

# Complete In Christ

Or

COMPLETELY WITHOUT HIM

Sometime ago I asked a class of boys if any of them could tell me how to get to heaven. After a minute or so one of them raised his hand and said, “Be good.”

“Have you been good?” I asked. “Yes,” he said. “Have you ever told a lie or stolen anything?” At first he shook his head vehemently in denial, but as he sat facing me he reluctantly admitted that he had.

“Well,” I persisted, “Do you suppose they take girls and boys into heaven who lie and steal?” “No,” he admitted, adding: “Well, then, how do you expect to get to heaven?!”

This young man’s question is our question, too, and there are so many answers being given all about us that thousands of people are understandably bewildered by it.

How many have said, “Oh, what’s the use! How can we know what to believe with all the different viewpoints about us? One says, ‘I’m a Catholic,’ another, ‘I’m a Protestant,’ another, ‘I’m a Presbyterian,’ another, ‘I’m a Baptist,’ others, ‘I’m a Methodist,’ an Episcopalian, Reformed, Mennonite, Pentecostal and so you can go... on down the list. There are literally hundreds of sects and denominations, all calling themselves Christians. How can the average man differentiate between all these various shades of belief?

We cannot deny the confusion. We must acknowledge that, not only Christendom, but Protestantism, and not only Protestantism, but Fundamentalism has become a Babel of confusion. Thank God that all true believers believe and preach salvation through Christ, but then many begin to add “ifs,” “ands,” and “buts” so that the Church has become confused and divided.

Because of this division and confusion some think that sincerity is all that is needed. They say, “We may not all agree, but if we are only sincere God will be satisfied.” But this is not so. Sincerity alone will not save your soul any more than sincerity will save your life if you drink poison, sincerely believing it to be medicine. Remember it is possible to be sincerely wrong. The only safe way to decide this question is to examine God’s Word and see what He requires for salvation.

Now the Scriptures say one thing very plainly: “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” (Rom. 3:23) And this declaration tallies with human experience. From where did your children get their sinful natures? Why, from you! And from where did you get yours? Why, from your parents. And from where did they get theirs? ...From their parents. And so you must go back, back, back, just where the Scriptures take you, to our first parents. Romans 5:12 says,

“...By ONE MAN sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

But there is another truth that the Bible teaches just as clearly. It is that sinners, under condemnation of death, may be reconciled to God through the death of His Son. He took our place and died that we might live. Romans 5:8 tells us:

“But GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.”

Consider carefully what Paul wrote in Rom. 5:10:

“...When we were ENEMIES, we were RECONCILED to God BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON....”

In Col. 1:21,22 he wrote:

“And you, that were sometime ALIENATED AND ENEMIES in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He RECONCILED

“In the body of His flesh THROUGH DEATH, to present you HOLY AND UNBLAMEABLE AND UNREPROVEABLE in His sight.”

Now God has committed to us this wonderful message of *reconciliation through the death of His Son*. By God's grace we are commissioned to tell condemned sinners that they may be forgiven, justified and made complete *in Christ*. As sons of Adam we all belong to the old ruined creation, but 2 Cor. 5:17 says, “*If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a NEW CREATURE.*” It's our business to help people out of Adam and into Christ; to see them saved from this fallen, ruined creation and made new creatures in Christ.

Isn't it wonderful that Christ, the holy Son of God, should have come into this world to take the sinner's place? He bore all the blame and shame for sins He never committed. He did it so that we might go free, and if you will trust in Christ alone for salvation, God says that He looks upon you *in Christ* and sees you perfect and complete in Him.

Christ took your place on Calvary and paid for your sins so that you might stand before God “*complete in Him.*” That's what Col. 2:9,10 says:

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

“And YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM....”

Do you suppose He means just that? Of course! Just think for a moment. If God looks at you *in Christ*, you must be complete. Did Christ come short of the glory of God or the holiness of God? Could God find any fault with Him? Was there anything He lacked? No, God said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” And God sees you *in Christ*; that is, if you have trusted Him as your Saviour.

Christ was willing to hang in your place on the cross; the question is simply, *are you willing* to cast aside your own “goodness” and stand before God in Him, depending only on His merits?

