

# Lord of All 2) Triumph For All By the Cross

Colossians 2:6-15 • 2023-01-15 • Epiphany Series: "Lord of All"



Have you ever been told something is all you need and then found out you still needed more? I'm sure it has happened to you. It seems to happen to me all the time. For example, the salesperson at the phone store will tell you that you are holding the latest and greatest model. The phone will do everything you need from making calls to giving you VIP access on the next shuttle to Mars. They tell you how it has the best camera, the best screen, the best battery life, all contained in a sleek, super-strong device. But then you get to the end of the purchase process and the salesperson tells you that more is needed. It doesn't matter whether it is a phone, a vehicle, a pair of glasses, or even a mattress. All the ad-on purchases are presented as essential. "You will probably want a screen protector with that state-of-the-art screen. They can get scratched all the time. Oh, and you'll want a case to protect it too. One drop and it could easily smash into pieces. And even though it will be outdated and surpassed by next year's model, if you just want to pay a little bit extra, we can throw in a ten-year protection plan for it too." The add-on purchases seem so compelling. The phone or whatever you are buying is great. But to make it truly great you need to purchase all the extras. At least that is what you are told.

Could it be that Christ is ever presented as our great and wonderful Savior and yet less than enough? Someone might share Christ and yet convince you that to truly have it all you need to toss in all sorts of extra things. Or they might claim that if you really want victory over sin, death, and the devil you need some sort of extra protection plan.

When Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians, he wanted them to know that Christ is more than enough for us. He is Lord of all and gives us triumph over all. Perhaps the reason many people treat Christ as if he alone isn't enough is because he doesn't bring us victory the way that this world expects. He doesn't give us what we need with all sorts of add-ons and extras. In fact, he does it through making himself weak and lowly. The Lord of all gives triumph for all by the cross.

Paul would have been the last person to tell the Colossian Christians they needed to add something to their faith. Instead, he told them to keep holding on to what they already have. It was very simple. "You received Christ Jesus as Lord." In faith they had come to believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord. If Jesus was their Lord, then they had all they needed. There was nothing to add, but they needed to keep it, "continue to live your lives in him (Christ)."

To live your life in Christ doesn't mean that you remain connected to him through the gospel. It means you trust in him. Paul urged the believers to be "rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught." The power of Christ does not fade. But our grounding in him can grow stronger or weaker. To be rooted in Christ means to grow a deeper understanding and appreciation of his promises and his working. It means to grow in knowing him better through regularly hearing his Word and reading it. When a person is confirmed or reads once through parts of the Bible, they can reason they don't need anything more. But they should not reason that they will remain in Christ if they neglect to put down roots and continue to find strength in his Word. Faith in Christ saves. But that faith can be built up as it grows in trusting and living for Christ. Don't misunderstand, you can't build up your faith to make it any more effective. If you are in Christ, there are no necessary add-ons. But you can build up your faith to withstand the enemies of God.

Paul makes it clear how we are strengthened in our faith. "Strengthened in the faith as you were taught." We grow roots to withstand the scorching trials, we build up walls to fend off the devil's attacks, and we grow stronger in faith as we remain in the Word of God. One of the immediate results you will notice when your faith is strengthened is that you will overflow in faith with thanksgiving to God. Nothing can be added to Christian faith. But when Christian faith has more of Christ and his Word, it is strengthened, and it produces blessings of contentment, praise, and thanks.

But the enemies of God will try to dethrone Christ as Lord. They will come to believers and will try to convince them that they aren't truly saved or aren't truly in Christ unless they purchase all the add-ons and the extras they are selling. "See to it that no one takes you captive." This word is used to describe what someone does when they win a battle and carry off the plunder. In the ancient world they would carry off conquered people as their plunder, as slaves.

That is what the enemies of God want to do with those who are in Christ. They do this by carrying them off away from Christ and back into slavery to sin. They do it by convincing people they need more than Christ. Paul says that they use the love of wisdom of this world and empty deceit which depends on the pattern of this world instead of Christ. The Christian child is told, "Jesus loves you... if you trust him and do good." An empty lie is sold that removes Christ as Lord. The Christian college student who isn't rooted in the Word is told that Jesus saves, but you are not really a wise Christian unless you also accept God used evolution and people are evolved today to go beyond biblical marriage boundaries. An empty lie removes Christ as Lord. The man who thinks he is rooted in faith finds his faith uprooted when he is sold the pattern of the world. The world says that Christ can only be Lord if he loves the same thing every sinner might love. Therefore, they reason, tolerance of sin makes a true Christian. Christ is removed as Lord. Still

others will say that a true believer keeps every command and never truly sins. Christ is removed as Lord in the hearts of those whose roots are shallow, whose faith is weak, and whose faith crumbles so that they are carried off as plunder by the enemies of God. They once again become slaves to sin and depend on themselves as lord.

