



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

# Reasons to Celebrate

**Preeminent. Christ's Place in the World | Part 10**

**Tim Badal | February 22, 2015 | Colossians 2:8-23**



Take God's Word in your hands and turn to the book of Colossians. Over the last couple of weeks we have been learning about one simple theme from God's Word. I hope that every time you hear the word "Colossians," you will connect with this theme: Jesus Christ is Preeminent. He is greater, He is more powerful, He is more majestic and He's more awesome than anything in this world. Because of that, He deserves first place in all that we say and do. This includes our worship, whether we are in church or not. May everything in your life be under the submission and lordship of the Preeminent Jesus Christ.

This week we are in Colossians 2:8-23. This is the same passage that we looked at last week when we addressed the problems that the Colossian church was facing. False teachers had infiltrated the church, propagating their own man-made heresies and causing confusion among the Colossians and resulting in them not making Christ preeminent in their lives. We will be looking at the solution to that problem this week. The solution wasn't in legalism, mysticism, ritualism or any other external practice. None of these things can grant spiritual vitality, which is never found in empty religion. You cannot be religious enough to make yourself have a healthy relationship with God. It can be found only in an extensive relationship with Christ and His church. Today, we will learn how we can have that relationship. It is all because of what Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary. So let's look at Colossians 2:8-23. Here is what Paul says to the Colossians and to us as well.

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

*If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations – "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used) – according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

Last week we dealt with the problems of ritualism, legalism and mysticism, but now Paul reminds us that we have a reason to celebrate, not in ourselves but in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We who were dead in our trespasses are now made alive in Christ. We need to understand what this celebration is all about.

We love celebrations, don't we? There are countless milestones that we celebrate: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, retirements, and the lives of believers who have gone to be with the Lord. We celebrate victories in sporting events. Yesterday, my son Noah had a basketball game and it was a close one. In the final seconds of the game, Noah's team stole the ball and sunk the winning basket at the final buzzer. All of the dads celebrated as if we had done the work. We celebrated like we were

on the team. We were victorious, winning a hard fought battle. Celebration happens in the halls of academia as well, when we have worked hard and are rewarded for that work. After all the hard work has taken place, we celebrate through the victory of a diploma.

What does it mean to celebrate? I like to study words that I use in every day language. To celebrate literally means to proclaim, praise or extoll someone. When you celebrate someone, you're praising, proclaiming or extolling them. We do this often. We celebrate the achievements of so many different people. However, as followers of Jesus Christ, we have Someone to celebrate. That Person is Jesus Christ. We celebrate Him because of His sacrifice. We celebrate Him because of His hard work. We celebrate Him because in His sacrifice, we who were dead in our trespasses have now been made alive in Jesus Christ (2:13).

The reason Paul tells us to celebrate is because during the days of the church at Colossae, people had begun to think that the Christian life was routine and mundane. It had become boring. This may be true for some of you today. When you are bored, it is easy to try and find something to spice it up. We learned last week from Colossians 2:16-23 that there were all sorts of options if you wanted to spice things up in your spiritual walk. If you really wanted to give a booster shot to your spirituality, you needed to partake in all kinds of ritualism and mysticism and legalism. That was the way you were going to find vitality and vibrancy in your walk with God.

Paul reminds us at the beginning of this passage that we don't need any of that stuff because we have Christ. If we have Christ, we have no need for anything else. Having Christ is reason enough to celebrate the greatness of what He has done. In this passage we're going to see Paul extol, praise and proclaim the Name of Jesus. I hope these three reasons to celebrate will change the way you look at your Christianity. I hope they change the way you fight. May you see yourself differently because you realize that you have been part of a celebration of Jesus Christ today. In Christ we have been given His:

## 1. Completeness

Through Jesus Christ, we have been given a new completeness. Look at Colossians 2:9-10. *"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him."* We have been filled with Christ. As children of God we are fully complete in Christ. We have an overflowing measure of all that Christ has purposed us to have in Him. When Jesus was ministering on this earth, He said in John 10:10, *"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* Not just mediocre, ordinary life, but an abundant one. This is a life that overflows with all of His goodness. Paul reaffirms this profound truth. What does "abundant" and "full living" in Christ look like?

