

The Fullness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ

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It may seem foolish to state this, but Jesus Christ is fundamental and central to Christianity. Christianity is not about principles and programs, it is about a person. It is not about theories, it is about reality. It is not just about adopting a new value system, it is about having life or not having it. In the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ states,

John 10:10 (all verses from NKJV)

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

In the epistle of I John, the apostle writes,

I John 5:12

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

And again in the letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul writes,

Colossians 3:3-4

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

According to the Word of God only those who have Jesus Christ have life. And the excellency of our life now, as Christians, depends on the clear understanding of our identification and total union with Christ. We need to fully understand and then build on the life we have through, in and with him. Indeed, our heavenly Father's goal, is that we be like Christ.

Romans 8:29

For whom He (God) foreknew [i.e. the Christian believer], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brethren.

C.S. Lewis, an English author, wrote a satire on Christianity called *The Screwtape Letters*. In the book there are letters from a devil spirit named "Screwtape" to his apprentice devil spirit named "Wormwood." Wormwood is trying to keep the Christian he is assigned to from really living in all the fullness and sufficiency he has in Christ. Trying to help out, Screwtape writes the following to his apprentice:

My dear Wormwood,

What we want, if men become Christian at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call, "Christianity And." You know - "Christianity and the Crisis," or "Christianity and the New Psychology," or "Christianity and the New Order" or "Christianity and Vegetarianism," or "Christianity and Spelling Reform." If they must be Christian let them be "Christians" with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian coloring.

Even though *The Screwtape Letters* is a fictional work, it shows us why many Christians experience an anemic Christian life. It explains why there is so little true power and joy in the lives of far too many children of God. It also explains why the world really doesn't see the church as having viable and relevant truth to present in the great market place of ideas. After all why should the world accept Christ, if the church so freely buys into all that the world offers?

Many of us are being tricked into thinking that we need something more in addition to Christ. We are being told that we need to adorn the gospel of Christ with bells and whistles. We need Christ and business principles, or Christ and the new theories from sociology and psychology. We are being told that we need to wrap up the gospel in some new clothes in order to make it appealing to our age. But all the things we can add to Christianity, can only in the end, dilute the power of the pure gospel of Christ. Look at what the apostle Paul writes near the end of his letter to the Romans.

Romans 15:29

But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Look again at the words that Paul uses, by divine revelation, when pointing to Christ. He

speaks of "fullness," "blessing" and the "gospel," which literally means "good news!"

Paul wasn't bringing to Rome principles for profitable living. He wasn't going to bring pious platitudes for the Pharisees among them. He wasn't bringing academic rhetoric and theory. He wasn't going to bring a new marketing strategy for growing the church, or a new sociological or psychological study that would really make their marriages great. Paul was going to Rome, and he was bringing "the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." He was bringing good news that could truly change people and provide all they needed for their new life!

In the book of Revelation, chapter 1 and in verse 11, Jesus Christ calls himself, "the Alpha and the Omega." This means that he is the first and the last. In our vernacular today we would say that Christ is everything from "A to Z." He is simply everything we need in life.

This world of ours is filled with real needs and stubborn problems. We are riddled with crime. We have racial, social and family strife. We have financial problems, emotional problems. Our world is full of sinful behavior. Where does the solution lie? We've tried more laws and more education. We've spent billions of dollars. The only real solution is in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and then to let this knowledge make its impact on our lives.

2 Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

In the exceedingly great and precious promises in God's Word, we have given to us in Christ Jesus everything we need for life and godliness. We have everything we need to be healed physically, emotionally and spiritually. In the knowledge of

God and of Christ, grace and peace is multiplied to us. As we grow in our knowledge of what we have and who we are, and what we can do through Jesus Christ, we can experience greater grace and peace. We can live with confidence, manifesting more of his character in our lives.

And we are given the power to escape the "corruption" that is in the world, a corruption driven by lust. Literally, the "corruption" refers to the influence of a huckster. The huckster is someone involved in deceitful dealings to make a dishonest gain. He is a fraud and what he is selling is fake. It seems like everyone today wants to sell you some new and improved philosophy or psychology, or religion. But all they really want to do is to make money off of you! But when you come to Christ, you come to someone who gave his life for you. You come to one who heals, who delivers, to a Savior who gives true wisdom and power.

