**Helping Others Embrace the Truth of the Completeness in Christ**

Colossians 4:12-18

**Introduction**

The people of Colossae were being told by false teachers that spiritual completeness is found outside of Christ—through philosophy, tradition and rituals, ascetic practices, visions, and special revelations. Through our study, we have seen this: To add anything to Christ is to take away from who He is. People today are still tempted and instructed, whether intentionally or not, to find completeness outside of Christ. Missionary Eric Shadle noted that the people of Ethiopia are totally engulfed in rituals and what the priests say, but his preaching through Colossians has revealed that “faith put in the correct object is the biblical solution to life. Not faith in faith…but faith in Christ.” The same struggle is found in people of the United States. Many do not know or understand that Christ is sufficient for their spiritual well-being. Some continue without any reference to God in their daily lives, seeking to find fulfillment in their careers, relationships, hobbies, and money. Others try to soothe their conscience with church attendance and the practice of empty religious rituals to try to earn God’s favor, never knowing when they are good enough for God. Then there are those who are saved, but have not made Christ central to their lives; filled with worry and the pursuit of happiness they miss the sufficiency that is found in Christ. Through this study of Colossians, hopefully you have come to a different conclusion; the truth that we are complete in Christ.

Once Paul came to this conclusion, he devoted his life to help others know this truth. He prayed that they might understand these truths (1:9-11). He labored intensely in the work of the gospel so that men might accept these truths about Christ (1:27-29). He was greatly disturbed by false teachers that would lead them away from the sufficiency of Christ (chapter 2). He taught that the fact they were complete in Christ called them to higher living (chapter 3), and that these truths are so wonderful that they should join with others who have devoted their lives to the propagation of the gospel (chapter 4).

You will be in one of two categories of people: Either you need to embrace the truth that we are complete in Christ, giving you the motivation and means to grow spiritually; or you have already embraced it, and should join or continue in the effort to help others do so as well.

1. **Central Idea: The early believers helped others embrace the truth of the completeness of Christ through prayer and the ministry of the Word.** 
   1. **Epaphras** prayed that those under his care might embrace the truth of the completeness in Christ. (v. 12-13)
      1. He was a Colossian (4:12) who planted the church in Colossae (1:7) and most likely started the works in Laodecia and Hierapolis, significant cities of commerce that formed a triangle with Colossae. He was a faithful minister, who declared unto Paul their love and informed him of the false doctrine that had seeped into the churches (1:4, 8). He was greatly concerned about the spiritual well-being of these three churches (4:13).
      2. He is a dear fellow-servant of Christ, was referred to as a fellow-prisoner in Philemon 24, and was with Paul in Rome when this letter was written (“saluteth you”) (4:12).
      3. He served Christ by praying for the believers.
         * 1. He could not be with them, but he could be with God. His Roman confinement could not keep him from reaching the throne of grace. He was regularly praying for them (“always”).
           2. He labored fervently in prayer; with agony. He battled in prayer and prayed sacrificially. He had a great zeal for them (v.13) *“Praying that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.” (Jowett)*
           3. He prayed specifically for their spiritual growth, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He prayed that they might be convinced of their completeness in Christ and that it might be lived out in their daily lives. He prayed against the false doctrine and false teachers. He did not want to see them waste their lives, therefore he prayed for them.
           4. You should have this type of prayer life. Do you pray this way for your spouse, for your children and grandchildren, for people in your church?
      4. Prayer is part of the work of the gospel.
         * 1. *“Paul regards prayer as more than just a pious ancillary [of lesser importance; subordinate; supplementary] activity to preaching and teaching: it is part of the work itself.” (Wright) “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.” (Oswald Chambers)*
           2. *“It is in a prayerless church that the enemy can best do his work of disruption.” (Stott)*
           3. Jesus told his disciples prayer is the starting point for missions. (Matthew 9:37-38)
   2. **Luke** helped others embrace the completeness of Christ by being faithful to the spread of the gospel. (v. 14a)
2. The book of Acts records that he was a faithful travel companion of Paul, having joined him in Troas. He traveled to Palestine, and then to Rome (the shipwreck voyage).
3. He was a doctor, but his occupation did not keep him from serving the Lord. He may have used his profession to help those involved in the work of the Lord.
4. He was most likely a Gentile. His travels with Paul gave him a love for the Lord and for people. It was evident in how and what he wrote.
5. He was beside Paul to the end. (2 Timothy 4:11)
6. Churches are blessed by professional men like Luke who help others embrace the truth of the completeness of Christ.
   1. **Demas** eventually hindered others from embracing the completeness of Christ by returning to the world. (v. 14b)
      1. He was with Paul in Rome at the time this letter was written. (4:14; Philemon 24)
      2. Three to four years later he deserted Paul and the work of the gospel. (2 Timothy 4:10) He loved this present world; society and life without God. *“How easy it is to maintain a religious veneer, while all the time we are living for the things of this world.” (Wiersbe)*
      3. It hurt Paul. It hurt the work of the Lord. It hurt Demas; he wasted his life.
      4. If you leave Christ for the world, you have left the One who alone is sufficient for that which could never satisfy.
      5. If you leave Christ for the world, you will hurt the work of the Lord, spiritual leaders, those influenced by your life, and yourself.
   2. **Paul** helped others embrace the completeness of Christ by writing to encourage them with this truth. (v. 15-18)
      1. He was concerned about the church in Laodicea. (v. 15a)
      2. He was appreciative of those who opened their homes as a meeting place for the church, including Nymphas. (v. 15b)
      3. He instructed them to read the letter to the church. Churches need to read the Word of God. His letters have more than just local relevance. (v. 16)
      4. He encouraged Archippus to fulfill his task in the church. It is most likely that he was the spiritual overseer of the church in Colossae, and as such, he had a God-given task. He could complete what God had given him to do. (v. 17)
      5. He personally signed the letter. (v. 18a)
      6. He asked them to remember his bonds. This was probably a request for them to pray for him in his work in the gospel. (v. 18b)
      7. He ended his letter as he began it: with a reference to grace. Grace is essential to the Christian life; we are saved by grace, we live by grace, and grace will keep us on the right path. It was final reminder that they are complete in Christ. (v. 18c)
7. **Application: You can help others embrace the completeness in Christ through prayer and the ministry of the Word.**
8. You need to embrace the truth that you are complete in Christ, and you need to help others embrace the same truth.
9. Do you care about the spiritual well-being of others? Are you helping others through prayer? Are you helping others through the ministry of the Word?
10. Travel with the gospel. Stay faithful to the Lord. Forsake the world. Encourage other believers. Depend on God’s grace.

**Conclusion**

We do not have to search for fulfillment in anyone or anything else because we are complete in Christ. Live out this truth in your daily life. Help others see this truth.