

COMPREHENDING OUR COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST – Part 2 (Colossian 2:13-14)

Starting about an hour from now—at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, AZ—a memorial service will be held for Charlie Kirk who was killed—assassinated, really—on Wednesday, September 10th at the young age of 31. To say that his death has caused **quite a stir**—not only in our **country**, but around **the world**—is not at all an exaggeration. Strong opinions—both **for** Charlie and **against** him—abound on social media.

--People have lost their jobs for celebrating his death

--Podcasters have verbally “sparred” over Facebook and “X” about what Charlie believed and taught

--And even believers have thrown proverbial stones at one another, saying that if your Pastor doesn't mention Charlie Kirk, you need to find a different church!

Although I never met him—and didn't consistently follow him on social media—his **assassination** still seems surreal to me. Have we really **come to the point** in our country that we **kill people** because we hate what they **believe and teach**? And have we really **come to the point** that we **celebrate the death of another person**? I'm still trying to process that—even after 11 days. And I'm sure I'm not the only one!

So how does the life—and death—of Charlie Kirk tie into a message from the **book of Colossians**?

In these **three** ways. **First**, Colossians focuses on the supremacy of Christ! **How much** does Charlie see and know what is happening here on earth? The Bible is pretty quiet about that! But I will say this: if Charlie could see what was happening as a result of his death, I can't help but think that he would be yelling, “Don't do it for **my** legacy, do it for **Christ!**” And don't wear “Thank You **Charlie**” tee-shirts; wear “Thank You **Jesus!**”

A **second** way is this: Charlie was a **gifted speaker**—and I don't believe anyone who heard him would deny that. And he used his gift for the Lord! The question is, **are we**? Are we using our gifts to serve the Lord?

Third, although Charlie was a gifted speaker, he still **worked at** speaking! He read and studied and prayed in order to have a full **heart**—and a full **mind**. And even though God may not have called us to be a public speaker, He still wants us to have a **full heart and mind!**

And—as we study the book of Colossians—it will fill **both our hearts and our minds!** It will lead to the conviction that **Christ is all we need**—and that we are **complete in Him!** We see that in Colossians 2:10; let's turn there. Notice again what it says: “And ye are **complete in Him...**” But what does it mean to be “complete” in Christ? That's what we are going to be looking at again here this morning.

In vs 11-15, Paul gives us five **illustrations**—five **pictures**—to help us better understand our “completeness” in Christ. In vs 11, we see Paul telling the Colossians they were “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,” a reference to **spiritual**—rather than **physical**—circumcision.

What was cut off—and disposed of—in this **spiritual surgery** performed by God on our behalf?

I believe it is this: *Our sin nature is counted as being cut away and “disposed of” based on Christ's death for us when we put our faith and trust in Him and are born again!*

What does that **mean for us**? It means that God's children do not have to be controlled by sinful habits or their sinful, selfish, **nature!** **The dragon** within us has received a **death blow**—and we don't have to **submit to its rule** in our lives anymore!

Picture 1, then, is **spiritual surgery!**

Picture 2—found in vs 12—is **waterless baptism!** We see that in the phrase “buried with Him in baptism...” What does that mean? It means that God counts us as being **in Christ**—being **united to Him and one with Him**—so that we are counted as **being dead**—and **buried with Him!**

We see that **here**...and in Colossians 3:3 (“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”) ...and Romans 6:3-4...and II Corinthians 5:17...Galatians 2:20 (“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live...)

What does that *mean for us*? What are *our responsibilities* in light of that truth?

1) Don't feed the dragon—meaning our sin nature! Romans 13:14 “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make not provision for the flesh**, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

2) Be thankful! Instead of “beating yourself up” and lamenting over your sin nature, be thankful that God counts it as ***crucified with Christ***, dead, and buried!

And that brings us to **Picture 3**—but point #1 on your outline: **1. Coming back to life—after being dead!** We see that in verses 12 and 13. First, vs 12: “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are **risen with Him** [Christ] through the faith of the operation [working] of God, who hath **raised Him** [Christ] from the dead.”

