

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Having Been Made Complete... To Be Completed

by Dan Trygg

“...in Him you have been made complete...”

Colossians 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 also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” Colossians 1:25-29

The proximity of these two passages makes it easier to notice the recurrence of the word “complete” in the NASB version. 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 has been established, ...end of story. Of course, when you read the entire context, that does not seem to fit, either.

**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”*.** The Greek word used here is a form of the word, *plēroō* (“play-rah-ō”), 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, “you have been brought to completion (and are still completed)”. Which definition we are to understand as the one Paul intended must be understood by the context. In the context, 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 **He is a source of supply, an origin of power and ability**.

**Paul then goes on to describe how it happened that we have been “made full”**. 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 the circumcision of Christ affect *me*? Paul goes on, without explanation, “having been buried *together with Him* (‘co-buried’) in baptism, in which also you were raised *together with Him* (‘co-raised’) by means of the faith of the inworking of God, the One arousing Him out from the corpses (the dead); and y’all being corpses in the transgressions and the uncircumcision of the flesh of y’all, He made you alive *together with Him* (‘co-quickened together with Him’), having forgiven-by-grace to us all the transgressions, wiping off the inscription consisting of charges against us, which was opposed to us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross; disarming (or, ‘stripping’) the rulers and the authorities, He openly displayed them, triumphing over them in Him” (2:11-15). **The key to understanding all of this is that we were somehow united with Christ, so that what happened to Him happened to us, or is applied to us. When we came to be “in Christ” by faith, all that Jesus did was applied to me.**

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, ...so probably “complete” is not the best translation, at least not without some further qualification.** When I read Paul’s description of what was done for me “in Jesus”, much of which I was totally unaware, in that 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 am no longer controlled by a “fleshly nature”. Furthermore, **I have been put to death to my past life**, my past self, and 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", 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 blood, so that *the accuser would have no charges to levy against me*, and he would be stripped of all power of accusation, prosecution, or any so-called claim to my life. **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 His 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 authority to claim what belonged 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 has been 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 Colossians 1:28?** In the NASB translation of the phrase, "that we may present every man complete in Christ...", the NASB translators chose to use "complete" to render a different Greek verb. If the word "complete" in 2:10 (πλήροο) 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", experientially, then the use of the word "complete" in 1:28 is referring to exact opposite end of our potentiality, i.e., *realized potentiality*. **The Greek word here is teleios** ('tell-ay-os'), and it means "mature, fully-grown, brought-to-the-end, whole". The main thrust of this word is that **it describes the end result of a process**, or the fulfillment of a purpose or plan. **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? In fact, 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 original 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 influence others (Matt. 4:19). He taught them to "continue in", or "abide in", His word (Jn 8:31,32). The apostles carried this 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 the Spirit, believers must learn to walk in the Spirit, not the flesh.**

**The incredible news on that first resurrection morning was electrifying! However, the apostles had, as yet, no real appreciation of the full implications of that event.** The glimpse that they had of it was amazing and overwhelming enough. To carry it to the next step, to see themselves as having been put into Jesus in His death and resurrection, were quite beyond them, at first. The truth that Paul proclaimed was still a mystery being revealed, but not yet fully understood. **The incredibly huge truth is that not only was Jesus risen that first Sunday morning, but, in some way, so were you! All barriers that might keep you from "walking as Jesus walked",** i.e., in righteousness, in love, in the power of the Spirit, in fellowship with Abba, **were obliterated by your union with Jesus** in the events of His passion and His victorious resurrection. **You have been "fully supplied". All the potential is there. Now what remains is to discover what it means, and learn how to walk in it. Now the task is to become fully-grown,** brought to the end of the process which began in you at your new birth. Christ in you *is* the hope of glory. **When we say, "The Lord is risen!", it is customary to respond, "He is risen, indeed!" Consider this, "You, too, are risen!" ("I am risen, indeed!")**