

Christ is all in all

Part 1

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[00:00:01] The second chapter of Colossians, reading from verse one.

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, [00:01:02] joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power, in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.

[00:02:03] In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, [00:03:03] or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.

Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from whom all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

That's all I want to read.

In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, there is a little word there that I want just to impress upon you, [00:04:06] first of all, tonight. It's a word that has certainly made a great impression on me.

It made an impression upon me over these last months.

Yes, I'll say months.

When the Apostle talks about the new man, in the third chapter of Colossians, he says that in the new man there is neither bond nor free, and so on.

Then he ends the verse by saying, Christ is all and in all.

I like the new translation rendering of that little expression very, very much.

I've taken it to my heart already.

If you have a new translation, you'll find that what the Apostle says is, Christ is everything.

[00:05:03] You know, my dear brethren, I would like that little word to rivet itself upon our hearts tonight.

I would pray that the Spirit of God might just indelibly write, this upon your heart and mine, Christ is everything.

If you were to turn also to the 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians, I think it's verse 11, and again to use the new translation rendering of the passage there, towards the end of the verse, Paul says, I am nothing.

One has put these two little statements together in one's mind, and one has dwelt upon them a good deal.

[00:06:01] So far as the Apostle was concerned, Christ was everything, and he was nothing.

And one feels, beloved brethren, that this ought to be the way.

This ought to be our manner of thinking.

This ought to be our manner of living.

It ought to be our manner of conduct.

Indeed, in every department of our lives, it ought to be Christ everything, and me nothing.

I think the Apostle expressed this very sweetly in the words that Michael drew our attention to this afternoon, for me to live Christ.

Christ everything, I am nothing, he says.

Alas, alas, one has to search one's own heart.

[00:07:04] And how many things there are that come in from time to time to displace Christ.

But I believe, you know, brethren, in speaking this way tonight, I believe I'm saying what is normal Christianity, normal Christianity, as I see it outlined in the precious word of God, in Paul's writings, I see this outlined clearly and distinctly, Christ everything.

Now why was it, why is it, in the epistle to the Colossians, the Apostle makes this tremendous statement, Christ is everything.

Why does he say it in the epistle to the Colossians?

Well, it would seem, reading through the epistle to the Colossians, that the Colossians were in a fair good state.

[00:08:05] The Apostle doesn't say, of course, about the Colossians quite what he says about the Ephesians. But he had a good bit of commendation to say for the Colossians.

But I believe it would be right to say that the Colossians were in terrible danger.

Terrible danger.

They were in danger from false teachers.

They were in danger of those who came along with their science falsely so-called and their philosophy. Paul says, There were those that came along with something which they said, well, of course, you Colossians, Christ is all right, but you want something else. You want something which will suit your intellect [00:09:02] and your intelligence. All you have to have, Christ, in your scheme of thinking, but something else. And you say, well, I don't want that. I don't want that.

All you have to have, Christ, in your scheme of thinking, but something else. And so the Apostle says, in chapter 3, he says, Christ is everything.

The philosopher can say what he likes. The agnostic can say what he likes.

The knowing ones can say what they like. They can ask you to search into the universe and angelic beings. But oh, the Apostle says, all this kind of teaching, all this kind of philosophy, all this kind of vain deceit, is going to divert your attention from the Christ of God.

And so Paul says, he stresses it, as I say, in chapter 3, [00:10:03] that Christ is everything.

Now, I don't think, beloved brethren, things are much changed from the days of Colossae.

When I say that, of course, I mean there are still those who are decrying the precious word of God.

Young people nowadays, in the colleges and universities, have got to stand up to a good deal of what slights and puts a slight upon Christ.

They tear the scriptures of truth to bits. And fundamentally, they give the Lord Jesus the place which is a secondary place, and not the place, not the first place, not everything.

Oh, I think, beloved brethren, that things aren't much changed as far as that is concerned as to what it was in the days [00:11:01] when Paul wrote to Colossae. The devil is ever on the watchtower.

The devil is always on the move.

If he can possibly, in your heart, my dear brother, displace Christ by something else, he will.

He won't come along blatantly, of course, as I said. These philosophers, they didn't come along blatantly and say, you don't need Christ. Oh, no, they didn't say that. Oh, yes, you have Christ, but you want something else. And, brethren, this is satanic.

It's not blatant.

It's beguiling, beguiling. Lead you astray, the apostle says.

Lead you astray.