Here we see that being “**risen with Christ**” is closely tied with **baptism**. **Why** is that? Because **water baptism** is a picture of the death, burial, **and resurrection** of Jesus! What would happen if **water baptism** was just a picture of the **death and burial** of Christ? You wouldn't **come up out of the water**—meaning no one would **survive** their baptism!

--Now vs 13: “And you, **being dead in your sins** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He **quickenened [made alive]** together with Him [Christ]...” Here Paul moves away from the **picture of baptism** to the picture of a **dead person being brought back to life**.

First, let's consider... A. The physical explanation of the picture

What is the **physical explanation** of someone being brought back to life again? Some of you might be thinking, ‘That's an easy one, Pastor! It means just **like it sounds**: someone who is dead comes back to life again—like Lazarus!’

Except it doesn't say raised from the dead **like Lazarus**, does it? It says—**twice**—once in vs 12 and once in vs 13—that we are risen together **with Christ!** How is **Jesus's coming back to life** different from that of Lazarus? **Lazarus** was raised in the same body...and in the same circumstances...and eventually died again. **But Jesus** was raised in a **new** body...a **glorified** body...a **resurrected** body—that **can't die** and will **never die!**

So the **physical picture** is that of **Jesus coming back to life again**—after He had died—in a body that has **never-ending, everlasting, life!**

And that brings us to... B. The spiritual explanation of the picture

First, we see... **1) The “deadness” of their past condition**. Notice again what it says in vs 13: “And you, **being dead** in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh...” Paul is writing to **living people** that had never **physically** died, so “being dead” is obviously a reference to their past **spiritual** condition.

What does it mean to be **spiritually dead**? It is important to remember that “death” in the Bible refers to **separation**—not just the end of physical life! **Adam and Eve** were told in Genesis 2:17 not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “for **in the day** that thou eatest thereof thou shalt **surely die.**”

--Did **they eat** of the tree? **Yes**; they did! --Did they **physically** die that day? **No**; they did not! **Why not?** Did God **lie about** them dying—or did He **change His** mind? **No—neither one**—right?

Physically speaking, nothing changed—but **spiritually** they were now **separated** from God! They no longer had a **close, guilt-free, and harmonious** relationship with God. Instead, they were **full of guilt...and shame...and were afraid of God** because of their sin! So they were **created sinless**—and **without a sin nature**—but **became separated from God** after they sinned!

The opposite, though, is true of the Colossians—**and of us!** We are **born** spiritually **dead**—we are **born** spiritually **separated from God**. **Why?** Verse 13 says because of **our sins**—that which **we do**—and the “uncircumcision of our flesh”—a reference to our **sin nature** that we inherit from Adam.

But being **dead in our sins** also means this: we have a spiritual “**death penalty**” hanging over our heads! **What** does that mean? In John 3:18, Jesus says that if we don't believe on Him, we are “condemned already.” John 3:36b says, “...he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the **wrath of God abideth** on him.”

And Jesus said in John 8:24b, “...if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall **die in your sins.**”

What about you? Are **you still dead** in your sins? You were **born that way**—but are you **still that way?** Thankfully, we **don't have to stay** in that condition! How do we know? Because the verse doesn't end there!

Paul doesn't just remind them of the "deadness" of their *past condition*; he also makes...

2) The declaration regarding their present position. What is that declaration?

Mid of vs 13: That God has "quicken" —meaning made us alive—together *with Christ!*

--**First**, don't miss the fact that it is **God's** doing! We don't bring ourselves back to life—**God** does it!

--**Second**, it is not a "**waking up**" of that which was sleeping—or a "**cleaning up**" of that which was dirty—it is **a resurrection**—and a **new creation!** **II Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature** [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new.**"

--**How long** will this **new life in Christ** last? Stated another way, **how long** will we be **risen with Christ**?

