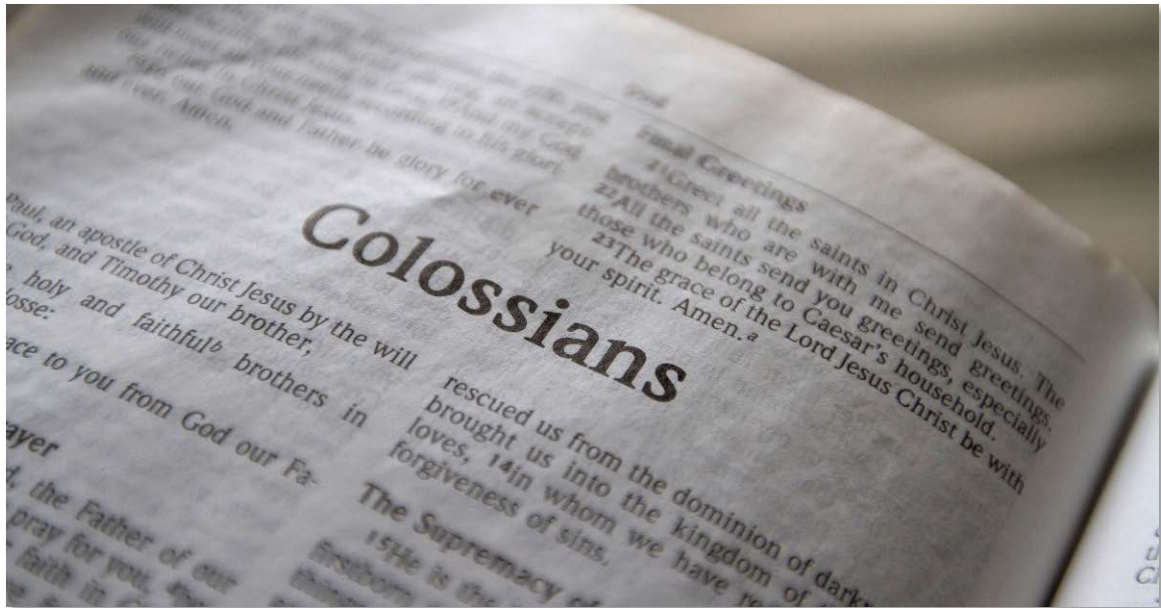


COMPLETE IN CHRIST COLOSSIANS 1.19-29



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Complete in Christ: Colossians 1.19-29
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Colossians 1.19-29: Introduction

In Colossians 1, Paul makes two primary points. The first is that saints and believers, all who are in Christ, will demonstrate that position in lives of faithfulness and love. The second is that Jesus is worthy of such devotion, for He is the Head of the Church, Lord of all creation, and Reconciler of all things to God..

We who believe are complete in Christ. Our salvation is sure in Him. Our eternal future is secure in Him. And our present reality is growing and increasing in Him.

In Christ we have all we need and all we could ever want.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 To Reconcile All Things

Opening Prayer: Psalm 145.1-3

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read Colossians 1.19, 20

Preparation

1. What did Christ accomplish by His death on the cross?
2. What is the condition that has resulted from that work?

Meditation

Paul has extolled the greatness of Jesus (vv. 15-18); here he explains in what that greatness consists: Jesus is the fullness – *all* fullness, the fullness of God and the fullness of humankind. Because He is fully God and fully Man, Jesus could perfectly accomplish all the righteousness of God, and He could perfectly endure all the wrath of God against us. This is what He did during His earthly ministry and in His death on the cross (v. 20). Theologians refer to Jesus' earthly ministry as His *active* obedience to the Father. His death on the cross they refer to as His *passive* obedience. In His fullness, Jesus accomplished full and complete obedience, and reconciled all things, “whether things on earth or things in heaven”, to the Father of glory.

