

SUPREMACY – The Christ of Colossians
Colossians 2:6-15 FULLNESS
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This morning we come to Week 4 in our series on Colossians and the passage is Colossians 2:6 to 15. In the Pew Bible it is on page 1183. Our title this week is **Fullness**. The heading for this paragraph in the Pew Bible actually says, "Spiritual Fullness in Christ" and I think that very nicely sums it up.

In v10 Paul says, *"In Christ you have been brought to fullness."* He is wanting to counter the false teachers who said Christ is a good start but you also need to pursue special mystical and spiritual experiences.

The apostle Paul counters this in v6,7 "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him." Paul wants us to put our roots down deeply into Christ to sustain our life of faith rather than pursue extraneous paths that have the appearance of being spiritual but actually distract us from the gospel.

We need to do this because we're in a spiritual battle. Paul talks in v8 about hollow and deceptive philosophies which depends on human tradition. Also in v8 he talks about the elemental spiritual forces of this world. And in v15 about the powers and authorities that Christ has disarmed through the cross. So that is the problem we're up against -supernatural forces of evil.

The answer is that we have to be rooted and built up in Christ.

But firstly let us look in more detail at **the problem**- deceptive philosophes, elemental spiritual forces, powers and authorities. In Paul's day this could be summed up as **Gnosticism**. The Gnostics believed they had higher knowledge and that through special spiritual exercises one could attain this higher knowledge. **Christian Gnostics** said it's OK to believe in Christ but then you also need to add these other things as well to get the higher knowledge. Paul constantly spoke against this idea, arguing Christ is sufficient and in Colossians, specifically, that Christ is supreme. If you have him you have everything you need.

Look again at v9&10, *"In Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness."*

There are still gnostic ideas around today. Just this week a Christian friend shared with me his experience of the Toronto blessing. This was around in the 90s and it offered people a special more ecstatic experience of God. He said how it made him feel very inadequate as a Christian, but it was through reading Colossians that he realised afresh that in Christ he had all the fullness of God and that was sufficient.

So be wary of chasing after spiritual highs; **pursue Christ**, sometimes there will be a notable experience, sometimes Christ is found in the ordinary. Simply pursue Christ not experience.

But it is not just gnostic ideas; the deceptive philosophes, and powers and authorities are operating on many other playing fields today as well.

There is the **'Eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die,'** philosophy. I know this has been around for quite awhile but with the growing hold of atheism in our society it's all that many people are left with. It reeks havoc in families and relationships in general.

On the other hand there are those people who are **workaholics** desperately trying to find the ultimate meaning of their life in their career progression. They must know that it is going to come to an end one day but they can't get off the treadmill.

There is the old philosophy of **relativism** dressed up in many new guises. Christ is simply viewed as another religious teacher no better or worse than any other religious teacher, but if you can be a 'good person' without religion then why bother with all the ritual! Why bother with any religion!

The only problem is every grouping/tribe, defines good differently and don't the tribes love to fight to establish the truth of their own position. And the level of anger in our society continues to rise. Relativism breeds a very disjointed society.

Apart from this there is pop psychology, new age philosophy, astrology, and here in Noosa we have the temple of Satan. There is an old saying that when people stop believing in God they start believing in anything.

The apostle Paul's answer to all this is of course **the supremacy of Christ**. Paul gives us here some impressive theology about Christ. He tackles both the person of Christ and the work of Christ.

Firstly, **The person of Christ**, who he was, his identity.

v9 He is someone in whom "all the fullness of the Deity lived in bodily form."

This reinforces what we've already read in the epistle in Chapter 1.

1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God the firstborn over all creation.

1:19 God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.

Colossians has a very high view of Christ. The whole of the Bible has a very high view of Christ. He is worthy of our worship because he is God, he is God Incarnate, God come in the flesh.

The Bible is also very clear that Jesus is fully human. Jesus is a flesh and blood human being just like you and me. He got hungry, he grew tired, he knew suffering. He also knew the warmth of human companionship, the beauty of creation, and the joy of a good party. He was fully human just like you and me.

He is 100% human and 100% Divine and there is a great mystery about this but if we diminish either, we distort the full picture of Christ presented to us in the Bible. Please take time as you read Colossians over these weeks to ponder especially the divinity of Christ that Paul presents to us in this epistle.

Not only the person of Christ but the work of Christ is highlighted in this passage.

The work of Christ is the cross.

