



MESSAGE GUIDE

For Oct. 19,
2025



Colossians 1:1-14
Lake Webb,
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PASTOR

CAN WE BE COMPLETE?

1. WHEN WAS A TIME IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU REACHED A GOAL OR FULFILLED A DREAM THAT YOU HAD HOPED WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL COMPLETE, ONLY TO REALIZE IT STILL WASN'T ENOUGH?

We wrestle with the idea of completeness all the time. Unless we have a percentage bar counting up toward 100 or some sort of numerical goal that quantifies what something means to be complete, we are often incredibly dissatisfied in the pursuit of wholeness. There are numerous times in Scripture where the concept of completeness is described as something attainable, almost as if it is tangible, something we can hold in our hands and understand experientially.

For Example:

- And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **James 1:4 (ESV)**
- Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Thes. 5:23 (ESV)**
- Jesus said, I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **John 15:11 (NIV)**

Purely from the perspective of your faith, you may feel as if your conception of Jesus is incomplete. If all my spiritual life is reading my Bible, going to church, and praying in a quiet room where I never feel like God is truly there, is God real? Is He good? Why is my supernatural Father figure seemingly uninterested in revealing Himself to me in a way that dispels doubt, fear, and anxiety? Can we be complete?

For the next 7 weeks we are going to be taking a look at a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to a group of people who were not only wrestling with the same questions but had added to the gospel message in order to satisfy their wrestling. The book of Colossians teaches us an entirely anti-Greek concept that completeness is not contingent upon who we are, nor are the keys to completeness hidden in secret, but full contingent upon the person and work of Christ. We are going to learn that the emptiness we feel in our faith, the emptiness we carry in our chest, and the insufficiency we hold in our purpose have all been resolved in our Lord Jesus.



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Historical Context: The city of Colossae was a medium sized city in Western Asia Minor situated on an important trade road near the larger cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. And because this place was situated on a trade route and was known for a particular fabric dye that was not produced in anywhere else, Colossae had their fair share of travelers wondering in and out of the city. With these travelers came new people, cultures, and ideas. Somewhere around the year 54 AD, one of the new ideas that came to the Colossians was the gospel, brought to them by a man named Epaphras, who saw an entire city called Ephesus be transformed by a couple guys named Paul and Timothy who preached about a Jewish rabbi dying and rising from the dead for the forgiveness of sins. So Epaphras spread this gospel message, and the Colossians clung to it. Around 61-62 AD, Epaphras left Colossae to visit Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome to tell him about the amazing work the Lord was doing through the people in Colossae. But even though there was a lot of good to report to Paul, Epaphras told Paul about new ideas that were adding to and changing the gospel.

Ideas such as Plato's **"theory of forms"** that says that the physical world is incomplete and for all intents and purposes, an illusion. The spiritual world is where truth exists, and the idea of forms dwell. The way the Colossians were adapting this to their faith produced a complete disregard for the physical world. In this view, there is no hope of completeness. If the physical world doesn't matter and all of it is an illusion, there are two proper responses: eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die – or asceticism (self-denial and rejection of good). This went directly against the idea that God's creation is good, that God through the Holy Spirit could dwell in one captive by a physical body, and that God Himself would even be capable of taking on human form. Years later, this Platonic idea would evolve into something called Gnosticism, that taught that true salvation came through a secret knowledge and relationship with the divine rather than through faith in the work of Jesus.

Long story short, the people in Colossae were in danger of contorting the gospel into an idea that had absolutely no power to save, nor would it be news that was teachable. This idea would lead to believers neglecting their call to live in holiness and cause them to reject the very real and necessary physical sacrifice of a perfect physical being.

2. WHAT ARE SOME BELIEFS OR IDEAS IN THE CULTURE OF TODAY THAT MIGHT APPEAR "CHRISTIAN" BUT CAUSE BELIEVERS TO LOSE SIGHT OF THE TRUE GOSPEL AND THE CALL TO LIVE IN HOLINESS?

Keep in mind Paul is writing to the Colossians only about 7 years after they first heard the gospel. There has not been much time between the truth coming and the truth being perverted. Bad ideas can take hold quickly! We have to pay attention to what's happening in our culture and guard our hearts and minds against bad ideas. Paul's purpose for writing was correction. He is correcting their false belief to align with a right belief in who Christ is and what He did for them.



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But notice how Paul begins his letter. Read Colossians 1:1-8.