The effect of this great work is that Jesus has opened the way for all of God's creation to reconnect with Him. The creation, ravaged by sin (Rom. 8.20-22) and populated with sinful people (Rom. 3.23), must be restored to the Father, Who ordained it, to Jesus, Who created it, and to the Spirit, Who dwells in it in the people of God. Jesus has accomplished this reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5.19-21). Now, through His Church, and by the power of His Word and Spirit, Jesus is restoring the reconciled world to the Father through the good works He does in and through His Body, the Church.

The result of this is peace – in the Hebrew, *shalom*: salvation, health, prosperity, wellbeing, peace, and joy. Anyone seeking any of these things – and all people are, in one way or another – will find them only in Jesus, perfect God and perfect Man.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

This perfect God and perfect Man gave His blood for our life. He is the supreme blood donor. Without His blood, we have no life. Blood is a constantly circulating fluid providing the body with nutrition, oxygen, and waste removal. Without it we cannot live. God said, “For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood...to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood *that* makes atonement for the

soul” (Lev. 17.11).

Through His blood Jesus reconciled all things to Himself, things on earth and things in heaven (v. 20). We, who esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted; we, who caused His wounding because like sheep, we had gone astray; and turned, every one, to his own way; we, who caused the LORD to lay upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53.4,6).

And yet, hallelujah! God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Because He shed His blood, we are now saved from God’s wrath through Him (Rom. 5.8-10). “...Christ’s righteousness makes men right with God, so that they can live” (Rom.5.18 TLB).

There is power in this blood!

Reflection

1. Why was it necessary for Jesus to bleed and die to reconcile all things to God?
2. How much is included in that “all things”? What does that mean for us, to whom portions of that “all things” have been entrusted?
3. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend the nature of the peace you have because of Jesus?

This is the true peace towards God, which Christ accomplishes in earth. It is clearly eternal life itself, and a supreme and ineffable solace in every distress. It is such a peace, that it also brings about peace towards others. For, after they have received the Holy Spirit, there springs up in them all the fruits of the Holy Spirit—love, patience, and so on. Philipp Melancthon (1497-1560), Notes on Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 1.20

Use me today, Lord Jesus, in Your work of restoring all things, as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 145.4-21

Praise the Lord for all His mighty works, for His compassion and mercy, and for His Kingdom. Whom will you tell about our mighty and gracious Lord today?

Psalm 145.4-21

(Brother James’ Air: [*The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want*](#))

To ev’ry generation we Your wondrous works shall tell.
The splendor of Your majesty we contemplate full well.
We speak of all Your mighty deeds and all Your greatness tell!

Then shall we all the glorious fame of Your great goodness sing –
Your righteousness, Your gracious Name, Your mercy: praise we bring!
Your steadfast love remains the same, mercy our covering.

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.
Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.
Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!
Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we'll bless!

2 If Indeed

Opening Prayer: Psalm 1.1, 2

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

Sing Psalm 1.1, 2

(St. Thomas: *I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*)

How blessed are they that shun sin's vain and wicked ways.
For them has Christ salvation won; He loves them all their days.

God's Word is their delight; they prosper in its truth.
In it they dwell both day and night to flourish and bear fruit.

Read Colossians 1.21-23

Preparation

1. Why did Jesus reconcile us to God?
2. What does He expect of those He has thus reconciled?

Meditation

Paul continues to unpack the work of Jesus for us who were once His enemies, as demonstrated by our wicked works (v. 21). By His death, Jesus reconciled us to God. But that was just the beginning of His work in us.

He intends to present us “holy, blameless, and above reproach” in the sight of God (v. 22). He is at work within us even now, enabling us to make progress toward that end (Phil. 2.13; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). *Getting* saved is just the beginning of salvation. *Increasing* in salvation is what the Lord expects of all His faithful saints. Our lives should demonstrate regular and increasing progress toward the end for which Jesus died to save us.

