

Lesson 7

Filled by Him

Colossians 2:9-12

Colossians 2:9–12 (CSB)

⁹For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ,

¹⁰and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

¹¹You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,

¹²when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Introduction

Throughout the opening verses of Colossians 2, Paul's message emphasizes the necessity of progressing toward spiritual maturity. In the verses, we see the concept of settled faith. *Firmness*. Stability. Being deep-rooted. We are *established in the faith*. All of these things are enveloped in a spirit of thanksgiving. Our Christianity does not stop at the baptistry. Instead, the moment of our spiritual birth serves as the ignition point for a spiritual life that grows daily in its discovery of who Jesus is, the wonderful truths of His word as revealed by the Spirit, and a growing consistency of walking *in Him*.

Inherent in *walking in Him* is to walk as He walked, to suffer as He suffered, and to embody Jesus to those in the world and fellow believers in Christ. Walking in Him demands complete trust in Jesus and surrender to His purposes.

Up to this point, Paul has asserted the positive. He has highlighted his prayers for them and his desire to encourage them. He has mentioned his striving for them and the three principal goals of his apostolic ministry. He has affirmed who Jesus is as God, the place He occupies in the church, and His role as Redeemer. He has attributed Jesus as the source of truth and all knowledge.

It has been said that Colossians 2:8-15 comprises the heart of this epistle. Beginning in verse 8, the apostle begins to deal with the error of human philosophies and traditions – insufficient to produce salvation – and unnecessary because of the all-sufficiency of Christ: *Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ*. Paul was certainly not opposed to philosophy in general. Here, he wants to reorient the thinking of the Colossian Christians. What is good and true in philosophy is good and true because it is true *in Christ*. Christ is the ground of all truth - philosophical systems are ultimately founded on some speculations regarding how the world works and thus prove empty.

What is in view here, however, are specific teachings that would lead a believer away from the simplicity found in Christ. These included access to higher and more profound knowledge through mystical

practices. Paul maintained that what was being pushed upon them was an empty illusion. It was a fraud, void of any value whatsoever. Of this, Barclay³⁵ summarizes:

Paul may be saying: ‘These false teachers claim that they are giving you knowledge which is very advanced and very profound. In point of fact, it is knowledge which is uninstructed and undeveloped because at most it is knowledge of the human mind. The real knowledge, the real fullness of God, is in Jesus Christ. If you listen to these false teachers, far from receiving deep spiritual knowledge, you are simply slipping back into the most basic instruction which you should have left behind long ago.’

2:9-10 – The All Sufficiency of Christ

There are four doctrinal beliefs regarding Christ in Colossians 2:9-10:

- He has *the fullness of deity*; in other words, Jesus Christ is divine or fully God.
- The *whole fullness* is in Him. All of God’s glory is present in Him, not in part. This is important to understand because the false teachers asserted that Jesus was a god but less than God.
- This deity *dwells in him bodily*. “Dwells” means to “inhabit or live in.”¹ Deity resides in Him continuously. While on earth, God’s fullness indwelt the body of Jesus Himself and continues to do so in His glorified existence.²
- Jesus is *the head of all rule and authority*. Jesus is God and subsequently over every other creature ... in heaven and on earth.

In verse 10, Paul affirms that we are *filled in Him*. The fullness of Christ is imparted to us, John 1:16. Our *filling* happened at the point of our salvation and will continue with us throughout all eternity. Connect this to what Peter said. We have been granted:

His precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

– 2 Peter 1:4

Now, because of the work of Christ, we are in total fellowship with God.

2.11-12 – The Complete Salvation Christ Provides

Now, Paul deals head-on with Judaism, which insists that circumcision is necessary for salvation. False teachers required Gentile believers to be physically circumcised since, for almost two centuries before, the Jews championed this as the identifying mark of those who were truly God’s people.³ For generations, Jewish people welcomed Gentiles to join them as God’s people by submitting to

¹ BDAG, p. 534.

² McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians* . . . , p. 230.

³ Dunn writes: “Circumcision had always been central to Israel’s self-understanding as the people of God (at least from the formulation of Gen. 17:9–14). And the Maccabean crisis had made it a crucial mark of national and religious identity and loyalty, the mark which most clearly distinguished Judaism from Hellenism (1 Macc. 1:15, 48, 60–61; 2:46; 2 Macc. 6:9–10; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12:241). Thus Josephus saw circumcision as God’s way of preventing Abraham’s posterity “from mixing with others” (*Antiquities* 1:192). And the point was well taken by outsiders such as Tacitus: “They adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference” (*Historiae* 5.5.2). See Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians*, . . . p. 154.

circumcision and observing the Law in its fullness. Many Jewish Christians naturally assumed and expected this would continue in the new covenant in Christ. Such claims were false, and they did not fully understand the salvation God accomplished in Jesus.

