

ROMANCING THE SAINTS AT COLOSSAE

Studies in the Book of Colossians

*“If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the ‘church of Christ,’
then Colossians must surely be labeled ‘the Christ of the church’”
unknown*

Text
Colossians 2:9-15

Topic
Paul describes your Christian life as a nautical voyage
for which you believe by faith that Jesus
has already packed everything you’ll need along the way

Title
“The Faithtastic Voyage”

Introduction

It’s income tax time and one of the major tax preparation firms is trying to attract your business by using the phrase, “I’ve got people.”

The idea is that you’re not alone when it comes to finding the greatest benefits and, if necessary, being defended from an audit.

As we read through our text this morning we could coin the phrase, “I’ve got a Person.” The apostle Paul will tell us that as Christians we can defer to Jesus Christ’s power and provision for every issue in our lives and thus enjoy every spiritual benefit while simultaneously being defended from every enemy.

It’s all real because Jesus is God and we are “in” Him. I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 In Jesus “Dwells... The Godhead Bodily,” and #2 In Jesus You Defer To God As The Head Of His Body.

#1 In Jesus “Dwells... The Godhead Bodily”
(v9-10)

The Jesus Seminar is a group of about 150 individuals, including scholars with advanced degrees in biblical studies, religious studies, or related fields as well as published authors who are notable in the field of religion. Founded in 1985 it is one of the most active groups in biblical criticism. The seminar members vote using colored beads to decide their view of what the “real” Jesus may have said and done.

The seminar's reconstruction of the “real” Jesus portrays him as an itinerant teacher who did not die as a substitute for sinners nor rise from the dead but preached a "social gospel" using parables.

I'd love to see the apostle Paul walk into a meeting of the Jesus Seminar. I think he'd say what we read in verse nine:

Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

It's a concise but precise statement about who Jesus really is. Let's pick it apart for a moment.

“Godhead” is word we don't commonly use. Neither did the writers of the New Testament - the Greek word occurs only here. The word itself as used here means *deity* and encompasses what the Bible teaches about God.

There is only one God. But the Bible also says clearly that there was a man, Jesus Christ, who claimed equality with God, and there is Someone called the Holy Spirit who is also equal with God.

The Father is God; Jesus Christ is God; the Holy Spirit is God.

This can't mean that we have three Gods, because God is One. That is why we believe in God as Trinity or Tri-unity. The word Trinity is not found in the Bible but the concept is clearly taught. We say that there are three Persons in the Godhead.

One author writes:

It's important to understand this from the beginning, because whatever is true of God the Father is true of Jesus Christ the Son and is true of the Holy Spirit. We mustn't assign lesser positions or attributes to the members of the Godhead. Even though there is order in the Trinity: the Son submits to the Father and the Spirit submits to the Son and the Father, they each are co-equally, co-eternally God. (Vickie Kraft).

Paul said the "fullness of the Godhead" dwells in Jesus bodily. He isn't just super-spiritual. He isn't just tapping into divine power sources. He isn't just a great teacher or insightful philosopher. He was and is fully God.

This fullness of God "dwells" in Jesus. It's a word that means to have permanent residence. And we're told it "dwells" in Him "bodily," in a real physical body.

Here is what this means taken together. Jesus always was God and He remained fully God when He became a real man with a real body in the incarnation. Then He rose from the dead in a real physical body and remains fully God and fully human in that glorified body for all eternity.

Jesus did not surrender His deity in the incarnation, nor did He surrender His humanity in the resurrection.

All this sounds very heady, very theological. It is but it is also very practical. See the connection Paul made in verse ten:

Colossians 2:10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

"Complete" is a great word in the original language. It is a nautical term that describes a ship being fully outfitted with provisions prior to a long voyage. On becoming a believer in Jesus Christ you begin a voyage home to Heaven. **You're promised that you have already been outfitted with every necessary provision for the entire voyage - no matter how short or long, no matter how smooth or rough.**

This is only possible because you are "in Him" and He is "the head of all principality and power." It means that Jesus, described as He was in verse nine, is greatly exalted in His position above *any* and *every* other authority and power in the universe.

