

Drink From the Fountain of Fullness: Part One

Our sermon text invites us to drink from the fountain of Christ's fullness, a fountain that contains three things: fellowship, forgiveness, and freedom. Hear the Word of God from Colossians, chapter 2, verses 9-15:

Colossians 2:9-15

9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 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, 12 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. 13 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, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Introduction

1. The Apostle Paul sets forth in Colossians 2:9-10 the fullness we discover in Jesus. The fullness of deity dwells bodily in Him. Then, he proceeds to speak about the fullness we receive from Jesus. "We are filled in Him." His argument is this: All the fullness of God is in Christ. All of Jesus is in me. So, I have all the fullness of God if I have Jesus.
2. He now proceeds to answer the question: In what does this fullness consists? This is the focus of Colossians 2:11-15.
3. It consists of three things: fellowship with Christ which delivers us from the reign of sin and the wages of sin which is death; forgiveness of Christ which delivers us from the guilt and debt of sin; freedom through Christ which delivers us from dark, sinister powers who want to keep us in bondage.
4. Our union with Christ is an inexhaustible fountain that deals with the root of sin, the fruit of sin, and the brute of sin — the devil and his demonic hosts.
5. Today, we want to look at the first aspect of the fullness of Christ: fellowship/sharing in His death, burial, and resurrection.

I. We share in Christ's death.

A. What does the text say? You were circumcised in Christ. We learn three things about this circumcision.

1. It is done by a divine surgeon not a human one ("without hands")
2. Therefore, it is not a physical circumcision, but a spiritual one. It doesn't involve the putting off of a piece of skin, but the entire body of flesh. The flesh is the whole personality organized for and geared for rebellion against God. Spiritual circumcision is brought by the Spirit and results in spiritual rebirth. It involves

the putting off of the body of flesh. It removes your alienation from God - your uncircumcision. (see v.13 and Deut. 30:6 - *The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.*)

3. This circumcision occurs by the means of Christ's circumcision. The flesh was put off when Christ was circumcised... not His initial circumcision when He was eight days old, but His ultimate circumcision when He was cut off from the land of the living. The death of Jesus—the shedding of His flesh—is understood through the metaphor of circumcision. Circumcision provides a gruesome metaphor for the crucifixion. His circumcision on the cross involved the violent removal of his entire body in death. Now “in him” as believers, we spiritually share in this circumcision, this death. Their “body of . . . flesh” was cut away; they died to their former way of life.

B. The significance of this

Jesus died not only as our substitute, He died as our representative. His curse-bearing death became ours. Why submit to the legalistic push to be literally circumcised when you have experienced something far greater?

C. What are the implications of sharing in Jesus' death? What difference should this make in our daily lives?

1. A New heart... Ezekiel 36:25-27.

2. A new power to fight sin. Sharing in Christ's death gives you a new power to say 'no' to sin. The Puritans spoke long and well about the mortification of sin. John Owen describes what this involves very succinctly: “Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.” See Colossians 3:5,7-8.

3. A radical claim. The Lord has a claim on your life. Your life is no longer about you and your desires. It is about Jesus and His desires. By virtue of your union with Christ in His crucifixion and death, you have been moved from the center of your own life. See Gal. 2:20. What is true of a person hanging on a cross? He no longer has any more plans of his own. He is looking only in one direction.

II. We share in Christ's burial (v. 12a).

A. We are buried with Him in baptism. In the earliest statements of belief, Jesus' burial is emphasized. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 offers a summary of the Gospel: Christ died for our sin. He was buried. This was the evidence that He was really dead, not mostly dead.

B. The burial of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4) set the seal upon His death. Our burial with Him in baptism shows that we too were spiritually laid in that tomb. The burial proves that a real death has occurred and the old life is now a thing of the past.

C. Implications

1. New master. Baptism in the name of the triune God means that you belong to God. You are no longer an owner of your life. You are a steward of it. You belong to the Lord. This frees you from your propensity to live as an owner rather than a steward.

2. New nature. See Colossians 3:10. Baptismal font is a like a grave. The old self is buried once and for all and the new self rises to new, resurrection life.

3. New freedom to face our last enemy. Sharing in Christ's death and burial does not exempt us from the physical death of our mortal bodies but it does liberate us from all liability of receiving the wages of sin, the curse of the second death which separates us from God forever.

III. We share in Christ's resurrection (v. 12b). This fullness reaches full blossom by virtue of our participation in Christ's resurrection:

A. We are raised with Christ. Christ's resurrection life is not ours. We already enjoy the gift of eternal life now. The essence of being in Christ is to experience a resurrection. To know Christ in the power of His resurrection.

B. How so? Through faith in the powerful working of God who raised Him from the dead.

C. Implications

1. A profound security... that frees us to take bold risks in serving Christ. Illustration: When James Calvert went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, the ship captain tried to turn him back, saying, "You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages." To that, Calvert replied, "We died before we came here."

2. A wonderful assurance. Because Christ has risen, you too will rise. Take your bulletin and look back at our song of assurance: "Before the Throne of God Above." *"One with himself, I cannot die."* Our union with Christ solves one of our fundamental fears: the finality of death.

Discussion Questions

1. Where are you looking for fullness, satisfaction, and life apart from Jesus?
2. Why do you think we often look to earthly things such as relationships, careers, and material things for ultimate fulfillment?
3. What do you make of this statement: In Christ you have everything that you need for a full, fulfilling life both now and for all eternity.
4. Why is it important for Jesus to take care of our sin nature (v. 11) as well as our sin (v. 13)?

5. In verses 11-15, the Apostle Paul describes some of what “fullness in Christ” means. What key words would you highlight from this text to describe what this fullness looks like? Another way of getting at this is: What particular needs of yours does Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection meet and fulfill?
6. You are united with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. What are the implications of this for your life?
7. Jesus refers to His approaching passion in baptismal terms. See Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50. What do you make of this?

Going Deeper

1. How do you see the Gospel being crucified in our day? What is it that robs the Gospel of its power in your life? Where are you succumbing to the “Christ and _____ syndrome”? Where are you tempted to fall prey to some kind of abundant life scheme apart from persevering in growing in grace by God’s appointed means? See Col. 2:4,8,16, and 18 for what the Colossians were being tempted to add to Jesus. Check out chapter 25 of the book *The Screwtape Letters* to find out more about how the devil uses this tactic in spiritual battle.
2. Colossians 2:11-12 declares that we share in Jesus’ circumcision and in His baptism. Why do you think the Apostle Paul uses these two signs of entrance into the covenant community to describe our union with Christ? How are circumcision and baptism alike and how are they different?