

Colossians 2:11-15 - David Baumgartner

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. This morning, we continue our study on the New Testament book of Colossians.

It's good to sing about these truths that we find in Jesus Christ. Amen. It's good to be here today. I'm glad that all of you are watching your clocks diligently.

So, I really appreciate that. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Colossians 2. We're going to be looking at verses 11 to 15.

We're really in the guts of this letter. You know, a lot of introductory comments have been made by Paul, and so now we know to whom he is writing.

And see, just a real, get to the nitty-gritty of why Paul wrote this letter. Last week, we saw that Paul warned the Colossians about what became known as the Colossian heresy.

[1:08] It had a lot of elements in it, just as David described last week. Elements of Gnosticism, mysticism, angel worship, a lot of things like that.

And Paul says, if you look on your handout, there's a verse there. It's chapter 2, verse 8. Paul says, I think if you apply this verse, I think it just basically says that no matter what the problem is, the answer is found in Christ.

I think that's really the attitude here. And so really, to equip these believers in the city of Colossae, Paul's going to teach them about all the blessings that come from being in Christ.

You know, he says, verse 10, In Him, you have been made complete. You know, we may wonder, regarding the original audience here, you know, was this new information to them?

Or maybe they needed to be reminded of some of these truths. Maybe that applies to us today. Is this new to us? Or do we need to be reminded that in Christ, we are complete?

[2:44] This morning's text, Paul's going to further elaborate on how the Colossians were made complete in Christ. And he's going to be using some rather technical language.

He uses some metaphors and some images. And he's going to explain that in some way, they too participated in the events of the cross, What am I talking about?

I'm talking about Jesus' death, His burial, and His resurrection. Please read with me chapter 2. I'm going to pick it up actually in verse 8, just to give us a little context here.

Paul says, See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete. And He is the head over all rule and authority.

[3:50] And in Him you are also circumcised, with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you are also raised up with Him, through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

And when you were dead in your transgressions, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all of our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, and which were hostile to us.

And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to a cross. When He disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Heavenly Father, we are once again so grateful that we can come and gather together, Lord, under this roof to study Your Word, to learn more and more about You.

And maybe this is a reminder to some, Lord, of just how precious it is in our faith in Jesus Christ, and what that means to us on a daily basis.

[5:19] Maybe to some, this is new information. And Lord, we just ask that just through the ministry of Your Word, we would be changed more and more into that image of Your Son, and that we would be refreshed today in all that You have for us.

Lord, what a difference You have made to each one here. We thank You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. In the fifth chronicle of the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis tells this story about a boy by the name of Shasta.

Shasta lived in a small village near the sea, and I'd say there's one word to describe Shasta's life. Misery. Yeah.

Every morning, you see, Shasta would go out on a boat and fish, and in the afternoon, he would sell his fish to these unfriendly people in the village.

And the sky was always gray. The village always smelled like fish. Shasta was raised by this old, bad-tempered fisherman.

[6:34] The fisherman was always dirty, and he was always mean. Mean to Shasta. For Shasta, there was no time for him to play and explore like other 12-year-old boys.

Whatever time was left for Shasta, he would find himself mending the nets or cooking supper for this mean old man.

Why was Shasta's life like that? Well, you see, this man wasn't Shasta's father. About 12 years earlier, Shasta was actually found in a boat that had washed up on the shore.

And he was just a baby then, wrapped in a blanket. And there was also another man in the boat with him, presumed to be Shasta's father. But the man was dead.

And the signs had indicated that he had just recently died. And so this man comes down and finds this baby. And here's a boy. I'll make him my slave.

[7:40] And so he was. Shasta was living a dull life, a life of misery, of servitude. Later, in the book, Shasta would actually confide in someone and he said, I have to be the most unfortunate boy that has ever lived in this world.

Shasta had always wanted to know what the country up north was like. He had heard stories and he had heard, and they were all bad about what it was like in the northern country.

