

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

**Episode 231**

**Colossians 2:11-12**

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### **Episode Summary**

These two verses are (in)famous in New Testament study. Paul's comments about baptism and circumcision, and a "circumcision made without hands" have been an interpretive battle ground ever since they were written down. How does baptism relate to our receiving and being rooted in Christ (Col 2:6-7)? Does baptism complement salvation? Does it propel us toward salvation? How does water baptism relate to circumcision at all—if indeed Col 2:11-12 is even about water baptism? What if Paul is talking about Spirit baptism (1 Cor 12:13)? What then?

### **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 231, Colossians 2:11-12. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! You know what tomorrow is...

**MH:** Yes, I do.

**TS:** And?

**MH:** I do indeed.

**TS:** It's the first day that you lose for the entire...

**MH:** It's the first day for the defense of the Fantasy Football championship. That's what it is.

**TS:** In a short 16 weeks, I will regain that title, I promise.

**MH:** Nope, keep dreaming. Keep hope alive, Trey. Keep it alive.

**TS:** The Pugs are going down.

**MH:** The draft is... We're talking about our Fantasy Football draft for the Naked Bible Fantasy Football League. You know, Mory has been hard at work. He's been working some higher math problems. You know that movie, *Rain Man*?

**TS:** Oh, really? Yeah.

**MH:** The autistic savant? Well, I have an autistic savant pug, and so whenever he opens his eyes, that's who I'm going to pick.

**TS:** Wow! See, I don't have to rely on an autistic pug dog for my picks because I actually know football, so I just...

**MH:** But you lost last year, didn't you? You lost to my pug last year!

**TS:** Right. But I won the year before, so I thought maybe I'd let you share...

**MH:** I'm sure you lost a lot of tears over that. [laughter] Cost you a lot of grief.

**TS:** Yeah. And I also created one of those survival leagues. It's free. It's on Yahoo, so if anybody's interested, you can go find that out on the Facebook page, the podcast page, or the Naked Bible Group, or just shoot me an email at [TreyStricklin@gmail.com](mailto:TreyStricklin@gmail.com). I'll send you a link if you want to play with Mike and me. I think there's probably a dozen or so people that have signed up. But it's free. It's where you pick one team a week. You can't pick the same team twice, and if you pick incorrectly you're eliminated. So it could be a two-week thing or it could be an entire season thing. So we'll see how good your predictions are.

**MH:** Yep. Just for the sake of listeners, that's different than our Fantasy Football League, but yeah, I'll jump in and try that this year.

**TS:** I guess I'm going to have to start introducing you as the champion, because I will concede, you *did* win it. You're the reigning champion. You've earned it.

**MH:** The Pugnacious Pugs still basking in their glory...

**TS:** Oh my gosh. Do you know how many people right now love us talking about Fantasy Football? [MH laughs] I wonder how many people skip over...

**MH:** [laughs] Probably not as many as talking about pugs.

**TS:** People probably don't even know I'm on the show; they just fast forward till you start talking. I should just...

**MH:** This is actually a good distractor, because you introduced the episode as Colossians 2:11-12, and for anyone who is listening, they thought, "Weren't you

guys going to finish Colossians 2 today?” The answer is, “Nope. I’ve failed again. And so I’ve given up on plotting it.”

**TS:** Please. I promise you, Mike. People would rather you do one hour per verse. I guarantee it. So we’re not going to...

**MH:** Well, we’ve thrown that to the wind. We have thrown planning to the wind.

**TS:** The more content, the better.

**MH:** So we’re back to two verses again.

**TS:** No complaints.

**MH:** That’s good.

Well, it *is* Colossians 2:11-12 today. And I think a number of people in the audience knew this was coming because of the content of these two verses: this whole reference of Paul to circumcision, and then to some circumcision made without hands, and then baptism, and like, “What in the world’s going on with that?” To start us off, I’m going to read Colossians 2. I’ll start in verse 8 to pick up where we’ve already been. I’m actually going to read through verse 15, because this stuff needs to be contextualized. In this case, I think we’re going to see in a few points where if we ignore what went before and if we ignore what comes after these two verses, we can really veer off into some bad theology—The Land of Bad Theology. So let’s just read Colossians 2:8-15 to jump in here. Paul writes:

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**<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.**

We want to focus today on verses 11 and 12. (The last episode was verses 9 and 10 and, of course, before that was 6 through 8.) And we're confronted right away with, "What in the world is going on in Paul's head, referencing circumcision and baptism?" I'm going to qualify it by saying, "apparently." What I'm going to do here is I'm going to make some initial observations. There are points of explicit clarity in this passage (in other words, the text just states things right up front, very forthrightly—stuff that's really hard to miss or mess up), and then there are other points that require some digging and some careful thought. We're going to start with the clear stuff (this explicit clarity in certain respects—the stuff you have to work hard to miss).

So first, I would say the content of verses 9-10 provides a means to eliminate some of the interpretive alternatives that we're going to talk about when we get to verses 11-12. For instance, think about verses 9-10. "In him" (that is, in Christ) "there dwells the entire fullness of deity" (that is, the Godhead in all of its fullness—the entire measure of deity, as we talked about last time) "in bodily form." So, "In Christ, there dwells the entire fullness of deity in bodily form." And you Colossians out there have your completeness (this is verse 10) as a result of being in him (in Christ). In other words, what Christ did was the cause of your completeness. It's the cause of your filling—this idea that you are fully in Christ. Your fullness—your completeness—is a result of what Christ did.

Now, just think about the content of that, in verses 9 and 10. That our filling is complete means that our filling or completeness in Christ isn't supplemented or capped off by baptism. It's either complete (like Paul says it is) or it's not. He talks about the Colossians being complete in Christ before he encounters anything about baptism. If baptism adds something to it, then Paul just goofed in verses 9 and 10. You're either complete or not. Your status in the family of God is either complete in what Christ did, or it isn't, and Paul says it's complete. So that's pretty much obvious thing #1.

