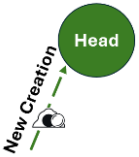
Christ Our Life!

Colossians

Part 1: Rejoice in God's Plan for Christ Preeminent 1:1-2:7

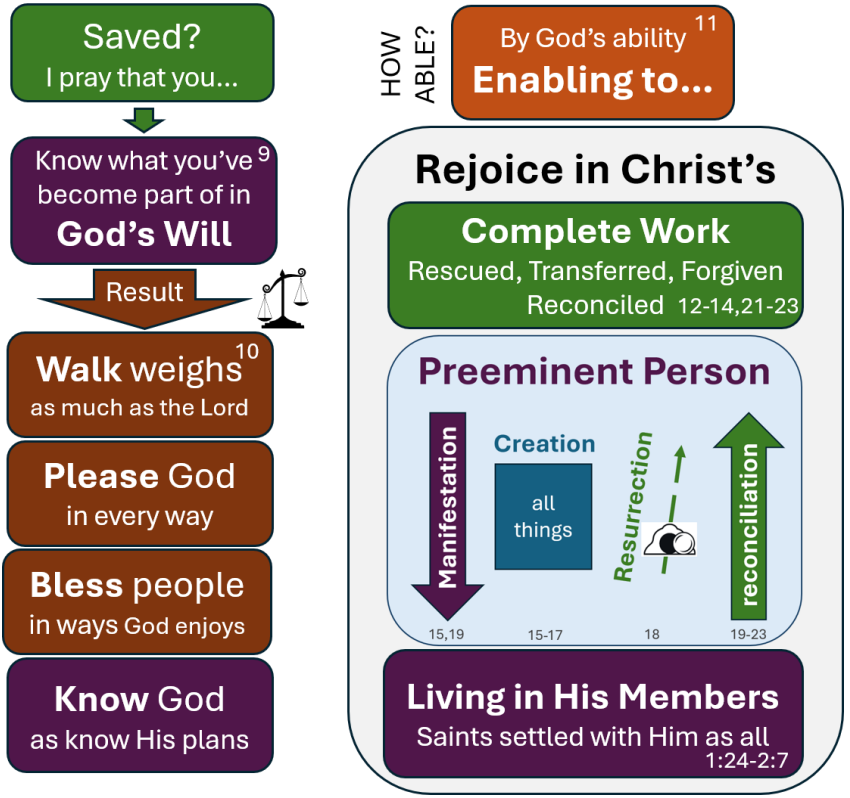


Paul prays for believers in Christ to know what they are part of. He heard of the Colossian believers' faith in Christ (1:9), so knows of their hope reserved in heaven (1:5) and that they are part of the church, God's special plan for today, the body united to the risen Head (1:18)! He prays that they richly know God's will (1:9). He desires that they join God in His love for His Son (1:13) and desire that He be preeminent in every way (1:18). He labors to see them rejoice in His design that the church exalt Christ in a special way (1:27). Because they are part of the church, they should develop in their knowledge of God's eternal purpose that magnifies His Son!

Know and Enjoy God's purpose in Christ (1:9-14)

They heard the gospel and "understood the grace of God in truth" (1:6), grasping that God provided a free, full salvation through Christ's perfect work. They rejoiced in a sure hope of heaven (1:5). Paul prays that these believers would deeply appreciate God's plans in Christ, seeing the richness and relevance of God's will. This understanding will lead to lives that "bear fruit in every good work" (1:10). As Christ-occupied believers abound in every good work outward they advance God's interests (1:10).

As they are settled in God's work in Christ, they overflow in thanksgiving, rejoicing that they are forgiven and now in the kingdom of the Son of God's love (1:12-14). They should enjoy the vastness of what Christ did and who Christ is, for the Father wants His Son preeminent in everything (1:18). By having their hearts occupied with Christ, they can know God and His will (Eph 3:17-18). They not only observe what God has done through Christ but also enjoy it personally! They have been transferred into the kingdom of "the Son of His love", having been set free by Christ paying the price for their sins (1:13-14).



Know Christ's unparalleled person and work (1:15-23)

There is no one like Christ! He is the perfect manifestation of all God is as a man (1:15, 19). He is the preeminent one in creation, because He made all things and He is the purpose for which they exist (1:16-17). He is not only "firstborn" (preeminent) in creation, but also in new creation, as the

only One Who rose victorious from the dead and shares this resurrection life with His body, the church (1:18). God has arranged everything such that Christ has the first place in every possible way. Why? Because the Father delights in His Son, so was happy to have all the fullness of who God is dwell in Christ as a man and to have Christ be the One through whom man is reconciled to God (1:19-20). He reveals God to man as man, and reconciles man to God by dying as the God-man.