You see, no one had ever been there in the village, and he himself was never allowed to go there. But there was something about that territory up north that seemed to be calling to him.

One day, this visitor came to their house. He was a rather large man, and he was dark in his features, and he rode this huge stallion.

In fact, it was a war horse. And apparently, the man was a soldier. And Shasta was forced to wait on this man, hand and foot, and then he was told to leave the hut and leave us alone while they talked, the man and the guy.

[9:00] Shasta overheard that the man wanted to buy Shasta. And so that evening, it was spent by listening to these guys negotiate a price for Shasta.

Shasta said, I had enough. And so he took the man's horse, and where do you think he went? He headed up north, and so his adventure began where he learned the truth about who he was.

You know, when you think about yesterday's conference, and when you think about just the things that we read in Scripture, so much of the time, we don't really remember who we are, especially those of us who are in Christ.

We are reminded of the treasure and the special position and the power that we have because of our identity in Jesus Christ. And yet, if you were to ask Shasta about his life at that point, he would say, I have to be the most miserable, unfortunate person that was ever born.

You know, when we look at our text here, I'd like to first examine how Paul describes a person who is without Christ. These descriptions, you would think of them as our pre-Christian state of being.

[10:41] They'd apply to all of us at one time. It applies to those in the world right now. Follow with me here if you would.

I think there's three descriptions that I'd like to just pull out of this passage here. Three truths that Paul talks about to describe every person who's been born.

It describes those living in Colossae. It would describe Shasta. It describes you and me at one time. And I think that these truths apply.

Notice the pronouns and notice the tenses in his passage here. Look with me. First of all, verse 13. Notice, you, plural, were, past tense, dead in your transgressions.

Boy, how do you like that term? You were dead. This describes the spiritual state of all human beings who are apart from Jesus Christ.

[11:46] You know, what do you think when you hear the word dead? Not a very good thing, is it? No. It's not a flattering word.

We like to think about things that are alive. Amen? Amen? I remember, you know, as when a young, when a family has young kids, what's the first, one of the first things you do?

You want to go out and buy a pet, right? Yeah, you want to buy a pet for your kids to hug and love on, you know, and they pet the pet.

You know, many families with kids, they'll go out and acquire or purchase a pet from a pet store so your children can play with it. Let me ask you, sir, I want a pet.

And the guy, and you got something in your mind about something alive and the guy comes out with a dead dog. Yeah. Man, that's disgusting.

[12:45] I don't want a dead dog. I want something alive. With the dead dog, what are you going to do, hug it? It oozes. It stinks.

And I think that this applies to our spiritual condition as well. A person who's dead, spiritually dead, cannot even perceive what's called divine truth as it's revealed.

Look with me that verse that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He says, the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God because they're foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised.

This is telling us that spiritually dead people cannot receive spiritual truth. They cannot understand them. What's another unflattering description of an unbeliever?

Secondly, look with me. Having a sin nature. Notice verse 13. You who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.

[13:55] Boy, what's he talking about here? This word, well, let me start with the word flesh. Normally, when we think of the word flesh, we think of something that covers our bones, right?

Maybe it's under our skin. But the word flesh is also used symbolically to represent that part of us that's at war with God.

That part of us that's antagonistic to the things of God. Sinful flesh, you may have read or heard about that. It describes, friends, our very human nature before Christ.

Sinful flesh. You know, you don't have to, it's something that we inherited from Adam and Eve and through our parents. You don't have to teach young children how to be selfish, do you?

No, it's because it's in them. It's that tendency to sin. Notice here, Paul, he calls it uncircumcised.

[15:01] This is talking about here in the Old Testament when there was a baby boy who was eight days old. He would undergo circumcision. And that's that procedure that involves the removal or the cutting away of a little piece of flesh.

That small piece of flesh was actually symbolic for the indwelling innate sin that's in all of us. And so here, uncircumcised flesh actually means that that sin nature is still there.

That sin nature is still controlling you, still dominating your thoughts and your actions. Here's another description. Notice in verse 14, Paul mentions having this certificate of debt.

