

In a few hours many of us will be glued to a phenomenon we get only once/year. We will wait with bated breath for it to begin and fill us with excitement and wonder. I'm not talking about the Super Bowl, though I know many of you will watch it. I'm not talking about the halftime show featuring the amazing Mary J Blige, though it's good for you to know Martha will turn our living room into a dance floor while she performs. I'm talking about...the commercials! How many of you watch for just the commercials? We do everything we can do avoid them 364 days a year. But on Super Bowl Sunday, we want to be entertained, laugh, and sit under their influence for the afternoon. Every commercial is intended to grab our hearts and minds and make us believe their product or service will lead to a fuller life. And while that battle rages in the marketplace, there's a similar battle going on for our soul.

Since the beginning, when a serpent invaded the Garden of Eden and tempted our first ancestors, the world has promoted countless paths to a full life apart from God. Whether it was the wisdom and stature gained from eating the fruit of a forbidden tree, the pagan religions that surrounded the nation of Israel, or the worldviews opposed to the gospel of Jesus, we have always been presented with alternatives that promise true fulfillment because, they say, Jesus isn't enough. Far too often all of us run after those alternatives. What we find though, is those promises are never met, and what was said would bring fullness turns out to be phony. So then, how do we live this full life? This morning, as we continue in our series in Colossians, Paul will show us what the substance of the full life is, how we can live it, and what alternatives are offered but can never deliver. My prayer is that God would show all of us what we are entertaining at the cost of what he has to offer.

[Colossians 2:6-7] ⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

So Paul concludes everything he's taught so far by prescribing how to live the full life in Christ. These false teachers in Colossae have offered an alternative full life apart from or in addition to Jesus. The Greek word for fullness, *plērōma*, is their word for heaven. That's why Paul combats their teaching directly by using it seven times in the first two chapters. And while the ideas of today may be different, the offer is the same; to convince us the free and abundant life offered by and through Jesus can be improved upon. It's not enough.

So Paul has told them to look back at their beginnings, prayed for their obedience, proclaimed the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ, and shown them how the Word of God is the catalyst for maturity. In light of all that, here's how you live the full life: **Walk in Christ. Grow in Christ. Learn in Christ.**

Paul says, "As you received Christ, so walk in him." It's a callback to 1:10 to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Your faith journey should continue in the same way it began ...a recognition of Jesus as Lord and Savior and the faith to receive him as such. "Walk in him" is an invitation to live in an intimate relationship with Christ and to honor that relationship through obedience. That's not the call of the legalist. It's the loving and faithful response that God's ways are best and the purpose he has for your life is where we discover the fullest life. You cannot love God and live disobediently, and you can't experience the fullness of what he has for you if you walk

in different ways. Want to get healthy? Got manage your diet and exercise. You want good grades? You've got to go to class. Want to walk in Christ? You've got to obey. The fullest life you can live is the obedient one because the things God asks of us draw us closest to him and lead to our flourishing.

“Rooted and built up in him” refers to our spiritual identity and development. You wouldn't plant anything this spring and not expect it to grow. God planted your roots in Christ when you put your faith in him, and it's in that soil that we will continue to grow into his likeness. We too often want to get planted in Christ, have our eternity secure, and then grow in something else. Fullness grows the more you grow in Christ.

And the full life comes from learning (knowledge and wisdom). I'm going fly fishing this summer for the very first time. Something tells me I won't be very good at it to start. I need to learn the basics, and then keep learning and growing in things that build upon those basics. It's the same thing with Christ. We all learned enough to put our faith in him, and the full life comes when you take what you knew to be true at the beginning of your faith journey and grow in that understanding. The more you know Jesus, the more you live the life he has for you.

Now you may here all that and say, “it can't be that easy”, but it is. Think about anyone you know who is “on fire” for Jesus right now. I guarantee you they are deep into God's Word, asking a lot of questions, their character is looking more like Christ's character, their love for the Lord is apparent and their lives are coming more into alignment with his will. It can be the same for us. He is enough. **If you want the full life in Christ, Paul just showed you how.** So then what gets in the way? Why do we veer?

Paul finally gets into some specifics about what they are being taught. I want to encourage you to read 2:6-23 a couple of times this week, especially 16-23. We don't have time to get into all the details, but you'll see the Colossians are hearing Gnosticism (special insight that questions Jesus' humanity and deity), legalism (self-righteous works to make myself holy), and mysticism (higher spirituality apart from Christ).

[Colossians 2:8] ⁸See 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.

Paul says any idea, thought, path, belief falls into one of two categories: Christ/Kingdom of God, which leads to fullness and freedom. Or the world. Elementary spirits or elementary principles are worldly thinking is heresy inspired by evil. Paul calls it “empty deceit”. It looks good, but it's phony, and it will take us captive. So what are the philosophies and elemental spirits in 2022? Times change, ideas change, but the empty and enslaving force of those ideas is still the same. I want to present a few and ask you to prayerfully let God show you what you might be susceptible to.