How thorough is the work He did? By the blood of His cross, He has brought believers into peace with God because everything has been completely addressed that stood between them in God (1:21-23). They were indeed guilty! Heinously guilty! Unclean before an all-seeing God. But now in Christ, He has presented believers holy, blameless and unaccusable before God's very sight. They are forgiven, with no barrier left between them and God. Christ's work is complete. So they should rest in this settled place, knowing they have a hope "reserved" for them in heaven (1:23, 5). There is a danger of them being drawn away from this rest by listening to deceivers who suggest they need more than Christ (2:4, 8). So Paul labors to have them know their completeness in Christ.

Rejoice to be Part of Christ's Body (1:24-29)

Paul was made a minister of the gospel (1:23) as well as a minister of the church (1:24-25). He had two aspects to what God had entrusted to him. Those who believe the gospel become part of the church, the mystery, God's special plan for today which was not previously revealed. The saints need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will (1:9), for they have a very special part in His will. They are the body of Christ (1:24)! The overflowing magnificence of this mystery is that Christ is in every believer (1:27)! How magnificent to know this glorious reality: "Christ in you (plural)." The Head is intimately in union with His body, and every believer is a member of that body. Christ's resurrection life is in every saint. How they need to know that! Every one of them (1:28)! How sad if they fail to live in the good of such a calling! "God willed to make known" His rich plan to us. Let's appreciate the church!

So Paul labors hard to teach and admonish every believer, such that every member of the body develops, growing up unto Christ in all things (1:28). Every member of the body is essential, so he invested in every saint. We should as well. We should love all the saints, and labor to build all saints up in Christ. Every saint needs to grow up unto the Head if the body is to become like Christ (Eph 4:15). We would not want just one of our arms to mature to being an adult arm.

Paul suffered for these Gentiles (1:24, 2:1), happy to have such a privilege! (cf. Eph 3:13) He was not suffering to atone for their sins, for Christ had completed that work and brought them into perfect forgiveness. But he did suffer, putting out great effort, struggling on their behalf (1:24, 2:1) that they not be deceived and distracted from the gospel of Christ's sufficiency.

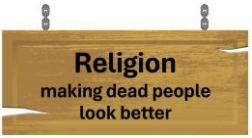
Enjoy the Wealth of Full Assurance (2:1-7)

Paul was extremely burdened for people whom he had never met (2:1)! Like Epaphras, he longed for rich fellowship of love in the one body as all members rejoice in "the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" the excellence of Christ (2:2-3)! He feared they might be deceived away from having Christ as their single object in whom they are resting and rejoicing (2:4-8). May we likewise long for all the saints to have the stability and overflowing joy that comes from knowing Christ's completeness! Our heart should be towards all the saints, longing that each one be taught in all wisdom. Be ready to invest truth in every Christian, longing that each one be in the good of Christ. If I rightly understand God's will in Christ, I will be settled and fully assured.

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Part 2: Know You Are Complete in Christ 2:8-3:4



Paul labored to see believers rest in their completeness in Christ (1:28-2:2). He urges them to not be deceived by persuasive arguments that draw them away from Christ (2:4). What joy to see saints stable, overflowing with thanksgiving, finding all in Christ (2:5-7)! But there is danger of being taken captive by men's ideas that are not centered in Christ (2:8).

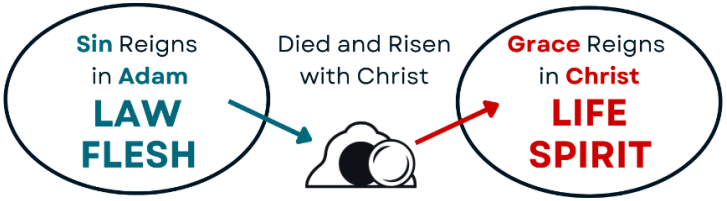
All must be "according to Christ" (2:8-15)

Christ is complete and if you have believed in Christ, you are complete in Him! Paul teaches this in Colossians 2:9 to 15. First, all the fullness of Deity dwells in Christ in bodily form. There is no being like Him (2:9). Second, you are complete in Christ. You have everything in Him with nothing missing (2:10a). Third, He is above every being in authority. All are below Him (2:10b). Do not look anywhere else!

Fourth, Christ did all needed for a complete work of salvation having comprehensively addressed what we are and what we've done (2:11-15). He addressed the problem that "you were dead in your wrongdoings" [what you've done] and also "the uncircumcision of your flesh" [who you are] (2:13). Do not fall for man's thinking that rejects the sufficiency of Christ's saving work. If you believed in Christ, you are complete in Christ regarding who you are (v 11-13a) and what you've done wrong (v 13b-15).

God fully dealt with <u>who we were</u> (our sinful nature) through our dying and rising with Christ (v 11-13a). You were dead "in the uncircumcision of your flesh" but God "made you alive together with" Christ. (2:13) As

taught in detail in Romans 5 to 8, our nature received from Adam has been taken over by sin.