This means we have work to do (v. 23). We must be “grounded and steadfast” so that we “continue in the faith” day by day. When we are planted in the Word of God, like a tree by a flowing stream, our leaves and fruit will flourish, and we will increase in the knowledge of God, love for Him, and service in His Name. Any who are not pursuing this course, and are not increasing in their salvation, have “moved away from the hope” of the Gospel, which is the hope of seeing and partaking of God in His glory (Rom. 5.1, 2).

The form of Paul's “if indeed” (v. 23) is more on the order of “and of course.” If Jesus has saved us and has conveyed us into His Kingdom, of course we will press on day by day to increase in Him.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“And of course, if Jesus has saved us and has conveyed us into His Kingdom, we will press on day by day to increase in Him.” But of course, this demands some participation on our part. Just because

Jesus has done this miraculously loving work of salvation for us doesn't mean that it is His responsibility to *make* us like Him.

To not work at our own growth and expect that we will mature is merely wishful thinking. If indeed. Of course.

Reading a book doesn't make one an author.
Nor does watching football make one a linebacker.
There is study and learning, effort, and prayer, and with football a whole lot of bulking up is included in the package deal.

But some believers expect to be class act Christians merely because we want to be. Or we think because we have read about it, or we have seen some dynamic people live out their faith, then that is enough for us. Been there, done that. We dust off our hands and move on to the next thing.

But Paul tells us that all this is ours "if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel..." (vs.23). That sounds like effort to me.

We need to decide to follow Jesus. No turning back. And really work at growing in our love by keeping the Law of God. No equivocating. Just doing it. Full speed ahead.

"My heart is set on keeping Your decrees to the very end" (Psa. 119.112 NIV).
Or. "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end" (Psa. 119.112 NKJV).

Either way. We set our hearts.
We obey His commands.
We do this forever.
To the very end.

Reflection

1. What's the difference between working *for* your salvation and working *out* your salvation?
2. How does Psalm 1 lead us to think about the "grounding" we need?
3. "To not work at our own growth and expect that we will mature is merely wishful thinking." Explain.

Here are two things required of us that we should be without blame or spot in God's sight. The one is that we should be constant in faith, the second not to shrink from the hope of these heavenly treasures, promised by the gospel, preached to all creatures under heaven. Lancelot Ridley (d. 1576), Exposition on Colossians 1.23

Thank You for the Gospel, Father; help me live it in love today as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 1.3-6

Pray that God will continually bring forth the fruit of righteousness in you, and that you may encourage faith and fruitfulness in others today.

Sing Psalm 1.3-6

(St. Thomas: *I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*)

Firm planted on the banks of God's great stream of grace,
they raise unending praise and thanks to His great glorious face.

The wicked are not so, but, driven by the winds,
they fall and perish, weighed with woe, when once God's wrath begins.

In Jesus' righteousness, though sinners fail and fall,
His flock He will preserve and bless, who on His favor call.

3 Suffering and Mercy

Opening Prayer: Psalm 13.1, 2

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Sing Psalm 13.1, 2

(Melita: [*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*](#))

How long, O Lord, O Lord, how long will You forget me and my song?
How long will You conceal Your face and keep from me Your precious grace?
How long must I my soul consult? When shall my weary heart exult?

Read Colossians 1.24-26

Preparation

1. In what did Paul rejoice? Why?
2. What has God revealed to His saints?

Meditation

Christians are members of the Body of Christ. As Christ suffered in His body during His earthly sojourn, so believers should expect to suffer as His body during theirs. This is what Paul meant by filling up in his flesh “what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (v. 24). Our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) puts us at odds with the unbelieving world and its agenda of self and stuff. The world indulges the self; Christians deny it. The world coddles the flesh; Christians mortify it. The world pants after stuff; Christians share it freely. The world seeks fleshly fulfillment; Christians seek the satisfaction of the soul, which they find in Jesus alone.

Paul suffered in many ways, including persecution, want, hardship, betrayal, long hours of work, and many other inconveniences. But he wants us to understand that these sufferings are the sufferings of Christ, Who is pleased to allow us to know such trials, not that we might be saved by them – only the suffering of Jesus saves – but that we might be seen truly to be members of His body.