Unless all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily He cannot be the “head of all principality and power.” Unless He is the “head,” you cannot be outfitted with the necessary spiritual provisions for the journey of life.

There is nothing more practical than a proper understanding of who Jesus is. Now that we know He is the unique and eternal God-man, let’s see how He outfits us.

#2 In Jesus You Defer To God
As The Head Of His Body
(v11-15)

Have you ever packed for a trip only to forget something that you absolutely must have? It may be something trivial, that can be purchased or replaced. Or it may be something critical that halts your journey.

There are times in our walking with the Lord when it seems we’ve forgotten to pack something we need. It may be something we consider relatively minor. Oftentimes it seems major. We find ourselves in a severe trial and are rummaging about for grace to sustain us, or mercy to encourage us.

Since Jesus is Who He is, we must understand that He has properly and completely outfitted us. **He did our packing for us!** We won’t find what we need until and unless we believe it is already provided.

Have you ever unpacked only to find you had what you were looking for all along? That is more like the Christian life. You’ve got what you need, it’s been provided. You just need to ‘find’ it when it’s needed.

Paul listed the spiritual provisions provided for us on our journey heavenward. First on the list: Circumcision.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

In the Old Testament God called upon Abraham to circumcise his children as a sign of His covenant with him. Then, in other portions of the Old Testament, God referred to the circumcision of the human heart. Thus He

causes us to understand that the outward rite of circumcision was always intended to be a physical operation that pointed to the need for a spiritual operation upon the heart.

If you are a Christian, if you've been born-again, then you "were," past tense, "circumcised." The moment you trusted Jesus as your Savior He circumcised you. Not physically, but spiritually. It was a spiritual "circumcision made without hands."

The spiritual circumcision of your heart is accomplished by Jesus when you are saved. He does it by "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." Now here is where it gets tricky. You get saved and you find that within you still dwells the "flesh." Some call it the sin nature; others call it the sin principle. It is the lust and longing of your flesh to satisfy itself in selfish, sinful ways.

Spiritually speaking, your flesh has already been circumcised; it's already been cut away. You therefore do not need to yield to its influences and desires. You can always say "No" to your flesh.

This is the kind of provision Jesus has made for you. It is spiritual and as such it is powerful. If you know who He is and what He has provided you will be encouraged to believe it and put it into practice. You will, as it were, 'unpack it' from your spiritual luggage and put it to good use avoiding temptation and sin.

Next on the list is baptism:

Colossians 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

We immediately think of water baptism, but there are many 'baptisms' listed in the New Testament that do not involve water. For example: the children of Israel are described as being "baptized into Moses" when they crossed the Red Sea on their Exodus from Egypt (First Corinthians 10:2). But they crossed on dry ground. This 'baptism' was a spiritual one, an identification with Moses.

In Colossians Paul was not talking about your water baptism that obviously occurs sometime after you are saved. He was talking about a spiritual baptism that occurs the moment you are saved.

At the moment of your conversion to Christ you are spiritually identified with Jesus. It means that God sees you as if you, too, were “buried” and “raised” with Jesus from the dead.

You appropriate this truth “through faith in the working of God.” You simply believe it.

What this provides you for your journey is the understanding that you have new life in Jesus Christ. It’s not just that you can say “No” to sin, as great as that is. You can also say “Yes” to God and surrender to Him moment-by-moment to discover the new life He has mapped-out for you.

Next you read,

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Paul was writing to Gentiles. Their condition before the Gospel was hopeless. They suffered from the proverbial double-whammy:

1. They were first of all “dead in... trespasses.” They were physically alive but spiritually dead. It is the condition of every human born into the world.
2. Secondly Gentiles found themselves in “the uncircumcision of [their] flesh.” This **is** a reference to physical circumcision. Gentiles as a group came to be called “the uncircumcision” because they were not a part of God’s chosen people. Before the resurrection of Jesus, if you wanted to approach God you needed to convert to becoming a Jew. You needed to complete and keep all the outward rites and rituals of Judaism, like circumcision.