God condemned sin in the flesh through our dying with Christ and rising to newness of life with Christ. (2:11-12) Because we have Christ living in us now, we should not look to our flesh to try to live righteously. God cut off the flesh (circumcision) by our dying and being buried with Christ. We are free from ourselves. We no longer look to the sinful flesh to try to live rightly (Rom 8:1-6). God "made you alive together with Him" (2:13). Christ is our life (3:4). The risen Christ is inside us by God's Spirit.

God also completely dealt with <u>what we've done</u>, through Christ taking away our guilt by dying for our sins (v 13b-15). "You were dead in your wrongdoings", but God has "forgiven us all our wrongdoings" (2:13). How many? All of them! How many are left to be addressed by my following rules and rituals? None! They all have been fully dealt with by Christ's dying as a substitute for us! God "canceled the certificate of debt" that called for us to be punished eternally for our sins, because Christ "has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (2:14). God is the one who accomplished this victory over our guilt and deserved punishment. By Christ's blood as a propitiation, God's justice is righteously satisfied as Romans 1 to 5 teaches.



We rest in God's rest. God is satisfied with what Christ did! So, no charge can be brought up against us in Christ! Even Satan Himself cannot accuse (2:15).

Results of completeness in Christ (2:16-3:4)

"No one is to act as your judge in regard to food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day" (2:16). Old Testament practices pointed forward to Christ. Now that Christ has come and done a complete work, no one is to impose on a believer that they need to follow rituals to try to accomplish anything before God. In Christ there is no place for feasts, fasts, repeated prayers, special ceremonies or other things thought to be sacraments to obtain virtue. Christ, the True, has arrived (2:16-17)!

No one should rob you of what you gained in Christ by saying they have something higher than what you already have in Christ (2:18). There is no one higher than Christ, and there is no place higher than your place in Christ. They may claim to have something from a spiritual being through mystical practices, so they present their idea as an upgrade. But it is a downgrade, because it draws you away from Christ. Religious people want you to think you are distant from God, and they can help you get closer. But they are pulling you away from the real living connection you have with Christ who is the Head of the body, the church (2:19).

Live in the truth that you died with Christ (2:20), so do not go along with people imposing rules that try to subdue your flesh: "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch." God is not trying to fix the flesh. He condemned it and gave us new life by Christ in us! In Christ there is no place for "self-made religion and severe treatment of the body" (asceticism such as in monasteries). Man-imposed limitations such as dietary restrictions or not marrying do not actually succeed in subduing fleshly indulgences (2:23; 1 Timothy 4:1-5). Religion tries but cannot improve people's natural self. The flesh is sinful and always will be, and so God condemned it and gave us the Spirit (Rom 7:18-8:8).

Fix your mind on Christ, not on external rules and rituals that do not apply to a person who has risen with Christ to new life (3:1-4). Christ is our life! Manmade religious ordinances draw our eyes away from Christ. “Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:2-3). Fill your mind with Christ. Man’s religion fills no need, because there is no need. You have everything in Christ, so no one has anything to offer you.

You have everything in Christ

If a religious person or system implies there is something more than just Christ, turn away from them. Live in the good of the completeness of Christ’s comprehensive victory, knowing there is no value to man-made ordinances or spiritual experiences to try to reach God.

Teachings that point away from Christ had started in the first century church, so do not accept a teaching just because an early church father taught it. Do not turn back to physical practices God fulfilled in Christ. Do not get occupied with self-abasement, spiritual beings, spiritual intermediaries, special people, and religious ceremonies. Do not let people urge you to improve your natural state rather than see yourself having died and risen with Christ. Do not let them impose “do nots” that were made by mere people.

Men’s thoughts with their mystical experiences, earthly rituals and religious disciplines do not consider the Lord Jesus Christ to be everything, and so they turn to empty things. But Christ is enough. Rest in His sufficiency. If I rightly understand God’s will in Christ, I will be settled and fully assured, even overflowing with joy and thanksgiving.

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Part 3: Display Christ's Life by How You Live 3:5-4:18



The church is composed of ones who died and rose with Christ. Christ is our life. Christ is all and is also in all believers, for we have all risen with Him. "Christ is all, and in all" (3:11). He is our life as Head of the body. His life flows through the body's members.

Exhortations in Colossians 3 and 4 are to those satisfied in Christ. They are more forceful than religion's commands that impose external regulations. God did not fix up the old us. He crucified us with Christ. We are to recognize that we died and thus choose to live as those who are dead. Let's be done with the old us! We have found Christ to be enough in every sense, so we are freed from living in self-seeking ways. God does not call us to reform but to live out resurrection life.