When Paul says that we have been filled in Christ, it means God has intended His children to be flooded to the point of overflowing with all of Christ's love, power and richness. He wants us to experience all that we can in Christ; therefore we don't have to turn anywhere else. It means we are so full of all that Christ has given us that we no longer have to go around looking for other things to fill the gaps in our lives, whether that is sin or any other external boosters or pick-me-ups of religious activity to spice up what we believe is mundane. In Christ, God has set before us a table where He meets all of our needs according to the riches of Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:7, 3:16). He does that by setting a table before us and showering us with succulent food to eat.

I grew up in a Middle-Eastern home. One of the ways that Middle-Eastern customs came out in our home was loving people with food. Now you know why I have the physique that I have. When a guest came over, we celebrated his or her presence by setting out all sorts of food. As soon as one course finished, another came out. It was totally different from the previous one. Food kept coming until everyone was completely full. Guests would have to say, "Enough! Enough! I can't eat anymore! It's too much!" The response to this was usually, "Unbuckle your belt buckle a little bit. Give yourself another notch. You've still got room."

God has opened the floodgates of heaven through the work of Jesus Christ. He has set you at the table and continues to bring in His blessings. It isn't the same blessing continuously; there is variety in His blessings. They are tailored to you so that you will feel like you are overflowing with blessings. This is what Christ has done. Before we look at how He blesses us, we need to review some of the things that we learned last week.

You might say, "That doesn't describe my life in Christ. I'm hungry. I'm thirsty. I'm lacking. It seems that the world has a whole lot more to offer than Christ. When I go to my computer, it seems to offer more. When I go and hang out with my friends, they offer more. When I live for myself, it seems to offer more." If you think this, it isn't that Christ isn't good enough, but rather it is because you have allowed the weeds in your life to suffocate the things that God wants to give you. Last week, we talked about plucking out those weeds. We need to pull those weeds that keep us from and rob us of what we need.

Notice how many times in our text Paul uses the following phrases:

1. In Him
2. With Him

If you want spiritual vitality, it is directly proportional to your connection with Jesus Christ. If you are far from God today, you have no right to say, "God, where is the blessing? God, where's the vitality? God, where is the abundant life?" If you are living far from God by going through the motions of religious activities, or even sinful activities, you'll never experience what God wants to give you. You will never have reason to celebrate.

This completeness can't happen through:

### **Our traditions, but rather in a total change of heart**

Last week, in Colossians 2:16-23, we discussed some of the heresies that plagued the Colossian church. One of those heresies was that you could not be complete in Christ unless you had been circumcised. The false teachers believed that even if you were a professing believer of Jesus Christ and following in His ways, you were not a true follower of Christ unless you were circumcised. Circumcision was the physical removal of the foreskin, an Old Testament tradition forced upon New Testament Christianity. It was a tradition commanded by God in the Old Testament to distinguish the chosen people of God.

Why would Paul say that such an important act was no longer necessary? In Colossians 2:11 we find the answer: "*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.*" Let's stop there for a moment. The reason why you do not have to become circumcised is because you've already had that take place. A priest had not removed the foreskin of these men. That was a shadow of something greater that was coming. In Christ, we now have experienced a far greater circumcision. This circumcision is a "*circumcision...of the heart*" (Romans 2:29) and "*made without hands*" (Colossians 2:11). They had never had surgery done by a human priest, but rather a spiritual surgery done by the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. While the physical circumcision only affected one part of the body, the spiritual circumcision affects all of who we are.

Before you think that this circumcision is merely something spiritual, Paul says that something has been cut away. This circumcision is "*a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.*" This does not refer to the Baby Jesus' circumcision on the eighth day of His human life. This refers to when Jesus was cut down from the cross of Calvary. In that one event, we no longer need a removal of skin; rather we need to affirm the death of Jesus Christ.

