

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians

Chapter Ten

Completely Complete

“⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. ¹⁰ And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: ¹¹ In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: ¹² Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ¹⁴ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; ¹⁵ *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:9-15).

Gnosticism introduced the idea of *Process Salvation* into Christianity. Salvation became something accomplished or achieved, not something received. Salvation became a series of steps that one must go through or levels one must achieve. This made salvation, being “born again,” a *process* rather than an *event*. This process involved various degrees of enlightenment with each step bringing a person closer to assurance of having achieved salvation (being part of the *pleroma*). This process evolved into infant baptism, catechism, receiving Christ in the Eucharist, Church (denominational) membership and keeping the commandments of God.

Salvation is not a process. Salvation is an instantaneous event in the life of a believer where he/she is immediately “born again” of the Spirit of God “by grace through faith” in the “finished” work of Christ Jesus. The majority of Christianity does not believe in completeness in Christ Jesus. Any group that adds anything to what Christ is and what He has done, does not believe you can be immediately complete in Him. For instance, if you (or anyone) believe participation in any ritual, whether it is water baptism, circumcision, the Lord’s Supper, or anything else, is necessary for your salvation then you also deny the completeness Christ offers. In this study we want to understand our completeness in Jesus Christ.

THE BASIS OF COMPLETENESS

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30).

The last proclamation of Christ before His death on Calvary was that the work of redemption “is finished.” All that He came to accomplish on man’s behalf is complete. The most basic of human philosophies contradicting the gospel is that which denies that the work of Christ for redemption is complete. If the work of Christ for redemption is not complete, mankind cannot have complete salvation. Any church, or person, that accepts this fallacy of the incompleteness of God’s gift of salvation has committed the same blasphemy against God that Jeremiah warned Israel of in Jeremiah 2:1-13.

“¹ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was* not sown. ³ Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, *and* the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD. ⁴ Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: ⁵ Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? ⁶ Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? ⁷ And I brought you

into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. ⁸ The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit. ⁹ Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. ¹⁰ For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. ¹¹ Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit. ¹² Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. ¹³ For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:1-13).

Similarly to Jeremiah 2:13, Christians (true believers) have available to them a "fountain" that never fails in the finished work of Christ. Those who deny the completeness believers have in Christ, also create man made sources for what they consider unfinished. This is a *do it yourself salvation*. Like the "broken cisterns" of Jeremiah 2:13, this false, misplaced faith will not hold water. What Christ has already "finished" is all anyone needs. He makes everything He touches whole. Let's see how.

Three aspects of our completeness in Christ

1. Spiritual Circumcision and Spiritual Baptism; the first aspect of the "finished" work of Christ is complete salvation (Col. 2:11-12). This is referred to as spiritual circumcision.

The influence of Judaism introduced the heresy that circumcision was necessary to complete salvation. They believed in a *surgical salvation*. Are you waiting to get certain sins removed from your life before you will become a believer, before you get saved? Christ says (Col. 2:11) you have already been spiritually circumcised if you trust in the completeness He provides.

What is this true spiritual circumcision Paul speaks of? It is the cutting away of the sin nature's power over our will. Spiritual circumcision is a spiritual surgery that only the work of the Cross could accomplish. Spiritual circumcision is the complete removal of the condemnation of the sin nature through the payment of the penalty (God's judgment) for sin and the satisfaction of God' justice (propitiation).

"²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. ¹ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 7:22-8:4).

These verses separate between Saul (the old man) and Paul (the new nature). *Sin* is a synonym for his sin nature. As Romans 8:1 says, once a person puts trust in the finished work of Christ "there is now no condemnation" from God whatsoever, ever again.

Spiritual baptism; this is not water baptism. If Paul is dealing with a spiritual reality in circumcision, you can be sure He is dealing with the spiritual reality of baptism. Paul was combating traditionalistic ritualism. To make this baptism mean water is to contradict the whole argument he is presenting. Yet a baptism of some sort is accomplished by Christ in our salvation. What baptism is it? It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the placement of each individual believer into the "body of Christ" (I Cor. 12:13). The word baptism means *placed into* or *immersed*. Water baptism is a picture of what takes place spiritually in our salvation.

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:3-6).

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).

