

Full Forgiveness

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[0:00] Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 2, and we'll be reading verses 6-15. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.

For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

In Him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us.

[1:26] He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

There's a very important way of thinking and logic in the Bible. It's a very important way that we as your pastors consciously try to teach you.

It's the relationship between the indicatives and the imperatives. Indicatives are statements of truth, and imperatives are commands.

And so the relationship between this is true, so therefore this is your duty. And in the Bible, those two things are married.

They're married together. You always find them. And what God has joined together, let not man separate. But in a marriage, one leads and the other follows.

[2:29] And so it is with this marriage of indicatives and imperatives of truth and duty. In the Bible, the indicatives lead. They go first. They form the basis of, because of these things, this is your duty.

And then the imperatives follow. They keep in step with the indicatives. And so in this marriage between truth and duty, it's one that you can see all over the New Testament.

All over the New Testament. And you can see it very clearly here in Colossians chapter 2. In verses 9 through 15, you have the indicatives.

You have things that are true. They're true. And they're gospel truths. And then in verses 16 through 23, which we didn't read, but we have read in the past, you have the imperatives.

You can look at verse 16. Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink. So these things are true, 15 through 23. And then verse 16 begins the therefore, because this is true, do not let this happen.

[3:35] Now, we consciously try to teach you these things, because this is the way the Bible wants us to think.

This is how the Spirit teaches us to think. Having both and in the right order is part and parcel of what it means to be led by the Spirit.

So truth leads naturally and logically and joyfully to obedience, to duty.

And so a heart soaring in faith to Christ. And laying hold by faith of everything that there is in Christ. All that we've seen in Colossians 1 and 2.

That leads to believing, joyful obedience in our lives. And that process is what it means to be keeping in step with the Spirit.

[4:33] The Spirit is telling us about Jesus. He teaches us by the Word of God. And he shows us who we are in Jesus and what Jesus has done. And then the Holy Spirit now says, therefore, go

and do this.

And so what it means to be led, what it means to be keeping in step with the Spirit is thinking through this process. Unfortunately, so much of the time we naturally gravitate to the imperatives. And so let me ask you, do you do that? You spend more time thinking about this is what I have to do. This is what I need to do. This is what I should do. We gravitate to only the do this.

That's our natural tendency. We focus on the commands. Now, sometimes we focus on them in one way. And sometimes we focus on them in another way. Sometimes we focus on them purely in whether I obey them.

I should obey them. Or sometimes we say, well, I don't have to obey them. I'm free from them.

That's natural man. They either say, I have to obey the commands or I don't have to obey them.

[5:41] But either way, their thinking swirls and is consumed with these commands. And that's why so much of the time you see these people who have been raised in legalistic homes and they go to college and then they throw it all out.

They go from one extreme to another because their mind has always been consumed with these commands. And that's natural religion. And that's thinking according to the basic principles of the world.

That's what Paul talked about. J. Gresham Machen wrote in his book, Christianity and Liberalism. He said this, here is the most fundamental difference.

The most basic difference between liberalism and Christianity. And by liberalism, he means natural religion, not political liberalism.

He's not talking about that. Between liberalism and Christianity. Liberalism is altogether in the imperative. What to do? The imperative mood. Well, Christianity begins with a triumphant indicative.

[6:46] This is what God has done. Now, liberalism appeals to man's will. While Christianity announces first a gracious act of God.

Now, does that mean there's no room in the Christian life and Christianity for imperatives? Well, of course not. Is there no room for therefore do this?

No. The Bible always takes us to the therefore do this. So what God has joined together, let not man separate. So to leave off the therefore do this is to snip the flower of faith.

It's to miss the power of godliness. And there is. Jesus saved us in order to save us from all lawlessness. So it's to leave the faith without an outlet of obedience.

Without an outlet of love. To leave faith wondering, what do I need to do? What should I be doing? That doesn't help faith. That doesn't help you in your Christian life.

[7:57] Now, why am I talking about this? Because I want you to clearly see how Paul is thinking here in Colossians chapter, in Colossians 2. In the whole book of Colossians.

But even more importantly, I want you to see the importance of thinking this way in your life. In your life. This is the pattern of sound thinking.

And the more you think this way, your mind will be transformed and renewed by the transforming of your mind. Not having a clear vision of these things, of this relationship between what God has said and then, therefore, this is what I need to do and this is how I need to live.