In the Colossians' day, people pointed to their own circumcision for verification of their salvation. They would say, "I'm a follower of Christ! See! I've done the work that you haven't done." Paul says that you cannot point to a physical aspect of your body that makes you holy; you must point to the finished work of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we can point to nothing in and of ourselves. We cannot say, "Look at this and you will see that I'm a Christian." The only thing we can point to is the cross and the change that event has made on our entire being.

Paul tells his readers to stop using some small piece of flesh as the litmus test of their salvation. Being a follower of Christ involves a total change of the heart. Traditions say, "If you do this ritual, you are made holy." Tradition may be good, but if you are using traditions to affirm your salvation, your faith is in yourself, not in the finished work of Christ.

What are you pointing to for your salvation? If it has anything to do with your own accomplishments, then you have accepted yourself, not Jesus Christ. Recognize that the total change of heart means that Christ's work on the cross has so uniquely and extensively changed who you are that you are no longer the same person. Christ has taken out your heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh that beats for Him alone. When a Jewish believer was circumcised, it meant nothing if it was not affirmed in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. If you think that any activity can merit your holiness, you are only boasting in your own works and stealing glory from Jesus Christ.

Paul corrects that mindset. Spiritual rebirth is not about the traditions or rituals that you hold to; it is about the change of the heart.

So spiritual completeness cannot happen through our traditions, but only through a total change of heart. Also, spiritual completeness cannot happen through...

## **Our experiences, but rather in His cleansing of our sins**

Colossians 2:12 says, "...*having been buried with him in baptism...*" Paul moves from circumcision to baptism. Some of you know a little bit about circumcision, but baptism is a topic most of us know a lot about. Baptism is the act where we are symbolically cleansed and washed of our sins. It is an external act of the inward change that has taken place. What Paul addresses here is the preliminary act that is done which allows this cleansing to take place. Baptism is a picture of our dying with Christ and being buried with Him. This is why we believe in the immersion style of baptism, which best represents what is being symbolized. We go down into the water as Christ went down into the grave. We come out of the water in newness of life because we have been resurrected from the grave. It is a picture of our spiritual death and resurrection. In the moment of baptism, we see that our sins are not cleansed or washed away until we recognize the powerful symbol accomplished. Our sin is buried with Christ. In baptism we put to death that which was part of the flesh. This death happens once for all.

There was once a little boy who had a cat. He loved his cat and spent all his waking moments with this cat. They were inseparable until one day the cat died. The father told the son that it was time to bury the cat. He couldn't keep it around. After all of his protests, the son reluctantly buried the cat. The son was smart. He knew that if he buried the cat, the cat would never be able to spend time with him. So he put the cat in a box. The boy cut a hole in the box for the cat's tail. He positioned the tail to poke up outside the grave. So when he missed the cat, he would go outside and pull the cat's tail, resurrecting the cat. While some would consider this morbid curiosity, this boy really cared for his cat. Every time he did this, however, the cat was increasingly decomposed. One day, the tail came up but the cat didn't.

This is a pretty sick story, but this is what I want you to understand: when we die to our sin, we do what the little boy did. We bury our sin, but leave the tail so that we can grab it when we need it and try to maintain some connection. We know the calling that God has given us to get rid of that sin and put it to death. However, we are often tempted to leave that tail so we can bring up those sins again.

After the death of Abraham Lincoln, there was a lot of suspicion that the Southern sympathizers would desecrate his grave. They were so filled with hatred after the war that there were rumors they would desecrate his body in some horrific way. These rumors and myths became so well known that, at the turn of the century, there was doubt as to whether or not Lincoln was actually in his grave. Because of this growing doubt, they were afraid that someone had stolen it, so they exhumed the body of our 16<sup>th</sup> president. A group of about 20 people — people who had walked and talked with Lincoln, including his own son — gathered to confirm that the body really was Lincoln's. Sure enough, Abraham Lincoln was in his grave. In Springfield, they wanted to make sure that no one touched the grave ever again so they entombed it in more tons of concrete than any other person in all of history.