What's that? Well, notice, he goes on, it's consisting of decrees that are against us. In the courtroom of heaven, there's this list of charges that are being compiled.

Maybe you can think of them as a running tally of sins and transgressions. How you and I transgress God's laws. As our creator, doesn't he have the right to have certain expectations of those who he created?

[16:29] He does. Adam and Eve failed. Our grandparents failed in this. You and I have failed. And so, that list keeps getting longer and longer.

And these violations, they're not a credit to us. No, they're not. You know, nobody brags about their transgressions on a resume. You ever notice that?

Our sins, our transgressions, they bring dishonor. They bring shame to all of us. Notice a couple things here in verse 14.

These charges, they're against us. Verse 14, they're hostile to us. This debt that we accumulate, it's so deep that we're unable to pay it back, which is one reason I believe that the lake of fire is a permanent place.

And I believe that because those who end up there will be forever in debt. But secondly, notice verse 15, Paul brings up these rulers and authorities.

[17:40] from the context here, he's referring to the spirit world, Satan and his demons. And these demonic powers are arrayed against God and his people.

But here's something to notice here. These adversaries use our sins, our list of debts against us. They use it for what?

To accuse us and condemn us. Always reminding us of our transgressions, transgressions, how we have blown it. Boy, with friends like that, you know, what are your enemies like?

Revelation chapter 12 verse 10, Satan is actually called the accuser of the brethren. That's because Satan and his demons cause people to feel hopeless, cause people to feel helpless, self-pity.

People feel abandoned. People feel angry. Doesn't that describe what we see in the world today? A world without Christ?

[18:46] Anger, self-pity, abandonment, hopelessness? Friends, there's a remedy. The answer is always found in Christ Jesus.

and for us knowing what it means to be in Christ. Let me get back to Shasta's story here for a minute. You know, just to say that what an amazing thing to learn the truth about yourself.

Doesn't it empower you? You know, it just puts everything into perspective. When Shasta goes off on his adventure, he's going to first of all learn how wonderful the country up north is.

And Shasta is going to also learn that his name is not Shasta. It's a beautiful name, but most importantly, he learns that he is the son of the king.

How amazing that is. The man that was in the boat was actually the captain of the king's army. And he took this little boy as a baby, the son of the king, and took him to rescue him from some invaders.

[20:06] And the man, the captain of the army, actually gave his life to save that little baby. That's who the man was. What a thing to learn the truth about ourselves and who we are in Christ.

I see three things that Paul describes, what God did for each one of us. Let's look at these with a, first of all, we're given new life.

Look with me, verse 12. Look what Paul says here. Having been buried with him, he's talking about Christ here, in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

This word baptism here, it simply means to immerse. It's not referring to water baptism. It means simply to be placed into, to be identified with.

Here's an example, Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians. Notice here, look with me here. He says in chapter 10, I don't want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized, into Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea.

[21:28] So that's what he's talking about here. Someone who's identified or immersed into, and he uses, Paul uses this because of this truth. Upon faith, we are immersed, we are placed into Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you, well, what happened to Christ? What happened to him? Well, consider his death, his burial, his resurrection.

The moment of faith, God places the believer in Christ. And that means that our old carnal nature died with Christ, and we're also risen with Christ to that newness of life.

That's why you hear words referring to the believer as regenerated, words like born again. What precious terms that describe us.

What's the result? Verse 13, he says, we've been made alive together with him. Paul says the same thing to the believers in Rome.

[22:38] Look with me in Romans chapter 6. He says, speaking of us, therefore we have been buried with him, that's Christ, through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Friends, that's a miracle. how precious this is when this describes the believer. Notice verse 12, Paul says, it's the working of God.

Wow. Secondly, in Christ, our sins are forgiven. Amen. What a great thing.

Verse 13, having forgiven us all our transgressions, verse 14, having canceled out that certificate of debt.

[23:49] How did he do that? He goes on in verse 14, he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Friends, this is why we talk about the cross every Sunday.