But Paul reminds us why we can fully depend on Christ and depend on him alone. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. And in Christ you have been brought to fullness." Jesus is more than just a powerful Savior. He is fully God. And in the person of Jesus, we have one who is true man, yet also true God. As true God, the man Jesus cannot fail to save, cannot fail to conquer, cannot fail to deliver on what he has promised us. You have all the fullness you need in him. As true God and true man Jesus is your only perfect and absolute source of rescue and hope.

In fact, to have Christ, to have the divine Son of God as your Lord, means that any add-ons are false and can only bring harm. There is a cartoon by Gary Larson that I'm sure most of us can identify with. It depicts a man at the dentist who has all sorts of dental tools in his mouth. His mouth is more than full! But as he sits there with his mouth wide open his eyes are also wide. That's because the dentist says, "Now open wide, Mr. Stevens. Just out of curiosity we are going to also see if we can cram in this tennis ball." When you have everything you need, adding something can actually make things turn ugly. That's what the enemies of God are doing with their work and their deceitful lies that you need more than Christ. They see someone who has the perfect love of Christ but want to ruin it all by insisting you add what is harmful.

Paul gives us an illustration of what we have in Christ. He uses the Old Testament covenant of circumcision to illustrate what Christ provides us. Circumcision involved the removal of the flesh of the body. Paul compares that to what all Christians now have who are baptized in Christ. With our baptism we have the removal of the sinful flesh. In baptism we were connected to the death and resurrection of Christ. That means our old sinful flesh was put to death. Christ brings us victory! We were once "dead in our sins and in the uncircumcision of our flesh." But God made us alive in Christ! He forgave all our sins. In baptism we were washed, saved, and forgiven by the power of Christ. You are connected to Christ in baptism. The sinful flesh that once ruled our hearts has been conquered! You need no more!

Paul gives another illustration which powerfully depicts what we have in Christ. Before we had Christ, we only had legal indebtedness that comes from the law. God's holy law stood against us because we had broken his laws. That left us only with a legal obligation which we could never pay off. But in Christ we have more than a protection plan against sin. We have the full cancellation of our debt to sin. We were condemned by sin. We deserved only God's just wrath over sin and the punishment of death and hell. But that condemnation was taken away from us. Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, took our debt and nailed it to the cross. There is no work, no philosophy, no change in teaching that you can add to this message. Our sins are nailed to the cross by Christ! Christ the Lord of all and true God came in bodily form to give you all you need! Sin is conquered! You need no more!

Finally, Paul gives us a third illustration. Remember how the enemies of God want to carry off God's people as plunder? They can't carry off those who are in Christ because Christ has already conquered all his enemies! Paul's third illustration depicts the triumph of the Lord of all. Paul speaks of what would happen when an ancient army conquered its enemies. You didn't have the local news to report the victory on video. Instead, you had a public victory parade to show everyone that the enemy has been conquered. Paul says that Christ, "disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them." When the devil and the sinful world try to assert their authority over the Word of Christ, they cannot win. The devil may try to make you think you need more than Christ. He may try to carry you off as plunder and dethrone Christ in your heart. But he has lost all his power over you because of Christ.

And Christ won this triumph over all authority by one of the most unexpected means. It wasn't by demanding us any payment. He made the payment. It wasn't by making us cover some extra add-on purchase. It was by him. And it was by the cross. He did it by lowering himself and humbling himself. Even though all the fullness of the Deity of God dwells in the person of Jesus, he set aside his glory and power. He went to the cross.

And even as the enemies of God scoffed at his suffering, he was Lord of all. And by his glorious resurrection assured us all that he remains forever Lord of all. And in him you are made complete and have fullness of salvation.

Don't be carried off by the empty deceit and lies of this world. Christ is the fullness and gives us the fullness. Don't accept any lie that you need to purchase or do anything more. Don't be carried away by the teachings that operate according to the pattern of this world instead of the pattern of Christ. Christ is all you need. He has triumphed over all. He gives his triumph which he won for all. And we can only marvel and wonder that the Son of God did it all in bodily form as he triumphed by the cross.