Secondly, when you get into Colossians 2:12... I'm going to telegraph here a little bit the content of verse 12. Colossians 2:12 links our completeness in Christ to our having been raised with him. In other words, when we get to verse 12, Paul's going to be talking about having been raised (which is an aorist passive verb) with Christ. That's the same language that we just read in verses 9 and 10. So it ties into verses 9 and 10. And since our completeness is found in the work of Christ on the cross, he's not talking about baptism completing us. When Paul gets to this "being raised" language in verse 12, "in the powerful working of God," and then he goes on in verses 13-15 with, "You were dead in trespasses, but now you're forgiven. Your record of debt has been cancelled. Your sins are forgiven. All its legal demands were nailed to the cross..." When he starts talking about the cross, that is the work of Christ. That is the thing that made you complete back in verses 9 and 10. And so we can't—or we shouldn't—read verses 11 and 12 with the circumcision/baptism stuff as a competition or as some sort of alternative statement to these ideas, because Paul gives us the idea of

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our completeness in verses 9 and 10, he is going to be talking about the work of Christ on the cross in verses 13-15, and in the middle there he hits the baptism and circumcision stuff. And he's not going to contradict himself in those two verses against what he has said in verses 9 and 10 and verses 13-15.

So we need to keep this in mind. All of these trajectories that are begun in verses 9 and 10 (our completeness *in him*—in Christ)... What did Christ do? Well, what he did on our behalf to enable us to be forgiven (to have our trespasses forgiven, to have the record of debt cancelled) didn't involve baptism and it certainly wasn't linked to his own fleshly circumcision. What that *was* was what happened on the cross. And so that needs to inform how we read verses 11 and 12. It's going to help us eliminate certain things from how we interpret what's going on in verses 11 and 12.

All of this is important—this being made alive... Just look at verse 13: "God made us alive together *with him*"—with Christ. Well, the whole "making alive with Christ" is a reference to the resurrection. It's not baptism; it's the resurrection, and then, again, the language of the cross there. I hope you get the idea. We're looking at these two verses (11 and 12) today, but we can't dispense with what has gone before and what has followed. We just have to keep these things in mind.

Last little item here. Not only do we have the content of the sense of being in Christ... verses 9 and 10, what "in Christ" is, the basis of our being labeled that way... You can even go back to verses 6 and 7: "We've received him, we're planted, we're rooted, we're built up in him, we're established in him"—all this kind of stuff. What does that mean? Does that mean in his character? The stuff he taught? No, it's a reference to what he *did* on our behalf, and that's a reference to the cross. You get to verse 15 and he starts talking about "disarming rulers and authorities, putting them to open shame." Well, that's actually consistent with what happened on the cross, as well. We have Jesus die on the cross and, even more specifically, that isn't what disarmed the rulers and authorities—the spiritual powers of darkness. What undid them was his resurrection. And this thought... We're going to devote a whole episode to this next time around because we will be hitting verses 13-15 in the next episode, at least. This whole notion of linking the resurrection to the defeat—the delegitimization—of the rulers and authorities (these spiritual powers of darkness)... Linking that to resurrection, we specifically find in 1 Peter 3 (if you've read *The Unseen Realm*, you know this already) the whole idea of baptism, which corresponds to this. I'm reading 1 Peter 3:21-22. Peter says, "baptism, which corresponds to this." Well, what's the "this"? Well, the "this" is a few verses preceding, in verse 18: Jesus being put to death in the flesh and made alive in the spirit. It's the death and the resurrection. That's what baptism corresponds to: what happened at the cross. It's an analogy—a visible analogy.

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So baptism, which corresponds to *this* now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience. Through what? Through your baptism? No. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. Now, in *Unseen Realm* I talk about baptism playing off of this analogy or this typology with Enoch. But this language about “appeal to a good conscience” really referred to a pledge of *loyalty*. And I quote BDAG (which is the major lexicon) on that semantic nuance and the term. You can go back and look at that in *Unseen Realm* if you care to investigate the basis for what I’m saying here. That’s fine. That’s why I wrote it. But baptism (this appeal to the conscience connected to baptism) is a loyalty pledge. That’s really what baptism is. It describes a decision. A loyalty pledge is not something *passive*. You have to make a decision to be loyal. This is going to help us contextualize this comment that Paul made about disarming the rulers and authorities, because when Peter talks about disarming the rulers and authorities and loops baptism into that discussion, he’s talking about a loyalty oath that is a decision. It’s not passive; it’s not something somebody does *for* you. It’s an active decision that looks back at the cross and the resurrection.

Another way to look at 1 Peter 3 is that Christians who are baptized are not viewing baptism as what defeated the dark powers, but they’re looking back on the death (1 Peter 3:18) and then the resurrection of Christ. *That’s* what defeated the powers. And baptism is typologically going to signify that. Well, Peter is going to be consistent with Paul, and so we need to have these things lurking—running—in the background of our heads when we look at Colossians 2:11-12.

So there’s some clear stuff in verses 9 and 10 about our completeness in Christ, that we’re not *partially* complete—that’s an oxymoron. You’re either complete or you’re not. And Paul says we’re complete in the work of Christ. And this work of Christ is what gives us forgiveness of sins. It’s what cancels the record of our debt. It nails those things to the cross. It disarms rulers and authorities.

All that needs to be kept in mind because what’s nestled in between here are verses 11 and 12. And if I can be so bold, I think in a number of respects there are a lot of Christians out there and there are a lot of denominations out there that I think just really don’t handle this very well. And we actually devoted a whole episode on baptism in the distant days of the podcast, all the way back in episode 5. We’re into the 230’s now. *All* the way back in episode 5, we looked at Colossians 2:11-12, specifically in regard to the baptism question. And really, there are other episodes that revolve around baptism. But if you listen to them all, you’ll find out that a lot of the denominational distinctions and the creeds articulate salvation really well in places, and then they’ll just undermine some of these statements in the way they talk about baptism, which is really unfortunate. It creates confusion. And I’ve been in denominational churches before, and I’ve seen, in real time, people *confused* by this language. It’s just unnecessary.

So I would recommend that listeners go back and catch episode 5, but I'm going to actually quote from the transcript a little bit here, because in that episode, I talked about what I think is the careless application of observing a link between baptism and circumcision. So that old episode spoke to a person that presumed or embraced the idea that what Colossians 2:11-12 is talking about is a reference to water baptism. That's assumption #1. You could say, "Well, Mike, what else could it be? Look at the verse, 'Having been buried with him in baptism.' What else could it be?" Oh, we'll get to that. But way back in episode 5, I presumed for the sake of the episode that we're talking about water baptism, and that since water baptism is this initiatory (for all sorts of Christian contexts) rite or ritual at the end of which you become part of the community, it was very easy for many people to see... If they're thinking water baptism, they would be thinking about circumcision literally as well.