Paul’s suffering was entailed in his calling as a minister of the Word of God (v. 25), just as our suffering will be entailed in whatever calling the Lord has for us. All suffering is made possible and can be endured as we bear in mind that we are engaged in the great mystery of the Gospel (v. 26). We must not think of “mystery” as in a murder mystery, where an unknown may be discovered and resolved through investigation. The Biblical idea of mystery indicates something we can never fully or completely understand, but which we may know and experience to some extent here and now because it has been revealed to us as saints by our heavenly Father. That mystery is the Gospel. Once we have truly tasted the Gospel, knowing that our taste at any moment is but the smallest portion of such a great salvation, we will, like Paul, gladly accept whatever suffering is necessary to know a greater measure of that holy mystery and to make it known to others.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

A mystery is something not understood or beyond understanding. Or a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand. Yes. The fact that Jesus would be willing to give up His life in heaven with the Father, and come to earth to deal with humanity and then be killed egregiously by those He came to earth to save, well yes, who can understand that?

This will never be something that we can puzzle out or solve with a few more clues. All the clues about us just lead to more mystery about why God loves us at all.

A whole lot of things in life don't make much sense, and sometimes to try and make sense of things only trivializes their importance. They must be accepted as mysteries.

Suffering is no mystery. It's just – suffering. Overwhelming Pain. Both physical and emotional, but also spiritual. And God gives us the option to find dignity and meaning in our deep suffering by allowing us to join with Christ in His suffering for us. That never minimizes or explains the suffering, but it permits participation with our Savior. Christ in us, the hope of glory (v. 27).

We can run with endurance the race that is set before us (the mysteries), “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12.1-3).

Reflection

1. Why do you think suffering must be part of the life of a faithful saint?
2. How can we as Christians live with the idea of “mystery”? Why must mystery be part of faith?
3. What does it mean to look unto Jesus as we run our daily race of faith?

Christians, therefore, may be said to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ when they take up the cross of Christ and bear patiently those afflictions which God has allotted to be borne by them after the pattern of Christ, though for another purpose. John Davenant (1576-1541), *Exposition of Colossians 1.24*

Strengthen me for any trials I must endure today, O Lord, so that I will...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 13.3-6

What will you suffer for Jesus and His saints today? Commit your sufferings to the Lord, and praise Him for His constant Presence and love.

Sing Psalm 13.3-6

(Melita: [*Eternal Father Strong to Save*](#))

Exalt not, Lord, my enemy; Lord, hear my prayer and answer me!
Give light unto my weary eyes; let not death claim me for its prize.
Let not my foe rejoice to say that I have fallen in the way.

Yet I have trusted, Lord, in You; Your lovingkindness sees me through.
My heart breaks forth in happy voice; in Your salvation I rejoice!
Thus I will sing triumphantly: “My God has dealt full well with me!”

4 The Hope of Glory

Opening Prayer: Psalm 93.1, 2

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne *is* established from of old;
You are from everlasting.

Sing Psalm 93.1, 2

(Trinity: Come, Thou Almighty King)

The Lord in majesty reigns, girded and clothed in strength!
Earth stands secure: Nor shall it e'er be moved.
God on His throne above set it in place with love –
His reign is sure!

Read Colossians 1.27

Preparation

1. To whom has God made known the riches of His glory?
2. What is our hope of glory?

Meditation

Glory is the singular focus of this verse. Let's look more closely at what Paul means.

The glory of God is His Presence, which, when we become aware of it, feels “heavy”, albeit in a spiritual sense. Paul wrote about a “weight of glory” in 2 Corinthians 4.17. He was deliberately playing on the Hebrew word for glory, which can mean “to be heavy.” The glory of God is being revealed through the creation (Ps. 19.1-4). So clear and compelling is that revelation of God's glory that everyone sees it, and it communicates a certain knowledge of God to every human being (Rom. 1.18-20; cf. Rom. 10.17, 18). Everyone sees the glory of God, but most people refuse to acknowledge it as such. Turning away from God, they explain the beauty, majesty, complexity, power, and wonder of the creation in more rational and comfortable terms. And frankly, don't they sound a little silly assigning all the wonders of creation to “chance” and “evolution”?