Paul had every right to lay it on the Colossians for straying from something so precious. Instead, he is grateful that God is working through them. How is God working through them? Not in their perfect theology, not in their willingness to follow the Law. But in their faithfulness in Christ Jesus, and the love they have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for them in Heaven. Paul addresses them as:

- Saints.** But this is nothing to brag about! “Holy ones.” We’re not perfect, but we’ve been made holy by the grace of God.
- Family.** Paul is writing “To the . . . faithful brothers [and sisters] in Christ” (v. 2). First John 3:1 says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”
- Recipients of God’s grace and peace.** This is more than a nice little greeting. The words always come in that order. Grace comes first, then peace. Without God’s grace, you won’t have peace.

3. HOW DO YOU SEE THE KINDNESS OF GOD WORKING THROUGH E91 CHURCH? HOW DO YOU SEE THE KINDNESS OF GOD CORRECTING YOU TO WORK IN YOU?

This evidence of God’s work in Colossae is incredibly encouraging to Paul because it means that the gospel is working. It is “increasing and bearing fruit,” and even though there may be some really important things to sort out, in just a few short years, a group of people in a trade city in Asia Minor that Paul has never even visited are trying their best to follow Jesus. What a win! How great is the work of the Lord!

Sometimes, we get so full of vitriol for other churches or Christians because they can’t possibly be doing it right. How often do we lead with accusations about places that openly proclaim the gospel and bear fruit? We don’t even have to go as far as heresy like the Colossians did. We hear things said, like, “I can’t believe they didn’t preach about Charlie Kirk.” or “I can’t believe they would put their church on a billboard.” Or “I can’t believe they don’t have live preaching at all their campuses.” And how about the way we talk about other believers on Facebook or TikTok. The comment section of every Christian post that gains traction says something about how the person in the video is actually wrong and is going to Hell. How do you end up with 45,000 denominations of Christianity in the world? You accuse other believer instead of seeing the work of God in them.



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4. HOW IS YOUR POSTURE WITH OTHER BELIEVERS? IS IT WITH ACCUSATIONS OR WITH GRATITUDE?

What if we take Paul's approach, and recognize God's work in other believers more than we criticize and attack them? Don't be part of the problem. Be part of the solution. Martin Luther King said, "I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

Theology does matter. Paul moves quickly in his letter to straighten out the Colossians' faulty beliefs. But he approaches the issue graciously. He's thankful for them. He prays for them. He singles out Epaphras, their preacher, and calls him "a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf."

If you want to be COMPLETE, be careful about your attitude toward others.

In the next few verses, Paul does then give some tongue-in-cheek references to the heresy.
Read Colossians 1:9-11.

How is Paul praying for them? That they would be filled not with secret knowledge, but with the knowledge of God's will so that they may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. The Greek word that we translated "filled" is one of two Greek words that we also translate to mean "complete." Paul is praying that they would be filled up, that they would be completed through knowledge of Christ.

What does a life that is worthy of the Lord look like? One where they do not neglect the body, but bear fruit in their good work. One where they do not appeal to unattainable wisdom, but where they increase in the knowledge of God. A life that endures rather than escapes. A life of gratitude, not one of discontentment.

If you want to be COMPLETE, live a life in a way that pleases the Lord.

5. HOW ARE YOU WALKING IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE LORD? DO SEEK KNOWLEDGE OF HIM? DO YOU MOVE THROUGH LIFE WITH PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE? ARE YOU BEING STRENGTHENED WITH GOD'S POWER?

If Paul were to end this section of the letter there, it would honestly be scary. It would sound like Paul is warning the Colossians that they need to watch their deeds and walk a certain way to attain and remain in salvation. But he does not end there. Paul caps his greeting with an amazing reminder of the identity of the Colossians in Christ – even in the midst of a whole lot of messiness.



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... Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

If you want to be COMPLETE, know who you are in Christ!

- **You are Qualified.** We feel incomplete because on our own, none of us are “qualified” to be in God’s kingdom. Without God’s grace, we’d all be disqualified. “All have sinned,” and sin disqualifies us from God’s presence. If the only way to go to heaven is to pass a qualifying exam, none of us would pass. We don’t meet the qualifications . . . but Jesus does!
- **You are Delivered (Rescued).** If someone saved your life by pushing you out of the path of a truck, you’d always be grateful to them. If a lifeguard pulled you out of the water when you were drowning, you’d never forget them.
- **You have been transferred...** From the domain of darkness to the kingdom of Christ!

The Colossians were real-world people like us. They struggled to walk worthy of God. But they were redeemed, forgiven, and washed by the blood of the Lamb. Can we be complete? Not on our own. But we can be complete in Christ. Not by our own power, but through His.

6. DO YOU WANT TO BE COMPLETE? WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO BE MADE COMPLETE AS YOU FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST?