

V. Colossians  
*The Preeminence and Prominence of Jesus Christ*  
“Empty Promises vs Fullness in Christ”  
Colossians 2:6–15  
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Colossians 2:6-15 says [6] *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, [7] rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

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

The grass withers and flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever. May it be preached for you.

This is our fifth study in the book of Colossians, Paul's letter to Colossae, and as you can see it has taken us several studies to get through one chapter. It's dense, intense theology in this little letter. It is packed. In the first chapter of this letter, Paul has painted this unimaginably high exalted picture of Jesus Christ. For instance, he has told us that Jesus is the subject of the Gospel, all the Good News that everyone in the world needs to hear. He's the fullness of knowledge and power. He's a Supreme Lord and a sufficient Savior. He's the only Redeemer of God's elect. He alone can reconcile us to God and He did this work of reconciliation when we were enemies, when we were hostile in mind toward Him. What kind of love is this?

Paul says that Jesus is the hope of glory. He says that he shares his fellowship with Jesus in His suffering and His resurrection, and that Jesus is the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. Not some, not part, but every bit of wisdom and knowledge that could be gained, that could be known, is in Him. This is what Paul does in his letters. Oftentimes he spends the first half of his letters talking about what God has done and what God has accomplished in Christ, building this big picture of what's going on and then he makes this big shift which I call the big ‘therefore’ where he turns from talking about what God has done, to his audience and says, “Now here's what you ought to do because of what He has done.”

The passage in this study is the big “therefore” because after this turn, he gives the first command that he's given in the entire letter – therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Paul gives a series of two commands in Colossians 2:6-7 which are ‘Walk in Christ Jesus as you have received Him’ and indirectly ‘Now watch out, for people to the sides of that path, trying to divert you.’ Then he backs up. He grounds these commands in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So we're going to walk through this passage in three steps.

Here's the main point. If you walk away with nothing else, walk away with this; as you walk in Christ, the thing that's going to keep you from being diverted off the path is being captivated with the fullness of Christ. The fullness of Christ that will keep you from being captivated by the empty promises and the empty threats of those who want to get you off the path. You have to be absolutely smitten, captivated with Him. So here are my three points that we'll look at a little closer in this study. The first point is walk this way. Two, watch for captors and three welcome the truth.

First walk this way. Colossians 2:6-7 says [6] *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, [7] rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* This first command, Paul says is, walk in Christ and then he begins to unpack this command. He has this one command, and then five little verbs that hang out around it and these five verbs tell us the way that we're supposed to walk. There's this movie called Young Frankenstein and it stars Gene Wilder. There's this running gag where Igor, the hunchback comes in and he's leading people along. He'll lead people up somewhere and he say, "Walk this way" and the people say 'okay' as they start to walk like the hunchback. Igor is showing them the way that they're going to walk. Through these five verbs Paul is showing us how to walk in Christ.

The first thing Paul says is, as you have received Him so walk in Him. This begs the question, how did the Colossians receive Him? You have to know how they received Him in order for us to know how he wants them to walk in Him. There's a few hints in the letter. In Colossians 1:2 Paul calls them faithful brothers, that is brothers, who are characterized by your great faith and the way it works out into your life, into love. In Colossians 1:4, Paul says as he's praying for them with fervor, "When I think about your faith, whoa, I blow up in my prayers, I just can't stop." Paul says in Colossians 1:23 that they have to continue stable and steadfast in their faith in Jesus Christ, not shifting from the Gospel that has delivered them. In Colossians 2:5 just before this command, Paul says that he rejoices to see their good order and the firmness of their faith in Jesus Christ.

This probably comes as no surprise to us as good, reformed Christians that you are saved by faith. They received Christ by faith. The shocking thing is that he says you received Him by faith, now walk in Him by faith. So the first way we need to walk in Him is by faith. How do we walk in Him by faith? I remember when this verse changed my life. When I first became a believer, I still had a lot of leftover legalism kind of hanging out in the attitude of my soul. I went to Bible college and we were talking about Colossians in a class, and the professor just read this verse as like the daily devotional before the class and it struck me all of the sudden what I thought was; that you become a Christian, you begin to follow Jesus and the Gospel is all about getting forgiveness for my sins. I keep the Gospel in my back pocket in case of an emergency. I see it when I need some place to go for forgiveness for my sins, but really, this whole life in Christ to me was all about my hard work. Now, God has empowered me to work extra hard so that I can earn my salvation even better than I could before. This verse made me realize that's not how I began. That's not how I received Christ. I received Him by faith. I have to walk in Him by faith.

