

The Gospel's Forgiveness
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Colossians 2:4-15

Opening: Let's talk about FACTS and FEELINGS. Think of the example of forgiveness. Let's imagine we've said or done something hurtful or wrong toward a spouse, a child, or a friend. I realize I messed up (fact, we call that "conviction") how does that make me feel? Now, flip the coin over, after we ask that person to forgive us for our actions, what words describe how it FEELS to BE forgiven?

It's a wise person who makes decisions based on FACTS and not just FEELINGS. Sometimes we have feelings that are not based on facts. We call that worry. But God created us in His image with feelings (emotions) that result from facts. Let's apply that to following Christ.

Following Christ should not just be getting swept up in an emotional state (feelings) and praying a prayer, it should be based on the facts of Who He is. However, if we are His follower and we consider the facts about what He has done for us, we SHOULD FEEL something in response. In this section of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae we'll consider the FACTS about Christ, what He has done for us, and remind ourselves how those FACTS should make us feel.

Here's the truth that should change us in this text: When I consider the facts about Jesus and what He has done for me, my heart will be filled with feelings that make me love Him more and more and desire to grow to be more like Him.

Colossians 2:4–15 (ESV) — **4** I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. **5** For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. **6** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. **8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the

elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. **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.

- Verse 4 builds on what we studied last week: *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* Because His Spirit lives in His followers, we have all we need spiritually (V.3.) Because of that Paul warned them about false teaching.
- In verse five he commends them for their *“firm faith”* in Christ.
- Like a parent saying to a child as they leave the house: *“Don’t forget who you are, don’t be led astray to make bad choices, don’t get off track!”* their spiritual father Paul said, *“Hold on firmly to your faith, don’t be deceived.”*
- Verses six and seven are a mini seminar on growing more like Jesus:
 - Like the day you trusted Christ, *“walk in him.”* [Keep following Him]
 - *“Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith”* [Learn more about Jesus and do everything based on His teaching].
 - The picture of roots growing deeper is important. Some people get swept up in false teaching because instead of growing deeper they are looking for something different. All we need spiritually is in Christ; we need to grow deeper; *“More about Jesus would I know.”*
 - *“Abounding in thanksgiving”* [If you do these things then you will FEEL thankful for Him and what he’s done for you.]

- Verse eight is another warning: Don't be "kidnapped" by false teaching. Cults don't just put up a sign and wait; they "capture" their victims.
- Verses nine and ten give some significant facts about Jesus: *"In Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body."* Jesus is fully God and came as fully human so we are *"complete through our union with Him."*⁴
- Two weeks ago we said Jesus must be at the top of the list of our life: He is *"preeminent."* These verses speak to His *"sufficiency."* He's all we need! That fact should cause us to feel a hunger to know Him more.
- Verse eleven talks about circumcision. No doubt part of the false teaching included the Jewish *"old covenant"* requirement of physical circumcision.
- In verse 11 in the NLT Paul said,¹¹ *When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature.*ⁱⁱ
- Verses 12 & 13: ¹²*For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.* ¹³*You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Fact: We are born "spiritually dead" but Christ gives "new life!" He releases us from being "slaves to sin." How does that fact make you feel?
- Fact: He "forgave all our sins." How does THAT make you feel?
- Remember our opening illustration of how good it feels to be forgiven for messing up in a relationship? Reflect on the fact if you've trusted Christ you are forgiven for every sin past, present, and future FOREVER!
- You might say, *"I'm forgiven but I still mess up! I still sin!"* ¹ John 1:9 covers that. Confess that sin and He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from it. Because of His death on the cross, we have a bank account of His righteousness and grace to cover us when we mess up!

- **Psalm 32:1 (ESV) — 1** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. The CSB: “Blessed” = “How joyful.”
- The fact of forgiveness should lead to the feeling of JOY!
- Verse 14 puts it in terms of a debt forgiven: ¹⁴ *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*^{iv}
- Have you heard of Dave Ramsey’s “debt free scream?” What is it?
- Ever been deep in debt and finally get it paid off? You’ll celebrate that!
- As great as it feels to pay off your own debt, what if someone pays it for you? Illustration: Pay it forward fail – they were buying lunch for the office!
- We were born with a “sin debt.” **Romans 3:23 (ESV) — 23** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 6:23 (ESV) — 23* *For the wages of sin is death, [now the GREAT NEWS] but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- Paying our sin debt is called “redemption.”
- Wiersbe: *“Satan seeks to accuse us and imprison us because he knows we are guilty of breaking God’s Law. But the ransom has been paid on Calvary, and through faith in Jesus Christ, we have been set free.”^v*
- Fact: We were born with a “sin debt” and “Jesus paid it all!”
- Feeling: Followers of Christ should be rejoicing daily because Jesus paid the sin debt we couldn’t pay! He cancelled it and “nailed it to the cross.”
- Jesus makes us a new person and gives us a new life, He forgives every sin past, present, and future, He paid our sin debt giving us freedom.
- How do those facts make you feel? How many followers of Christ walk around feeling guilty and defeated instead of forgiven and FREE?
- Here’s another fact about what Jesus will do for us: He gives Victory!
- Verse 15: *“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”* What does that mean?

- This is a picture of a triumphant army parading their defeated enemies through town to shame them in defeat. The old hymn described the *“old rugged cross”* as *“the emblem of suffering and shame.”*
- Charles Spurgeon wrote: *“Faith regards the cross, not as the emblem of shame, but as the token of glory...Christ has subdued death and the devil...nay, more, has utterly trodden them under his feet.”^{vi}*
- Fact: On the cross Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil. We have victory in Jesus! That should make us feel something!
- Question: When you think about everything Jesus has done for you, what feelings come to mind?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Following Christ should be about facts not feelings; but when we clearly look at the facts about Jesus we SHOULD feel something!
- It's a tragedy if truly saved followers of Christ walk around in defeat instead of celebrating the FACTS of Who He is and what He has done.
- Satan is called the “accuser” of God's children. I imagined a conversation:
 - The accuser: You're not different because you prayed some prayer.
 - Fact: I'm a new creation in Christ. Feeling: Confident
 - Accuser: As sinful as you are, you won't get into heaven.
 - Fact: Jesus paid it all. Feeling: Forgiven and free
 - Accuser: You're so weak you can't keep this Christian life going.
 - Fact: Christ has defeated you and your minions and given me power over sin. Feeling: I have victory in Jesus!
- I thought of the lyrics of the Bill and Gloria Gaither song, “I'm Free”:

*“I'm free from the fear of tomorrow
I'm free from the guilt of my past!
I've traded my shackles for a glorious song
I'm free, Praise the Lord, free at last!”^{vii}*

- This week, let's focus on the facts Paul gave us about life in Christ and celebrate the feelings of forgiveness, freedom, and victory in Him!

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Col 2:9–

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Col 2:11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Col 2:12–13). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Col 2:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^v Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vi} <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/christ-triumphant/#flipbook/>

^{vii} <https://www.lyrics.com/track/3478273/Bill+Gaither/I%27m+Free>