And so that whole episode (#5) was about, if you're going to make this assumption—if you're going to presume water baptism here and a link with circumcision—how do we think about that? How should we think about that? And my take was pretty simple. If you're going to link circumcision and water baptism as respectively the sign of the covenants... In the Old Testament, it would be the Abrahamic covenant, and then the New Covenant, which was fulfilled in Christ. If you're going to do that, and these things (circumcision and baptism) are the sign of the covenants, and therefore these things (circumcision and baptism) are *sign acts* that put the recipient into the community—the people of God, as it were—then you need to be *consistent*. What I meant by that, in that episode (and now, of course), is that if you're going to make this equation, if you're going to look at it literally (water baptism and physical circumcision were analogous to each other), then you should not say anything about baptism that you cannot say about circumcision. Your assumption is that baptism has replaced circumcision, if you're following this trajectory, and Colossians 2:11-12 is often the proof text for that idea. So you have to ask yourself a couple of questions if you care about consistency between the signs.

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Example... first question:

1. What did Old Testament circumcision accomplish? And what didn't it accomplish?
2. Old Testament circumcision obviously wasn't performed on women. So what did it mean for women, and how does that translate to any equation with baptism? Women were omitted, so how does the analogy work? You've got to ask yourself some fundamental questions.

Again, if I could be so bold, I think a lot of the context for some of the denominational statements and creeds and whatnot, they weren't thinking about these questions. They were thinking about *other* questions that were some sort of immediacy (typically a response to what the Catholics were saying in the

context of the Reformation), so I get that. But these are important questions. Now, I'm going to quote from episode 5. Here's how I handled this issue then, and I'm doing this because I want new listeners to go back and listen to the series on baptism at the beginning of the history of the podcast. It's good. But I want new listeners to get some take on, if these two verses really are about water baptism and now we have this reference to circumcision... if you're going to look at it literally and you're going to fuse those two things, how should you be thinking about them? So I want to at least expose the audience to that. Once I'm done here quoting from episode 5, we're going to go off and take a deeper dive into how we would think about these verses if, indeed, water baptism is in view, because there are things to cover here that we'll do today that I did not do in episode 5. And then we'll really shift gears. I'll throw you a curve ball by what else this might be that isn't literal water baptism later in the episode. So from episode 5, and if you're looking at this literally (literal water baptism analogous to literal circumcision) with these two questions in mind (what did circumcision do and what didn't it do, and what about women?)... Here's what I said:

First, circumcision neither provided nor ensured salvation [MH: So we're hitting this first question: What did circumcision do, and what didn't it do?], nor did it lessen anyone's sinful impulse. The Old Testament story is dramatically clear that most circumcised Israelites apostasized, turning to idolatry and prompting the curse of Yahweh in the form of the exile. The fact that Israelite men were circumcised meant nothing with respect to their spiritual inclination or destiny. In fact, Paul specifically denies such an equation in Romans 4, where he labors to make the point that Abraham was justified prior to circumcision because he believed.

Second, circumcision was not practiced on women. This may seem obvious, but female genital circumcision was (and still is) practiced among some cultures and religions in the Middle East. The fact that circumcision was only practiced on men in Israel should inform us that the cutting rite itself did nothing with respect to one's ultimate spiritual destiny. Otherwise, women would not have been excluded. [MH: In other words, if this is the path to heaven, you're deliberately excluding women. Well, that's just kind of bad.] Circumcision did mean something to Israelite women, though—the same thing that it meant for men...

For both male and female Israelites, the sign of circumcision was a physical, visible reminder that their race [MH: that's Israelites]—their very lives and the lives of their children—began as a supernatural act of God on behalf of Abraham and Sarah. Circumcision was a constant reminder of God's grace to that original couple [MH: to enable them to have a child] and to their posterity. Undergoing circumcision did not bestow salvation. It was a reminder of the supernatural grace of God—in this case, directed at a people whom God had

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chosen in love to give them the revelation of who he was and how to be rightly related to him.

Additionally, for males, circumcision granted the recipient admission into the community of Israel—the community that had the exclusive truth of the true God. This truth included Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel and their need to have circumcised hearts (in other words, to believe in Yahweh's promises and worship him alone). In ancient patriarchal Israel, women were members of the community through marriage to a circumcised man or by being born to Israelite parents. Intermarriage with foreign men (in other words, those not circumcised and thus not part of Yahweh's covenant community) was forbidden. This was a prohibition that maintained the purity of the membership, and that purity was directly related to the spiritual significance of circumcision.

**Let me stop there. The significance was, you are now put into a community that has the truth about the true God. It didn't mean that you were going to heaven when you died. You had to *believe* in your own heart. You had to have circumcision of the *heart*, as well. You had to *believe* that Yahweh was who he said he was—that he was the God of all Gods—and that he had entered into a covenant with you, with your people. You had to believe that message—the content of that message—and not worship any other god (never turn somewhere else). This is salvation by trusting in the act of grace of this true God that you were able to learn about in your community, because that God had chosen to give his revelation to that community alone. And circumcision let you into that community. But you still had to believe. And that applied both to men and women. And men and women were reminded of all of that, plus their supernatural origins as a people, by virtue of circumcision. Back to the way I put it in podcast #5:**

To summarize, membership in the community was important for a specific reason: only this community had the truth—what Paul calls "the oracles of God" in Romans 3:2. Only Israel had the truth in regard to the nature of the true God among all gods and how one could be rightly related to him. In other words, only Israel knew about the way of salvation. Yahweh had created this human community with the goal of giving Israel truth—the way of salvation. This exclusivity is what it meant in Old Testament theology to be elect or chosen. Election was not equated with salvation, since again, vast multitudes of elect Israelites were not saved from God's curse in response to their unfaithfulness. Every Israelite member of the exclusive community had to believe in the covenant promises and worship only Yahweh, trusting that relationship to result in an afterlife with their God. Circumcision merely meant access to these truths. Now let's apply this to baptism. It's easy to see how the meaning and significance of circumcision connects to baptism, whether one's position includes baptism of infants or not. Baptism of an infant makes that infant a member in the believing

community—a local church. Hopefully, that church will teach the oracles of God—the way of salvation—so that the child will hear the gospel at one point and believe. The hope would be the same for an adult recipient. When Abraham and his entire household (even his servants) were circumcised, the account does not tell us who believed in Abraham's God and who didn't. The assumption was that as the members of his household observed God's blessing on Abraham and Abraham's faithfulness, then they, too, would believe in what was going on. Membership in the family of God would both foster and sustain faith. These were God's goals for the Old Testament people of God—the nation of Israel. The same is true of the people of God today known as the Church. The sign and rite have changed, but the theological point is the same.

