

Fullness in Christ.
Colossians 2 v 6 – 10

The ancient Greeks and Romans believed in many so called ‘gods’, AND in numerous “demi-gods” or half-gods, exceptional men or women who were born as a result of the gods having children with human beings. Hercules, Achilles or Perseus are examples.

But in Colossians 2 v 9 the Apostle Paul goes way beyond the popular mythology of his day. Jesus is not just an exceptional man, not even just a half-god, He is the one true Lord. He is God in the flesh!

“In Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

No half measures here! Christ is the whole deal. The Greek word translated ‘fullness’ is ‘pleroma’ and it means total abundance of God’s nature, His absolute authority and power, His complete knowledge of all things, His profound goodness and love, all of these dwell permanently and naturally in God the Son, our Lord and Master and Friend, Jesus.

The fullness of God, the glory of His ruling majesty and redeeming love are revealed to fallen human beings like us through Jesus, as the Spirit teaches us of Him in the Scriptures.

And yet possibly more amazing still is what we read in v 10: “and *you* have been given fullness in Christ, Who is the Head over every power and authority”.

Paul is writing to a group of Christians who were just as human and ordinary as we are today! They had their strengths and weaknesses, hurts, jealousies, disagreements and controversies. Their faith had prompted them to form a loving fellowship but they were just as vulnerable as any group of flawed human beings.

And yet God has chosen to share with them and us and all Christians everywhere something of His ‘fullness’, because we are ‘in’ Christ.

What does this mean, to be “in Christ”? It is clearly very important, of the very essence of being a Christian, and yet many of us who have been Christians for years are still learning the rich depths of this truth.

Scripture tells us that when we repent of sin and put our trust in Christ as Saviour, when we consciously become Christians, opening our hearts and lives to Him, a new spiritual birth takes place. He accepts our invitation and comes to live ‘in us’ by the Holy Spirit, bringing the ‘hope of the glory’ and all kinds of new spiritual awareness. We find this living connection identifies us closely with our Lord. God looks at us differently now, no longer as lost rebels but as beloved children. Not only is Christ in us, we are ‘in Him’ and in experience are becoming more like Him. Our old sinful way has died and been buried, we are enabled to rise and live holy lives as citizens of heaven. We are discovering the joy of service, even the honour of suffering opposition like Christ, for His sake. In Him, spiritually we have died and yet come to life like never before.

As Christians actively seek to maintain this close link with our risen Lord we experience more and more this truth we sometimes sing “God is at work in us His purpose to perform, building a Kingdom of power not of words”. Something of the ‘pleroma’ of Almighty God is being shared with those who obediently take refuge in Christ by faith, that we might know Him better and serve Him in a more Christ-like effectiveness.

Let me suggest three outworkings of this. As those who are ‘in Christ’:

1. We come to God and are welcomed and accepted.

We have no confidence to approach God on our own, for He is completely holy and abhors sin and corruption and we by nature, and too often by practice, sinful and offensive. But we *don't* approach

God on our own merit or in our own strength. We come to God ‘in Christ’, having trusted in Him as our Perfect Substitute and Righteous Saviour. In Him, we are clothed, presented as perfect, given a righteous status before God’s throne. This means that our prayers, like His, are accepted by the Father and prove powerful in bringing about change. We do not pray as helpless outsiders but as children of God who have been encouraged to pray in the name of Jesus, the name that is above every name, the name that carries most weight in Heaven!

We come to God and in Christ, make powerful prayers that really change things.

2. As those who are ‘in Christ’, we come to our fellow human beings to share our testimony to Christ by our lives and sometimes also our words, and our witness to the Gospel is compelling, persuading others to think and change and act.

For it is no longer we who live but Christ Who is living in us! It is God sharing His fullness, as his Spirit acts and speaks through us.

At the end of Colossians 1, Paul writes, “We proclaim [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me”.

How exciting! That as we humbly and earnestly do our little bit to the best of our ability with trusting prayer, God is powerfully working through us to draw others to faith and build up His Church.

3. As those who are ‘in Christ’, we come against the forces of evil in Jesus’ name and send them packing, for we have been given ‘fullness in Christ, Who is the head over every power and authority”.

In Ephesians 6 Paul reminds us that our real struggle is not against other flesh and blood people, “but against the rulers, against the

authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”.

Jesus Himself said the very gates of Hell would not be able to hold out against His Church, those who know we are ‘in Him’, living and operating with the fullness He shares with His obedient disciples. And yet too often we have acted like a people in retreat, afraid to drive out the enemy as Jesus authorises us to do.

Let us be encouraged by God’s Word tonight. Are we struggling with temptation? – God is at work in us, powerfully making us more like Christ. Are we facing trials? – God’s fullest resources are available to all who are in Christ. Have we lost our sense of purpose? - We exist to glorify our Saviour and the fullness of equipping power is already within us by the Spirit, just waiting to be deployed!

Our Master Jesus is simply without equal. And He desires this close connection with us, He in us, us in Him, that in His mighty strength we should make Him known. Let’s do it!

Because in Him we can.

Amen