It is one reason, it's not the only reason, that Christians wrestle on and on with assurance. They wrestle with a joylessness.

Because all they think about is what God has told them to do, but they don't think about what God has already done for them. We need both. And so, their worlds become very small.

[9:03] And very dark and stuffy. And they live in this tomb that they've created, instead of living in wide open spaces where God's grace is blowing. And they're experiencing the joy of the Lord.

And that's why it's hard for them to encourage people. They themselves are not encouraged.

Therefore, they have a hard time knowing what to say to people.

We don't know or we don't understand how the Bible encourages us and how God comforts us. And so, therefore, we can't encourage others. And so, it's why we as parents can so very easily say to our children when they are sad and where they're discouraged and when they're facing something hard in their life.

Well, we say too often, just buck up, cheer up, get over it. That's not that bad. Well, and we don't give them the gospel. But it's the gospel itself that gives people the power and the ability and the hope to obey.

It's the gospel that is the very thing that makes obedience possible. And so, a holy, loving obedience is the flower and the fruit of faith.

[10:13] They need both. I need both. Our Christian brothers and sisters need both. And so, what we have in verses 9 through 15 is the indicative.

It's the truth. The gospel truths that ground what we're going to see in the rest of Colossians. Because after verse 16, it takes a very different turn.

And it starts focusing then on what is our duty. Now, he's not going to leave the imperatives all behind. You're going to see them coming up. Are the indicatives all behind? They're going to come up.

But he's going to then turn to, now this is because Jesus Christ is this. He is the Savior. You need to live this way. Now, so dear Christians, what are some of the things that you absolutely have to bring into your way of thinking?

What are some of the things that you need to put in the inventory of your mind? So, these are things that you are thinking on daily. We saw Psalm 13.

[11:19] Your unfailing love. That's something that we need to put in. Well, what are some of these things that we need to put into our intellectual inventory? A few weeks ago, we already had one.

Who Christ is. Who Christ is. He's the fullness of the deity living in bodily form. Now, your faith needs to have the ongoing incarnation of Jesus Christ.

That thought living in your mind. So, not just Jesus in the past in a manger, but Jesus the man living in heaven right now for us.

Thoughts of Christ need to fill our mental inventory. So, when we're going through life, and we're faced with challenges, and we're faced with opportunities, and we're faced with possibilities, we're faced with difficulties.

That thought that Jesus is God living in the flesh needs to be a part of our inventory. Well, maybe you've worked sometime in your life.

[12:22] Maybe you do work now in a factory. I worked at Nisco here in Bremen, and they make the rubber seals that go around your car doors. And so, as part of the process of making those, we had to go day after day.

We had to go get these swools of rubber, and we had to go back into where they were stored, and we had to bring them out, and we had to put them on our machines in order to make these parts. So, day after day, we went back to that room, and we pulled it out, and we brought it out, and we used it. Now, faith goes back to the incarnation day after day.

It's thinking about who Jesus is. He's God, and he's man. It lives on that. This life I live, I live by faith on that reality. So, faith goes back to the incarnation again and again, day after day.

Faith leans on the fact that in Christ, the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And now, in verse 10, Paul turns this and makes it more personal.

[13:32] He tells us he's been talking a lot about Jesus Christ. But now he's going to say what is now true of us. What is just as true about us.

And he says, and you have been given fullness in Christ. You've been given fullness in Christ. Just as the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, you are just as full in Jesus Christ.

And like I said this morning, this is a great week to talk about being full. Because we're going to have a great illustration in our own lives. I hope that you, this week, will be full at some point. Now, when we're in Christ, God fills us full. Full, satisfied, complete. There's no more room for anything else.

And so, what are we filled with, Paul? Well, he doesn't say. That's what's made this a rather difficult passage. He doesn't say in particular. It might have something to do with what the false teachers are saying.

[14:39] But I think the bigger, the broader answer of what we are full with, Paul's going to give us a little sermon about what we're full with. It's not just one thing. It's a lot of different things. Well, what are we filled with?

Verses 11 and 12. He shows us that in Christ we have fullness of life. Life. We're new creations. And we need to put that into our intellectual inventory. We need to be thinking that. That needs to not be some foreign concept to us, but a concept that we know and understand and live upon and know what are the implications of that.

So, I'm not what and I am not who I used to be. I'm not what or I'm not who I used to be. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old is gone. The new has come. Now, the false teachers were saying, you need to do this. You need to do that. You need to keep this set of rules.