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So, in other words, as an adult, believers' baptism... This is how I was baptized. I had come to Christ, now I'm going to get baptized. It's an outward enactment of what I am professing to believe. I could still go to heaven if I had never been baptized because I believed, because my completeness (to quote Paul in Colossians 2) is in Christ. It is not in my baptism, and baptism doesn't supplement it, because that would mean I'm really not complete. Paul would contradict himself. But the reverse is not true. I could go through the baptism, and if I didn't really believe—if I went off and worshipped some other god, if I rejected the gospel—don't expect me in heaven. So, as an adult, this is what we're talking about—the relationship between these two things: salvation by faith and baptism.

For an infant, the infant is not being *saved*. Their eternal life is not guaranteed by the baptism. The parents don't believe on behalf of the infant; the infant must make a choice. As he or she grows up, they're going to hear the gospel because they've been put into a community. Hopefully the church they've now become a part of through this ritual act of baptism will teach them the true gospel and they will believe it. They must believe the gospel. It's not believing "at 9:00, way back 15 years ago, I was baptized, so I'm in." No, that is *not* the gospel. They must believe the gospel. The baptism just puts them into a community where the gospel will be taught. That's the idea, at least, that's what *should* be the idea.

So again, if you're going to go off on that perspective of Colossians 2:11-12 (that we're talking about water baptism, that it has something to do with circumcision), you need to think well about the two sides of that equation, and they need to be consistent. They can't be mutually contradictory. So that's what episode 5 was about.

But now we need to go a little bit beyond that. You know, I've already tipped my hand here in saying that it's possible that Colossians 2:11-12 has nothing to do with water baptism. Most people assume that it's a "wet passage," as we theologians like to call these things—a "wet passage" or "not a wet passage." "Is it water baptism or some other kind of baptism?" It might be about water baptism,

but it also might not. We need to jump into both those things. But for the sake of our own consistency, I want to stick with thinking about it as water baptism, just for the sake of continuity here. We'll get to what it might be later on. Now, these are some of the harder things that we have to think about. It's going to take a little bit of concentration, because there's a lot involved here. Yes, it'll get into some nuts and bolts. It'll get into grammar and verbs and participles, and all that stuff. And I want you to see why this is a difficult topic, especially if you are thinking water baptism here.

So we have this statement in Colossians 2 that in him (in Christ) the Colossians (that's both Jew and Gentile mixed together) were "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." That's verse 11. Let me just quote it to you in the ESV:

**<sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands...**

Let's just stop there. That's half of verse 11. Now many commentators see in these statements (this circumcision verbiage here) a swipe here against the Jews, generally, who placed confidence in their literal circumcision. That's not unreasonable, since Paul's opponents were Jews who were teaching several things that contribute to what is generally called the Colossian Heresy. So it's no shock to include pride and physical circumcision among the things that irked Paul. That's reasonable. Physical circumcision had no importance for Paul, only when it came to the question of eternal life.

Alternatively, a non-literal circumcision—the circumcision of Christ (that's the second half of verse 11)... That idea (a circumcision not made with human hands) was a different story. That was important to Paul. So let me read the whole verse, verse 11.

**<sup>11</sup> 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...**

Now it's obvious here that the circumcision of Christ does not refer to the physical circumcision of Jesus when he was eight days old. That wasn't part of his work, as Paul has described prior verses 11 and 12, and as Paul is going to describe again once we get past verse 12. It's not part of the work of Christ. Scholars really don't have any struggle here, because it's kind of obvious. The fact that Jesus lost his foreskin when he was eight days old has no bearing on his accomplishment of our salvation, forgiveness of sins, nailing it to the cross—has nothing to do with it. So there's no struggle there. Rather, the phrases "circumcision of Christ" and "not made with human hands" points us in the direction of the Old Testament concept of the circumcision of the heart. And you get this in a number of places. For instance, Deuteronomy 10:16:

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**<sup>16</sup> Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.**

Deuteronomy 30:6:

**<sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**

Those aren't the only two references, but you get an idea of what this concept is about.

Circumcision of the heart was about faith in the true God—loving the true God. You can't love the true God unless you believe in the true God. It's this set of ideas. So in the first part of verse 11 ("In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands)," Paul reminds the Colossian believers that something had happened to their heart. Whether Jew or Gentile, they'd had a change of heart about Jesus being the Messiah—being their savior. I would say this is a reference to their conversion, to their belief in the gospel, their embracing of the gospel of Christ, their embracing of his message.

This change of heart, then, is linked to the next phrase: the "putting off of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." Now, there's a lot more disagreement about *that* set of phrases that form the second half of verse 11. How do we define "putting off the body of flesh?" "Putting off" here is actually a noun, not a verb. It's actually a prepositional phrase: "in the putting off of." In other words, "in the removal of." The scholars have devoted a lot of attention to asking a fundamental question here. So Paul's talking about this: "in the removal of the body of the flesh." Think about that. Just think about these words: "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," which refers to belief (a new heart). In him, you got a new heart by the removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ. See, we have to ask ourselves, "Whose body is being put off here?" Now, a lot of Christians read that (because of some wording elsewhere in the New Testament) as if that refers to putting off the old man—in other words, like repentance from dead works or repentance from a wicked lifestyle. But there's ambiguity here. There's no possessive pronoun. It doesn't tell us whose body it is. "The removal of the body of the flesh."

