

Sermon Notes on Col. 2:11-15, Epiphany I

1. Already at Jesus' and Paul's time false teachers arose who claimed that faith in Christ was not enough. Something must be added, they said. The Jews demanded circumcision in addition to faith. At Colosse false teachers taught a philosophy which, they said, Christians needed in addition to faith in Christ. The Church of Rome says you need your own works in addition to Christ. The charismatics today demand ability to speak in tongues to prove your faith. Nyet, nyet, nyet!!! Vs. 10 before our text says: "In Christ you are complete." He did it all. Faith receives what He did. What He did is explained in our text. Read vss. 4-10 carefully before studying our text. Beware lest someone mislead you!
2. Vs. 10 spoke of the universal atonement of Christ for all men. Vs. 11 introduces the personal appropriation of the individual of all that Christ did for all men.
3. Vss. 11-12 form a unit. They speak of baptism which is spiritual circumcision. Circumcision, cutting off the foreskin, symbolized that the individual was now cut off from sin. In our baptism because of the atonement of Christ, two things happen to the individual: the body of flesh is put away and he is raised from spiritual death. He still has a sinful flesh, but its guilt and power are gone. He still feels his sin, but he's been born again, he's been raised from spiritual death. Baptism is the circumcision of Christ or Christian circumcision, as opposed to Old Covenant circumcision which foreshadowed Christian baptism. In baptism a person is actually buried with Christ. Read Rom. 6:4. In baptism we are spiritually buried with Christ and raised with Christ. SLAVA BOGU!! Vs. 12 reads, according to the Greek: "Buried with Him (Christ) in baptism in which you were raised through the faith which God works, God, Who raised Him (Jesus) from the dead." The very power of God which raised Christ from the dead, raised me from the dead when I was baptized. I am still a sinner, but I'm spiritually alive, forgiven, armed with strength to fight the sin in my life. Are my works necessary to complete this? Nyet. Do I need to speak in tongues to prove something? Nyet. In Christ I am complete, Vs. 10. Can a dead man do anything? Nyet. Who did it all for me? Christ. How did it come to me? Through baptism. Cf. also Eph. 1:19; 2:8 and I Thess. 2:13 on faith, a gift of God.
4. Vs. 13 is as simple and clear as the bright sun at high noon on a cloudless day. We were dead in our trespasses and original sin, the sin we inherited from Adam. That's the meaning of "uncircumcision of the flesh." But with Christ God made us alive by forgiving us our sin. Like Luther said: "Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation." When we are absolved of our sins we are being assured that we've been raised from the dead. Think about that. On this vs. read Eph. 2:1.
5. Vs. 14 tells us that Christ wiped out the handwriting which was recorded in the Law against us. He wiped out both the charge of sin and the power of the Law completely by nailing it to the cross. See Eph. 2:14,15. See also Rom. 7:4. I Pet. 2:24 tells us that Christ bore our sins on the cross.
6. Vs. 15 tells us that Christ stripped Satan and all his helpers of all their powers. Here "powers and authorities" means Satan and his angels. In vs. 10 it meant all created power. Then He openly made a spectacle of them. Some theologians refer this to Christ's Ascension into heaven. The last clause "triumphing over them (Satan etc.) in it (the cross)" evidently refers to Christ's descent into hell, I Pet. 3:18-19; Eph. 4:8, when He declared Himself Victor over hell and its forces. Satan's head has been crushed, Gen. 3:15.
7. You are complete in Christ Who is the head of all created powers. Vs. 10. Let no one tell you that you need more than what Christ has done for you. It is yours by grace through faith.

Theme: JESUS HAS SUPPLIED YOUR EVERY NEED

Introduction: In every generation there are false teachers who try to tell us that we need something IN ADDITION to what Jesus has done for us. The Jews told Christians they had to be circumcized. False teachers at Colosse required empty, deceitful philosophy. Rome requires works of penance. The charismatics require speaking in tongues. But vs. 10 of our text says: "In Jesus you are completed."

I-The Powers and Authorities of Hell were Against Us. Vs. 15. At Gen. 3:15 God promised that the Savior would crush the serpents head. At Lk. 10:18 Jesus said: "I saw Satan fall, like lightning, from the pinnacle of heaven." He is conquered. At Jn. 12:31 He said: "Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out." Our text at vs. 15 says that Christ stripped the evil powers of their authority, made a public display of them and triumphed over them by means of the cross. Now Jesus gives us authority over this terrible enemy. Though the devil goes about seeking to devour us, we resist him by faith. I Pet. 5:8. Though he treats us like he treated Job, God protects us.

II-Jesus has wiped out the accusations which were against us. Vs. 14. The Law and the sins of which we are guilty haunt us and plague us. Even when we know that our sins have been forgiven we still remember them and become afraid. God promised at Jer. 31:34: "Their sins I will remember no more." But we remember them. We must be reminded that the cross of Christ has wiped out our sins. David cried: "Blot out my transgressions." Ps. 51:1. God has done that. Paul asks at Rom. 8:33: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?" He answers: "It is God who justifies." Then he asks: "Who is he who condemns?" He answers: "It is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Our biggest problem is that we don't really believe what Jesus says. Jesus has blotted out the the handwriting which was against us by nailing it to the cross.

III-Though we were dead in our actual and inherited sin, He has raised us Adam and Eve died spiritually when they ate the forbidden fruit. Their sin was passed on to us at conception. We are just as guilty as they are. We were like the uncircumcized heathen, outside the church of God, dead in our sins. But Jesus made us alive. He raised us just like God raised the dry bones of Israel at Ezek. 37:1-14. All of Israel was like a cemetery of dead bones but the Spirit of God came through the Word and made the dead bones live. The Father raised His Son from the dead. Vs. 12. And now Jesus has raised us from the dead. He has made us come alive through the Word. He says: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he dies, yet shall he live and he who lives and believes in Me shall never die." Jn. 11:25-26.

IV-Though we were pagans He has given us Christian circumcision. All male Hebrews were required to be circumcized on the eighth day. From Moses to Paul, all were circumcized, even John the Baptist and Jesus. It was a sign of the seal of the righteousness of God. Rom. 4:11. It was only for the Covenant People. When Christ came it was no longer required. He fulfilled it. Paul said at Gal. 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor the lack thereof is anything. What counts is the new creation." How does that new creation come to us? Read vs. 11-12 of our text. Baptism is our Christian circumcision. Sin and its power have been cut off. In baptism He raised us from the dead. The power that raised Jesus from the dead gave us the power to believe in this new circumcision.

Conclusion: Beware of the false teachers who say that Christ is not enough, that something in addition to Christ is required. In Him you are completed. He is yours by faith alone, the faith which He works in you, the faith which raises you from the dead.