[15:43] If you're going to be complete, if you're going to be mature, if you're going to be fully grown, if you're going to reach all that God wants you to be. Now, notice, what does Paul do?

Does he meet them with his own set of rules? With his own list? He doesn't meet them on their own battlefield. He says that. He just totally undercuts it all.

He says that's ridiculous. If you're in Christ, you're already new. You're already full. You already have life. You don't need to be circumcised like some of these people were saying.

You already have been circumcised. And that circumcision wasn't done by the hands of men. It was done by Christ. Something much more profound and something much more amazing.

It wasn't just the cutting off of some skin off your body. It was a heart level circumcision. In the Old Testament, Moses talked about the circumcision of the heart.

[16:45] He said to the Israelites, circumcise your hearts. And of course, how do you obey that command? It's really not one we can obey. It needs to be done.

But you can't change your heart. The leper can't change his spots. But in the New Covenant, New Covenant age, Moses the prophet prophesied, the Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul and live.

Wasn't that a command? He said love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul. It's something we can't do. But God's going to do something so amazing that it's going to put that love in our hearts.

And the result is that we're going to live. The implication is this life that you've been living with an uncircumcised heart, that's not really life. But he's going to come and circumcise your heart and give you life.

And Paul is now coming to the Colossians of all people, these Gentiles, and he's saying that has happened to you. The end times, the last day's circumcision has happened to you.

[18:00] And God didn't do some sort of minor surgery on your body. He cut off the sinful nature, the flesh. The flesh. That's that principle. It's that power of that controlling power that says, that only asks, what do I want?

What do I want? Or it says, what do I have to do? It's up to me. It's the principle that lives according to the basic principles of the world that Paul has already talked about. That thinks, if I do this, or if I do that, then I'll be saved.

Then I'll somehow merit favor with God. Or I'll somehow have life. Now the flesh's only concern is me. Is me.

It listens only to me. And the flesh is a little desperate tyrant. The flesh turns us all into little where it's dark and poor and ignorant and blind and enslaved and sad.

And the flesh does that to us. We nail ourselves into our own coffins. And under the power of the flesh, it's impossible for us to please God.

[19:24] We can't please Him. We don't even care to please Him. We want to only please ourselves. It's impossible for us to really live. And we can't escape. And we can't even imagine life outside of this tomb that I've made.

Now what did God do for us in Christ? That was our old life. That was who we used to be. So what did God do for us in Christ?

And again, remember, this is what we need to be putting into our inventory and living on. Well, He cut the flesh off. He circumcised our hearts. He took the flesh off the throne of our hearts.

The flesh is that controlling power that just forces us. And we only think about ourselves that, well, He takes it away. Well, now it still lives. But it's not on the throne of your heart anymore.

It's still present. It's still running its little insurgency. But we aren't living in the flesh's kingdom anymore. So how did that happen?

[20:27] How did God save us from ourselves and from that power of the flesh? Well, verse 12, He shows us. Having been buried with Him. This is how Jesus saves us from ourselves and from the flesh.

Having been buried with Him in baptism. And raised with Him through your faith in the power of God who raised Him from the dead. So what is God's solution to the flesh?

To that part that just says, I want to sin. I want to do what I want to do. And I don't care what anyone else wants. Or this is all up to me. This is all my self-righteousness. What is God's solution to the flesh?

Notice, it's not reformation. He doesn't change the flesh. God doesn't send the flesh to reform school to learn how to behave. I think sometimes we think that's how we're going to be able to get away from sin.

If I can just manage and get this flesh to behave. You know what? The flesh does not and will not and cannot learn to love God. It's against God.

[21 : 31] So God doesn't save us from the flesh by changing the flesh. His solution is very different and far more radical. And it's far more amazing.

Stuart Elliott tells a story that illustrates what God did. So imagine a poor, enslaved prisoner in the castle of a tyrant.

And that's us. A slave to the flesh. Dead in the uncircumcision of our hearts. A slave to sin. And this slave is exploited. And he is condemned.

And he is sad and miserable. Sometimes he tries to escape. He finds a ladder that he leans against the outside wall. It's a ladder with ten rungs.

And sometimes we try to climb out of that castle with our ten-rung ladder. But we don't get very far. And then our master comes and beats, tears off one of the rungs and beats us near to death.