Notice on your outline **Ephesians 2:5-7a** "Even when we were dead in sins, hath **quicken us together with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶ And hath **raised us up together**, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That **in the ages to come** He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

We can't spend a lot of time on this, but I want to make sure you see the **progression of thought**.

--We **were dead**—separated from God—**in and because** of our sins, but God counts us as **having died with Christ**.

--But that's not all; God also counts us as **being risen with Christ!**

--And on top of that, we are now—**in position**—counted as being **seated together in the heavenly places** in Christ! **How long** will that **last**? What does vs 7 say?

"That in the ages to come..." refers to **all of eternity**—not just time on earth! God's children will be **seated forever with Christ**—and forever be **seeing** (meaning, **experiencing**) the grace of God's kindness toward us through Christ! So us being raised with **Christ is permanent**. We have **passed from death unto life; we will never perish!**

Look again at the end of Colossians 2:13. **How—and why**—can God count us being risen with Christ? Because God has **forgiven us all our trespasses; our sins!** We'll come back to that in a bit, but let's consider now...

C. The spiritual application of the picture

How are we to live, then, in light of the fact that God counts us as being **risen with Christ**?

1) The faith aspect. We see that in vs 12: "wherein ye are risen with Him [Christ] **through the faith** of the **operation** of God..." "**Operation**" here obviously doesn't mean a **surgical procedure** like Paula had—and like Christopher is going to have! It refers to the **working** of God in us.

Notice **Romans 8:11** "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He that raised up Christ from the dead **shall also quicken your mortal bodies** by His Spirit that **dwelleth in you.**"

How will we bodily—physically—**rise from the dead** some day? Because the same Spirit of God that **raised up** Jesus from the dead **currently lives in us!** And if the Holy Spirit that **dwells within us**—right now—has the **power to raise up Christ in the past**—and **raise us up in the future**—He certainly has the power to **enable us to live** a godly life now! So the problem is **not in God lacking power**—it is **us lacking faith** in—and depending upon—that power!

So we need to consider ourselves as **risen with Christ** because God says we are **risen with Christ!**

2) The practical aspect. We're in Colossians 2; notice Colossians 3:1-2.

Pretty straight-forward, isn't it? If you **are risen** with Christ—and God **says you are risen with Christ** if you are a believer—then **have a heavenly focus!** **Seek** the things **which are above**—and **set your affection** on things above!

Along the same lines, another practical thing we should do is "walk in the newness of life!" We saw that in some vss from last wk. Rom 6:3-4 "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that **like as Christ was raised up from the dead** by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life.**"

Next, let's consider **Picture #4**—point 2 on your outline... **2. The blotting out of a debt (vs 14)**

Notice what it says in vs 14: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross;”

First, ...A. The physical explanation of the picture

So what is the picture Paul is painting for us here? We understand (somewhat) circumcision...and baptism... and being risen with Christ. But what does Paul mean by “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us?”

--To “**blot out**” means “to erase, rub out, or wipe away.” The word is used in Revelation 7:17 and Revelation 21:4 in reference to God **wiping away** all tears.

--The “**handwriting**” means just like **it sounds**: what **someone has written in his own hand!** But...it wasn't just a random, hand-written note about **anything**. It was a written **record of debt!** Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines it like this: “a note of...writing in which one acknowledges that money has **either been deposited with him or lent to him by another**, to be returned at an appointed time.”

In other words, it is a note—**with your signature**—acknowledging **your debt** to someone! There is a parable in Luke 16 where the steward calls in the people who owed his master money. He said to the one, “Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty” (Lk 16:6). That used to strike me as kind of strange—until I read about this “handwriting.” **The bill** wasn't just **getting changed**, it was also being **signed by the one** who was in debt, acknowledging what he **now owed!**

Next, let's consider... B. The spiritual explanation of the picture

What—in spiritual terms—do we “**owe**” God for...that is **against us**...that we **cannot pay for** on our own...and that we **need God to erase** and wipe away? In other words, what does Paul mean by “**ordinances**” that are “against us”? Commentators suggest at least **three** different meanings; today we will look at **just one**.