Spoil you.

Brethren, young brother and young sister, be on your guard as to what you hear. Be on your guard as to what you are told. [00:12:01] Be on your guard as to what you are taught. Is it Christ-centred? Is Christ everything in what you're taught and what you hear?

In this chapter, there's quite a remarkable expression in this chapter when he talks about this philosophy and this vain deceit down the chapter. He says these words. He says, and not after Christ. And not after Christ. Could we take such a thing, beloved brethren, and make it a test? Is it after Christ? Is it on his line?

Is it measured by him?

Is he the origin?

Is he the end?

Is he the way?

Is he the alpha and the omega and the alphabet between? Does it give him the place of being first and the last? Alas, the apostle had to say, [00:13:01] all this philosophic talk and this highfalutin kind of

talk, it was not after Christ.

And I tell you, my dear brethren, that only that which is after Christ is worth anything at all. Not after Christ.

Oh, beloved brethren, put it to the test. Put it to the test. Things you're taught, things you hear, voices in the world, put it to the test, Paul says. Not after Christ.

Is it after Christ on his line of things? Does it make him everything? The philosophers might have said, of course, oh yes, of course. He is a wonderful light among other lights. That was their kind of talk, you see. But oh, beloved brethren, he's not a light among other lights. He's the blessed sun in the universe, isn't he?

The sun in the spiritual solar system. [00:14:02] He's the sun.

Not a light among other lights. He's the prominent one. He's the sun, the sun. Not after Christ.

Oh, beloved brethren, put things to the test. Put things to the test. Is it after Christ? Is it on his line?

I think you'll be able to see why it was that the apostle said in chapter three, Christ is everything. As far as I'm concerned, beloved brethren, I find that to be a tremendously searching word, a very, very great test, a very, very great test. Our brother was talking about loss of first love tonight, this afternoon.

Loss of first love. You have lost, left your first love, the church at Ephesus. And I believe, beloved brethren, [00:15:02] that when we lose first love, Christ ceases to become everything. Christ ceases to become prominent in our hearts. Christ hasn't the place that he ought to have. Yes, Christ isn't everything. I believe those who are characterized by first love believe Christ is everything. I've heard it said thousands of times that first love is embodied in the words I quote again, for me to live Christ, first love.

And brethren, in this first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, the second chapter of Colossians, the apostle was terribly concerned that the saints might make Christ everything.

Was it a difficult matter? I think the apostle thought it was a difficult matter. As he begins this chapter, this chapter two of Colossians, he talks about his combat. [00:16:03] What kind of combat do you think it was? He talked about a combat in the end of chapter one, which I believe myself refers to his ministry. But I'm persuaded that when he speaks about this conflict, this combat, in verse one of chapter two, it was his praying, praying, praying.

Paul didn't say his prayers, dear brethren.

He fought and he combated and he wrestled with God in relation to the saints of God. It was a combat, a conflict. Paul, the apostle, understood very well. He understood very well the power of Satan and the subtlety of the enemy and he prayed and he prayed and he prayed for the saints of God. What does he pray for in Ephesians three? [00:17:01] He prays that Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith. What does that mean? That means that Christ should be preeminent in the hearts of his saints. And Paul prayed.

Oh, they were combatings, combatings.

I sometimes have to reproach myself and say I don't pray for the saints like that.

Do you?

Do you pray in wrestling, combat, conflict for the saints of God? Paul did.

Paul did.

Would be good exercise, wouldn't it, praying for the saints of God and Paul saw the, as I say, the subtlety of the enemy and he prayed and he prayed that Christ might be everything to the Colossian brethren, [00:18:02] the Colossian saints. Looking down this chapter I've read to you tonight, the second chapter of Colossians, I couldn't hope to touch on all this chapter. It would be impossible. I'd like to say a word or two about, well, all right, these four warnings of the apostle. Now, it's not my objective tonight to occupy you with the warnings. It's not my thought to occupy you with the warnings. What I'm more concerned about is to give you or just mention to you what was the apostle's antidote to it.

What was the apostle's antidote to it?

Well, all right, let's sum it all up. Christ was the answer to it, wasn't it?

The person of Christ [00:19:01] was the answer to it. The teachings of the, of these false apostles, whatever they were, false teachers, they didn't give Christ and therefore the great antidote to what they had to say was Christ.

Now, very, very simply tonight, my dear brethren, I want just to look at the first one in verse four. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. Now, what is the apostle's antidote to this?