[22 : 37] But nearby a great king lives. And this great king sees this poor, trapped slave in the castle of this tyrant. And his heart is moved with compassion for the slave.

And the king comes up with an amazing, a wonderful plan. And in some ways it's outrageous.

It's unthinkable. It's unimaginable. It's outside the scope of our imagination. And we would say, oh, can it be done? Is this even possible? Well, we can't go into the details.

But the king puts into plan his escape, his rescue. The good king goes in and he kills the imprisoned slave.

He kills him. He crucifies him on a cross. And now the tyrant goes to look for his slave. But his slave is dead.

[23 : 42] It's dead. Dead and buried. And now the slavery is over. And the master-slave relationship is through. It's done with.

It's broken. And so the flesh no longer rules. But once the slave's body's been buried, the king comes along three days later and raises him from the dead and takes him to his own home.

And now that slave is alive again. And he's living in a different kingdom. He's living in a different castle. And he has a new master. Now, if you're a Christian, you have to understand that has happened to you.

You have a whole new life. And it's a full life. You've been filled up with life toward God. So God's solution to the flesh is not reformation.

It's resurrection. You can see that theme in the Bible if you look for it. The same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead raises us from the dead.

[24 : 49] And so when he died, when Christ died, you died. And when he was buried, you were buried. And when he rose, you rose from the dead. And it happened by faith.

It was pictured in your baptism. In baptism, you by faith say, this Jesus is mine. His life is mine. His death is mine. His burial is mine.

And his resurrection is mine. Christ said that he came that his sheep might have life. And life to the full.

Now, that's what you already have. That's what you already have. This is all in the past tense. This is not something you need to make happen.

This is not something that you need to do. It is something that has happened. And it is something that you, something that God has done.

[25 : 46] So the house is built. You've been moved into the house. And what God calls you to do is live in the house. And enjoy the house. And day by day, wake up and say, look at this life.

This is my life. I have life now where once I was dead. This is all mine in Jesus Christ. I was only once alive to myself. I was only once alive to me and what I wanted.

But I've walked out of the tomb with Christ. And I've walked into the blazing sun. And the breeze is on me. This is my life. And now his commands are my delight.

Because my heart has been changed. I hear and I can obey. I used to only live for my own little kingdom. But now God has put me into his big kingdom.

The Hobbit describes Gollum under the power of the ring. And it's a perfect description of us under the power of the flesh and sin.

[26 : 47] He lived in dark caves under the mountains, hating the sun, gnawing on the old bones that he had drug up. Talking only to himself about himself.

That's us in the flesh. Hiding from God. Gnawing on the old things that we once had. Talking only to myself about myself.

But Jesus came into the cave. And he killed me. And he brought me out. And raised me to new life with God. He cut away my flesh.

And he gave me life. So what's the practical point of all this? What's the practical upshot?

One, you must count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. See, this is not just one little fact out there.

[27 : 47] Like an outlier that's nice. It's interesting. But it doesn't have anything to do with my normal life. No, this is the background of your Christian life. This is the air you breathe.

And that means you must count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. So turn over in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6. Romans chapter 6.

And Paul here in this passage talks very much about the same thing. And he brings us right to the practical application of this truth that now I'm dead to sin but I'm alive to God.

Look at what he says in verse 8. Chapter 6, verse 8. We'll read through verse 14. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all.

[28 : 53] But the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, imperative.

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness. But rather, offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master. For you are not under law but under grace.

If Christ has given you full life, life to the fullness, a whole new life to God, then you must count it so. You must say, this is true.

Now, if I count something, I put it in my category of this is what is true. This is what I have. So if I have my assets, and I'm saying I'm counting on this, I'm going to live like I have this much money in the bank.

[30 : 02] That much money determines and shapes my life and what I'm going to do. So Paul, in the same way, is saying you count this to be true, that you are no longer alive to sin.

You're dead to sin, but alive to God. So therefore, you don't let sin rule over you. You don't offer the parts of your body as instruments of wickedness.

That's how you used to live. But you're not in that place anymore. But you offer yourselves to God who has been brought from death as those who have been brought from death to life.

So if Colossians 2 and Romans 6 are true, then God is calling you to a daily, continual offering of your bodies to him.

A sacrifice of your abilities, your gifts, everything you have. You're alive to him, alive to God in Christ. And so you live that way.