The instant a person puts faith in the “finished” work of Christ, that person is buried with Him in the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea 2000 years ago. Your faith positionally takes you back in time; it hangs you on the cross with Jesus. That is the proclamation of faith. Your faith positionally puts you in the grave where you belong and He doesn’t. That is the reality of faith. Yet friends, three days later, you receive something you don’t deserve. You are positionally resurrected with Him. When Christ arose, you positionally rose with Him. That is what the reality of the baptism of the Spirit is all about. It is your placement into the body of Christ. All that His body experienced physically, we positionally experience spiritually.

How is this accomplished? It is an act of God (Col.2:12). “Operation” is from the Greek word *energeia* (en-erg’-i-ah). It means energy, but always is used to refer to superhuman power in the N.T. This act of God is procured by “faith.”

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Now pay close attention, this is extremely important that you understand! You see, a miracle took place in God’s operation when you were buried with Christ. That “old man” was buried also. He died (Rom. 6:6). He was positionally crucified and buried with Christ. That “old man” was the one condemned to an eternal hell, but in the miracle of Christ’s resurrection (“the operation of God”), the believer is positionally and eternally separated from that “old man.” The “old man” was left in the grave and the believer was set free.

The second aspect of our completeness in Christ is the complete remission of the sin penalty (Col. 2:13-14). In complete salvation the emphasis is completeness apart from ritual. In the complete remission of sin the emphasis is complete righteousness apart from human participation and the complete removal of any sin that might condemn us through the payment of its penalty. As a result the believer is “made alive.”

Before trusting Christ the believer was “dead in your sins.” Without Christ, everyone is helplessly condemned and on death row awaiting execution of capital punishment. Before trusting Christ the believer was “dead in your uncircumcision of your flesh.” This means he is totally corrupted and under the power of the “old man” with absolutely no power over it.

In Colossians 2:14a, the word “handwriting” is a word that refers to a self confessed recognition of a debt owed. It is translated from the Greek word *cheirographon* (khi-rog’-raf-on). It refers to a written confession. Essential this makes the death, burial and resurrection of Christ the believer’s *spiritual eraser*. Jesus nailed that confession to the Cross and marked it **Paid in Full**. The debt was removed.

The third aspect of our completeness is complete victory (Col. 2:15).

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Satan's dominion (God's curse upon sin) over our fallen nature was broken and destroyed at Calvary. The victory over death provided by Christ's substitutionary death, burial and resurrection is the believer's present possession.

“⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

Do you know this completeness today? Is your salvation a complete salvation? Does your salvation recognize the complete remission of the sin penalty and all the guilt and anguish that goes with it? If that is not your salvation you don't have the salvation that Christ gives as a free gift received by faith.

Are you living in the sure knowledge of a complete and already accomplished victory, or are you still living under Satan's dominion. There is no need to! His power was broken 2,000 years ago. The victor's claim to victory is “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” **Claim your completeness in Christ Jesus today and live in that completeness.**

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1. Define *Process Salvation*. _____

2. The majority of that which calls itself Christianity does not believe in a completed work of salvation. What have they done to complete the salvation they see as incomplete? _____

3. What is the significance of the cry of the Cross recorded in John 19:30 in regard to the work of redemption Christ came to accomplish? _____

4. Read Jeremiah 2:1-13. From verse 13 what do all true believers have available to them in the finished work of Christ? _____
5. List the three aspects of a complete salvation.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
6. What is the spiritual circumcision that Paul refers to in Colossians 2:11-12 as opposed to the *surgical salvation* introduced into Christianity by apostate Judaism? _____

- If water baptism is the means by which a person's salvation is completed, isn't that the same type of thing (*bathtub salvation*)? _____
7. Discuss spiritual baptism. What is it (give Scripture)? _____

8. How does Romans 8:1 confirm a completed gift of salvation? _____

9. Read Colossians 3:12. How can a believer living in the 20th century be "buried" with Christ? _____

 - A. How can a person be living and yet be "risen" with Christ? _____
 - B. How is this accomplished? _____
 - C. How is it procured? _____
10. In Colossians 2:14, how does the word "handwriting" relate to us and what is the significance of it being nailed to the Cross? _____
11. Read Hebrews 2:14-15 and I Corinthians 15:54-57 and make some Scriptural conclusions about Satan's dominion and our victory in Christ's finished work for salvation? _____