The reference to spiritual circumcision in 2:11 refers to what happened at the time of our conversion. This is the moment in the past when the Spirit operated on our heart, bringing it to life.⁴ This takes place on the occasion of our baptism, 2:12. In Romans 6:2-6 Paul describes it as putting the old man of flesh to death. When we do so, we are *raised up with Him by faith*. Thus, baptism is the occasion when the new life begins.

In these verses, we see the essentiality of baptism. In it, we proclaim:

“that the old order is past and done with; it proclaims that a new order has been inaugurated. The convert did not remain in the baptismal water; he emerged from it to “walk in newness of life.” Baptism, therefore, implies a sharing in Christ’s resurrection, death, and burial. . . . Baptism derives its efficacy not from the water or from the convert’s token burial in it, but from the saving act of Christ and the regenerating work of God, producing that faith-union with the risen Lord of which the (act) is the sign and seal.”⁵

All of this is not by our power but through *the powerful working of God*. Working is from the same word we use today for *energy*. It refers to God’s active power. You did not have the power to save yourself. You had to be rescued. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that regenerated your spiritual heart.

To be circumcised today is to fall away from grace because our salvation has been made complete by the work of Christ. There is no need for anything or anyone else but Jesus. To this, we have the promise:

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

– Romans 10:9

Conclusion

Faith does not end at our baptism; it begins there, with our lives rooted and built up in Christ, continually growing in our understanding and expression of who He is. Our spiritual maturity is deeply connected to our knowledge and application of Christ's sufficiency. Jesus is not merely an addition to our lives; He is the foundation and the fullness of our existence. We find all the wisdom, knowledge, and power we need to live a godly life in Him.

This calls us to a deeper reflection on our walk with Christ. Are we relying on human philosophies and traditions that can lead us astray, or are we anchored in the truth and simplicity of the gospel? Paul's warning against being taken captive by empty deceit is as relevant now as it was then. In a world full of distractions and false teachings, we must be vigilant, holding fast to the truth of Jesus Christ.

⁴ See also Romans 2:28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Philippians 3:3.

⁵ Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians*, . . . p. 105-106.

The idea of being filled in Him, experiencing the fullness of God through our union with Christ, should inspire us to live out our faith with confidence and joy. We are partakers of the divine nature, called to reflect the character and love of Jesus to those around us. This is not just a passive existence but an active, vibrant life of faith characterized by trust, surrender, and a commitment to walk as Jesus walked.

Let us carry with us the assurance of our complete salvation in Christ. Remember that your baptism brought about a powerful transformation, a death to the old self, and a resurrection to new life in Him. This new life is marked by ongoing growth, a deeper understanding of God's promises, and a steadfast faith that withstands the trials and temptations of this world.

May we continually seek to be established in our faith, abound in thanksgiving, and be aware of the incredible gift we have received from Jesus Christ. Let His fullness be our strength, His truth our guide, and His love our example as we strive to live out our faith daily.

For Discussion

How do you personally understand and pursue spiritual maturity in your daily life? What steps can you take to deepen your relationship with Christ?

Paul emphasizes the importance of having a settled and stable faith. What does a "settled faith" mean to you, and how can we cultivate it in our Christian walk?

How does a spirit of thanksgiving influence our faith and our daily lives? Can you share a personal experience where gratitude strengthened your faith?

What does "walk in Him" and "walk as He walked" mean? How can we practically embody Jesus' teachings and example in our interactions with others?

Paul warns against being taken captive by philosophy and empty deceit. What modern-day philosophies or traditions can lead us astray, and how can we guard against them?

How do you understand the concept of Christ being all-sufficient? How does this understanding impact your faith and reliance on Jesus?

Paul speaks of spiritual circumcision happening at our conversion. How do you interpret this spiritual transformation, and what significance does baptism hold in this context?

Baptism symbolizes the beginning of a new life in Christ. How can we continually live out this new life, and what practical steps can we take to ensure we grow spiritually?

2 Peter 1:4 speaks of being partakers of the divine nature. How does this concept challenge you in your personal faith journey? What changes might it inspire in your daily life?

Reflect on Romans 10:9 and the assurance of salvation it offers. How does this promise shape your faith and approach to sharing the gospel?

³⁵ Barclay, William. *The Letters to...*, p. 159.