

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: When have you received forgiveness?

Pray: That we would see clearly what we already have in Jesus, and practice gratitude for his gift.

Read: Colossians 2:6-15

Questions about the passage:

- What does Paul mean by 'received' in v.6? How do the four images in v.7 describe what that life looks like?
- What does Paul mean in v.9 when he says 'the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' in Christ? Why does he say this here?
- What is the 'circumcision made without hands' in v.11? How is it connected to baptism v.12?
- What does Paul mean by the 'record of debt' in v.14? What has God done with it?
- Why does Paul describe the cross as a triumph rather than a defeat in v.15?

Questions for us:

- Read Paul's encouragement to the Colossians in v.6-7. What habits and practices help move you further in this direction?
- Where do you see Christians being 'taken captive' by empty philosophies or traditions today?
- Before Jesus we were dead. Not weak, not struggling - dead. How does that shape our response to God? How should it shape our response to those that don't have the covering of Jesus?

Pray: that Village would continue to grow into full Christian maturity

Homework: Spend 10 minutes reflecting on your spiritual habits

Remind: Life Series online + in person (www.myvillagechurch.net/life)

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Overview:

Paul's letter to the Christians of Colosse in Asia Minor is one of his shortest letters. Paul is writing to a young church that's just starting to figure out what it means to believe in Jesus and follow him. He urges them to dig into the riches of the gospel and let it shape the way they live.

This week we look at the centre of Paul's argument in Colossians, that everything we need is already ours in Christ. He warns against teaching that would add to what they have. He assures them Jesus forgave their sins and disarmed spiritual powers through his victory on the cross.

Paul's aim:

Paul writes to a church he's never visited to establish his apostolic authority and relationship with them. His core aim is to ground them deeply in the gospel so they grow to maturity in Christ. Urgently underlying everything is a warning - don't drift toward the alternative teachings circulating in Colosse.

Asia Minor Map:



Asia Minor in the time of Paul

Source: N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 18.

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Questions about the passage:

What does Paul mean by 'received' in v.6? How do the four images in v.7 describe what that life looks like?

Paul isn't describing a 'Jesus, come into my heart' moment but rather a confessional and baptismal entry into life with God. Rooted: signifies a settled past / planted in Christ at conversion and once-and-for-all. Built up: represents ongoing construction / the Christian life constantly rising. Established in the faith: secure foundation, legal or covenantal significance. Overflowing with thankfulness: end result of the previous images, a life recognising its blessings and expressing gratitude.

What does Paul mean in v.9 when he says 'the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' in Christ? Why does he say this here?

Paul's word choice suggests not just a divine quality but the full being of God himself, that he is the full, complete, embodied presence of God. The word 'bodily' highlights the incarnation and not a spiritual or abstract fullness. Paul says this immediately following a warning against people who would lure them away. He is hammering his point, don't turn to anything less than the God of the universe.

What is the 'circumcision made without hands' in v.11? How is it connected to baptism v.12?

The OT idea of the need for a circumcision of the heart, a stripping away of the old self oriented away from God. Paul ties this to baptism in v.12 by drawing a direct parallel, both describe the same decisive transfer from old life to new. Baptism is the enacted sign of a death and resurrection that has really happened to the person. A burial with Christ into death, and a raising with him into new life.

What does Paul mean by the 'record of debt' in v.14? What has God done with it?

Paul here likely refers to the Mosaic law and also to the broader debt of sin that affects all humanity. The Greek word (cheirographon) refers to a letter of indebtedness, and suggests it kept both Jews and Gentiles locked out and unable to satisfy its demands. God did not ignore it or overlook it, he took it and publicly nailed it to the cross, echoing the written charge Pilate had nailed above Jesus' head.

Why does Paul describe the cross as a triumph rather than a defeat in v.15?

The rulers and authorities conspired to crucify Jesus, stripping him naked and publicly humiliating him, believing they had won. However, Paul argues the opposite. By crucifying Jesus they revealed themselves as usurpers of the rightful authority he possessed. God held them up to public contempt leading them in his own triumphal procession.

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Questions for us:

Read Paul's encouragement to the Colossians in v.6-7. What habits and practices help move you further in this direction?

'...walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.' Take an honest assessment of your last month and notice the effect of your habits and practices. What's something you could pick up, and what's something you could lay down for a season in order to create more space for God to work in you? It might be a daily practice of gratitude for God's good gifts, or putting your phone to bed early in order to create more space for prayer or bible reading.

Where do you see Christians being 'taken captive' by empty philosophies or traditions today?

Can you think of examples of when Christians have been distracted from Christ by empty philosophy or tradition? What does this look like and how can we guard against it?

Before Jesus we were dead. Not weak, not struggling - dead. How does that shape our response to God? How should it shape our response to those that don't have the covering of Jesus?

Our response to God should be profound gratitude. Dead people don't raise themselves. To God we give the glory and we gift our lives back to him.

For non-Christians, let us be continually practicing intentionality to invite those into the same gift we have received. With grace, tact and truth spoken in love. Let our lives witness to the power of Jesus just as much as our words. Who in your life needs to hear that the record of debt against them has been cancelled?