Legalism/Spiritualism. Some threats don't change. Anything we add to the gospel is a lie and pulls us away from the full life. Legalism says we must perform to make ourselves right before

God and earn his favor. But we are saved by grace, through faith. There's nothing we can do to earn it, and if we try, we put ourselves in bondage and will fail.

Spiritualism may not be the right word, but it goes to the belief that I must have some manifestation of the Spirit in my life to justify my salvation. Speaking in tongues or some ecstatic expression is required and, if I can't manifest it, I'm not really saved. There is one word for that: Heresy. If you grew up being taught that, know that God's grace saves, your faith receives that gift, and that's all that is necessary.

Deconstruction also fits here because it says I can live a full life with a generic spirituality or that I can have Jesus without his Word and his Church. You can't.

Materialism. If Gnosticism was the primary threat to the Greek world and early church, materialism is our greatest threat. We put our worth, resources, energy into accumulating more stuff. Another word for that is idolatry. But none of those things can save, and not of those things can ultimately fulfill. **If your stuff has your heart, it doesn't belong to Jesus.**

Busy-ism. If materialism is #1, this is a close second. He who is busiest wins. We are convinced that if we kill ourselves and our kids with more and more that somehow we will live the full life. **But nowhere in Scripture does Jesus commend exhaustion, nor does he say a walk worthy of the Lord is one full of achievement.** I know this one well. This is the first year I didn't come out of the gates on fire. I am weary and, yes, it's been a difficult few years, but I'm worn out because I'm spread to thin, and everyone in my life is paying the price for it.

Escape-ism. This is the child of busy-ism because it's how we have to live when we've crashed and burned. Chilling out is good. Having to check out is not. **Our life is not full if we are constantly trying to get away from it.** Would you have the courage to add up the amount of time you've spent on Netflix so far this year? Would you compare it the amount of time you've spent in God's Word? I just started a book called *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and its premise is that screens are killing us. It was written in 1985!

Instagram-ism. Study after study show the devastating effects social medial is having on us, particularly our youth. Parents, I urge you to get your kids off it, and I urge all of us to limit our exposure. It's made up of Comparison-ism and Approval-ism. We look at it as if it is real, compare it to our lives, and are left disappointed and discontented. We tell God "This isn't enough." It also puts our self-worth in the hands of others instead of in the hands of the one who loves us so much and calls us his own. God clicked the Like button when he sent his son to die for you and reconcile you to himself.

Me-ism. All of these ultimately wind up here. Our initial rebellion in the Garden, where Adam and Eve believed there was a fuller way, started here. Every single one of these worldly ideas entices us to believe the fullest life is found in self-rule, which says "I'm the boss.", self-indulgence, which says "I know what's best for me and want I want it when I want it", and "self-righteousness", which says "I can make myself good. I don't need any help." For those of you about to go through Yonique, you will hear these same temptations as ambition, approval, and

appetite. They are the anchors in our heart that these ideas want to hook on to, convince us Jesus is not enough, and pull us away.

Would you just pause and look again at that list and ask God if he wants to point one of them out to you? It's an inexhaustive list. You may be able to think of others. What is it for you? Identify it. Tell someone. Share it in your Life Group. Ask for their help and prayer. The cost is too great to ignore it or keep it to yourself. And as you do, remember what we have in Christ. Paul wants to remind us one last time.

[Colossians 2:9-10] ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Don't ever lose your wonder and gratitude about the fact that our infinite, holy God whom we indescribably offended and separated ourselves from with our sin, chose not to leave us in that condition but, instead, took on flesh to reveal all of himself and his intent through Jesus. He dwelled among us for a time because he wants to dwell with us for eternity and he fills us up with himself to unite us to him and lead us in the life he has for us. How did he do that?

[Colossians 2:11-15] ¹¹ 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, ¹² 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. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

The gospel is more than just being saved from death. It's being saved to life: a perfect, eternal life that is our hope, and an imperfect, but full life we can live now. Your guilt, your shame, your sin, your debt to God has all been nailed to the cross, and the old you was buried with Jesus. **Because Jesus paid it in full, your life can be full.** The power of sin and the power of the evil that oppose us have all been defeated at the cross. The power that raised Jesus from the dead raised you from the dead and now works in and through you. We are now under the Lordship and love of Christ. **Because he won, we now win.** The full life is ours, but we have to choose to live in it.

I recently ran into a guy that I hadn't talked to for a few years. He started telling me about his Bible study. I didn't know him to be a Christian so asked if this was a recent development. He answered "No, I became a believer 13 years ago. But I thought that was it. Only recently did I realize there is so much more." He told me about growing closer to God, growing in awareness of the good and bad in his life, and how he would go forward. But through it all, even tears, I noticed a common theme: Anticipation. He had an amazing hopefulness that what God began in him 13 years ago is what he needs to get back to and build on because that's where his full life is.

What about you? If you desire a full life, and my guess is that we all do, where are you looking for it and why are you looking there? What world commercials are you listening to? They will

Enough
Full vs. Phony

Colossians 2:6-23

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Kurt Pressler

leave you disappointed because the life they offer are phony. Everything we need we already have in him. Only in Christ can you be full.