There's so much in them you can spend all night on one of them, but just let's look at this little word first. Some of my young brethren here will recall me making these words just last Lord's Day evening. As ye have received [00:20:02] Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in him.

Take your mind back, beloved brethren.

Take your mind back, and think of the day in your history when you received Christ Jesus the Lord. Think of that day when he was everything to you, he was everything in your life, he was the object bright and fair to your heart. These teachers are coming along and they want you to listen to something else. One can listen to some other argument as the apostle Paul, as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

Or says the apostle, I want you to go on in the way we have begun to walk in him.

You know, [00:21:02] he doesn't say here be imitators of the Lord quite the same.

That, of course, is right. We follow in his steps. That's very good too. But what the apostle says here,

he says as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

In him.

I believe what the apostle was driving at was that we might get the gain of conscious union with Christ. The apostle is the apostle that talks about union. You know, I'll tell you, dear brethren, it's a lot of years since I heard a brother speak about union.

Brethren, God through his infinite grace has united us to Christ. Union is a Christian teaching, dear brethren, a Christian teaching. And the apostle says, so walk ye in him.

[00:22:02] Consciously one with him, drawing all you need from the living one. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

That seems to me to be one of the antidotes the apostle has to say to these Colossians in answer to those who sought to beguile them. A lot more one could say about this. He goes on to speak about being rooted and grounded, interesting words because the words here rooted refer to the past.

Built up is what is present. It's being rooted.

Having been rooted, I should say. Having been rooted, it's the perfect.

Having been rooted and being built up. Oh yes, every one of us tonight who belong to the Lord were the subjects of a divine operation, [00:23:01] a divine operation in our souls. Having been rooted and being built up is the continuous.

It's what's going on. And Paul says established in the faith. Not our personal faith. Established in the faith, the faith.

Our brother was commending tonight this afternoon to the second Timothy where Timothy was to be a workman rightly dividing the word of truth.

And, oh brethren, what a need there is to be established in the faith, the Christian faith. And as I am established in the Christian faith, then I'm abounding with thanksgiving. I'm abounding with thanksgiving. It's very sad, isn't it, to see a miserable Christian, isn't it? Very sad to see a saint of God with a long face.

Oh brethren, if we're not abounding with thanksgiving, [00:24:02] there's something wrong. Something wrong.

In fact, I'll tell you what's wrong. If you're not abounding with thanksgiving, brother and sister, Christ has ceased to be everything to you. That's it.

As long as Christ is everything to your brother and sister, you'll be abounding with thanksgiving. But on the chapter the apostle says, gives a warning here in verse eight. I just want to look at this verse. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Oh yes, the philosophers, you know, they had a word they liked to use. It was the word pleroma. Oh yes, the Greek word pleroma. Oh you see, you're missing

something, you know, says the philosopher. [00:25:02] You want some fullness. Well the apostle, of course, he takes their words up. Oh yes, he takes the philosopher's words up. Pleroma, fullness.

Whatever do you want with the traditions of men? What do you want with man's philosophies? What do you want with this vain deceit? Oh, says the apostle, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ. Whatever do you want anything else but Christ for?

In fact, in the early part of this chapter, the apostle uses another one of the philosopher's fancy words, epignosis.

Full knowledge.

Four times in this epistle, full knowledge.

It came from the philosophers. It was their kind of talk. And Paul says, [00:26:01] I can talk like that as well, as fullness in Christ. All the fullness of the Godhead bodily resides in that man in the glory of God tonight. Whatever do you want to look anywhere else for? In chapter one of this epistle, referring to which blessed path we're here, the pathway of the Son of God here, he says, it pleased, it was the pleasure of the Godhead. It was the pleasure of the Godhead that all the fullness should dwell in him. I haven't got the words right, have I? That all the fullness should dwell in him. And as a man treading through this world, dear brethren, all the fullness of the Godhead was resident in him. All the fullness of the penitence of the Godhead was there. Wonderful thing, isn't it? A man that trod the streets of Capernaum and Galilee and Nazareth, [00:27:01] a man that, yes, who started his life as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, hung on the cross.

Oh, says the apostle, all the fullness of the Godhead was there in him.

Wonderful, isn't it? There are those who tell us, he emptied himself. Oh, you see, that's right. That's what Darby says in his translation. He emptied himself. Yes. But Mr. Darby didn't mean what the Kenosis teachers meant. But he divested himself of divine attributes. He didn't divest himself of divine attributes. This verse is the answer to it, the clear answer to that horrible idea. All the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in him here as a man.