So what is that? You've got two options. One is that the body of flesh that was removed in connection with this change of heart (this spiritual circumcision) points to the actual body of Jesus on the cross. In other words, it would be a reference to the crucifixion—the laying down of Jesus' life. The second is the one that's more familiar to us, that the body of the flesh is the body of each Colossian believer. In other words, it's their turning from disobedience to embrace Jesus, their repentance, their departure from their old life. In other words, they lay their *own* body down. They turn from sin; they repent.

So whose body are we talking about? “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.” That last part might help us think about it, too.

“Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.” You had a change of heart by the removal of the body of Jesus from the cross. By the circumcision of Christ? In other words, that becomes the means by which your heart was changed? Are we talking about the actual body of Jesus, or do we read it by saying, “You had a change of heart by the putting away of your former lifestyle?” Or by the changing of your... Not necessarily your lifestyle, but you’ve changed from your disobedience. In other words, *one* of these options puts the emphasis on the cross event (that’s the first one—the “putting off of the body” refers to the body of Jesus) and the other one puts the emphasis on the individual (the Colossians, or you and me—that Paul is talking about something that *we* did). So it’s either something *Jesus* did on the cross or it’s something *we* did.

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Now, they’re obviously related, the options are related. But scholars have disagreed about which one of these things Paul has in mind in this verse. So taking that into consideration, here’s how the two interpretive options might sound, just by way of summary. We could read verse 11 this way: “In him (in Christ) also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. Your heart was changed in or by virtue of Christ laying down his life.” Again, the reference would be to the cross event. Or, we could read it this way: “In him (in Christ) also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.” In other words, your heart was changed by repenting from sin. The preference here is the change of heart, the individual heart of the believer, turning from the old man, and going a new direction.

Now, the two options, as I noted, are closely related, though the former (I think we have to admit) puts more weight on the cross. And for me, that’s kind of the key to deciding, at least for myself, which one is more coherent. Which one is more consistent? Let’s ask it this way: which one is more consistent with the concept of being in Christ and our completeness in Christ in verses 9 and 10? I think we have to point out here that Paul’s not giving us in Colossians 2 some sort of chronology, or as the Reformed theologians would like to say, abstractly (not in specific reference to this passage), the *Ordo Salutis*—the order of salvation. That’s a term that tries to take terms like “justification,” “regeneration,” “faith,” “belief”—all these ways salvation is described—and tries to actually reconstruct a chronology of what happens to you first, and then next, and then next, and next... I think that’s a pointless pursuit. It just creates problems. It creates more problems than it answers.

Anyway, Colossians is not trying to give us a chronology. It doesn’t say, “Oh, well, okay, verse 6: ‘You received Christ the Lord, so walk in him. And then you need to be rooted, and then you need to be built up, and then you need to be established. And then down in verse 9 or verse 10, then you’ll be complete in Christ. And then you need to be baptized, or maybe spiritual circumcision, and

then... Wait a minute... Then we hit verse 13, and it's back to being dead in trespasses and made alive together." In other words, the chronology gets messed up in a couple of places there. It just sounds odd to try to make this a chronological order. And it sounds odd because it is. Verses 9 and 10 are not a chronology. Verses 13 and 14 are really going to be talking about the same set of ideas that Paul talked about earlier. They're just different ways of talking about the same reality. If we're complete in Christ (verse 10)... If that's true, it's because we've been rooted and built up in him. We've embraced him, we've accepted him, we've believed in him, and that's what roots and builds us up. It's just another way of talking about our salvation in him, and it's our *complete* salvation.

All these things are what *God* has done. Remember, all these verbs (or many of the verbs) are passives (something done *to us* by an external actor (i.e., God) through the work of Christ. If we're complete in Christ— we've been rooted and built up in him, established in the faith—then our change of heart must also be a work of Christ. That just makes really good sense. And so, in my head, when Paul talks in verse 11 about the putting off of the body, the removal of the body of the flesh, is it possible that he's talking about either the removal of Christ from the cross and that he'll rise from the dead, or is he talking more generically about the cross event? In other words, is he rooting his discussion there in verse 11 on what Jesus has done, as opposed to a decision we made? I think both are possible. But for me, the first one just sounds a little bit better—that we're still locating all of this on what happened at the cross.

Now, that takes us to verse 12, and here's where we hit a bunch of things to think about. It's kind of a hornets' nest. But if we think about focusing on the cross, if we think about focusing on the completeness that we have in Christ, if we think about what follows in verses 13-15 about our sins being forgiven at the cross (or because of the cross, nailed to the cross), and the cross and the resurrection are what defeat the rulers and the authorities... If we think about those things, then hopefully we will not be confused about baptism talk. If we presume that verse 12 and its baptism talk is talking about water baptism, hopefully we won't be confused. But again, I've already confessed that I think a lot of people are. So let's go to verse 12. We have an aorist passive participle.

**<sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands [MH: you had a change of heart], by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried [aorist passive participle] 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.**

Now, notice right away in verse 12: our faith is not in our baptism. Our faith is in the powerful working of God who raised Jesus from the dead. Just a clue,

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something to keep in mind. But here's the key question when we get to this language about verse 12. How do we take the "having been buried with him in baptism" phrase? Now, it can either be (and has been by many scholars and commentators)... The participle here can either be viewed temporally (that is, it has something to do with timing) or in some other way.

Let's just think about the temporal aspect. Participles are verbal adjectives. They describe something (that's what an adjective does) but with an activity (that's the verbal part)—verbal adjective. And they relate to the other verbs in a given sentence temporally. In this case, we can have the "having been buried with him in baptism" either be temporally simultaneous to the earlier verb (the other verbal elements here) or temporally prior. Now, let me give you a little quote from Wallace, just so that you know that I'm not making this up (Dan Wallace, in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*). Wallace is a major Greek grammarian. He says:

Time in participles is relative (or dependent), while in the indicative it is absolute (or independent).

The *aorist* participle, for example, usually denotes *antecedent* time to that of the controlling verb. But if the main verb is also aorist [MH: in this case, it happens to be], this participle *may* indicate contemporaneous time.