“But,” says someone, “Surely that is not all.” Men are afraid to depend wholly on Christ for salvation. They say, “Must we not be baptized? Did not John the Baptist say, ‘Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins?’ and didn't Peter preach the same message at Pentecost?”

Ah, but that was all before the rejected Lord had reached down from heaven to save the chief of sinners and send him forth with the message of grace to a lost world. (1 Tim. 1:13-16). Just listen to 1 Tim. 2:5-7:

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

“WHO GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL, TO BE TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME.

“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle....”

This is why Paul says in Eph. 3:1-3, 5:

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

“How that BY REVELATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME THE MYSTERY...

“WHICH IN OTHER AGES WAS NOT MADE KNOWN UNTO THE SONS OF MEN....”

“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17), **but** Christ *on earth* did not preach grace to a lost world. It was not until “the house of Israel” had rejected Him that, from His throne in heaven, He stooped down in love to save Saul, the chief of sinners, and sent forth the message of grace to a lost world. Israel had rejected Him both in humiliation and in glory, but “*where sin abounded grace did much more abound... that grace might reign.*” (Rom. 5:20,21).

This “*present evil world*” (Gal. 1:4) is God’s reign of grace, and, remember, when grace reigns you cannot mix it with works. You can’t mix it with sacrifices or holy days or water baptism. Grace is everything for nothing. Rom. 11:6 says, “*If by grace, then is it no more of works....But if it be of works, then is it no more grace.*” Thus Rom. 4:4,5 declares:

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,

“BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

God is not selling anything; He is *giving* it. If you pay Him one cent for it, it is no longer a gift but a purchase. God declares, however, salvation to be “*the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Eph. 2:8,9).

There are those who would add religious works *after* salvation. They argue, “You don’t have to be baptized to be saved – only to join our church.” They insist, “You are *saved* without it, but you’re not really complete as a Christian until after you have been baptized.” But God says, “YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM.”

Suppose for a moment that you are painting a house and your helper wants to put red coloring in with the paint. You say, “No, no. That’s not necessary. We painted the bam red but we want the house white.” But he argues, “I know it’s not necessary, but let’s just add it extra for good measure.”

Well, if you do, the house will be red, not white! What’s the difference whether it was necessary or not, if you put it in you adulterate the paint and make it red. Just so, people add things to the grace of God. They agree that these things are not necessary but feel more complete when they have added them. So the grace of God is adulterated. As the Judaizers of old added circumcision to salvation, so Judaizers today add water baptism to salvation. John 1:31 plainly says, “*I knew Him not: BUT THAT HE [CHRIST] SHOULD BE MADE MANIFEST TO ISRAEL, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*” Is this why our baptizing friends come baptizing with water today? Do they not know that Gentiles were both circumcised and baptized only while God was dealing with Israel?

Water baptism is the number one divider in the church today. Even sound, evangelical believers are confused and divided over it. It is because we have turned away from God’s message and program for this age of grace and have followed human traditions instead.

It is true that in Paul’s early ministry he baptized some, but only so long as God was still dealing with Israel as a nation. But even then he wrote to the Corinthians, “*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.*” (1 Cor. 1:14,15). The Twelve Apostles would have been out of the will of God if they had said this! Rather,

the Twelve were distinctly sent to “teach all nations, baptizing...” (Matt. 28:19) But Paul, God’s messenger of grace, said, “*Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*” (1 Cor. 1:17). The reason for this omission of water baptism from Paul’s commission and message is that for the “one Body” there is “one baptism” – and that performed by the “one Spirit,” as 1 Cor. 12:13 makes abundantly clear:

“For BY ONE SPIRIT ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY....”

This is the “*one baptism*” of Eph. 4:5, a baptism that places each recipient into the Body of Christ and thus into living oneness with Christ. It is by this Spirit-performed baptism that we are made “*complete in Him*” the moment we trust Christ as our Savior.

God has ceased dealing with nations, to now deal with individuals. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” and there are no “ifs” or “buts” or “ands.” It is salvation full and free by the matchless grace of God,

“FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD:

“NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST” (Eph. 2:8,9).

If you have never done so, will you accept the gift of God’s grace today? God offers eternal life to you freely, through Jesus Christ our Lord. It may seem too good to be true, but God says it is true, so take Him at His word, trust Christ as your personal Saviour and stand before God “complete in Him.”

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