

Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 8
**CANCELING
OUR DEBT**



“You, who were dead in your trespasses ... God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us” (Col. 2:13-14).

When the Romans hung a condemned criminal on a cross as punishment for a crime, they always affixed a titulus above the one being executed. This titulus listed the capital crimes that had been committed, explaining why the crucified individual had to pay the debt his offense incurred against Rome. In the case of Jesus, the titulus read that He claimed to be “King of the Jews”; thus, the Romans crucified Jesus because they believed Him to be seditiously claiming for Himself an authority that, in their view, properly belonged to the Caesar (John 19:16b–22).

As he unfolds the cosmic significance of that dark day on Golgotha, Paul, in today’s passage, alludes to the titulus the Father affixed to the cross when His Son bore the sins of the world, thus facing the wrath of God. On the cross, the covenant Lord took “the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” and set it aside, “nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). The apostle is

COLOSSIANS 2:11-15

CORAM DEO

That God no longer regards us as guilty, because of our union with Christ, does not mean that He has overlooked our sin, for He has judged it in the flesh of His Son, whose perfect righteousness is credited to our account. Let us therefore walk in the freedom He has purchased for us, not thinking that we must do things to make Him love us but endeavoring to please Him because of the great love He showed us when we were yet sinners.¹

¹ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/canceling-our-debt/>

speaking of the IOU that all the children of Adam have signed off on. We came into this world under an obligation to obey God completely, and whether we grew up hearing the Word of God or know what the Almighty requires of us only because we are made in His image, none of us has paid this debt (Rom. 1:1–3:20). Having failed to obey God perfectly, all of us must pay for our evil through suffering eternal death — the wrath of God — but the Father has shown unfathomable love in allowing another to satisfy the debt for His people. Taking the debt — the IOU that shows what we have not done and the divine wrath that must fall on us — God nailed it over Jesus’ head, showing that His death satisfied our debt. In turn, we were taken out of a state of death in which we were uncircumcised in the flesh — slaves to our sinful nature — and brought to life, set free to love and obey Him (Col. 2:13). God did everything that had to be done, so we must not let anyone tell us that more is required to pay what we owe Him (vv. 8–12).

The Westminster Confession of Faith 11.3 summarizes it this way: “Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father’s justice in their behalf.” God no longer regards anyone who is in Christ guilty of not paying his IOU, for Jesus satisfies the payment for us, and we are free from trying to do it ourselves.

OPEN IT



Describe a time when someone paid a bill for you or you paid a bill for someone else. What transpired after this took place?

READ IT | Colossians 2:11-15

EXPLORE IT



1. What does our baptism signify?
2. In verse 12 what stark contrast is given in our life before and after Christ?
3. What did Christ do with our record of debt?
4. What has Christ done to the rulers and authorities?

GET IT

*In Colossians 2:9-15 Paul explains that a believer has been made **complete** in Christ through identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Col 2:11,12), out of which arise some significant benefits (Col 2:13, 14, 15). When confronted with false teaching, most of us attack it and try to point out what is wrong with it. Paul's approach is to "accentuate the positive" and thus he reviews what the saints already possess in Christ. You will never possess any more of Christ than you do the moment of salvation.²*

5. What is the world's definition of success?

How does that differ with the picture of success found in verses 9-10?

² http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_211-13.htm#2:11

Thus, in union with Christ our every spiritual need is fully met. Possessing him, we possess all. There was no need, therefore, for the Colossians to turn to the “philosophy” of the errorists (false teachers), the ritual of the Mosaic Law, or the spirit-beings worshipped by the pagan world. All they needed was in Jesus Christ³.

6. Explore the first sentence by Vaughan (above). What does it mean for you, personally, to have every spiritual need met in Christ?

What effect does this have on your relation to good works? To worship? To giving (tithing)? To service?

Jewish legalism was a huge problem which threatened to divide the first century church. At the center of the debate was the issue of circumcision. Teachers who insisted on this physical operation for Gentile converts were, in essence, saying, “You need to become a Jew in order to be saved.” But even a casual look at Judaism reveals a people caught up in an earned righteousness. Paul staked his entire ministry on the fact that the grace of God sets his children free from keeping score, from working for one’s salvation.⁴

7. Why do Gentile Christians have no need to conform to Jewish rules and regulations?
8. What "additions" to faith in Christ have you been tempted to add as a result of so-called Christian teaching or culture?

In the context of verse 11 “putting (or stripping) off the body of flesh” is most plausibly contrasted with the minor operation in circumcision: bluntly it appears to say that instead of stripping off a little piece of flesh, as in circumcision, the Christian has stripped off his whole body of flesh, and this has happened because Christ was circumcised,” that is, killed on the cross, the Christian shares so completely in that event, it is as if he himself had suffered that appalling bloody death.⁵

9. Compare the following verses with Paul’s notion of putting off the body of flesh. What does each of these passages say about our problem with the flesh?

- Romans 6:6
- Romans 7:24

³ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philipppians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, Westminster, 1959

⁴ http://sbcommunity.org/lifeinc/pdf/Colossians_study.pdf

⁵ http://sbcommunity.org/lifeinc/pdf/Colossians_study.pdf

- Ephesians 4:22
- Colossians 3:9-10

10. The scriptures are clear about the flesh being nothing but trouble for the believer. Why then are we so drawn to feeding the flesh instead of “putting it off”?

*The Jews boasted in the covenant sign of **circumcision**, but it was only in their flesh. The true spiritual circumcision God desired had never reached their hearts. In a similar way, people today who depend on baptism and some other church sacrament (ordinance), and yet who have never repented and trusted Christ, are in the same situation as the Jews in Jeremiah’s day —they think they’re a part of the divine covenant, but their confidence is false and they stand deceived and in imminent danger of entering into a Christ-less eternity.⁶*

11. Compare your new self with your old self. What are the chief differences?

How has Christ changed the outside of your life?

How has He changed the inside of your life?

12. How does baptism help to illustrate outwardly what has happened on the inside?

If the Bible speaks so clearly about the importance of illustration, what keeps people from being baptized?

⁶ www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_211-13.htm

Starting in verses 13-15, Paul begins to address the wonder of our salvation. Each phrase is powerfully saturated with the saving work of God. Within this text we learn two truths of our salvation:

First, Jesus canceled it. Literally he wiped it clean. Second, he nailed it to the cross. Paul has in mind the ancient practice of placing a written tablet on the cross of a condemned man carrying the charges for which he was condemned. Thus when people passed the suffering convict they would understand what led to his plight. Jesus took our record of debt and nailed it to his own cross!!!

The J.B. Phillips paraphrase captures the image: He has forgiven you all your sins: Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the cross.⁷

13. Take some time and write down some of the personal sins that you had written on your record of debt. Get specific!!!

After reviewing this list, what does this say about you?

What does it tell about Jesus Christ and his death on the cross?

14. How does verse 15 help us as believers when the devil reminds us about our guilty past?
15. How do the words of this chapter help us when we are troubled by a guilty conscience?
16. Take some time as a group to thank Jesus for His finished work on the cross. Use this time to confess the things that have put you back into bondage and hindered your relationship with Him.

⁷ http://sbcommunity.org/lifeinc/pdf/Colossians_study.pdf