

## Union with Christ

### Colossians 2:8-15

- I. The Problem (v/8)
  - A. Current State of World
    1. Current Rise of Depression and Suicide (Since COVID-19)
      - a) Depression – “The percentage of U.S. adults who report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetime has reached 29.0%, nearly 10 percentage points higher than in 2015.”
      - b) Suicide – “Suicide rates increased 37% between 2000-2018 and decreased 5% between 2018-2020. However, rates returned to their peak in 2022.”
    2. Societies Solution
    3. Christian Solution
- II. The Need (v/13-15)
  - A. Dead in Transgression – v/13a
    1. Incapable of Coming to God – Romans 3:10-12
  - B. Uncircumcised Flesh – v/13b
    1. Filthy Rags - Isaiah 64:6
  - C. Debt – v/14a
    1. Excessive Burden of Sin
    2. Accuser – Job 1:9-11
  - D. Enmity (Hostile) with God & Man – v/14b; Ephesians 2:15
    1. Hostile to Man (Greed, Pride, Envy)
    2. Hostile to God – Rom. 5:10
- III. The Shadow (v/11)
  - A. Circumcision & Law were a glimpse of a truer reality – Hebrews 10:1-4

***“He who fears death more than Christ and loves life more than Christ, does not yet possess Christ by faith. Sin still has dominion over him and he is under the Law”*** – Martin Luther
- IV. The Solution (v/9-12)
  - A. Christ is the solution
  - B. In Him the Fullness of God Dwells
    1. What did Christ do?

**Union with Christ  
Colossians 2:8-15**

- a) Associated with us in...
  - (1) Baptism – Mt. 3:13-17
  - (2) Temptation – Mt. 4:1-11 & Hebrews 4:15
  - (3) Sleep/Rest/Hunger – Mt. 8:4
  - (4) Prayer & Reliance – Luke 5:16
- b) Bore the Wrath of God
  - (1) Became Sin on Our Behalf – 2 Cor. 5:21
  - (2) Just & Justifier - Rom. 3:26

C. Union with Christ Through 2 Illustrations

- 1. United by an Act of God – Ez. 36:25-27
- 2. United by an Act of Faith

a) Aspects of Union

- (1) Change in Nature – John 3:4-8

***"Christianity has a morality, but Christianity is not primarily a moral religion. It is a religion of redemption through a singular hero, and knowledge of that hero; both propositional and experimental drive us to a morality, drive us to an ethic."*** – Paul Washer

- (2) Change in Function – John 17:14-16

- (3) Change is Final – Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 2:17-18

b) Initiated Through Faith (Col 2:12)

- (1) Means & Methods

V. Where does this leave us?

- 2. Salvation Only Through Christ Alone – John 14:6
- 3. Gospel Doesn't End There; Are we truly living in Union with Christ?
  - a) We are to live by faith alone
  - b) We are to daily pick up our cross and follow Christ – Mt 16:24-27
    - (1) ***"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die"*** – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## The Problem (v/8)

### I. Current State of World

- A. Good Morning, I am Harrison, not Randy. Dan and Randy were down at Shepherds Conference in L.A. I received a text message yesterday morning from Randy indicating that his flight had been canceled and rescheduled for today, due to Santa Ana winds. So I ask for everybody’s grace as we get head into our text this morning.
- B. I was hoping to join in with you guys in worship, looking deeper into the Gospel. As of late, there has been one specific item that I seem to be seeing everywhere, and that is our Union with Christ. We will dive deeper into an actual definition of union, later in this sermon, but at the offset this idea of Union with Christ is something that stems far beneath the surface of joining in the Church, or being able to call ourselves a Christian, even learning what Christmas even means. Union with Christ is something that goes far beyond what is cultural Christianity. (Easy Believism).
- C. Current Rise of Depression and Suicide (Since COVID-19)
  1. Depression (Gallup)
    - a) “The percentage of U.S. adults who report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetime has reached 29.0%, nearly 10 percentage points higher than in 2015. The percentage of Americans who currently have or are being treated for depression has also increased, to 17.8%, up about seven points over the same period. Both rates are the highest recorded by Gallup since it began measuring depression using the current form of data collection in 2015.”
  2. Suicide (CDC)
    - a) “Suicide rates increased 37% between 2000-2018 and decreased 5% between 2018-2020. However, rates returned to their peak in 2022.”

(1)

“Union with Christ”  
Colossians 2:8-15

2018	14.2	48,344
2019	13.9	47,511
2020	13.5	45,979
2021	14.1	48,183
2022	14.2	49,476
2023	14.1	49,316

- b) The suicide rate among males in 2023 was approximately four times higher than the rate among females. Males make up 50% of the population but nearly 80% of suicides.