When we died with Christ, concrete was poured over that grave so that it would never open again. We need to die to our sin because cleansing comes in the death of our sin when we die with Christ. It is then and only then that sin can be washed away. This means that interactions with angels, dreams and visions — things that will puff you up — will do you no good. You must put to death, once and for all, your sinful nature so that it may be raised anew with Christ. You want cleansing? You want vitality? Allow your life to be laid low — not elevated as Paul says, not puffed up, not in some self-made religion (Colossians 2:22) — but laid low in a grave with all of its sin and guilt.

In baptism, we acknowledge that a funeral has taken place. Do you recognize that? We held a baptism service here a few weeks ago. It's a funeral, right? When baptized, a person is saying, "I'm not going to live that way anymore. I'm not going to follow those ways anymore. That lifestyle is dead to me. I'm not going to do that because it has been buried in Christ, once and for all."

So spiritual completeness cannot happen through our traditions, but only through Jesus Christ cleaning our sins. Spiritual completeness also cannot happen through. . .

## **Our sacrifices, but rather in how He resurrects our corpses**

We celebrate the resurrection of our corpses by His power. In Colossians 2:12, we learn that we have been raised with Christ through faith and the powerful working of God, Who raised Christ from the dead. Last week we talked about empty religion filled with abstaining from a variety of different things (Colossians 2:21-22). This empty religion believed that by forbidding ourselves from doing certain things God would deem us good and holy. Here's the problem with that thinking: if you think that sacrificing certain things in this world will make you holy and righteous, you are only dressing up a corpse. You are putting deodorant on a rotting piece of flesh. When we die, we'll have a funeral and they will put us in our Sunday best. From a clothing

standpoint, we'll never have looked better. However, at no point will we get up and say, "Because I'm wearing my best suit, I'm alive!"

When we think that we can clean up our lives through sacrifices, we're missing the point. No amount of sacrifice, no amount of abstinence, is going to make new birth possible. Paul says that this is an act of God. It is a work of power done through Christ. We cannot do enough to earn right standing before God.

This leads us back to the story of Lazarus who died, was wrapped up and buried (Luke 16). He cannot say, "I will sacrifice my way out of here." No. The only thing that would raise him from the dead is Jesus Christ the Life-giver saying, "Lazarus, come forth." The only thing that saves us from our sin is when God, through the work of His Son Jesus Christ, cries out our name and says, "Come forth alive." We need Someone to raise us from the dead. We need that Someone Who has done it Himself. Christ Himself has been resurrected from the grave. He is the Firstfruit of the resurrected from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20). That's what we celebrate. We who were dead in our trespasses and sin have been made alive through Christ (2:13). That is what God did on that first Easter Sunday. That is why we celebrate Easter.

With these three examples we can see that we will never be complete if we try to experience abundance through traditions, experiences or sacrifices. True living in Christ means having a change of heart, cleansing of our sin and being raised from the dead in Christ. How does He accomplish this?

## 2. Conquest

We celebrate because of what Christ has done on the cross. The victory that He secured on the cross enables us to rest in Him in the midst of every need we face as believers. How can we have abundance in life if we are dead in our trespasses and sin? Christ takes care of three things once and for all.

### The penalty of sin

Colossians 2:13 says, "*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.*" Paul speaks of the issue of trespasses. Our sin means that we have crossed the line. We have stepped out of bounds. We have gone onto property that was not our own. The same sin that we have committed is the same sin Adam and Eve had committed in the Garden of Eden. God said, "Don't go there," but they did. God has told us, "Don't go there," but we did. We have trespassed on property that is not our own.