No such thing as him giving up divine attributes. He was ever God over all, blessed forevermore. And, brethren, he's up there tonight. [00:28:01] All the fullness is dwelling in him. Says the philosopher, he wants some more knowledge. He wants something to satisfy your intelligence and your intellect. Oh, says the apostle, he says, all the fullness, in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. As a man in glory, beloved brethren. Some people have objected to the expression, a man in the glory. This scripture, as far as I'm concerned, tells me it's a man up there bodily, bodily.

And all the fullness of the Godhead resides in him.

And then the apostle says, and ye, ye, ye, are filled full, filled full in him. That's what he says. Ye are filled full in him. And I believe very, very simply, brethren, what the apostle was saying was this.

[00:29:02] You don't need anything else. You don't need what the philosophers are saying. You don't need what men are saying. You don't need tradition, the elements of the world. You don't need these things. You're filled full in Christ and you need nobody else but him. God has made us, brethren, if we

do what is right, to be independent of everything else but Christ.

I wonder if you realize that, brethren. I don't think I realize it, you know, as I ought to have done. I honestly don't think I have. I don't think a truth like this has really dawned upon my heart. But everything that I require, whatever it might be, it's in Christ.

It's in Christ.

Oh, don't listen to what men say, dear brethren. I'm interested in these warnings of the apostle, you know. He keeps saying what man does, you see. [00:30:01] Beware lest any man does this. Any man beguiles you. Any man draws you away. To go back for a minute, and talk about men. Men. Listen, as ye have received Christ, Jesus the Lord, that's the man that you ought to be concerned with, not what men say.

And so the apostle says that you're filled full, filled full in him. You are a Christian friend, young brother, young sister. I don't care how young you are or how old you are. Filled full is what the apostle says. You don't need, my dear brethren, I repeat, to go anywhere else for anything. Everything resides in Christ, dear brethren.

Everything is resident in him. Filled full in him. The apostle makes a comment here about the work of Christ. He hasn't got much time to touch on this. [00:31:01] Circumcised with the circumcision, made without hands. We've been brought to see the judgment of God upon the flesh at the cross.

The cutting off of the Christ refers to the cross. Buried with him by baptism, in which we are raised with him by faith of the operation of God who has raised Christ from the dead. That's as far as the apostle goes in Colossians. That's as far as he goes risen with Christ.

Doesn't go as far as Ephesians. Risen with Christ.

I'm here upon earth, raised with Christ, looking up into heaven where my hope is.

And he says, you're quickened together with him. That's not in Romans. It's in Ephesians, Colossians as well, quickened together with him. These expressions, dear brethren, [00:32:01] all have to do with union.

Union.

Buried with him.

Raised with him.

Quickened together with him. Union.

What do these things mean, dear brethren?

What a wonderful thing is that God looks at me and he sees me as being risen with Christ, risen with Christ.

By faith, you know, by faith of the operation of God, by faith of the operation of God who raised Christ up from the dead. God has given me, in his infinite grace, a receptacle whereby I can apprehend something of the blessedness of what it means to be risen with Christ. Faith, faith grasps it. Faith lays hold upon it. Now I tell you something more. God has given me a life.

[00:33:02] Get it, dear brethren. Quickened together with him. God has given me a life.

And that life enables me to enter into the enjoyment of what it means to be risen with Christ. That's what I believe it means, brethren. It's when you come to chapter 3 and we start to feed upon the old corn of the land. Set your minds on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. There's the heavenly man, risen with Christ, looking up into the glory. In a power of life, quickened with him, in a power of divine life, God would have us to be in the blessed enjoyment of all those things which belong to Christ at God's right hand, quickened together with him. Raised with him, quickened with him, [00:34:02] dead with him.

These are all precious truths, brethren, that touch upon the fact of our union with Christ. And I ask you once again, I raise the question, brethren, if these things are true, if I'm united to the man in whom all fullness dwells, what do I need with the word of the philosopher? What do I need with vain deceit?

What do I need of all the false science that the world ladles up? What do we want with it? If Christ, as he says in chapter 3, is everything.

I haven't left much time, have I, for the other two.