Paul says this to the Galatians where he pulls no punches because they had started depending on their works for salvation, in Galatians 3:3, [3] *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?* Paul is telling them that this is a foolish thing to think. Paul will elaborate more on why in the rest of this verse. So that's the first thing is we walk in Him as we have received Him and we continue in Him by faith, never thinking that

our works are somehow going to help you be more saved. You will do good works. When you get in Christ, He will start producing fruit in you and you're going to do good things. You're going to be better than you were. You're never going to be perfect. You're never going to have a day or maybe an hour or maybe 5 minutes, if you're like me, where you don't sin in thought, word and deed. But don't you ever for one moment think that those works make you any more saved than the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit that gave you faith to receive Him as a gift. Your works are the fruit of that salvation.

The second thing he tells us about in how to walk in Christ is 'So walk in Him rooted.' I'm not a fan of this translation here. This is what is called a perfect participle. A perfect participle means that the action being described happened in the past and the effects of it continue to right now and hopefully beyond – is the idea, it happened in the past and the effects continue. When there is a participle like here, it means you have a main verb *walk*, and then there is this verb that because it's the way it is, it's happening before that. So, before you received Christ, you were rooted in Him. You were rooted in Him before you received Him, before you began to walk in Him. Before you believed in Christ you were a dead tree, uprooted, rotting and God comes along and takes this dead, rotting tree (you), plucks you up, and puts your roots down into Christ the way that a tree's roots go down into the ground. Then you received Christ the way that a tree receives water, nutrition, life and everything it needs up from the ground that you were rooted in.

You received Christ because that's what a living tree does when it's planted in good soil, it receives the life of the soil. So He made you alive, made you a living tree, and rooted you by rooting you in Him and then you believed. You can't believe when you're dead, you have to come alive first and that's what Paul's getting at. This rooting happened before that so the second way we walk is we walk like a tree. That one's pretty obvious. So walk like a tree. I don't think Paul's getting at it like we should walk like Ents from the Lord of the Rings. You know, the big tree people who, you know, don't be arched, you know, it's. That idea of these walking tree people really isn't that far off from the imagery that Paul has in his mind because in the Bible, trees are so much more than just objects in part of the story but they actually take part in the narrative. We'll get into that little bit later when I will unpack a little more of Paul's imagery.

The third way we walk in Him is by being built up in Him. So we're rooted and that happened before we received Him, and now we walk in Him. Now this means is as we're walking in Him, we are being built up. The first thing I want you to notice is, this is something happening in the present tense that you are being built up in Him. The second thing is, who is doing the action here, the rooting and building up? We don't root ourself and we aren't doing the building up. We're under construction. We can't save ourselves. We can't transform ourselves. It's like we're patients in an operating room and we're being operated on. The patient doesn't save themselves. The surgeon saves them.

The fourth thing that Paul says is we walk in Him by being established in the faith. This idea of being established means to prove the reliability of something and the Colossians are being established in their faith as they received it. That means they received these promises from God, and they are testing them. They are walking in them. As they test them, they're finding them more and more reliable. They're being more and more established in their faith as they see God show up over and over again. This word established is used importantly, for it is describing the fastening down of a tent. How do you keep a tent in place, from blowing away? You fasten it down, you establish it.

That's important here because of these mixed metaphors. He says, walk like a tree and as you're walking like a tree, you're supposed to be being built up like a building, like a house. Then you're supposed to be staked down like a tent so which is it? Am I walking or being rooted or being staked down or being built up? How do all these images that seem so different, go together for Paul? There are three images here – a tree, a tent and a building. What are those three images have in common from the Bible? They're all places where you meet with God. These are all temple words.

In the Garden of Eden, where did they go to meet God? They met Him at the Tree of Life. Humanity was bound up with this thing about trees from the very beginning. When God shows up to Moses, where does He appear? He appears in what we call a burning bush but it's the same word for tree. It's a burning tree. It's God's presence in a tree. He's seen at the tree of life on Mount Sinai there and Moses is communing with God. It was a place where he met with God. Then when God instructs Moses to build the tabernacle, what kind of decorations do they have inside the tabernacle? It's all decorated with trees, fruit, nuts and living things – creatures from the earth. There are these two big, terrifying creatures (cherubim) that guard the Divine presence in the tabernacle on top of the ark. Think what Ezekiel sees when he sees lion headed people with wings that breathe fire or something with a thousand eyes. It's something terrifying with a look that says 'you come any closer, you're going to die.' That's the point of the creatures guarding the ark.