[30 : 59] No longer just talking to yourself about yourself. No longer just thinking about what's in it for me. What do I need to do? Sin and this new life don't go together.

They don't fit. They don't belong. You and your sin aren't two peas in a pod anymore. And so you can't live that way. So get rid of your sin. Second, second practical application.

Let me talk to our young people. Are you living this way at school? And I hope adults, you can see where I'm going with this.

You can apply it to your own situation. When you are with your friends, is this part of your intellectual inventory that you're thinking about?

It's hard to live a Christian life in a public school. It's not impossible. It is hard.

[32:05] You can do it. You can be a light. You can be a witness. You certainly aren't doomed to be just like them. You can keep yourself pure and living a different kind of life from your peers precisely because of this.

Because you are not alive to sin. You're dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. So this isn't just a Sunday truth. This is a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday truth.

It's truth for your school week. You are a new creation. The old is gone. The new has come. And so it's impossible. It's impossible to live a Christian life in your own strength, in your own power, with your own resources.

But that's not you. That's not you anymore. It's not you, Christian young person. That's not you at all. You've been raised from the dead in Christ.

And so now Christ's life flows into your life. And his resurrection power is flowing into you.

[33:14] So, young people, are you living this way? You can. Third, this should fill every Christian with joy.

This should fill you with joy. Giving you assurance and hope. So are you lacking joy? Meditate on these things.

Say to yourself, ask yourself, how is it that I'm spiritually alive? Why is it that that happened? God loved me and saved me.

How do I have any spiritual strength at all? God loved me and saved me. He loved me. He put his affections upon me.

Why do I have new desires? They're not explainable on human terms. God loved me and saved me. He took me and found me when I was dead.

[34:15] And he made me alive. And that's what I am. And he saved us at the most extreme cost. His own son died. His own son was buried.

And he was raised again. And that's amazing grace. See, God took Christ's history. And he made it our history.

God took Christ's life and his story and made it your story. And so you can look through his scrapbook.

And you know what you find in every picture? You find you. You find you there. You in his life. You in his death. You in his burial.

You in his resurrection. And him holding your hand the whole way. Join to him. Let that fill you with joy. That Christ noticed you.

[35:16] And he loved you. And he saved you. That's third. Here's fourth. This is how anyone here can be saved. This is how, this is why anyone here can be saved.

Because salvation is not something human. It's not something that we do. It's something that God does. And that's why anyone here can be saved. Anyone.

No matter how stubborn your sins are. No matter your past. No matter your long history. This is how anyone here can be saved. And not just having your sins forgiven.

But a new kind of life. And it happens by faith. You notice that? Verse 12. Look at verse 12. It says we're raised.

Oh, you're in Romans. I'm sorry. It says we're raised with him. Through faith. In the power of God. How does all this?

[36:15] How does his history become my history? It's by faith. I take him. It's simple faith. Faith looks away from myself.

Looks away from me. So simply looking away from yourself. And saying, Jesus, it has to be you. You have to do it.

Here I am. That's faith. It's not doing. It's not fixing the outside of your life. It's not trying to live a different life in your own power anymore.

Faith. This is where it begins. This is where this fullness of life begins. It begins by faith. Saying, Jesus, it has to be you. You have to do it.

Here I am. And that's how anyone here can be saved. It's looking away from myself.

[37:15] Looking to Jesus. Let's pray. Father, I do pray for our young people. And ask that you would help them to live a godly life.

In an ungodly generation. Thank you that you have given us the truth that we need to be able to do that. That you have not left us poor and beggars.

But you have adopted us as your sons and daughters. And you filled us with every good thing. And you've given us new life. Help us by faith to count these things to be true.

Help us to take our eyes off of ourselves. And our circumstances. And our sins. And our righteousness. And look up. And look to see what you have done for us.

And fill us with joy. And spur us on to obedience. And zeal. And fervor. And love for you. May these things encourage us.

[38:16] And put wings on our backs. To make us to run. In the ways of righteousness. That we would have some encouraging word to say to our brothers and sisters.

That we would have a good word to say to those who are lost. That we have a Jesus. And we have a salvation. That's for sinners. And it meets them where they are.

And can totally change them. Will you encourage us to those things? So will you fill up our hearts.

And fill up our minds. With who you are.

And what you've done. And help us then to respond. In faithful. And loving. And thankful obedience.

It's in Jesus name I pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.