Has there ever been a Sunday where we haven't said the word cross? No. I hope it never happens. that we would neglect to lift up the Lord Jesus for who he is, but also what he did.

Our sins here, they were nailed to the cross. They were not ignored like a corrupt judge would do for a bribe. No, rather, they were dealt with.

They were paid in full. Our debts were nailed to the cross. And no other system of beliefs teaches that. Mohammed, he's still in the grave.

Buddha, he died, he's still in the grave. He didn't die for anyone's sins. Nobody could. They have their own sins to deal with. Only Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, was nailed to a cross for our sins.

[25:04] What great truths those are. And by the way, those rulers and authorities, what about them? They've been put to shame, friends.

They have been dealt with. Verse 15 in our text, when he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, God made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Christ.

You know, when you look at the Gospels, I'm sure that for a while, it looked like the cross was a defeat for Jesus and a victory for Satan.

But how did it turn out? No, it turned out to be Satan's greatest defeat, from which he cannot recover. At the cross, Satan and his demons were stripped of their ability to accuse believers before God.

And God made a public spectacle of them, revealing, exposing, just how deceitful they are, just how they lie and how vile they are.

[26:17] Well, thirdly, here's another thing we see. We undergo spiritual circumcision. Verse 11, look with me. And in him you were also circumcised.

Earlier, I had referred to circumcision as that procedure involving the removal or the cutting away of a piece of flesh. And that little piece of flesh is symbolic for indwelling sin.

Well, in Christ, all believers are circumcised. Yeah. Look, in verse 11, he goes on, it's by the circumcision of Christ.

Symbolically, he says, it's a circumcision made without hands in the removal of that body of flesh. And so, therefore, in Christ, the believer is no longer enslaved to the power of that sin.

Now, Paul's not saying that Christians don't sin anymore. No, we need to understand that. But what he does say is that domination, that rule of sin has been removed.

[27:29] And so, the believer is no longer under the control of that sinful, rebellious nature that we once had. Friends, when we are tempted in Christ, we don't have to sin.

We have the power, we have the ability, we have the Holy Spirit that is, who is living in us. And we have the power to resist sin.

Since believers are identified with Christ in the fullness of God, I want to ask this question, what more do you and I need in this life?

What more? I'll say nothing. Nothing. I'd like to end here with some practical applications for us being in Christ.

I think it really is a matter of appreciating, taking hold of our new state of being in Christ. First of all, being made alive forever.

[28:41] Made alive. What a great description to be said that you're alive. Yeah, you think about the world and how on television and radio it's like live life to the fullest.

You ever heard that? Yeah, you know, do this, do that, buy this, buy that, you will be able to live life to the fullest. Well, I don't know, many of those things are fun and good, but I'll tell you what, believers are the only ones who can, on this planet, who can actually live life to the fullest.

And I think it's not me saying that, I think it's the Lord who says that. Think about what Jesus said in John chapter 10, speaking of Satan, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

Here's what Jesus came to do, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. So, being made alive forever. Secondly, forgiveness.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? Any of you have ever had something that you needed forgiveness for? Maybe it was months, weeks. I'm not going to ask anyone to stand up and say, they'd be uncomfortable.

[30:00] You couldn't do that. I mean, myself, it's uncomfortable. But here's the thing, in Christ, we are forgiven.

What a blessed thing that is. Paul said in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

What do you do if you sin? What do you do when you fall? You say, that's over. It's over. I'm done. I violated it.

No. John would say in his first epistle, my little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if, get this, if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

That just reminds me that when I sin, it's not a matter of if I sin, I'll tell you this, when I sin, I just look at the cross, and I remember my sins, that list of accusations that I've had, they were nailed to the cross.

[31:13] they were dealt with. Third, we are free from the shackles of sin. Let me continue that passage in Romans 6.

It uses the same language here. This is Romans 6, verse 6. Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Do you notice how frequently these things are said in these various letters, whether it's Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, the other apostles in their writings, they all say the same thing, talking about how precious it is to be in Christ.