Ah, but Jesus rose from the dead and changed all that! In Him Gentiles now find forgiveness of their trespasses without converting to Judaism.

Not only that, “He has made [Gentiles] alive together with Him.” The word Paul used means you are “quickened.” It’s a reference to the fact that when you get saved God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart.

In Colossae there was a group of false teachers telling the Gentiles they must become Jews to be truly saved. It wasn’t true then and it isn’t true today.

You have a relationship with God apart from any religious observances. One of the things this means practically is that you are always ready for what happens on your journey by simply trusting Jesus Christ. You don’t need to ‘do’ anything, you don’t need to perform or undergo any religious ritual.

If you’ve ever been involved in a religion you understand what a great provision this is. Instead of all the rites and rules and rituals, I simply enjoy a relationship with the Lord.

There’s more for your journey:

Colossians 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Paul called God’s Law “the handwriting of requirements.” The words literally mean, *a certificate of debt*. When you read God’s Law, summarized by the Ten Commandments, you find yourself owing God a debt. If you are honest you’ll see that it is a debt you can never hope to pay.

The purpose of God’s Law was to prick your conscience to make you realize you were a sinner. It was never to show you how you might live and therefore earn, through personal righteousness, your salvation.

Paul said God’s Law was “against” you. Staying with the image of a debt, this means it has gone to collection. “Contrary” means the debt collector calls upon you to pay it in full. Think of a home foreclosure. There comes a point at which you can’t just make one or a partial payment. If you don’t pay in full you lose your home.

The debt of sin was death. You were a sinner and God's Law demanded death - your death.

But the moment you are saved you discover that Jesus did three things for you:

1. He "wiped out" the debt. It means He erased it by paying it for you.
2. He has "taken it out of the way." He has permanently separated you from any further obligation to keep God's law.
3. He "nailed it to the cross," meaning it was all fully and finally accomplished when He substituted Himself in death for you on the cross at Calvary.

How is this a provision for your journey? You no longer labor under God's Law, trying to keep it. No, instead you find that your love for God encourages you to walk with Him in a manner that is pleasing to Him as your heavenly Father.

Years ago one of my bosses told me that, on a long road trip, he found himself driving close to 100 miles per hour on a long stretch of highway. He was breaking the law. Then he looked over and saw his wife sleeping next to him and his kids in the back seat. He started to think about the consequences of an accident or a blow-out at that high rate of speed. Because he loved his family, he slowed down. What the law could not do, love accomplished.

The last thing Paul listed is in verse fifteen:

Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

After a great victory a Roman general would march through the streets of Rome to cheering crowds with his vanquished enemies in chains following behind.

At the Cross Jesus won a great and decisive victory over the devil and his fallen angels. Though they remain active, they cannot harm any believer who will not harm himself.

Really? Then why are believers persecuted? Why do you have so much against you at work and in the world?

I look at it like this. When did Jesus make “a public spectacle” of His enemies? He did it on the Cross and in His resurrection. We always want to get past the Cross and into the resurrection. **But the Cross must come first.**

On the Cross Jesus appeared to most to be defeated, defenseless. Even His own disciples fled (with the exception of John). He was jeered and mocked as He hung there in shame as an apparent criminal.

How did He respond? He referred the crowd to Psalm twenty-two so they might understand He was their Savior. He called upon His Father to forgive them all. He saved the thief next to Him who made a declaration of faith. He acted with mercy, love, and grace.

It was the single most selfless human moment in all history as He took my place (and yours) as the substitute for the sin of the world.

Do you see the majesty of the Cross? Do you see its power? Others need to see it, too. They see it when you are treated as the Lord was treated and you respond as the Lord responded.

It's how you triumph over your enemies and make a spectacle of them. Having first suffered you can share the power of the resurrection.

You've got a Person! It's Jesus. Your body belongs to Him; He is its Head. And together we are His body and He is the Head. As the Head of us individually and corporately we need to defer to Him in every situation for every provision. He's already packed us all the things we truly need.