**Complete in Christ**

Colossians 2:6-10

**Introduction**

The majority of the people living in today’s world try to find fulfillment apart from Christ. They seek fulfillment in money, a career, a house, hobbies, education, sports, relationships, religion, accomplishments, acceptance…and the list goes on.

Colossians is a Christ-centered letter. One commentator said, “Every section and sub-section in the main body of the letter could be accurately summed up with reference to Christ Himself. The main reason why the Colossians should give thanks to God is because of Jesus Christ; if they do this with full knowledge and understanding about who He is and what He has achieved, everything else will fall into place.” (N.T. Wright)

We are to live Christ-centered lives. The Colossians were tempted to think that they needed something more than simply a relationship with Jesus Christ in order to be complete or to reach their full potential. Religious leaders were urging them to look outside of Christ for real fulfillment. Could we be guilty of doing the same today? In this series, we will consider the wonderful, life-changing truth that believers are complete in Christ. This particular lesson will provide as an overview of the letter.

1. **To understand the message to the Colossians, we must understand** **the situation of the church.** 
   1. Colossae was a small town on the banks of the Lycus River in southeast Asia Minor.
2. It is approximately 120 miles east of Ephesus.
3. The people of the city were predominantly Gentile. Their lives were given to various forms of Greek culture. Mystery religions offered opportunities of religious experiences that would set them apart from the general populous.
4. There was a strong Jewish element in the city as well. Twelve thousands Jewish families were brought to the region from Babylon by Antiochus III.
   1. The gospel made a difference in some of their lives, and a church was planted.
5. God used Paul in Ephesus to establish a church planting movement that had an effect throughout Asia. (Acts 19:10)
6. Paul did not start the church in Colossae, nor was he able to visit the church. He did, however, care about their spiritual well-being and faith in Christ (1:3-5; 2:5).
   1. The church was started by Epaphras, one of the men saved through Paul’s evangelistic efforts and a native of Colossae (1:7).
7. He was instrumental in the spread of the gospel in the three cities that were in this region (4:12-13). Epaphras was well-respected by Paul for his fervent spiritual work. He came to visit Paul and was still with him at the time of his writing. Paul referred to him as a fellow prisoner in Philemon 23.
8. Paul writes the Colossians to indicate Epaphras’ well-being and to address the situation as presented by Epaphras to Paul.
   1. The people of Colossae were saved out of a hopeless situation (1:13; 21, 27).
9. Now they had hope (1:5), redemption (1:14), forgiveness (1:14, 2:13; 3:13), and victory (2:15) through Jesus Christ.
10. They were united to Christ through His death, burial and resurrection (2:12, 20, 3:1, 3). The fact that they had received Jesus Christ should greatly change their lives (2:6). It should also produce thanksgiving (2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2).
11. **Epaphras and Paul understood that the Colossian church was in danger.**
12. Paul was concerned that they could be taken captive by false teachers. (2:8)
13. The word “spoil” meant to take captive; to carry off as a captive of war; brainwashing someone with religious error or false teaching; to take control of, lead astray, or prey onsomeone spiritually. (Friberg)
14. Epaphras went to encourage Paul during his imprisonment (most likely in Rome) and to wisely seek his counsel on the situation in the church. He understood that if the situation was not addressed, it could threaten the well-being of the church.
15. There are a variety of explanations for the heresy that was disturbing the church.
16. They, of course, would have known the situation Paul was addressing, but we are left to piece it together from what Paul tells them.
17. Some say it was just a general warning that, given their pagan past and/or Jewish roots, they should be on guard lest they go back to their old ways of living. However, there are too many specifics in the letter to come to the conclusion it was just a general warning.
18. They were encountering various teachings and ways of life that threatened their stability in Christ. There was a blend of pagan and Jewish thought in the belief and practice of the false teachers.
19. The teaching would lead them to think they were not complete in Christ.
20. They would be tempted to reason that there must be more that was essential to their Christianity.
21. Receiving Christ, they may have thought, only initiated the process. If they wanted to be with the spiritual elite, there is more they felt they must experience than simply a relationship with Jesus.
22. They were being influenced to believe that to be complete, they must give attention to philosophy (2:8), the traditions of men (2:8), food regulations (2:16), observance of holy days (2:16), appeasing angels (2:18), and acceptance with the spiritual elite. They were urged to press on for more wisdom and special knowledge.
23. Paul brings them back to a simple, yet profound message.
24. They already had what they needed! (2:9-10).
25. They had what they needed in Christ. They are complete in Him!
26. “Complete” means filled or full.
27. **Central Idea: The Colossians should refuse to try to find fulfillment in anyone or anything else because they are complete in Christ.** 
    1. They can rest in this truth.
    2. This is the premise from which they were to live out their Christian lives.
    3. Their lives are to be centered around a relationship with Jesus—not religious activity; not acceptance with religious leaders; not a list of endless rules.
28. **Relevance: You are complete in Christ. There are several implications of this truth that we will discover as we venture through the book of Colossians.** 
    1. Life need not be so burdensome. (Matthew 11:28-30)
29. We think we have to live up to man’s ideas, traditions, rules, religious activities, special knowledge, or acceptance.
30. It is really about understanding who you are in Christ and living your life accordingly with His power.
    1. Any attempt to find fulfillment outside of Christ will prove to be futile.
31. You are not complete through relationships. “My life is just not complete without…”
32. You are not complete through accomplishments. “My life will be complete when I…”
33. You are not complete through performance. “I am worthless if I don’t…”
34. You are not complete through possessions. “Once we move into this house…”
35. You are complete in Christ.
    1. Although you may not be making full application of Who He is to your life, Christ is all you need for life. (2 Peter 1:3-4; Philippians 4:13)
36. We need to understand Who He is.
37. Consider His names, His attributes, and His deeds.
38. Meditate on Who He is on a regular basis.
39. Receive the grace that He gives for daily living. (2 Timothy 2:1)

**Conclusion**

We do not have to search for fulfillment in anyone or anything else because we are complete in Christ. I pray that through this study you come to know Him better and to appreciate Him more. He is sufficient for your every need.