So we have the "buried with him in baptism" either happening at the *same* time as our earlier verb, where we were "filled in him, circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," and so on and so forth... Do we have those things happening at the same time as the baptism, or is there some other antecedent time? Those are the first two things to look at. Some scholars also see a causal relationship here, that the participle "having been buried with him in baptism" is somehow *causally* related to that other stuff. We'll get to that in a moment. But if we're looking at verse 11 as the cross event (remember we had two options there: you could look at verse 11—the "removal of the body"—as either the cross event or your own repentance)... Let's start with the cross event. If we're looking at verse 11 as a reference to the cross, then here's... Just let me show you some of the ways you could read verse 12 in light of that assumption. You could read these two verses together this way, and I think you're going to start to see where different views of baptism emerge from this. "In him (in Christ) also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." Your heart was changed. This is an aorist passive indicative verb. You were circumcised. Your heart was changed by virtue of Christ laying down his life, the removal of the body of the flesh (the removal of Christ's body from the cross—the cross event). You were circumcised. Your heart was changed by that event. And now here's where we get into the participle, "when you were buried with him in baptism." That's the simultaneous time. So your heart was changed because of the cross when you were buried with him in baptism.

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Here's the subsequent, the antecedent time approach: "Your heart was changed by virtue of Christ laying down his life, having been previously buried with him in baptism." Now, that makes it sound like the baptism *preceded* the change of heart, doesn't it? If you're going to go *causal* (that the baptism language here is somehow causal in relationship to the other verb), you'd read it this way: "In him (in Christ), your heart was changed by virtue of Christ laying down his own life, the removal of Christ's body from the cross, by means of being buried with him in baptism." In other words, baptism was a means to the change of heart. It was sort of causative. Baptism played some role in causing your heart to be changed, even though the thing that effected the change was what happened on the cross.

You can really see here that when you start to play with the interpretive possibilities of the participle—the action of the participle in its relationship to the action of the main verb ("you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands")... In other words, you were converted, you had a change of heart about Jesus. When you start to play with that activity and then the activity of baptism, you can see where you get ideas like baptismal regeneration. You can see where you get views like baptism has some role in our conversion. It's very easy to see how these things could be drawn out of the text.

But the problem is twofold. One, is this consistent with circumcision? See, we've already assumed in our discussion here that verses 11 and 12 are about water baptism. That's an assumption we've made. And if we make that assumption, then we've also assumed that circumcision (the physical circumcision) was analogous to this. Yes, we know it's about circumcision of the heart here, but Paul wouldn't have been using a word like circumcision if he didn't want our minds to think about the physical ritual. So we've *assumed* that it's water baptism and we've assumed it's linked in some way to circumcision. Was it circumcision? Did that *cause* salvation? Did it happen at the same *time* someone believed? Of course not. It's very obvious. So if you want to exclude the question of "let's be consistent between how we view circumcision and baptism" and if you just want to only look at verses 11 and 12, well then you can play with it. You can massage it. You can come out with baptism having a role in salvation.

The second problem with doing that is you're ignoring what comes after—verses 13-15—where it's very clear that the basis of the forgiveness of our sins is the cross event. These things were nailed to the cross. The record of our debt was cancelled at the cross. And it's because of the cross that principalities and powers and rulers and authorities are defeated. Now, if you've read *Unseen Realm*, you know how baptism in 1 Peter 3 commemorates the defeat of the dark powers. You know all about that if you've read the book. But that isn't what caused their defeat. The baptism isn't what caused their defeat. What I'm trying to get at here (maybe awkwardly) is you cannot isolate verses 11 and 12 and cut off the next three verses and cut off the preceding verses and then forget about the analogy with circumcision, thinking about both sides of the analogy



consistently. I should say, you *shouldn't* do that. People do it all the time. And they come out with views of baptism that contradict clear articulations of the gospel. And that bugs me. I'll confess, that bugs me. It's something we should not do. But in order to not do these things, we have to be thinking about the questions, and a lot of people never get to the questions. So that's what we want to cure here. We want to help people think about the fact that whatever way they practice baptism, we need to be doing this in a consistent way that honors Old Testament theology and that honors the supremacy and complete sufficiency of the cross event. That's what we need to do. That's how we need to frame the discussion.

So you can see how people can just go off the rails here, but you can also hopefully see how to think about these things, no matter what your traditional practice of baptism is. We just need to honor Old Testament theology. We need to honor the cross. These things are... God doesn't change his mind. "Ah, you know, back then it was all works, works, works, and boy, I hope you were circumcised." No. Paul specifically denies that in Romans 4. So we need to be consistent with what has gone before and we need to be consistent with the cross event and place the onus—the supremacy, the efficacy—on the cross, not on what happens in water baptism.

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Now all of that presumed that we see in verse 11 a reference to the cross event. Well, what if we don't do that? What if we go with the other option, that this removal of the body is about putting off our old lifestyle—in other words, what happens in our own repentance? If we look at it that way, then how do we combine that idea with the participle of being buried with him in baptism? It's going to give us some options. So let's look at a couple of them. So if we *don't* see a reference to the cross event but we *do* see a reference to the "putting off" change in our own lives, we would read something like this: "In him (that is, in Christ) also, you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." In other words, you had a change of heart in or by repenting from sin, and so now let's add the "buried with him in baptism." So "in him, you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands (you had a change of heart) *when* you were buried with him in baptism." Now that sounds odd, because that makes it sound like you planned your repentance really carefully to coincide with your baptism. That just doesn't sound right. It sounds really odd. You could say, "Well, you had a change of heart, got that circumcision. It's not made with hands. You had a change of heart by repenting from your sin, having been *previously* buried with him in baptism." So in other words, you got baptized and *then* repented? Well, okay, I guess that can happen. But you see, it just sounds kind of weird if you take that second option—that the removal of the body is not about the cross, but the removal of the body is *your* body, your old man. It gets you into some really strange territory. You could say it this way: "In him also, you had this change of heart in or by repenting from sin *because* [there's the causal element] you were buried with him in baptism." In other words, the baptism in some way led to the acceptance of the gospel. Now we're really on shaky theological ground. So