But to His saints and faithful ones, God makes His glory known. They sense His Presence in all things. He weighs heavily upon them, and they bask in His pleasure. The clearest and most compelling experience of the glory of God comes from our reading and study of Scripture, where Christ reveals Himself on every page and the Spirit frees us from our temporal/material constraints and unlocks the glory of each text to transform us increasingly in the likeness of the Lord of glory (2 Cor. 3.12-18; Jn. 5.39). Thus, Christ in us, and being realized more fully day by day, brings us ever more deeply and constantly into the glory of God, and increases our hope in that glory, which will one day be ours in the face-to-face Presence of the Lord (1 Jn. 3.1-3).

But we need not wait until then to know the glory of God, and to proclaim and offer it to all the people to whom God sends us day by day. For God wills to make His glory known, and He has called us be the means of its revelation to the world (1 Cor. 10.31).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The riches of the glory. The mystery of salvation and suffering. Our hope in Christ.

We as believers are overshadowed, weighed down, enfolded in this truth that God wills to make known to us. That we belong *in* Him. We are saved *by* Him. We owe our lives *to* Him (Rom. 12.1, 2). This knowledge is ours to embrace and live through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Still a mystery. But ours to inherit.

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8.16-18).

“This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...” (Heb. 6.19).

Reflection

1. Why does Paul say that Christ dwelling in us is the hope of glory?
2. How do we make that glory known to others?
3. What can you do to see more of the glory of Jesus in the Scriptures?

Through what, then, do we hope for participation in this glory? Take note of this—do you have Christ in your heart? Examine yourself, whether you have taken hold of hope’s certainty and firmness. If hope does not mean for you life, salvation and glory, you cannot be certain that you have him in your heart. Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563), *On Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 1.2*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 93.3-5

What trials or difficulties are threatening to swamp you today? Give them to the Lord of glory. Cling to His testimonies and press on in His holiness. Commit your day and all its endeavors to the Lord of glory, Who dwells in you and rules over all.

Psalm 93.3-5

(Trinity: Come, Thou Almighty King)

What, though the floods arise, raising their voice to the skies,
strong though they be, God on His mighty throne,
drowns out their fearsome drone, hasting to save His own,
eternally.

Almighty God on high, Your Word can never lie!
Your truth is sure – holy and just are they
who tread Your holy way; Yours shall they ever stay,
Lord, evermore.

5 Complete in Christ

Opening Prayer: Psalm 71.14-16

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read Colossians 1.28

Preparation

1. What does Paul want us to become?
2. How did he try to help the Colossians become that?

Meditation

Paul's goal in ministry was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The word "perfect" is perhaps better translated "complete." Being complete in Christ has three phases, and effective preachers and teachers always aim at these in their work.

First, we are complete in Christ in the sense that nothing more can be added to secure God's salvation for those who believe in Jesus. If we believe in Jesus, our salvation is complete. This is a matter of our *position* in Christ – like being "saints." Being assured of this is essential to the other phases of being complete in Christ.

Third (I'll come back to second), we will be complete in Christ when we see Him face to face and are made like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3). Faithful teachers consistently hold out this "end" of salvation for the people they serve, that they might always know that they have an upward calling that culminates in being like Jesus in glory.

Second, then, we must strive to become more complete in Christ day by day, working out our salvation and pressing on toward holiness in the fear of the Lord (Phil. 2.13; 2 Cor. 7.1). The Spirit within us uses the Word of God to transform us increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18). Thus we increase "in all wisdom" for daily living.