D. Societal Solutions

1. Social Media Detox
2. Going out in Nature
3. Mindfulness & Mental Health Culture
4. Relationship

E. Christian Solution

1. The issue is Spiritual not physical or emotional or psychological.
2. Illustration of Recognition - Lt. Col. Balaz
  - a) Presentation 1 - Physical, Emotional, Spiritual
  - b) Presentation 2 - Physical and Emotional
3. Illustration of Macarthur
  - a) Speaking on Christian Ethic in Jews Professors class at a Secular College

F. Personal Heart (3-Part Series)

1. This heavily burdens my heart, for the Church, as well as those in Western Society.
  - a) Church was my only source of community, rooted in Christ (More on this Later)

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

2. But to get to this solution, we have to build our case, ultimately that we all might live this out.
  - a) Union with Christ
  - b) Unity of the Body
  - c) Union of the Body
3. Recognize that this has forever been a problem, but has always manifested itself in different ways.

II. Read Colossians 2:8-15

**The Need (v/13-15)**

- I. Dead in Transgression – v/13a
  - A. Incapable of Coming to God – Romans 3:10-12
- II. Uncircumcised Flesh – v/13b
  - A. Filthy Rags - Isaiah 64:6, *For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away.*
- III. Debt – v/14a
  - A. Excessive Burden of Sin
  - B. Accuser – Job 1:9-11
- IV. Enmity (Hostile) with God & Man – v/14b; Ephesians 2:15
  - A. Hostile to Man (Greed, Pride, Envy)
  - B. Hostile to God – Rom. 5:10

**The Shadow (v/11)**

- I. Circumcision & Law were a glimpse of a truer reality – Hebrews 10:1-4
- II. God shows us our own inability
- III. Luther says, **“He who fears death more than Christ and loves life more than Christ, does not yet possess Christ by faith. Sin still has dominion over him and he is under the Law”** – Luther (P. 104)

**The Solution (v/9-12)**

- I. Christ is the solution
  - A. Not Traditions
  - B. Not Philosophies of Man

“Union with Christ”  
Colossians 2:8-15

C. Not the Elementary Principles of the World

1. Psychologies, Education, and Observations

II. In Him the Fullness of God Dwells

A. What did Christ do?

1. Fully God descend to Earth
2. Perfect life, while subject to the Law & in Human flesh
3. Yet associated with us in...
  - a) Baptism – Mt. 3:13-17
  - b) Temptation – Mt. 4:1-11 & Hebrews 4:15
  - c) Sleep/Rest/Hunger – Mt. 8:4
  - d) Prayer & Reliance – Luke 5:16
4. Bore the Wrath of God
  - a) Became Sin on Our Behalf – 2 Cor. 5:21
  - b) Just & Justifier - Rom. 3:26
5. Defeated Death
6. Ascended & Seated at God’s Right Hand

B. Now we can Know Him

III. Union with Christ Through 2 Illustrations

A. United by an Act of God

1. Circumcised by a Circumcision without Hands
2. Heart of Stone – Ezekiel 36:25-27

B. United by an Act of Faith

1. Directly in Christ’s Death and Resurrection
  - a) Romans 6:4-5 – Buried in the Likeness of Christ Death & Raised in the Likeness of His Resurrection
    - (1) Indicating a complete change in our old & new nature.
  - b) Romans 6:8-9 – Christ’s act and thus our Union with His acts are one & done.
    - (1) Indicating both function & permanence
2. Three Primary Points of this Union – Intimacy

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

a) When looking at the time, we cannot fully bring out all the implications that come from this Union with Jesus Christ, so I want to focus on three. Specifically these three aspects that we are making connection to in Romans 6, because it reveals to us how intimate and necessary the reality of our Union is.

b) Change in Nature – John 3:4-8

(1) First is that our Union with Christ results in a complete change in nature. I just heard this remark from the Missionary Paul Washer, and think it helps us refocus how we think about the salvation that Christ brings. Paul Washer’s remark was, **“Christianity has a morality, but Christianity is not primarily a moral religion. It is a religion of redemption through a singular hero, and knowledge of that hero; both propositional and experimental drive us to a morality, drive us to an ethic.”** To be united with Christ is not a mere word exercise or something to repeat over and over again as a word affirmation exercise. You say it enough times and it will be real. Union with Christ is the true change of nature. Where the old nature is done away with a new nature. To illustrate this point, I actually wanted to pull something from my work, designing road reconstruction projects. One method that is pretty popular in the State of Idaho is something referred to as “Cement Recycled Asphalt Base Stabilization”, or “CRABS” for short. What they do is instead of digging out the old road, they will bring in a machine and pulverize (break up) the asphalt. Then they will bring in a little extra rock and a stabilization agent, which is cement. And then they will mix the top asphalt, the extra rock, and cement with 8” of the road below the asphalt. Making sure it is well mixed, they will then

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

compact the base down with a big roller, in which they can then place pavement over the top of the new road structure. This option is typically used to reconstruct a road for two reasons. The first being its price, it is typically a 1/3 of the price; meaning where they originally could only redesign 2 miles of roadway, now they can do up to 7 or 8 miles. Making it cost effective, but it also becomes an even stronger substructure under the roadway.