We have one answer in **Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death...” We “owe” God a payment for **our sins**—and that payment **is death!** And let's not forget what I said earlier about **death**. **Death** means separation from God—and the **second** death means **eternal** separation from God! The Bible is clear on that!

Revelation 20:12-15 “And I saw the dead, small and great, **stand before God**; and **the books were opened**: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works**.¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were **judged every man according to their works**.¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the **lake of fire**. This is the **second death**.¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into **the lake of fire**.”

You've heard me say this before, but here it is again. The verses I just read—commonly referred to as the Great White Throne judgment—**does not** apply to **everyone!** All of mankind **does not** “stand in a line” and appear before God one-by-one to be judged. This judgment is for those that died **in their sins**...that died **unforgiven**... that died **without having received Jesus** as their Savior!

And the judgment is not to “weigh” their good deeds against their bad—it is to **demonstrate** they are **not deserving** of heaven—and to determine their **degree of punishment** in the lake of fire!

God's children—those that have Christ and are born again—are **not at this judgment!** They are not judged for their sins. Why? Because—according to Colossians 2:14—the sins that were against us **are taken away!**

On what basis did God take away and destroy the pages and pages **of the lists** of our sins? **How** could God do that? Did God just “sweep them under the rug” and forget about them?

No; that's not what happened, is it? God Himself **left heaven**...and **came to earth** in the person of His Son...and was **nailed to a cross**. And God took the **book of our sins**—the **certificate of debt** that we owed—and nailed it to the cross **with Christ**. And as the blood flowed, **drops of blood** fell onto our pages—and our sins were blotted out. That—I believe—is the **spiritual picture** Paul is painting here for us.

Is it any wonder that Horatio Spafford wrote, “*My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—My sin, not in part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul!*”

Lastly, C. The spiritual application of the picture

What should **we do** in response to this wonderful truth that our sins are forgiven and taken away because they were nailed to the cross of Christ and paid for by His blood?

1) First, don't take sin lightly! It cost the Son of God His very life! We show a disregard—a lack of appreciation—if are **casual about sin** in our life—especially in light of what Jesus did to pay our penalty!

2) Second, enjoy—but be humbled by—the fact that you are forgiven!

3) Third, share Christ with others! Jesus' death on the cross is **the only way** sins can be forgiven! People need to hear that!

4) Four, surrender your life to God! Rom 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your **reasonable** service."

II Corinthians 5:14-15 "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵ And that He died for all, that **they which live** should not henceforth live unto themselves, **but unto Him which died for them**, and rose again."

Have you done that? Have you surrendered your life to Christ? If not, why not do that today?

What is it that God would have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, **where** are you—right now—spiritually speaking?

--We were born with a sin nature—and consequently we all sin. So the **question is not**, "Are you a sinner?"

--The question is: Are you **yet** in your sins—or are **you forgiven** because you are in Christ?

--If you **choose to reject Christ** and die unforgiven, you will be judged for every sin you've committed—and will be forever separated from God—forever—in the lake of fire!

--But we don't have to **die in our sins**; we don't have to **die unforgiven!** We can come to Christ for forgiveness and salvation from the penalty of our sins!

How does a person "come to Christ"? How does a person receive forgiveness?

--**Admit and agree** with God that we are a sinner...and that sin disqualifies us from heaven...and that we cannot save ourselves

--**Believe** what God says about Jesus Christ: that He is God...and He died in our place...and that His blood paid the debt that we owe...and that He rose from the dead

--**Then call** upon Him! By faith, ask Him to forgive you and save you! Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved.**"

Have you done that? If not, you are yet in your sins!

2. Second—if you are truly a believer—are you comprehending—and enjoying—your completeness in Christ?

--God counts you as being dead with Christ—but also alive with Him!

--Are you living like a new creation?

--Are you thankful for being forgiven?

--Are you sharing Christ with others?

--Have you surrendered your life to do His will?