They are "complete in Christ" for whom all these phases are true. How serious was Paul about our understanding and embracing this upward calling? He not only taught this doctrine to us, but he "warned" or "admonished" us concerning it, that we should be as eager to be complete in Christ as

he was to make us so.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Who has never heard a child complain, “I’m bored. I don’t have anything to do”?

And of course, for the child who is unknowing enough to say that in our presence, will be found many things to do to relieve them of their perceived boredom.

As Christians, we should never say in front of Jesus or Paul, “I’m bored”, because they would knowingly and lovingly smile at us and point to this verse. (Col. 1.28) We have been given more to do than we will ever have time to do; and yet it is incumbent upon us to give it our all. It is the task of becoming complete in Christ and bringing along those who are in our Personal Mission Field to the same end.

Him we preach.

Warning every man.

Teaching every man.

In all wisdom.

That we may present every man,

Perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col.1.28)

“Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

“Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Who *is* the man *who* desires life, and loves *many* days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

“The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

“...let us go on to perfection...” (2 Tim.4.2; 1 Thess. 5.14; Ps. 34.11-14; Prov. 9.10; Rom. 12.1; Heb. 6.1)

Complete. In. Christ. We have a whole lot to do!

Reflection

1. How does knowing you *are* complete in Christ affect your outlook on life?
2. How does knowing you are *becoming* complete in Christ affect your daily life?
3. How does knowing you will one day *be* complete in Christ affect your love for the Lord?

And we must grow and not be dwarves in Christianity, but still grow, for in Christianity there is no old age, but in the oldest age is a growth till such time as all rebellion and imperfection are taken away in the kingdom of God. Thomas Cartwright (1535-1606), Commentary on Colossians 1.28

Thank You, Lord, for delivering me from darkness and conveying me into Your light! Help me today to...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 71.17-24

Pray that God will continue to strengthen you, that you may grow in the Lord Jesus and serve Him faithfully in every aspect of your life.

Sing Psalm 71.17-24, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O Lord, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.
Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Your righteous deeds are great and true. O God, there is no one like You!
Though many troubles I have seen, You will revive my soul again!

Refrain

Increase my greatness, comfort me, and unto You shall praises be.
Your truth I will exalt full well, O Holy One of Israel!

Refrain

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; Lord, humble all who do me wrong.

Refrain

6 Working and Work

Opening Prayer: Psalm 126.1, 2

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing,
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

Sing Psalm 126.1, 2

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Read Colossians 1.29

Preparation

1. How many different times does the idea of work appear in this verse?
2. Who’s doing all this working?

Meditation

What is this “work” Paul is writing about here? It’s the work of being a disciple and making disciples. Paul worked to increase in his discipleship, and he poured himself out to make disciples of those he was called to serve.

Start talking about works of any kind, and many Christians stop listening. We do not work *for* our salvation, that is, in order that we might be saved. But being saved, we work *out* our salvation, for we have been redeemed for this purpose by the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2.8-10; Phil. 2.13).

Paul “agonized” in this laboring (“striving”, as the NKJV has it). Working out your salvation and working to help others grow in theirs is not easy. It’s labor, work, striving, and working. But we have the promise and assurance that, as we exert ourselves in this calling, God is at work within us, by His Spirit, mightily helping us to realize the goals we seek in our work.

We won’t know the power of the Spirit working in us unless we exert ourselves diligently in the direction of being and making disciples. If we really want to grow, we need the power of God to work in us. And He will engage us for growth and ministry to the extent that we, like Paul, labor and work and agonize to improve our discipleship and to help others grow in theirs (cf. 1 Cor. 11.1).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“To this *end* I also labor,
striving according to His working which
works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1.29 NKJV)

“To this end I strenuously contend
with all the energy Christ so powerfully
works in me.” (Colossians 1.29 NIV)

“For this I toil,
struggling with all His energy that He powerfully
works within me.” (Colossians 1.29 ESV)

“This is my work, and I can do it
only because Christ’s mighty energy is at
work within me.” (Colossians 1.29 TLB)

The work that we have been called to do
can only be done when
the Holy Spirit is working within us.