Be Done with the Old Me (3:5-17)

Rather than acting out the self-seeking ways of the old us, satisfied saints thrive by blessing others. Before Christ, we tried to get for ourselves, seeking to fill ourselves, breaking down moral boundaries in our pursuit (3:5-9). But we have Christ now. We are done with that way of living. The passion to get more for ourselves now disgusts us like it does God. Our life of greed was in fact idolatry, living as if we were God.

We are done with the anger, lying and abusive language that came from living for our interests. "That's not me anymore. That person died!" With Christ in us, God's righteous character is seen in us. Christ's life in us blesses others. We are full, so we do not look at people as a means of getting for ourselves or trying to find happiness.

Christ who's gone above is my identity; I am free from being me! We are no longer concerned that people honor us (3:11). We do not view other believers based on their earthly situation. Christ is our everything now! We should relate to each other that way.

> Once I'd lust and lie and fight to get for me;
> Now forgiveness, love and peace!
> What a rest! I'm free to bless… in Christ.

We have put on the new self which blesses those around us through Christ's beautiful ways showing up in real ways – kindness, humility, forgiveness, love (3:12-17). Because we are not occupied with our interests or trying to promote or protect ourselves, we are able to forgive, be patient, be humble. As those loved by God, we are free to show love to others. Unlike lust that takes from others to try to fill self (3:5), love gives of self to seek God's best interests for others (3:14). We should be harmonious, seeing ourselves united with all believers (3:14-15).

Thankfulness will show up (3:15,17). We do not deserve anything, yet we have everything in Christ, so we need nothing. We are free to be thankful to God and to others. Singing will also show up as we fill our hearts with God's thoughts of Christ from the Word (3:16). Surely Christ is enough to cause our hearts to overflow with blessing, thanksgiving and singing to our good God! Saints who are satisfied with Christ are freed from past self-seeking ways and can now bless others by Christ's life in them.



Live Free to Submit and Bless (3:18-4:1)

Knowing Christ as our everything, we are set free to submit when under authority and bless when in authority (3:18-4:1). We aren't fighting to be on top. If we are in authority, our new thinking shows love, brings blessing, and does not misuse our position to gain for ourselves. My natural life is not my identity. My role is not my significance. I am free from being me. So, I am fine with being under authority, serving, and obeying. As we keep Christ in view, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, our way of serving under authority can be excellent. I am freed from fakery since I can genuinely do all heartily as for the Lord, knowing His view of my serving is what matters. What peace this gives!

Those in authority also should show transformed ways. If those in authority think about themselves, those under authority will face bitterness, exasperation and extortion. But my position is not for me to use for my gain. I have everything already in Christ. Further, Christ lives in me, so I want to act like the One who has brought such blessing to me. What a privilege for Christ's ways to be evident in my living! If I have everything in Christ, I need nothing. As such, I am freed to submit, to bless others, to live in loving harmony in Christ's body.

Appreciate Christ in All Members of the Body (4:2-18)

How important to maintain close fellowship with Christ through prayer (4:2-6). "Lord Jesus, live your life in me today! Teach me Your ways! Guide every step I take, every word I say, every thought I think. Transform how I think about others." As part of the body of Christ we can pray this for ourselves as well as for other members of the body. As we pay attention in praying, we are able to pray in specific ways, sharing God's heart and desires in applied ways. In Epaphras' burdened praying for the believers in Colosse (4:12), he was sharing God's concern that they enjoy their completeness in Christ.

Christ is not just my life personally; He is the life of His body as a whole (4:7-18). The church is a living organism with vital connection to the Head. Let's enjoy living fellowship with the Head and the other

members of His body! This body life of God's assembly is seen in vibrant fellowship in Christ, interest in how others are serving the Lord, loving concern for the spiritual well-being of other saints, earnest praying for other believers' enjoyment of their completeness in Christ, and active service in ways that the Head directs and enables (4:7-18). God does not view the church as an organization with a few people doing most of the work while most people observe or receive. All should be active participants in the church's spiritual life.

What active role does God want you to take in the church? Take to heart the exhortation to "see to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it" (4:17). Use diligence to see through what you were entrusted. What does the Head want you to do? Be in touch with Christ so He can be directing you in your interactions with other believers, to use you to help the church go forward in His desires.

Christ is All and In All

Paul and Epaphras struggled in prayer and preaching to see all saints know their completeness in Christ (1:28, 4:12). They desired that all...

1. enjoy **full assurance of their completeness in Christ** (2:2, 4:12), so
2. they keep **occupied with Christ, not turn to religion** (2:8-23), and
3. **Christ's risen life is seen in their selfless lives** that bless others, as
4. they live in active **fellowship with the rest of the body** (3:5-4:18).

Let's share this longing for ourselves and all the saints, and make efforts to do our part to build up Christ's body! If I rightly understand God's will in Christ, I will be free to happily bless others.

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