We have transgressed against God and His law. We have crossed the line. We have done this, not just because we are lost, but in all-out rebellion. Don't think that the sinful individual is someone who simply lost their way and got on the wrong side without knowing it. We were told, as I have told my children, "You will not touch that." What do we do? We touch it. We can't try the excuse, "Oh, I fell into that. I'm sorry." No, we've said, "I'm a rebel. I don't care what You say, I'm going to do it." We have rebelled against God. Every one of us has rebelled against God.

The Bible makes it clear that if you rebel against God and go against His perfect plan, all you can expect is death. The soul that sins will die. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We have a problem. We are dead in our trespasses and sin and the uncircumcision of our flesh (Colossians 2:13). It's all over us. It is evident! We don't have to wonder if we are sinful. We are all sinful. We can watch the news and see that we are a sinful group of people.

However, we are not to be left in that situation. The text says that Jesus came and we were, "*made alive together with him.*" How? How could we go from being dead in our trespasses and sins, in the uncircumcision of our hearts, to being made alive together with God? How can that happen? The text tells us: "*Having forgiven us all our trespasses.*" Jesus came and forgave us our sins. It would cost Christ His life, but He did so in order that we who were dead might be made alive in Him once again. How did He do it?

Look at the word, "forgiven." It's a powerful word. It is from the Greek word *charizomai*. It literally means, "to give, to grant as a favor, to give gratuitously, generously, graciously; to be given in kindness; to offer freely something; willingly and unconditionally bestow it upon another; to give to those who don't deserve it; to show grace by providing undeserved help to someone who is completely unworthy and doing it from a place of love." Jesus forgave our sins out of a heart of love. Jesus didn't go and say, "God, do I really have to forgive Tim's sins? Tim's a loser. He's a rebel. Father, do I really have to? Really? Tim? Give me ten

others, not Tim. I don't want to save him. He's blown it so many times. It's hard to keep count of all the times that he's blown it. I don't want to do that." Jesus didn't say this about you either. He didn't say, "Do I have to?"

I want to be careful. The Bible says that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ wanted the cup to pass by Him. However, that was His humanity speaking; no human being wants to be put to death. His humanity was crying out, "If there's any other way..." But when Christ submitted Himself, as He always did, to the plan and will of God, He said, "Not My will, but Your will be done" (Matthew 26:39). This should be our cry as well. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus went to the cross with joy. He had us on His mind, and His heart was overflowing with joy, not "Do I have to," but "I get to die for them so that they who are dead might be made alive in Me." That should give you cause to celebrate. That should make you rejoice. He looked forward with joy to forgiving you.

Remember this when you have to forgive someone else. "Do I have to? They are really a loser. They really don't deserve it. They've done nothing to move themselves closer to me. Why would I extend forgiveness?" The Bible says that we must forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. If you are holding a grudge, you don't recognize the grace that has been extended to you. You will never be able to forgive until you know how truly forgiven you are in Christ.

Paul doesn't stop here. Let's look at the text. This is important; let's walk through this. The text does not say, "having forgiven us 'a few' of our trespasses," "having forgiven us 'some' of our trespasses," "having forgiven us 'the smaller' trespasses." No, the word here in the English is the word "all." All means all. You don't need to be a Greek scholar to understand that! This means that every one of our sins — every last one, the small ones and the big ones, all of our trespasses — has been forgiven. Every time we cross the line against God, Christ, in the work on the cross, said, "It is forgiven. It is forgiven. It is forgiven." If that doesn't give you reason to celebrate, then you don't know what it means to be forgiven.

How did He do it?

## The payment of sin

Jesus Christ has declared victory by paying for our sin. Colossians 2:14 says, "*By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*" Let's look at your record.

Growing up, I wasn't the best kid. I got myself into trouble, not just a little bit of trouble, a lot of trouble. In fact, when I was cleaning up my grandmother's things after she had passed away, I came across a filing cabinet. One of the files was labeled, "Tim's Legal Issues" and it wasn't a small file. It was a pretty big file. My grandmother had an attorney friend who would come to my aid when I got into trouble. This file contained all of the different things that I did and information about all my community service hours. When I pulled it out, guilt washed over me. I thought, "My goodness. All of the trouble that I have gotten myself into!" It wasn't fun. Amanda got to see that. It wasn't fun admitting to her some of the things that I had done in my youthful past.