I knew that would happen, of course. But in the third one, the apostle says, let no man judge you. Let no man judge you in meat or in drink on the respective unholy day or the new moon or the Sabbath days. [00:35:02] There were those, of course, who were inclined to be Judaistic in their talk. They were wanting to bring the Colossians not only to dazzle them with philosophy but to bring them under bondage to a Judaistic influence. And the apostle says very simply, he says, the body is of Christ. What does he mean by that, do you think? Well, I would say, you know, yes, maybe.

The kind of thing he says in the epistle to the Hebrews when he says, look, we are done with the shadows. We've been brought to the substance. Let's not bother about Sabbaths and new moons and that kind of thing. They're all shadows, shadows, the apostle says.

But the body is of Christ. He is the substance. Oh, brethren, I say again, are we in danger of being brought into bondage? Well, not perhaps, [00:36:02] not that kind of bondage, but whatever it might be, brethren, the whole answer to it is it's Christ.

And the answer to the shadows of the old economy, the shadows of the law, the answer to it is Christ the substance, the body is of Christ. I believe that's what the passage means. People think otherwise. They think it means two things. I don't think it means two things. It means one thing. The body is of Christ. It's substance in contrast to shadow. And lastly, I want one little word if I may on this last one in verse 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels and touring into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind and not holding the head.

What a lot we learn by these negative statements [00:37:02] of the apostles, don't we? Not after Christ.

Oh, how much that brings into our hearts, doesn't it? Not after Christ.

And here he says, not holding the head. It only seems to emphasize that we ought to be holding the head. What does it mean to hold the head?

The head of the body, of course. I remember once being in a reading meeting. Michael was telling us little pieces this afternoon. I remember being in a reading once a lot of years ago up in Sutton, over at Sutton, at Cheam Road Hall. And we had a reading on the 15th chapter of John. And we came to the little expression about abiding in Christ. And the brother who was there that day, I shan't mention his name, he said something which stuck with me. He said, you know, there's not a lot of difference between abiding in Christ and holding the head. [00:38:02] And I said to myself, as he said it, of course, the simile is completely different, of course.

It's a branch and a vine in the 15th of John. It's the body and the head in the epistle to the Colossians. But I think I got the idea, you know, the idea of it. The branch draws its sap and its nourishment from the vine.

And when you think about it, there's not a lot of difference, is it, between holding the head, except, of course, holding the head has a corporate effect. A corporate effect. The Lord has a corporate effect. It must be done by each individual member. Holding the head.

Holding the head.

How can we explain it? Difficult to explain, isn't it? I apprehend him, dear brethren, as the source of all. The source as far as direction, control, nourishment, life is concerned.

[00:39:02] I need the head.

And so the apostle says, not holding the head, telling us, of course, what we've got to do is to hold the head. And philosophy, vain talk, angels, all this kind of thing would divert my attention from Christ.

Not holding the head. Our brother was talking this afternoon about gifts. Gifts.

God has given to the church gifts. But I don't think that the joints and the bands are gifts.

The joints and the bands are not gifts.

If I apprehend this passage right, dear brethren, it's not a gift to be a joint and a band. I believe it's something open to every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, every member of the body, to be a joint and a band. [00:40:02] Oh, it's not gift.

It's not gift.

We heard this afternoon we've all got gifts. Thank God for that. But I don't think to be a joint and a band there is growth, growth. And when the apostle speaks about the increase of God, I believe he

speaks about what is proportionate, what is normal, not disproportionate. As we hold the head, says the apostle, all the body, all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increases with the increase of God. Joints and bands.

Brethren, let's play our part. Let's play our part. Oh, you say to me, of course, the body's in smithereens today. Yes, it is.

It's in shattered.

It's shattered.

Absolutely shattered. [00:41:02] Paul says all the body. Can I reach this today? Can I touch this today, do you think, all the body? All I say is this, dear brethren. Now, brother was touching upon this this afternoon. Being like the ostrich and putting our head in the sand. Let's look at things plainly and squarely, our brother said, and I agree with him. But brethren, at the same time, never for one moment lose God's thought. Never for one moment lose sight of what God has in his mind for his sins.

And if all the body may be broken up into smithereens as we speak, brethren, don't lose sight of God's thought.

Paul says that we ought to be holding the head.

[00:42:02] And if we are holding the head individually, then there's bound to be some corporate blessing here below.

Well, I've gone over my time. Just before I close, let me say this.

I haven't come to Canterford tonight to just talk.

I want to make that plain, brethren. The things that I've said today, I feel, I feel, Christ is everything.

I am nothing.