As the musicians come up, I want to do this last one here, to know that our enemies have been defeated. I think it's important for us to remember, Satan and his demons continue to exist and exercise power.

They try to incite evil. And we continue to struggle against them. In Ephesians 6, Paul says, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.

[32:38] We have these warnings, but our enemy, he's as good as dead. He is. While Teddy picks up that mess, I'm reminded, when you talk about something that is as good as dead, not Teddy, something, David Jeremiah has this great illustration, it's actually a story about these two guys that they're in this village, I can't remember what part of Africa it was, but this guy was in this hut and this big snake popped out.

It's probably one like Steve St. Clair has, you know, one of those really big, round, long snakes. And this thing was just going crazy, okay, trying to grab the guy and squeeze him.

The guy runs out and he gets some help and the guy comes and hacks off the head of the snake.

And the thing is, you'd think the snake is dead. The thing is just still rolling around in the hut knocking things over and it's like, what's going on?

The thing doesn't have a head. Well, the guy said, it's because the snake is doing what it just did all these years. It's actually dead and it'll settle down for a while.

But what a great image of Satan. He has been defeated. And what we're seeing right now is this snake just, you know, wheeling around in this earth trying to deceive, still deceive people.

[34:15] At the cross, Satan was defeated. At the cross, you and I find new life. Jesus died, he was buried, and he rose again.

Amen. That happened in history. That is an undeniable truth, what I just said. Nothing more powerful has ever happened in history.

So, just to be reminded of those truths. You know, just thinking about some of the things that Nate Bramson said yesterday.

He was talking about how we can know certain things about somebody. he has this game. I guess he travels a lot, and so he goes to these airport terminals, and he talks to people.

He says, there's these three things that I know about someone without ever having to talk to them. I know that God loves them with an everlasting love.

[35:23] Nobody, they may not even know that, but Nate knows that. They are loved. How special it is. And just to think, and to be reminded, you know, you may be talking about Hillary Clinton.

You may be talking about Donald Trump. The thought that God loves that person with an eternal love. And the other thing is that they were wonderfully made.

You think about God's hand in making someone. No accidents. God made that person like that. Or maybe not didn't make them like that, but he made that person.

And how special that person is. Talk about, you know, the handiwork of God. And thirdly, God says that he would not have anyone to perish.

He wants all of us to have that eternal life. Think about what that equips us to do. When we relate to people, when we know people, when we meet people, that these are truths about them.

[36:37] We can also add to those truths that without Christ, they are going to live a Christless eternity separated from God.

Secondly, we know that they have sinned and they have fallen short of the glory of God. Thirdly, we know that there is this list that they are accumulating of debts because they're spiritually dead.

But we know that Christ died for them. And we're equipped with those truths. We're equipped in how it applies to us. Because Jesus Christ died for us.

And we can come here and we can remember him. We can relish what he did. And you know, the most fascinating thing to me is that Jesus Christ did this while we were yet sinners.

You and I could have been there holding the spikes and driving the hammer in our hand, driving the spikes, and Jesus still would have did it. We remember him.

[37:46] And we also remember that sin is nailed to the cross. And that body of sin, that body of flesh that tries to influence us, that's been taken away.

Our sin nature has been removed. And you and I don't have to sin anymore. We can walk in the Spirit, walking in the power that God has purchased for us through his Spirit.

Heavenly Father, thank you for these truths. Thank you for all that you have done.

And as I look at this passage, I remember that Paul said that it's through faith. I don't see anything in here that we do to earn this.

But it's through faith. And we thank you so much. that we are so special to you. Sometimes we see ourselves like Shasta as the most unfortunate people or person who has ever lived this earth.

[39:04] And yet, Lord, when we say such things, it's because we don't know or we're not remembering who we are in you. Thank you, Jesus, for the position we have in Christ.

Thank you for him. Thank you for what he did for us. May you be glorified in him as we remember Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Bye. Thank you.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Thank you.