However, your preacher is not the only one with a rap sheet. We all have one. Each of us has a large file with every single one of our indiscretions in it. It includes the public ones — the ones that everyone sees — and every one of the private ones. The sins that have ripped you up for decades, the ones that you cannot get beyond, every sin is there on your rap sheet, staring you in the face. The sins that you did yesterday, the ones that you haven't thought about, the ones that you haven't felt guilty for are all on that rap sheet.

As good parents, my parents sought to make sure that whenever I got in trouble, they would pay crazy amounts of money to make sure that my youthful indiscretions would not hang over me as an adult. I learned what it meant to "expunge" a record. That meant making sure that it was wiped clean. It meant that when I went to get a job, none of these things would rise up against me. My parents worked hard for that. I am thankful for that because none of it hangs over me as an adult.

What each one of you has sitting over you like a ton of bricks is your written record held against you. You have a record against you filled with all of your trespasses. It isn't something that only you see. Everyone sees it. When a convicted felon was crucified on a cross, his offenses were nailed to the cross with him. Remember when Pilot asked, "What is Jesus' crime"? The answer was, "King of the Jews." This was placed above His head: "The King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26). Those who accused Him wanted "Blasphemer" and all of this other stuff. Pilot, by the providence of God, wrote, "He's the King of the Jews." People asked why this Man was dying.

Standing before us for the whole world to see, as much as we want to hide it, our offenses are written for others to see. The devil knows it. That's why he beats you up over it. That's why he brings that stuff up over and over again. That's why he accuses

the brethren. It's public record. It's there. He knows it and others know it. But here's what God does: Jesus came and canceled the record of debt that stood against you with its legal demands. Your sin and my sin deserve death but Christ's death cancels that penalty. How? Christ died on our behalf. That was the legal demand. By dying on the cross, He takes our record of debt and wipes it clean. Jesus doesn't give amnesty; He clears our record. He says, "I saved you from your sin. You are no longer a sinner. You are made clean."

As a young kid, I grew up with an Etch-a-Sketch, that fun little toy you could draw on. When you were done with that drawing, or you made a mistake, or wanted to do something else, you would shake it. Once you shook it, the drawing was erased. In the greatest Etch-a-Sketch moment in all of human history, on the day that Christ died on the cross, He took all of our sins written on our horrifically large Etch-a-Sketch and with one fell swoop, shook them off, never to be seen again. He did so in order that we might live. He did this so that we would not be in bondage any longer.

Our text says, "...*the record of debt...*" (2:14). Paul is alluding to a prevalent issue in New Testament days: indentured servitude. An individual would get into so much debt that he or she could not get out of it and would become an indentured servant. In the same way, we had no way of redeeming ourselves from our sinful state. We paid our debt to the devil. We were in bondage to him. We were enslaved to him. We were trying to work our way out of that bondage. The devil mocked our efforts: "Yeah. Just keep working. If you keep working, maybe you'll get close to God. Maybe that will work." The devil knew that we could not work our way out of hell. Jesus came and went to hell and scooped us out of that place. He paid the debt and said, "They are no longer in bondage to you, Satan." We cannot do this on our own. It is only by the work of Jesus.

The verb "canceled" is the aorist tense, which means that this action took place in the past and it's over. You don't have to be hounded by the devil anymore. I know some people who are hounded by sins that were committed decades ago. They are still horrified and wonder if God has forgotten those things, if He's forgiven those things. They wonder if they can ever live in freedom and vitality.

In Christ, you can know that your debt has been canceled. That sin that you committed yesterday, that you promised yourself you would never do again, the one that keeps getting you into trouble, Christ has canceled that sin. You don't have to be hounded anymore. Are you having trouble accepting the forgiveness of God? Remember, Paul says it has been wiped clean.

