

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15  
COMPLETE

Are you complete? Do you have sense of being complete in life? Maybe “fulfilled” is a better word, but it means much the same. We’ll stick with complete! If you’re not complete, what would you say is missing? How can you get what that missing thing is? Our culture will suggest that to be complete there are relationships we need to have; it used to be “married with 2 children!” but I’m not quite sure what that culture norm for relationships is today if there even is one; what kind of relationship do you need to have to be complete? Or there are things to have – how can life be complete without a 42” flat screen TV? The whole advertising industry is built around this idea; life can only surely be complete if we have the right possessions or the right financial portfolio! Or life has to be incredibly happy, full of lots of good experiences to be shared with our pals; the next feel-good experience is what? Are these what makes us complete? Is there something that is missing? How do we find the missing piece and make life complete?

Paul tells us that we are complete! Jesus makes us complete. He was writing to a church that was in danger of losing its connection with Jesus; Jesus is Lord, but other people were telling them that Jesus was not enough; they could have Jesus but they also needed other things. They needed to keep lots of Jewish ceremonies and rituals; they needed to keep lots of Jewish laws about food; they needed some secret knowledge that only certain people had and could pass on to them. From all of that, they were being told by these other people that Jesus wasn’t enough. The issue we face today is different, but has same effect of leading us away from Jesus: we are faced with a culture that is telling us that Jesus is irrelevant, that Christian faith is just a fairy story that people have made up because we are afraid of dark! Some even tell us that the world would be a so much better place if all religion would just die off and go away. How do we deal with that? How do we stay close to Jesus?

Paul tells us that we are complete. He tells us that Jesus is complete; he tells us that Jesus has achieved a complete salvation; he tells us that we are complete because Jesus has saved us. This is not to downplay our relationships; this is not to say that we can’t enjoy a flat screen TV; this is not to say that feel-good experiences are wrong; but it is to say that our sense of being complete, fulfilled, does not lie with these things, but our sense of being complete lies with Jesus.

*Jesus is complete: “In Christ...” (Colossians 2:9)* Let me ask you: who is Jesus? If someone were to ask you that question today after you leave worship, what would you say? He is a teacher, our friend, someone who loves us? For Paul, the complete Jesus is here, the One who has all of God in Him. We struggle to understand this because it is a big thing to say. The Bible shows us Jesus, the perfect man, the real human being: He was hungry and tired, then we see Him suffering, dying and we revel in fact that Jesus is just like us; He is a real human being, who knows us, who understands us. But Paul takes us to the other side of Jesus’ character to tell us that the whole of God lives in Jesus; Jesus is completely God as well as being completely human. There is nothing lacking in Him! He is Lord; there is nothing missing, nothing lacking. He is complete; He is completely human, He is completely God and because He is complete, we need no-one else to be our Lord, no-one else to save us.

*Jesus saves us completely:* if we go to end of this passage there are two pictures that Paul uses to explain what Jesus has done for us. “*He forgave...*” (Colossians 2:13-15) Forgiveness is key to the gospel; Jesus forgives us our sins and Paul has the picture of a piece of paper on which is written all of our faults, failings, misdemeanours, crimes, shortcomings and that

piece of paper is the record that will condemn us in the eyes of God; it stands against us. But Jesus has taken that piece of paper and nailed it to the cross; in a sense it is still there, it is still nailed to the cross because the cross is the place where Jesus took it away; He took on Himself everything written against us on that piece of paper and now we are forgiven; “*He forgave us all our sins*”. There is a second picture: we face difficult things and we have an enemy who would use these difficult things to take us away from Jesus; these enemies are disarmed, powerless, defeated at the cross and by the resurrection; our enemies are powerless to hurt us now because they are disarmed and defeated by Jesus.

Jesus saves us completely. We need no other saviour. There is nothing else to do for our salvation. Our sins are forgiven and our enemies are defeated and Jesus is Lord for ever. To have Jesus is to have everything we need in our relationship with God. We don't need to keep any special ceremonies; we don't need to keep any special rules and regulations about life or religion; we don't need any secret knowledge. Jesus saves us completely! When people in our culture tell us that Jesus is irrelevant, then they are blind to how things stand between us, our world, and the God who made everything! Jesus saves us completely and we need nothing, no-one else to add to what Jesus has done.

*We are complete: “You have...” (Colossians 2:10)* This is where it gets tricky. We might well be happy to say that Jesus is complete; we might well be happy to say that He has achieved a complete salvation for us, but we're not quite so sure that we can say “we are complete”. We'd much rather speak about ourselves in other ways: a work in progress; better today than I was yesterday; a day nearer heaven; or however we may express that sense of being made, being worked on, growing, being built up; we're more comfortable with that sort of language. In reality both are true! The tree picture from earlier still stands as a picture of something growing and that we are growing, being built up, and strengthened. But Jesus has not only done something *for* us in our salvation; He has also done something *in* us and it is that something *in* us that makes us complete.

Circumcision and baptism are both ceremonies that admit us into the people of God. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the physical mark of being Jewish and being part of God's people. In the New Testament, baptism was that same mark of being part of the people of God. These were ceremonies that people went through to show that they belonged. But Paul is not talking here about outward ceremonies; he is talking about what these ceremonies mean on the inside. Both mean the same! Both are about putting something off and putting something else on. Being circumcised by Christ is all about putting off the sinful nature, getting rid of all that is against God in our attitudes and in our lives. Baptism is a picture of going down into the water and coming up again, going down to die to the old self and coming up in the power of Jesus to live a new life. Jesus has done this *in* us. When we believe in Jesus as Lord, this is what He does *to* us, *in* us; He makes us new people, people who have died to the old self and who are raised as new people, looking to live for Jesus. Jesus has done this in us; by faith we are these new people; Jesus has done this to us and so we are complete; we need no other Saviour to do anything else in us! This is another kind of reality for us to see; this is the gospel and that God does for us and to us in Jesus; this gospel way of seeing transforms the way we see Jesus and transforms the way we see ourselves because no longer does salvation depend on us and our being enough and how much we grow, but we are already complete; Jesus has already done everything for us and to us and in us.

We live in Jesus; we live for Jesus. We need nothing else; if we have nothing else we are still complete. If we have none of the relationships that our culture tells us we need; if we don't have a flat screen TV; if we are past going out for feel-good experiences, we are still complete

when we have Jesus. We are complete and we live out that complete life by being the kind of people Jesus wants us to be. We live in the ways He teaches us; we follow His model for life; we put our faith into practice because we are already complete. Living in Jesus' ways shows the world that we are complete and that we are living out that complete life that Jesus already gives!

We hold onto Christian faith in face of opposition because Jesus is complete, salvation is complete, and we are complete. We hold onto Christian faith in face of difficult things because Jesus is complete, salvation is complete, and we are complete. There is so much about life and the world that would try to break the connection we have with Jesus, but we persevere in faith, we keep going in the Christian life and we keep that connection come what may. Be inspired and let nothing distract you. "*The righteous...*" (*Psalm 92:12-15*) This is what Jesus does for us; this is what Jesus does to us; this is what Jesus does in us. We are complete for ever!