because you were baptized, you changed your life? Well, okay, I guess people can look at their baptism as a beginning point, but what does that have to do with actual conversion? It puts you back to this thing where “I’m *planning* to be converted, I’m *planning* to accept Christ when I get baptized.” No. I guess that happens with some people. In the whole world of people coming to Christ, yeah, sure, I guess that could have happened. But it just sounds kind of odd. And it gets really kind of flaky if you’re talking about infant baptism here, because let’s be honest, you’re not talking about infants believing *anything*. So you’ve got to rethink the whole thing when it comes to infant baptism, which, earlier in the podcast, hopefully... If you’re going to treat baptism as water baptism and analogize it with circumcision, there’s a way to think about baptism with infants that doesn’t violate the exclusivity of the gospel. There is a way to think about that. We’ve gone over that turf here, and you could go back and listen to episode 5 and the other episodes on baptism to see how that might cohere. But for our purposes here, if we take this second alternative (that the removal of the body is our own repentance), to me it just has a lot less weight. It not only puts less weight on the cross, but it gets a bit convoluted, like having to merge your own repentance with your baptism. It’s easier that if you’re looking at the cross and you’re assigning your conversion to the cross and having the removal of the body of Jesus from the cross, it’s a reference to the crucifixion event. If *that* precedes the talk about baptism, and your conversion on the basis of *that* precedes baptism, well, that just makes more sense because it has the focus in the right place. I’m not saying that it’s impossible to think other thoughts, but you just get into some really strange ideas, when you get right down to it.

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Now, here’s my wild card. What if Paul, though, isn’t talking about water baptism here at all? You say, “What could he possibly be talking about? He uses the word “baptism.” What else would he be talking about?” Well, what about Spirit baptism? And I’m not talking about the way the charismatics have sort of muddled this thing—some sort of zapping that happens to someone who’s already a believer. That’s not what we’re talking about here. We’re talking about New Testament Spirit baptism—the way that the New Testament uses this language. For instance, Mark 1:8. There’s a strong scriptural precedent for this, where John the Baptist says, “I have baptized you with water, but he (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Tell me, when did Jesus baptize anybody with water? Uh, he didn’t. In fact, John 4:2 makes the specific point that Jesus did not baptize people in water. It says, “Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples.” So the baptism that Christ is going to baptize with is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now, his baptism (putting that statement in Mark 1:8 in the context of Jesus’ ministry)... This baptism of the Holy Spirit is either the cross event (because the cross event—his death burial, and resurrection—is going to lead to the coming of the Spirit when he ascends)... So it either refers to the cross event, which would fit really nicely here with what we’ve been talking about in Colossians 2, or it refers to the actual coming of the Spirit. Remember, if you’ve read *Unseen*

*Realm*, there's a little section in the book about how four times, Paul... Let me put it this way. There are places in the New Testament, a handful (4-5) of these, where the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus (Spirit of Christ)... those phrases are interchanged. And there are two places where Paul refers to Jesus as the Lord, who *is* the Spirit. So in some way, just as Jesus is, but isn't, God, the Spirit is, but isn't, Jesus. In *Unseen Realm*, I talk about how this is the matrix of ideas from which trinitarianism emerges—this “is but isn't” kind of stuff. And we go back into the Two Powers in heaven. The angel is, but isn't, Yahweh, and that gets transferred to the New Testament with Jesus is, but isn't, God. He is God, but he's not the Father.

Well, here we have the Spirit. Well, he *is* the Lord, he *is* Jesus, but he's not. He's his own thing, too. This reference to Jesus baptizing them with the Holy Spirit could be this idea that the Spirit... Well, he's the Holy Spirit, and yes, that's an independent person, but it's also Jesus. When Jesus says, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the age,” it's a reference to the Holy Spirit. That could be what it's talking about: the actual Pentecost event that followed the ascension. So Spirit baptism in Mark 1:8 refers to one of these two things: either a more holistic view of death, burial, resurrection, ascension, the coming of the Spirit; or more precisely, what happens at Pentecost. It's hard to know. But the point is we have this concept of Spirit baptism. It's the Spirit who baptizes believers *into* the Body of Christ. And that is the non-literal collective—to use an unfortunate term, the “universal Body of Christ.” Theologians like to talk about the universal church and the local church. Universal's not a great word, but we'll go with it because it's familiar here. We're not Universalists here, but I'll go with the terminology. It's the Spirit who baptizes believers into the mass collective, the universal Body of Christ, the universal church. And we get that in 1 Corinthians 12:13, which says:

**<sup>13</sup> For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.**

I'll read it again.

**<sup>13</sup> For in [or by] one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.**

He's talking about the gifts given to the Body of Christ, to believers. So there is this thing—Spirit baptism—in the New Testament. It relates to our entrance, our insertion into the believing community, the family of God, the Body of Christ. It's not a subsequent zapping that happens to us later. That's just sort of made up by tradition. That's just the way something else gets talked about imprecisely. So what about that? What if Colossians 2:11-12 is talking about Spirit baptism instead of water baptism? Now, this gives us some kind of interesting possibilities.

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Now all of that that we just talked about (that this could be Spirit baptism)... You recall that what we were talking about is if we assume that the reference to the removal of the body in Colossians 2:11 there, that that refers to the crucifixion event at our conversion. Our heart is changed because of that, then we get into this idea that logically, then, that would be the point when we were baptized into this corporate Body of Christ. Spirit baptism makes a lot of good sense. If we take verse 11 as the removal of the body from the cross (looking at it as a reference to the crucifixion event), well of course, if this is the basis for our change of heart, yes, obviously, then the Holy Spirit comes and indwells us and we are put into the corporate Body of Christ. We have a reference to Spirit baptism. It's nice and smooth. It actually works really well.

Now, what about if we view, though, the removal of the body as our repentance? Well, in that case, "in Christ, we had this change of heart by virtue of our repentance from sin, *when* we were put into the Body of Christ by the Spirit." So the repentance, if you read verse 11 that way, is simultaneous with our being put into the Body of Christ by the Spirit. It's simultaneous with Spirit baptism. Well, that can actually work. That actually works pretty well.

What about the other temporal option—that we had this change of heart when we repented, having been previously put into the Body of Christ by the Spirit? Well, that doesn't work. There's a disconnect there. So we would *not* be able to interpret the participle as temporally antecedent, so we have to wipe that one out.

What about causal? We had this change of heart, and our change of heart was by our repentance from our sin—putting aside the old man—*because* we were baptized into the Body of Christ, because we became part of the people of God by virtue of the Spirit. That could work, too, just depending on how you word things. So this is why, substantially, predominately, if you ask *me* how I think about Colossians 2:11-12, I think it's much more cohesive to look at the circumcision talk as *only* the circumcision of the heart. Let me go back and read it.