## The power of sin

There is one final victory. Colossians 2:15 says, "*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*" Paul addresses the sin and then he addresses the enemy, who seeks to destroy the people of God (1 Peter 5:8). We have victory in Christ because He has not only taken care of the problem with sin, but He conquered the enemy. This truth is seen in two ways:

1. Jesus disarmed the enemy. I love reading about wars. One of the aspects of war that I love reading about is the surrender, which tells us more about why the war was fought than the war does itself. One of the things that is present in every surrender is that the losing side has to lay down its arms. The losing side's soldiers will be brought before the winners, and they will place all of their weapons at the feet of the victors. On Easter Sunday, Jesus watched as the devil and all his demons placed all of their ammunition at His feet. They set down their weapons and stacked them up. Each of those relinquished weapons proclaimed Jesus as Victor. The devil was disarmed. How could the devil be disarmed if you feel that he is wreaking havoc in your life right now? The devil is a deceiver. He is being bombastic, roaring like a lion seeking someone to devour. The reason why he roars is because he has no teeth. He wants to scare you into believing that he is more powerful than he actually is. James tells you to resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). He has no power. If you think the power is in yourself, you're wrong. However, if your power is in Christ, you stand secure. Jesus disarmed the enemy.
2. Jesus put Satan to open displays of shame. In order to proclaim victory to their homeland, the victors would shackle the losers and parade them around the towns. It proclaimed that the battle was over; victory was won. Remember to celebrate because the devil has been defeated, his demons are disarmed and now he is paraded in shame before us. Our God has conquered him. When you recognize that, it will change the way you deal with temptation. Our temptation can often seem more powerful than we can handle. Temptation doesn't have the teeth that it used to have; it has taken the walk of shame. Jesus is more powerful. When temptation comes, remember that you are no longer in bondage. You have been made alive in Christ.

This leads us to our third and final point:

### 3. Certainty

We must celebrate because of the certainty that we have. What is our certainty? There are two certainties that should change the way we live in light of what we've heard. When we see Christ as Preeminent we realize that:

1. **All we need in life we can find in Christ.** This passage reminds us why Christ is preeminent. If Christ is preeminent, then why do we need that sin? Why do we need that website? Why do we need that gossip? Why do we need to have a loser mentality? If Christ is preeminent, why do we have such broken relationships? If Christ is preeminent, why are we giving the devil a foothold? If Christ is preeminent, why do we think that popularity in this world is important? If Christ is preeminent, why do we think that we should spend all our money on ourselves? If Christ is preeminent, why do we waste our time with such earthly things when we could be living for the glory of God? If we believe that everything we've just talked about makes Christ preeminent, why isn't it seen in our everyday lives? Christ is preeminent. That means that everything we need is available in Christ. Therefore, *"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ"* (Colossians 2:8). Go after that which is Preeminent, not the shadow, not the counterfeits, but the real deal.
2. **All we need from our Lord is available through Christ.** Colossians 2:9-10 reminds us of this truth: *"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."* Christ has all of God dwelling in His bodily form. We have all the fullness of Christ dwelling in us. Therefore, we need to recognize that all we need is at our disposal because of our relationship with Jesus Christ. God withholds nothing from us. We must bow the knee, rejoice in our Savior, rejoice in God and cry out, "God, give me all that I need. You've made it available. I want all of it that I might live for You, proclaim You as Lord, worship You, serve You and honor You in all my ways because You have empowered me to do so."

This week you can either celebrate the victory of Jesus or you can wallow in your own defeat. The life that is worth living — that vitality and abundance He has promised in John 10:10 — is found in a relationship that sees and recognizes that Christ is the Victor. We have reason to celebrate.

This means that we need to live differently. We know what Christ has done, now we must live in a place of victory rather than defeat. Will you live in light of that victory or will you live in some quasi place of defeat because the devil deceives you into thinking that you are defeated? My prayer is that you will take these verses and allow them to transform your life and the way you look at your temptations and service to God. After all, He is the Victor!