Why is the tabernacle decorated like this? It is because the tabernacle is a portable Eden something that can be carried around with you. Then when you get to the place where God has led you, then you can unpack it, stake it down and establish it. What is God doing for the Israelites in the wilderness by continually leading them and establishing them? He's building their faith. He's building them up. Then the third word/phrase here, 'being built up' applies to the temple. When God establishes His people in the land, Solomon builds up a temple for God to permanently dwell in that place. So this is all temple language.

Why is this important for me to go into this about trees, buildings, tents and temples? The Colossian heresy/controversy brought in by the false teachers to Colossae, a lot of commentators, think maybe they were these Jewish mystics and what they believed that you needed to abuse your body, throw it off, cast it off for you need to be an ascetic and starve yourself. You need to not drink any water for a while and beat and abuse your body so you can cast it off. And then behold the true heavenly temple. So if you don't eat for long enough you will start to hallucinate, right? That's what they're trying to whip up – these hallucinations of the heavenly temple.

So when Paul says to them, "You have been rooted in Christ, are being built up in Christ, and are the tent that is staked down in Christ" he's telling them not to listen to these lies. Don't listen to these people trying to deceive you. They're trying to trick you into seeing some heavenly Jerusalem, heavenly temple up there. You are the Heavenly Temple. You are where God dwells because you are in Christ who is the fullness of Deity dwelling bodily. You're in Him and He is in you. You don't need anything else and that's the essence of these deceptions.

There is a fifth word attached to walk and unlike the other four, this one is active. This is something you do. The other four are things you receive and things that God does. Colossians 2:7 tells us to walk in Christ, abounding in thanksgiving. So God's doing all these things to make you, transform you, and build you into a temple that Christ can dwell in on earth. You are to live in response. The final thing that you do walking is that you're supposed to abound, overflow. You need to be taking in His life abounding and overflowing with gratitude and thanksgiving, because in you dwells this great treasure of Christ.

There is a second command which is found in Colossians 2:8; [8] *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.* As you walking, you need to watch out for captors, for things that are going to destroy. This word/phrase ‘see to it’ is to be on guard, on look out. If you were on a ship, it would be in the crow's nest, looking out for things that you could crash into.

The idea that Paul's getting at here reminds me of an illustration from Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, they're these creatures that are half birds like cultures and half people called sirens. These mythical creatures that dwell on the rocks along the sea and they're actually hideous in reality, but they have beautiful voices and they can make themselves appear beautiful. They sing songs about all the things that sailors long for when they're out at sea. They sing them so beautifully that a sailor sailing along hears the voice calling and becomes so captivated by this voice and the promises in the songs that promise life, home and all the things that you've longed for. The sailor gets captivated by this song and end up crashing on the rocks. Their ships are destroyed and the sirens devour them.

There are two captains and their crews in Greek mythology who actually escaped these creatures and lived to tell the tale. The way that each of them went about escaping these creatures is so perfectly illustrative of how we're supposed to look out. The first captain is Odysseus, from Homer's The Odyssey, the title character. Odysseus, knows that they're going to be sailing past the sirens. He has a map and knowing the sirens' location he says to his crew, “I really want to hear the songs that captivate people and drive them to their deaths but I'd really like not to die. So here's what I think we should do. You guys all plug your ears with wax, but I want you to tie me to the mast so that I can hear the songs without going to grab the rudder and killing us all.” So the crew men do that. He says “no matter how much I scream, beg or wail, don't let me go.” They obey his orders. They put their wax in their ears and start rowing as they see their captain hearing the captivating songs and pulling against the ropes he is tied up with. He bloodies himself trying to escape. As he hears the song he begs them saying “I'll give you anything. I'll give you everything I have. If you just let me go, let me escape. Come on. Just cut me free. I won't crash the ship. I'll go swim myself. You can all live.” Thankfully, they obey. They don't cut him loose and the ship sails by safely. Wonderful, they escaped the captors. Did they do so in a way that we would characterize as joyful or a way that we would characterize as victorious? No, they kind of muddled through. They did their best and Odysseus wants to hear the songs. He comes out bloodied because of it.

