14 is wonderful news. He forgave us all our trespasses.

Not just some of them but all of them. Sometimes I've asked people who are struggling with receiving God's forgiveness, did Jesus Christ die on the cross for some of your sins or for all of your sins?

[34 : 59] And they almost always say oh well like all. Right? Because you realize that it would be it doesn't make any sense to say some.

Are you living that way? Or do you think there's something that you've done in the past that there is no way that God could forgive? He forgave us all our trespasses.

trespasses. He canceled the record of debt. He didn't just reduce it. He didn't just refinance it. He erased it.

He wiped it away. He set it aside. That's actually an interesting phrase that literally means he took it out of the middle. In an ancient courtroom the record of debt along with other signed statements would be placed right in the middle of the courtroom.

But now what Paul is saying is the list of accusations that stood in the middle has been nailed to the cross of Christ. Jesus paid it all.

[36 : 09] We can know forgiveness and freedom from enslaving guilt and shame. There's freedom from the guilt of sin in Jesus Christ. Verse 15 tells us there's also freedom from the powers of darkness.

God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Christ. You might say what exactly does that mean?

Who are these rulers and authorities? Well verse 1 chapter 1 verse 16 says that the rulers and authorities in heaven and on earth have been created by Christ were created through Christ and for Christ.

And in chapter 2 verse 10 which we read we read that Christ is the head of all rule and authority. In other words no authority stands above the eternal son of God.

There is no one that can overrule or override what Jesus decrees. But it's also evident from verse 15 and elsewhere in scripture that these rulers and authorities that Paul is speaking of in both heaven and on earth have rebelled against the rightful authority of Christ.

[37 : 19] So Ephesians 6 speaks of rulers and authorities cosmic powers over this present darkness spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Paul may also be referring to earthly rulers and authorities that is power structures in this world that have become bent and twisted toward carrying out Satan's evil designs.

What he's saying here is that on the cross God triumphed over all the evil powers. Think about what happened when Jesus was nailed to the cross.

He was condemned to die by the rulers and authorities of Rome and of Israel. Their power was bent toward accomplishing the evil designs of Satan himself.

But paradoxically when it seemed that the powers had triumphed over Jesus Jesus was actually triumphing over the powers. And T. Wright put it this way these powers stripped him naked held him up to public contempt and celebrated a triumph over him.

But in verse 15 Paul declares that on the cross God was stripping them naked disarming them. It's the same word as put off in verse 11.

[38 : 39] God was holding them up to public contempt put them to open shame and leading them in his own triumphal possession in Christ. The crucified Messiah was in fact their rightful Lord.

The cross therefore becomes the source of hope for all who are held captive under the rule of powers which are hostile to God enslaved in fear and suspicion.

Christ breaks the last hold that the powers had over his people by dying on their behalf. he now welcomes us into God's new family. What that means is that the cross of Jesus gives hope to all of God's people who are oppressed by hostile rulers and authorities whether those are spiritual powers, demons, or corrupt human authorities.

They will not have the last word. Christ has triumphed and he will have the last word. Are there demons that are afflicting you? We don't always talk a lot about demons in some of the churches in the West but they're real.

Are there demons that are afflicting you? Are there addictions that threaten to overcome you? Do you believe that your future is determined by curses or spells or other words that people have spoken over your life in the past?

[40 : 02] Verse 15 says, none of these hostile rulers and authorities can stand before the triumphing power of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

They are enemies but they are defeated enemies so stand firm in the name of Jesus Christ and do not believe their lies. Verse 15 also gives hope to Christians who are persecuted and oppressed by earthly rulers and authorities who are carrying out Satan's evil designs.

no matter how strong and how unyielding they may seem they do not have the final word. Christ triumphed through his cross and he leads us in triumphal procession even when we suffer injustice as Jesus himself did.

And just as Christ was raised from the dead we can be confident that all God's people will one day be vindicated. for 12 years Solomon Northup was a slave and his story is one of perseverance and endurance.

It doesn't come out in the movie but if you read the book it's also evident that he was sustained by his faith in Christ. But 12 years after he was kidnapped and sold into slavery he was working in the fields of Louisiana one morning he saw two men approaching neither of whom he recognized one was an attorney from his home state of New York.

[41 : 27] He wrote this as my eyes rested on his countenance a world of images thronged my brain a multitude of well-known faces my wife Ann's and the dear children's and my old dead fathers all the scenes and associations of childhood and youth all the friends of other and happier days until at last the perfect memory of the man recurred to me and throwing up my hands towards heaven I exclaimed in a voice louder than I could utter in a less exciting moment Henry B.

Northup thank God thank God in an instant I comprehended the nature of his business and felt that the hour of my deliverance was at hand I seized my old acquaintance by both hands I could not speak I could not refrain from tears throw down that sack Northup said your cotton picking days are

over he was finally vindicated he became an abolitionist he lived the rest of his life as a free man now his vindication wasn't complete because those who had kidnapped and enslaved him were prosecuted but were let off without anyone being punished there was not full justice and of course there wasn't full justice for many other people who remained in slavery their whole lives but the promise for every Christian is that however incompletely it may happen in this world or however much it may happen in this world that the day of your vindication will one day come that the powers and authorities will not have the last word

Paul says see to it that no one takes you captive do not be hopeless build on the foundation you have in Christ live in the fullness revel in the fullness that you have in Christ and stand firm in the freedom you have in Christ and know that he is the Lord who will one day be completely victorious and we will stand with him let us pray father we pray that you would help us to to build on the foundation of Christ to be rooted down and built up to be established and abounding in thanksgiving we pray that we would know the fullness that is in Christ and that we would go deeper and deeper into the fullness that you have given to us and we pray that we would stand firm in the freedom that you have purchased for us the freedom from guilt and shame the freedom from the powers and authorities which threaten us we pray that we would walk in Christ just as we have received Christ the Lord we pray this in his name amen joy and Lord say just ■■ ■■■■■■ egal His name on fact and the God and the man have seen