

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## The Basis of Maturity – Having Been Made Complete... To Be Completed

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"...in Him you have been made complete..."

Col. 2:10

"Of this church I became a minister... to make full the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been made evident to His saints, ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, ...Whom we proclaim, reminding every person and teaching every person in all wisdom, in order that we might present every person complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

Col. 1:25-29

**The proximity of these two passages makes it easier to notice the recurrence of the word "complete" in both contexts.** I have reversed the order in which these verses occur to clarify a logical point, to be addressed in a few moments. Before going there, however, if you were to read them in the order that they actually occur in Colossians, you might assume that the completeness which Paul was trying to bring about in 1:28 has been established, according to the language in 2:10, ..end of story. When you read the entire context, however, that does not seem to fit. The problem, the source of confusion, lies with the limitations of our English translation. **The kinds of "completeness" alluded to in these two passages are entirely different, though they are related to one another.**

**In Col. 2:10, it says that in Jesus we have been made "complete".** *Already.* The Greek word used here is a form of the word, *plēroō* ("play-rah-o"), which means "to fill, to make full, to fully supply, to fulfill (as in 'to bring about', or 'to bring to completion')". **The particular form of the word in this verse emphasizes action that has taken place in the past with ongoing results, i.e., "you have been filled (and are still full)", or, "you have been fully supplied (and still are fully supplied)", or, possibly, "you have been brought to completion (and are still completed)".** Which definition are we to accept as the one Paul intended for this verse? **In the immediate context following 2:10, the emphasis is upon what has happened to us because we are "in Christ".** Christ is described as the "head (source) of all rule and authority". The thrust of this statement is that **Jesus is a source of supply, an origin of power and ability.** After making this general statement, Paul describes how it came to be that *we* "have been made full" in Christ.

**In Christ, we were circumcised with a non-physical circumcision, a "putting off" or "setting free from" the body of the flesh. How? "In the circumcision of Christ".** What? How can *Christ's* circumcision affect *me*?

Paul goes on, *without explanation*, to say that **we were separated from our past lives and identity, buried together-with Christ, "...having been buried together-with Him ('co-buried') in baptism..."**

The passage says **we were also resurrected to a new life and identity in Jesus.** "... in which also you were raised together-with Him ('co-raised')..."

**How did this happen?** Not by anything *we* did. Rather, **we trusted in God to act.** We believed He would work in us. Paul states it this way, "God was the One arousing Jesus out from the dead ones; ...and *we* ourselves *were dead* in our transgressions and the uncircumcision of our flesh. By means of faith in the inworking of God, *He made us alive* together with Him ('co-quickened together with Him'), having forgiven-by-grace to us all the transgressions, and wiping off the inscription consisting of charges against us, which was opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross. Disarming the rulers and the authorities, He openly displayed them, triumphing over them in Himself" (2:11-15). Did you catch all of that? **We were spiritually dead. God made us alive in Christ.** In order to bring that about, **He forgave us and removed every charge or accusation against us. Satan has no basis to attack us anymore!**

Wow! That is a lot that was accomplished in Christ on our behalf! **So, how are we to understand the word, *plēroō*?** **Our own experience indicates that we are not "complete", in the sense of being a finished product, fully mature, or without need to grow.** Furthermore, the commands and admonitions of the practical section would not make sense, if we were somehow miraculously mature in Christ. Clearly, **the practical instructions in 3:1-4:6 are given to help us work out in real life the inner change that God has worked within us, ...which means we still need to grow and mature.** Thus, to translate *plēroō* in 2:10 as "complete" is not the best translation. That rendering is misleading. **What would be a better translation of *plēroō* in this passage?** When I read Paul's description of what was done for me "in Jesus", ...much of which I was totally unaware, since it took place without my conscious involvement..., **the definition that makes most sense to me in the context is that I have been fully supplied** (and am *still* fully supplied). It appears that *His life in my place* has much more incredible, far-reaching ramifications than I ever thought possible. It seems to have covered *all the areas that might hinder my relationship with God.* **At the heart of it all is the message that somehow I was put into Jesus so that His actions have had an effect on me.**

*My uncleanness has been removed* (symbolized by the spiritual circumcision). *My fleshly nature has also been put away* from me in this same symbolic act. I can no longer use the excuses that “God does not find me acceptable”, or that “I am just a fallen human being, bound to keep sinning”. No. In God's sight, I am clean, and, within, I need no longer be controlled by a “fleshly nature”. Furthermore, *I have been put to death to my past life, my past self, and have been raised "from among the corpses" by the inworking power of God.* **There is absolutely nothing from my past that can hinder my relationship with God. My life is new, fresh, beyond what is natural. I have been infused with the resurrection life from heaven.** The same power that brought Jesus out from the tomb has made *me* alive together with Him. I am a new person, empowered by a new vitality, one that neither sin nor death can destroy.