V15 says God "*makes a public spectacle of the powers and authorities, triumphing over them by the cross.*"

This understanding of the cross has been traditionally known as **Christus Victor** **ie Christ the Victor**. It emphasizes Christ winning a great victory over satan and all the forces of evil when he died on the cross. This view was predominant in the Middle Ages. It has had its critics within liberal theology which doesn't accept a personal satan and forces of evil. But I believe it is a very important understanding of the cross, given there is so much evil in our world which cannot be explained in simply human terms.

In the 20th century many theologians have returned to this understanding. We have had the horrors of World War One, the Holocaust in World War Two, and the horrific purges that took place in communist countries such as Russia under Stalin and China under Mao Tse Tung.

In the 21st century we see the madness of what's happening in Ukraine. There is also the work of terrorists, which has probably slipped to the back of our minds the last couple of years but which rages against the Christian Church in the Middle East, Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

Paul writing to the Colossians tells us that Jesus' death on the cross was a victory over the powers and authorities. The obvious question is why don't we see more of this victory happening today. There is of course a great mystery about evil and the suffering it brings. What is important, is to know that God has provided an answer in the cross. We don't see the full realisation of it yet but we do know that Christ's obedience in going to the cross was the victory. We do know that the apparent weakness of the cross is the power of God for salvation.

In the final count it will be seen that it is the crucified Lord who has defeated the elemental spiritual forces, the powers and authorities. In the Book of Revelation we see that final victory. And it is the crucified lamb who has the victory; Revelation 5:12, *"Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise."*

The New Testament gives us many ways of understanding the cross, there is

- the cross as sacrifice
- the cross as reconciliation
- the cross as substitution
- the cross as moral example
- but then there is the cross as victory

and we do need to hold onto Christ the Victor, as we face a world where there is horrendous evil.

So my friends Christ is the answer.

The person of Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in him in bodily form.

The work of Christ, at the cross he disarms the powers and authorities and makes a public spectacle of them.

What is the application of this for us? For Paul it is about realising afresh **our fullness in Christ** v10 We have been brought to fullness in Christ.

And Paul uses some powerful images for this fullness in the verses which follow- V11,12 The whole self ruled by the flesh has been put off by virtue of our baptism. And we have been raised to a brand new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

v13 We are alive with Christ

v14 The debt of our sin is cancelled through the cross and we are forgiven.

There is so much in each of these ideas but let me focus on **Verses 11 & 12.**

Paul draws a parallel here between circumcision and baptism.

Circumcision was the sign of entry into the old covenant and

Baptism is the sign of entry into the new covenant.

Paul says when we are baptised it is like we are being circumcised by Christ. It is not a physical circumcision, but the whole self ruled by the flesh is being put off. What does that mean?

It means our human nature that doesn't want to submit to the authority of God. In our fallen human state, we rebel against God, we are cut off from God.

That's what Paul is talking about in verse 13 where he says, *"You were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh."* This is the natural condition of every human being until the Holy Spirit softens our hearts and enlivens us to the glory of Christ; and raises us up to be alive with Christ.

Notice the very realistic language used here of baptism. Paul talks about being buried with him and being raised with him. He says that's what baptism is all about. And baptism very powerfully conveys that doesn't it. The flesh, the self, which was dead in sin, is buried in the waters of baptism and we are raised up to the new life in Christ.

So my friends, it's like a completely new start. For his 4th birthday my grandson received a drawing pad, but it wasn't paper and pencil. It was a mechanism which I think works on the basis of little magnetic filings that are inside it. I think the pencil is a magnet and when you drag it over the surface brings the filings up on the inside and creates a line. After you finish your drawing there is a handle on the side which you can slide down the page and it erases all of the drawing. It gives you a completely clear slate to start a fresh drawing.

Using this device reminds me of the cross because it is about wiping the slate clean as v14 says, *"cancelling the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us."*

With the slate wiped clean we can have a completely fresh start. Coming up out of the waters of baptism we can have a completely fresh start.

So to sum up,

-my friends we don't have to give into the principalities and powers.

-We don't have to be captive to their hollow and deceptive philosophies.

-We don't have to always be looking out for a higher more ecstatic spiritual experience.

Enjoy experiences if and when they come but that's not the goal, the goal is simply Christ.

He has to be supreme.

Paul says in v6, *"just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him."*

And in verse 10, *"In Christ you have been brought to fullness."* Amen!