(2) Why bring this up? Because our union with Christ is in many ways the same. Our having died with Christ, and then raised to life is a complete change of nature. In a way, Christ (or better yet the Holy Spirit is our cement). That is what it truly means for us to be born again in Christ. We are not born of the same nature, just layers of rocks, the Holy Spirit intricately binds us together with Jesus Christ. That all my sin was put on Him on the Cross and the life Christ lived and His righteousness is covers me daily. Jesus explains it this way in John 3:4-8, ***4 Nicodemus \*said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born [c]again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”***

c) Change in Function – John 17:14-16; (Col. 1:16-17 & Rom 1:16-17)

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

- (1) The next point that I want to draw out regarding our Union with Christ, is what it means for our function. Looking again at our CRABS illustration, at the end of a construction project, when all is said and done with road reconstruction, the truth is that all the general public typically cares about is not what is under the road. All that matters is that the road is smooth and our cars are not going to be damaged. And hopefully I have not bored you with this illustration, although you probably won't think the same about the road you are driving on as you head home this morning. The truth is that, when salvation comes, on the surface it almost seems like nothing has changed. We still have to work and deal with people that we don't want to. Provide for our families and be productive parts of our society. Sadly, God does not take away our sinful flesh. But just as CRABS road and reconstructed road have the same surface immediately after construction. Which one shows more wear and tear, and produces potholes quicker, the one without the cement base. The one without the Spirit of God guiding and leading them. In the true sense of salvation, our lives should show the fruit of sanctification, that we are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. That we are shedding the fruit of world, that we might take on the fruit of the Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, and Self-Control. And this is because God has left us on this Earth for a specific reason, that He might use us as witnesses to a suffering world. In Christ's prayer in John 17, the Disciples heard Christ say this, John 17:14-16 – ***14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You***

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

***to take them out of the world, but to keep them [d]from [e]the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*** We are not of this world once we are in Christ, and our lives should not be the same. To bring it back to the beginning part of this sermon, our lives should not reflect a constant life of depression and suicidal thoughts. We should be overrun with Joy, not artificially because we are united with Jesus Christ, through whom the entire world was created (Col. 1:16-17) and through Him salvation became available to all people (Rom. 1:16-17). God has kept us on this Earth to be a testimony of that life change! That what Christ said was true! And that true life change, Christ’s peace, comfort, and salvation come through Him and Him alone. Every other method and solution is nothing more than a gimmick that can do nothing but glance over the true issue at hand, a sinful heart.

d) Change is Final – Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 2:17-18

(1) Not only does our nature intricately change, becoming something completely new and different; and the outpouring of our actions change; but it is a permanent change. It is not a nature that fluctuates with our mood or even daily actions, it is something that cannot change back. Looking one last time at our CRABS illustration, I was at a project near Grangeville, where the contractor had done this CRABS process on the road and paved it. We were out doing a walk through and checking the final product. We ended up finding a divot in the pavement, and the client wanted the contractor to fix it, but due to the expense to have them come and just grind and fix the pavement, the client wasn’t willing to do it. So he asked if the contractor

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

could just use an excavator. Digging out the pavement and the new CRABS base, in order to patch it back. This idea was immediately thrown out because it would be too difficult for the bucket of an excavator to dig through the cement base, to the point it would break the teeth on their bucket. Now that the base has been changed, there is no going back. Our life in Christ is the exact same, if we are truly born again in Christ there is no changing of our nature. We are a completely new creature and we are with Him for all of eternity, and the Father, the Son, and the Spirit hold us.

- (2) In Romans 8:38-39 Paul tells us, ***38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** It doesn't matter what comes our way, whether death of a loved one, persecution, sickness, etc... If we have truly died with Christ, and raised from the dead with Him, then there is nothing that could tear us from His grip. Which is to be a point of great comfort and rejoicing, that our savior so greatly loves us that he would never cast us aside. If this idea scares you, that Christ holds you, that we are kept for the Father's great pleasure and purpose, then this becomes a point to question our own hearts. Do we truly know Christ? Have o we truly been born again in the Spirit, or did we merely recite words that were given to us, out of pressure? Or did you join a church merely because it seemed to be the right thing to do but never truly believed in Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life? This should make us pause and truly question if we

“Union with Christ”

Colossians 2:8-15

want to be with Christ or in Christ. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:17-18, that the main point of our salvation was not just peace with God, but that we might have access to the Father, *17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.* That we want to be in His presence and with Him. That we long to be held in His sweet embrace.

3. Initiated Through Faith (Col 2:12)

a) Means & Methods

C. Salvation Only Through Christ Alone – John 14:6

D. Gospel Doesn't End There; Are we truly living in Union with Christ?

1. We are to Live by faith alone

2. We are to Daily Pick up our Cross and Follow Christ – Mt 10:37-39 & Mt 16:24-27

a) **“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die”** –

Dietrich Bonhoeffer