**As if to anticipate the objections of my shame, ...or the accusations of the enemy..., Paul describes how all of my transgressions were removed, ...totally forgiven-by-grace and wiped away.** The inscription above Jesus' head on Good Friday read “King of the Jews” (Mk. 15:26), but invisibly there were also transferred all the charges and decrees that could possibly be leveled against *me*. Spiritually, they were added to the charge seen by human eyes, so that **all the spiritual realm would clearly understand that He was dying in my place, paying off my debt, removing any and every hold or legal claim to my life with each drop of His blood.** I have been *totally* redeemed, and there is *no* charge, decree, or covenant that can have any hold on me. **Jesus' cry from the cross, "It is finished!" was the common Greek expression written on every record of debt when it was finally completely retired.** In that cry, “Paid in full!”, is not only a *promise to us*, to assure ourselves in our inner struggles that no sin can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:31-39), **it also was a cry of victory meant to put the enemy on notice that he had been stripped of any and all legal authority to lay claim to anyone that belongs to Christ.** All debts and obligations had been covered. In that moment of apparent helplessness and public humiliation, Jesus succeeded in outwitting the enemy, and proclaimed His triumph from the cross. **Even the demonic realm has been legally stripped of their hold on our lives. They have no basis for interference in our affairs. Their claims or accusations will be "thrown out of court", because the debt or obligation has been "paid in full".**

**So, what about the other passage? What about Col. 1:28?** In the NASB translation of the phrase, “that we may present every man complete in Christ...”, the translators chose to use “complete” to render an entirely different Greek word. **The Greek word here is *teleios* (“tell-ay-os”), and it means “mature, fully-grown, brought-to-the-end”.** The main thrust of the word is that *it describes the end result of a process*, or the fulfillment of a purpose or plan. **If the word “complete” in 2:10 (*plēroō*) meant “fully supplied”, referring to our yet-to-be-realized potential in Christ**, (i.e., what Jesus has made available to us, but what we may not yet understand or “walk in”), **then the use of the word “complete” in 1:28 is referring to the exact opposite end of our potentiality, i.e., our realized potentiality.** **What Paul is saying in this verse is that he labors to help every person grow up to their full potential in Christ.** The hidden mystery, which has now been made known, is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (vs. 27). This is a reference to the potentiality which Paul elaborates on in 2:10-19. **Paul's work is to not only proclaim the revealed-mystery (the Good News), but also to teach, admonish, remind, exhort, and warn every person, in order to move them on to maturity in Christ. For what benefit is the potentiality without the practicality?** What is the value of the *innate capability* made available in Jesus, if we do not *discover it* and *walk it out* in our experience?

Not only do *we personally miss out on the benefits* that come with a deeper, more consistent walk, but, to the degree that we are immature and inconsistent, *our lives do not accurately portray who Jesus is, nor what He has done.* **Our immaturity is not only painful and frustrating; it is bad advertising.** The early church was very much into pursuing maturity and consistency. The apostles were called by Jesus to be *disciples, active followers, ones-under-training.* He called them to *be like Him, to do what He did, and to learn from Him* how to train others (Matt. 4:19; 10:25). The apostles carried this discipleship thrust into the early church (Acts 2:42-46). They were diligent to get the faith of new converts both *grounded* and *active*, so that they would mature. **In order for others to see the work of God, believers must learn to walk in the Spirit, not the flesh.** The world desperately needs to see Christians who are mature, fully-grown, Spirit-led followers of Jesus. **How will people come to know the real Jesus, if He is not expressed through His people?** That was God's original plan. He intended for the church to be an incubator and training arena for personal growth and spiritual development. We were *all* to mature, as we learned to express truth to one another in love. Paul said the goal was the maturity of *every* believer, ...*everyone* equipped in knowledge, experiencing Jesus, and fully-grown to be like Him (Eph. 4:12,13). **We were to be committed, as Paul was, “to present every person mature in Christ”, each one of us “striving according to the power that mightily works within” us.** Sadly, we no longer *expect* that we are to help each other grow, so we don't *apply ourselves* to mature, either. **In Christ, we have been made complete (fully supplied), to be completed (fully actualized).** **Press on to lay hold of that for which you also were laid hold of by Christ Jesus** (Phil. 3:12). **Don't settle for less.**