

June 14, 2026

“Complete in Christ”

Colossians 2:11–15

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No person, possession, career, talent, spouse, or anything in this world can complete us except Jesus. He is the only one who can fulfill the deepest longings of our souls. As Paul wrote in Colossians 2:10, “You are complete in Him.” In this study, we learn how Jesus completes us.

1. **Colossians 2:11–15** – “[11] In Him [Jesus] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [12] buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. [13] And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, [14] having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. [15] Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
  - a. Christ triumphed “in it,” that is, by the cross.
2. We belong to Christ, not the world.
  - a. **Colossians 2:9–10** – “[9] In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; [10] and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”
    - i. We are complete in Jesus (verse 10).
    - ii. “Complete” in Greek is **plēroō**, meaning “to be full, to abound, to lack nothing, to be wholly satisfied.”
      1. Jesus is the one who satisfies the deepest longing of our souls.
    - iii. If we are complete in Jesus, we can infer that we are incomplete without Him.
      1. No person, possession, career, or talent can complete you.
      2. When people say their spouse completes them, they imply two things:
        - a. That single people are incomplete.
        - b. That married people are only complete when their spouse is with them.
  - b. **Colossians 2:11** – “In Him [Jesus] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”
    - i. Physical circumcision

1. Paul wrote Colossians to a predominantly gentile audience.
2. While circumcision was foreign to the gentiles, the Jews understood it as the sign of God's covenant with them, beginning with Abraham.
3. The Mosaic Law said every baby boy needed to be circumcised on the eighth day.
  - a. We now know that vitamin K is released to enable clotting on the eighth day.
4. By having Jews put a knife to the place of reproduction, God was reminding Jews that they were His children and His covenant people.

ii. Spiritual circumcision

1. Physical circumcision is no longer required, which is why Paul described it as a "*circumcision made without hands*" (verse 11).
2. Just as Jews had to cut away the flesh, we are to cut away the "sins of the flesh" as a sign of the new covenant (verse 13).
3. **DISCUSS:** What do you need to cut away because you belong to the Lord?
4. The Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is the old covenant.
5. The New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, is the new covenant.
6. In the old covenant, circumcision was a sign to identify as a people belonging to God.
7. In the new covenant, we are to be circumcised in heart because we belong to God through Jesus' death on the cross.
8. **DISCUSS:** How has Christ given you a new heart? How has your view of sin changed?

iii. A new sign

1. When we put our faith in Christ, we demonstrate it by water baptism (verse 12).
2. Baptism is not required for salvation, but it is a way to externally demonstrate the internal work of God.
  - a. When you go under the water, you identify with the death and burial of Jesus.
  - b. When you rise out of the water, you identify with Christ's resurrected life.
  - c. In baptism, we identify as dead to our old way of life and alive to new life in Jesus.

3. Jesus breathes life into our dead souls (verse 13).

- a. We are all born physically and must be born again spiritually.
  - b. **John 3:3-7** – “[3] Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ [4] Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ [5] Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7] Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.””
    - i. Our physical birth is God’s design, but our spiritual birth is our decision.
      - 1. We must choose Christ if we want to be born again (born spiritually).
      - 2. **DISCUSS:** How can a person be born again? What makes this second birth more important?
    - ii. **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
      - 1. Our physical life, which will end one day, is less important than our spiritual life, which will never end.
      - 2. The question is not whether we will live forever, but where we will spend eternity after death.
4. **Colossians 2:13-15** – “[13] You, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, [14] having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. [15] Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
- a. There are four participial phrases in verses 13–15 to show us how God has made us complete in Christ:
    - i. “Having forgiven you all trespasses” (verse 13)
    - ii. “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us” (verse 14)
    - iii. “Having nailed it to the cross” (verse 14)
    - iv. “Having disarmed principalities and powers” (verse 15)
5. **Colossians 2:13** – “. . . having forgiven you all trespasses.”
- a. The words “sins” and “trespasses” do not mean the same thing, though they have related meanings.

- i. “Sin” comes from the Greek **hamartia**, meaning “to miss the mark, to not measure up, to fall short.”
        - 1. None of us measure up to God’s righteous standard.
        - 2. **Romans 3:23** – *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
      - ii. “Trespass” comes from the Greek **paraptōma**, meaning “to willfully do wrong.”
        - 1. When we “trespass,” we willingly go to places where God placed a “no trespassing” sign.
    - b. Christ died for even the worst of our trespasses.
6. **Colossians 2:14** – *“... having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.”*
- a. The word “requirements” comes from the Greek **dogma**, meaning “ordinances” or “rules.”
  - b. When Paul spoke of the *“the handwriting of requirements that was against us,”* he was referring to the moral debt we owed God.
    - i. This is a debt we could never pay because no imperfect person can, but Jesus expunged our record by paying for our debt on the cross.
    - ii. The phrase “wiped out” can also be translated “wiped over.”
      - 1. This is the same Greek word used for “whitewashing.” Christ’s blood covers us.
7. **Colossians 2:14** – *“... having nailed it to the cross.”*
- a. Christ nailed our pasts to the cross.
    - i. In **Matthew 27:37**, Jesus had the words “King of the Jews” nailed to his cross.
      - 1. Romans would nail accusations onto a criminal’s cross.
      - 2. It was a crime in that day because the only king you were allowed to acknowledge was Ceasar. Anything else was treason.
    - ii. When we identify with Christ’s death on the cross, it is as though our accusations were nailed there with Him, never to be revisited again.
      - 1. **Galatians 2:20a** – *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”* (NIV)
      - 2. **Psalms 103:12** – *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*
      - 3. **DISCUSS**: Do you base your identity on Christ’s victory or your defeats?
  - b. Once we are saved, God does not accuse—but Satan does.
    - i. “Satan,” or **satan** in Hebrew, means “accuser.”
    - ii. **Revelation 12:10** calls him “the accuser of our brethren.”

8. **Colossians 2:15** – “. . . having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
- a. Do not let the Enemy deceive you; he’s been disarmed and you have been forgiven.
    - i. Satan’s future end is judgment.
    - ii. The Christian’s future end is heaven.
      1. **DISCUSS:** Do you live with the future destination in mind? How is that evident in your life?
  - b. In this world, we must wrestle against spiritual darkness.
    - i. **Ephesians 6:12** – “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
      1. **DISCUSS:** Are you living with an awareness of the spiritual war around you? How do you defend yourself from the Enemy’s attacks?
    - ii. Though we face spiritual warfare, Satan and his demons do not have the same power over Believers that they do over unbelievers.
      1. Christians have the name of Jesus to stand behind.
      2. Demons can attack Christians from without (through temptation, deception, and discouragement), but not from within.
      3. **1 John 4:4b** – “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (KJV)
      4. Every time the Enemy comes against us, we must respond with God’s Word as Jesus did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (**Matthew 4**).
      5. **DISCUSS:** What verses have you treasured in your heart to combat the Enemy? How has God brought these verses to mind when you needed them?
      6. Satan may be “a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (**1 Peter 5:8**, NIV), but Christ defanged him on the cross.
9. **Psalms 34:10b** – “Those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.” (NIV)
- a. Jesus has completed us, filled us, and alone can satisfy the deepest longings of our souls.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)