

## 14. Learning Why We Are Complete in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical children learn to understand and be able to explain the unity that we have in Christ. We saw that it is possible to have that unity because every Christian receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. As we grow and become spiritually mature, we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. We will have unity with other Christians that are also yielding to the Holy Spirit because of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in each of our lives. In our topic today, we are going to learn why we are complete in Christ.

In Colossians 2:1-4 we read, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.” Here, we see that Paul had a great concern for the Christians in Colosse, Laodicea and for all other Christians who had never met him personally. In an earlier topic, we pointed out that Epaphras had probably learned about the Gospel in the city of Ephesus and had taken the Gospel to Colosse and the surrounding cities.

The word that is translated “conflict” in this verse is the root word of the word that was translated “striving” in Colossians 1:29. There we saw that Paul used a word that was talking about putting forth every possible bit of energy to win in an athletic event. Paul was doing everything that he could to help the Christians at Colosse and Laodicea grow to spiritual maturity. In fact, Paul was making this same effort to help every Christian that he had not met face to face. At the end of his life, Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” The word that is translated “fight” is the same word that is translated “conflict” here. Paul never slowed down in his ministry because he wanted to please the Lord in all that he did.

Paul wanted the Christians in these other places to experience several things in their spiritual growth. First, Paul wanted their hearts to be encouraged. Second, Paul wanted them to be knit together in love. The word that is translated “knit together” is also used in Ephesians 4:15-16 where we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Here, we see that the various parts of the body are joined together and all receive their instruction from the head who is Christ. That will help Christians in any place to grow and mature.

Third, Paul wanted all Christians to come to a full assurance of understanding of the Gospel. The word that is translated “understanding” is the word that was used of Christ when he spoke to the religious leaders in the temple at the age of twelve. Luke 2:47 says, “And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” Christ had the understanding that resulted from spiritual maturity even though he was young in physical years. Paul wanted every Christian to have that same mature and full understanding of the Gospel so that each Christian would come to

a full assurance of salvation that the Father and Christ have provided. It is in Christ that all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for every Christian to gain this wisdom and knowledge because He teaches us all things. Paul knew that he needed to give this instruction because he knew false teachers were trying to deceive the Christians with false teachings about Christ.

Colossians 2:5-8 says, “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Paul could not go to the Christians in Colosse to encourage and teach them because he was a prisoner of the Roman government. However, he had the same concern that he would have if he were present. Paul said a similar thing when he wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica as we read in 1 Thessalonians 2:17, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.” Paul might not be physically present but he had a deep concern for every Christian whether it was possible to be with them or not.

Paul was filled with joy as he thought of the Colossians. Since good order and steadfastness are both military terms, Paul saw that the Colossians were standing for Christ like an orderly army that was following its leader. This was due to the fact that they had a strong faith in Christ even though false teachers were trying to deceive them. As a result, Paul gave them several instructions about the way to walk as they followed Christ. First, he encouraged them to become rooted and built up in Christ. In Ephesians 3:17 Paul wrote, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” As a part of his prayer for the Ephesians, Paul prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in love. Here, Paul prayed that they would be rooted and built up in Christ. To be “rooted” means *to cause a thing to be strengthened with roots* into the thing in which they are rooted. Paul knew that as the Colossians continued to take deeper root in Christ and His love, they would be strengthened (built up) in Christ.

Paul also encouraged the Colossians to become “established in the faith”. The word that is translated “established” means *to confirm or make firm*. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” Here, we see that Christ, the Father and the Holy Spirit are all involved in the process of establishing us in the faith. In addition, Paul encouraged the Colossians to abound in the faith with thanksgiving. As we help our children learn to develop a strong faith that is solidly based on God and His Word, our children will have a great reason for thanksgiving.

Paul knew that there were false teachers who were trying to destroy the faith. That is why Paul told the Christians in Colosse to beware (see and understand) so that they would not be robbed of their freedom by false teaching. The words that are translated “philosophy and empty deceit” spoke of ideas that were intended to deceive by those who claimed a higher knowledge. These

teachings replaced the Word of God with the traditions of people. Proverbs 16:25 says, “There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death.” Instead of leading people to follow God, human traditions lead to bondage and death. These traditions actually teach the principles or ideas of the world. Galatians 4:9 says, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” These elements or traditions produce spiritual bondage.

Colossians 2:9-10 says, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” Although Christ came to this earth in a human body, He possessed the attributes and divine nature of God in all of its fullness. As a result, we are complete in Christ. 2 Peter 1:3-4 says, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” Christ is the One who is the head over all principality and power. As a result of our faith, we have also become partakers of the divine nature and are complete in Him.

Colossians 2:11-12 says, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” In the Old Testament, the Jews were given the sign of circumcision. However, many Jews did not understand the purpose of circumcision. Romans 2:29 says, “But *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” In this verse, we see that what God really wants is circumcision of the heart. At the moment of salvation, our sins are forgiven and we become saints instead of sinners. That is due to the fact that all of our sins, past, present and future, were placed on Christ, and His righteousness was placed on us at the moment of salvation.

Baptism is a symbol of the fact that we are buried with Christ so that we can be raised to walk a new life. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Here, we are reminded of the fact that Christ has given us His power to walk with a new life. Just as the Father raised Christ from the dead, He also raised us from spiritual death because of our faith in Christ. This is a very important thing that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. Because Christ lives in us, as we yield to Him, He has the power to make it possible for us to walk in that new life. We are complete in Christ now and not just when we get to heaven because His power began working in us at the moment of salvation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why we are complete in Christ.