But the work that we have been called to do
will only be done when we decide to get busy
and call upon Christ’s power to help us do it.

And then do it.

Striving. Struggling. Toiling. Working.
Mightily. Powerfully. Energetically.

Reflection

1. What does it mean to “work out” your salvation? Work it out to what end?
2. How can we, like Paul, help other believers to work out their salvation?
3. Should working out our salvation make us stronger in the Lord? In what ways?

Paul toiled and agonized for the perfection of his fellow believers (see v. 28), not in his own strength but by the power of God working in him. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on Colossians 1.29

Be at work in me today, O Lord, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 126.3-6

How will you sow the good seed of the Kingdom of God today? Commit your work to the Lord, and go forth expecting Him to bring a harvest of good Kingdom fruit from your labors.

Sing Psalm 126.2-6

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav’nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

7 In Christ

Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.1-6

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.
The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.1-6

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise To God Who Reigns Above*](#))

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.
The snares of death encompassed me; hell’s grip could not unloosened be;
distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Read Colossians 1.19-29; meditate on verses 19 and 20.

Preparation

1. What did it please the Father concerning Jesus?
2. What work did Jesus accomplish?

Meditation

The theme of Colossians 1 can be summarized in the phrase, “in Christ” (vv. 1, 4, 14, 17, 19, 28). Paul stakes out the greatness of Jesus by saying it pleased God that in Him all the fullness should dwell (v. 19). He means by that all the fullness of deity and all the fullness of creatureliness, specifically, of humankind. Whatever there is to know about God, we will know through Jesus. Whatever it is God intends us and our world to become, we must look to Jesus for the template.

In Christ we who believe and are faithful are both a finished work and a work in progress. We are complete in Jesus – saved, kept, adopted, conveyed into His Kingdom, secure. One day we will be so complete in Jesus that, when we see Him as He is, we will be like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3). “Like Him” is the key here. We will retain our own distinctive personality, but it will be glorified to refract Jesus completely. Along the way we aspire to increase in completeness and thus become more faithful as saints of the Lord. We thank God that He gives us faithful ministers like Paul to nurture us along the

way; and we make the most of those opportunities we have to apply ourselves to becoming complete in Christ, and to encouraging our fellow saints as well.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

In Christ, life is complete.

In Christ, we see what pleases God.

In Christ, we have peace with God through the blood of His cross.

Without the risen Christ, we are lost.

Our faith is futile; we are still in our sins! (I Cor. 15.17)

But.

“...as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*” (I Cor. 15.49).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery:

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment,

In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible,

And we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15.51).

Completely.

And while we are waiting:

“...my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15.58). Both now and later “...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15.57).

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10.10).

Forgiven. Changed. Steadfast. Victorious. Abundant life.

In Christ.

Reflection

1. What is so wonderful about being “in Christ”? How would you explain this to an unbelieving friend?

2. What does it mean that we are “both a finished work and a work in progress”?

3. What does it mean for you to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord”?

*Now, he means a fullness of righteousness, wisdom, power, and every blessing. For whatever God has he has conferred upon his Son, that he may be glorified in him, as is said in John 5:20. He shews us, however, at the same time, that we must draw from the fullness of Christ everything good that we desire for our salvation, because such is the determination of God... John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Colossians 1.19**

Lord, let me know more of Your fullness today as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19

Offer and commit your day to the Lord, that in all your relationships, roles, and responsibilities His fullness might show through you for His glory.

Sing Psalm 116.7-19

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your Presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What are the three senses in which we are (or will be) complete in Christ?
2. Why should we expect that those who have been set aside for God and conveyed into the Kingdom of His Son (“saints”) would strive increasingly to be grow in Him (“faithful”)?
3. What does it mean to “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” and “not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (v. 23)?
4. What is the glory of God, and what is the hope of glory that faithful saints can know?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from Colossians 1.19-29? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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