No wonder Satan would have us grasping for every new idea, every new program, rather than learning about Jesus Christ and who we are and what we can do in and through and with him. Don't think for a moment that a thorough and practical knowledge of Jesus Christ is irrelevant to today's demands on your life. The message of the cross, of our redemption and new life in Christ has not played itself out. The gospel has not lost any of its vitality. It may be an old, old story, but it has the power to change your life.

Romans 1:15-16

So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also the Greek.

The gospel of Christ has in it the power to make our lives whole and complete. The gospel is the power of God to deliver us from bondage, to heal, to forgive. The gospel of Christ is the very power of God!

I Corinthians 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

To some the message of the cross is foolishness. But to others it is the power of God. And what is the message of the cross? The message of the cross is that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The message of the cross is that when Christ was buried, our old sinful nature was buried with him. And the message of the cross is that when Christ was raised from the dead, we too were given newness of life in him!

Romans 6:3-4

Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

When believers are baptized into Christ they are immersed in him. Being immersed in him we are inextricably linked together, united for all eternity. Being united with him by the glorious power of God, we are able to live differently, to become victors rather than victims. As Christians united to Christ in his death and burial and resurrection, we have the right and the privilege, and the power to change for the better.

Going back to I Corinthians we read,

I Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the

message preached to save those who believe.

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

We must say it again. Christ is the power and the wisdom of God. He is our all and all. He is all we ever need. Though it may sound foolish that because a man was crucified and buried and raised from the dead almost 2000 years ago, your life can be different, it is nonetheless true.

There are those who seek after "wisdom" - some fashionable idea, some modern method, some new program. There are those who seek after a "sign" - some spiritual phenomenon. But true wisdom and true power are found in Christ alone. In Jesus Christ we have what the world could never provide by logic or showmanship, we have the supernatural and miraculous wisdom and power of God!

I Corinthians 1:26-31

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

and the base things of the world and the and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

that no flesh should glory in His presence.

*But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us **wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption -***

that, as it is written,

"He who glories, let him glory in the LORD"
[my emphasis].

It is in Christ that we have true wisdom, the insight for living. Our guilt is gone before God. With righteousness we stand before God holy and without blame, and we have boldness to approach the throne of God with assurance. Christ is made unto us sanctification, separating us from a corrupt and corrupting world. In our sanctification in Christ we are given to God as His inheritance, made saints and destined for glory.

With Christ we have redemption. We are freed from every form of bondage whether spiritual, physical or emotional. With Christ we have all that we need for life and godliness. With Christ we can not only come to grips with the affairs of life, we can overcome the world (I John 5:4-5)! The truths of who we are and what we can do in Christ are more relevant to the present world scene than any new psychology or self help group.

Colossians 2:6-10

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our total sufficiency!
We need to believe it in the depths of our hearts and

then act on it. The greatest danger to the Christian believer comes from not being rooted and grounded in Christ. Satan will always try to deceive us to think that we need more than the Lord. But we must not allow anyone or anything to rob us of our total completeness in him.

There is nothing lacking in our life when we have Christ. We lack neither purpose in life, nor the power to live life more abundantly. In our Lord Jesus Christ dwells all the fullness of God and we are absolutely complete in him! He is our life!

Because of Christ we can be free from worry and fear, from the anxieties that eat away at so many people today. We can be free from the emptiness and the restlessness that permeates our world.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

To those who struggle with intellectual doubt, the Lord simply says come and find your rest. In him alone is to be found real and solid quietness of heart and dignity of person. To those who are ignorant of "the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," the invitation is, "come!"

[This article is adapted, with permission, from a book by Chuck LaMattina entitled *Christ Our Life*. This book and two others, *Our Awesome God* and *Essential Matters*, may be ordered for \$5 each from: Grace Ministry USA, 7359 North Hoyne, Chicago, Illinois 60645. They are all highly recommended as practical and inspirational helps in learning and applying the truth of the Bible].

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