**<sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands...**

I think if we make the circumcision non-literal there (that it actually refers to the circumcision of the heart) and then if we take that verbiage that way, we're not thinking about literal circumcision in the Old Testament. It argues for not taking the baptism talk in the next verse as water baptism. If we look at that as Spirit baptism... In other words, if we look at verse 11 as a change of heart (the circumcision of the heart) and then we look at verse 12 as Spirit baptism, it's just a whole lot easier to interpret these two verses in a way that is entirely consistent with what has preceded and what follows. Because it's all about the cross and

our response to the cross, at which point (when we believe) we are put into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Now, I realize I'm in the minority here. Most people are going to look at this and think water baptism right out of the gate, and that's what we did with episode 5 way back when, and we rehearsed episode 5 here. If you're going to assume water baptism here—this rite of passage, this ritual event that is in some way commemorative of or related to your faith in Christ... If you're going to make those assumptions, then you're going to be assuming that Paul brings up circumcision to be a literal analogy to this literal water baptism. If you're going to do that, then there's a way to think about that that honors what Paul has said about our completeness in Christ prior to these two verses and that also honors what Paul talks about the basis of our forgiveness being the cross event in the verses that follow. You can do that. You can do that; it's workable. But you have to be really careful with it.

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But I think it's equally workable, and I think probably even easier (probably better), and I would say it might make a little more sense because of verse 11's emphasis on the circumcision made without hands... He's not talking about literal circumcision *at all*. I think it's a little easier to go that direction and look at this as Spirit baptism. But either way, there is a way to read this and not alter the meaning of the gospel—not alter the basis of eternal life, of our forgiveness of sins—as being the cross event and nothing else. Because again, for those who want to go the water baptism route, I think it's really important to ask yourself the crucial question. “Well, if there's an analogy here to circumcision, what can I say about circumcision and what can't I say?” And that is a question that largely goes unexamined. Just trust me on that. Very few people, even theologians, even stop to ponder that question. They never get into the fact that election really can't mean salvation in the Old Testament. Let's just restrict our discussion there, because things can... I have my own take on what's going on in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament, you certainly can't, because you had most of the Israelites who were circumcised go off and worship Baal and other gods. So much for election. But people don't ask these questions, and that's the problem. The problem isn't their effort to articulate the gospel and then try to talk about baptism. Not asking the earlier question creates confusion on the other side, especially in certain denominational contexts. So I don't want to portray them as being evil and sinister and whatnot. I'm saying there *is* a way to function within the certain denominational parameters. I would not include baptismal regeneration here, obviously. I think that's really off the deep end. But we can't have it supplementing the work on the cross or something like that, because we're either complete or we're not. But there's still a way to talk about it. There's still a way even to include infant baptism, just depending on how we articulate things. So I want to make that clear. The real problem here is failing to ask the really important interpretive questions.

So where does this leave us, at the end of the episode here? Well, I would suggest three things here, just to wrap this up:

1. Let's make sure to talk about baptism (in this or any other passage) in light of what else is said in those same passages or related passages. In other words, let's stop proof-texting. Can we just stop the proof-texting when it comes to the issue of baptism? Can we just knock it off, on all sides? It just doesn't do any good to pluck a verse out of context, and say, "See? There you go. There's how we should think about this." It's just not that easy. And if you do that, you can really create a mess for yourself, and you can muddle the mind of somebody else. So let's just stop the proof-texting.

2. I would say, be open to Spirit baptism in this passage and in a couple others that mention baptism, because it does have precedent. John did say Jesus would do this. And since Jesus didn't baptize with water, Jesus did some sort of Spirit baptism somewhere. We have to take a look at the entire work of Christ and ask, "Well, where might that fit?" It has that precedent from John and it has the idea of Spirit baptism specifically mentioned in other passages, like 1 Corinthians 12:13, so maybe that might be the way we want to read this passage. Maybe Romans 6, too. That's another one. Is it water baptism or is it Spirit baptism? Who knows? These are the places that this question *ought* to come up, but unfortunately doesn't. And they're good illustrations of the fact that there's a lot of stuff to think about here, even in passages that you think are no-brainers. Well, there aren't a whole lot of scripture passages that are complete no-brainers. There's usually something to think about. And so be open to that possibility.

1:15:00

3. I would just say that, by way of the summary of the content for today, I'm left with the thought, "How many ways can Paul say, 'Christ is superior to everything?'" [laughs] How many ways can Paul say we're complete in the family of God because of the cross event? Not because of ritual purity, not because of circumcision, not because of observing laws and times and feasts and food do's and don'ts. How many ways can he say that we're complete? How many ways can he say that Christ is superior? "In him dwells the fullness of all that is God bodily." How many ways can he do this? It's nonsense to think that we need any of that stuff. It's also nonsense to think that we need some mystical experience that involves other entities, because Paul's going to go there in verses 13-15. He's going to keep beating this drum.

But here we go again. In this passage, we talked a lot about baptism and its relationship to the change of heart (to conversion, to belief) and we still went back to the idea of "are we complete because of the cross event or not?" Paul says we are, and that really ought to end the discussion. But unfortunately, either

because of our tradition or the way we were taught or maybe some guilt or whatever it is, we somehow drift away from the concept of the completeness there in verse 10, and I think we can add baptism to the mix.

**TS:** Alright, Mike, that's what I like to see: another episode content-filled. Two verses, an hour and a half. I love it!

**MH:** [laughs] Well, let's hope you're not the only one.

**TS:** No, I guarantee you, I am not. But alright, Mike, I want to get us out on this, because we've got a draft to prepare for tomorrow, so good luck to you, sir. I hope you draft horrible. I hope your laptop doesn't work, Mory is asleep, and...

**MH:** And my internet goes haywire...

**TS:** And your internet goes down. I hope all those things happen to you. [MH laughs] But good luck to you...

**MH:** Be warmed and filled, too.

**TS:** There you go. Alrighty. Well, I'll look forward to competing against you this year, so I hope everybody shows up for draft, and everybody else out there is getting geared up for American football, which I'm sure our audience is not... Just me and you.

**MH:** Half of them probably don't care at all. Yep.

**TS:** Alright, Mike, I just want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.