There's a second ship called the Argus, and Jason is the captain of the ship. The title of this story is Jason and the Argonauts. The Argus has a completely different strategy. On this ship there is a skilled lute player named Orpheus. As they go past the sirens, the Argus actually gets caught off guard. Odysseus knew they were going by them, so he had time to prepare but not the Argus. They're sailing along and all of a sudden, this wafting over the sea comes, this voice that calls to them and says, “Leave your path, leave the way and come to me for I'll give you everything you want. I'll meet all your needs, I'll fulfill you come to me, come to me.” And they start to turn the ship. Jason grabs the rudder and says “Oh, yeah, I want everything they're offering me” as they're hurtling towards these rocks. All of a sudden Orpheus, because he knows songs of high beauty, the sirens have no power over him. Orpheus grabs his lute and begins to play a song of such high beauty, such grace, such wonder, a song about glory, heaven, the greatness beyond, truth and the beauty of reality. As he does this they are pulled away from the empty promises of the sirens and they are captivated by this song about the deep truths and high

beauties of the world. They're so captivated with Orpheus, his sweeter song that they turned the boat and sailed to freedom as they escape the rocks. They're miles away before they realize that they're still captivated in this beautiful song and they're singing as they row.

That is the kind of victory that God wants for us in Christ. He doesn't want us just resisting. He doesn't want us just tying ourselves to the mast and blocking our ears. Sometimes you have to do that to resist the things that are telling you to come and be fulfilled in them instead of Christ. But the ideal way is to learn to sing the more beautiful song, to learn to sing the song of the Gospel to yourself. In times when the sirens of this world are promising you all the things that will fulfill you, you need to be able to take the way like Orpheus.

This has to do with my third point. We have to welcome the truth. We have to listen to and hear the truth of the Gospel so that we're not lured away to our deaths – these empty promises that want to destroy us. What does this actually mean practically? Your home alone and a certain website starts to call like a siren. What do you do? It's promising life, joy and good things. How do you handle that? Strap yourself to the mast, block your ears or do you learn to sing the song? What you want in that moment is to see something beautiful and have that beautiful thing say of you. "I am well pleased with you." So what do you do? That's a false promise. It's not going to give you that.

You go to the truth. You remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:8; *[8] Blessed (Happy) are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* If I want true happiness, I'm going to want to see God and if I want to see God, I need to be pure in heart. Lord, I want to see you. Psalm 27:4 says *[4] One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.* The one thing that's going to really bring me happiness is the praise of the ultimately One who is praiseworthy, the joy of seeing Christ and seeing God. That's what's really going to satisfy me. You start to feel a little more satisfied and then you remember I John 3:1-3 that says, *[1] See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

By the time I've sung this song to myself, I've forgotten all about the impure thoughts that were being offered to me. I'm captivated and swept up by what Thomas Chalmers calls the expulsive power of a new affection. This new affection for Christ pushes out all my old affections. There's no room for other things. This is what Paul is getting at when he says in Colossians 2:9-10 that He in whom all the fullness of deity dwells bodily, fills you. There's should be no room left for anything else. He fills you. He should satisfy you so deeply that any other promise off to the other side of the road looks ridiculous.

God says this in Jeremiah 2:13, *[13] for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.* Do you understand what sin is? It is that you have access to clean running, living water and sin is going to God and saying "No thank You. I would rather drink out of this mud puddle." That's what you do when you sin. That's what you do when you reject the goodness that He's offering. You can be completely satisfied in Him, but you want to go find your satisfaction somewhere else.

Our problem is that we don't satisfy ourselves enough with Christ. He is the fullness, everything we could possibly want, everything that any siren to the side, anything trying to lure

us away into our destruction could offer us. We already have the true thing in Christ. Don't go worship money. You have all the riches, knowledge and power in Christ. Don't worship sex. You have all the pleasure, glory, and the ultimate vision of glory and beauty in Christ. Don't worship power. He has all power and authority in heaven and on earth have been given to Him. Worship Him. The way this works is you fix your eyes on Jesus and all that you have in Him and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

In these last few verses of our text in Colossians 2, Paul gives us the weapons of the Gospel to fight every other thing that could lure us off the path. We could be lured off the path by sirens, or we could be chased off the path by fears. Empty promises can lure us off the right way to go, and empty threats can make us turn aside. When we face empty promises we can say, "Nope, I'm already satisfied with Christ. I'm hearing the more beautiful song."

The first empty threat we see is the fear of death, and that's taken away in the Gospel in verses 11 and 12. Here's the Gospels answer to the fear of death. Colossians 2:11-12 says *[11] In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off (stripping off) the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [12] 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.* You fear death? Jesus beat death for in His body in which the fullness of deity dwelled, dwelled fully and bodily. This body was torn, and stripped as the flesh was stripped off His body when He went to the cross. He endured this horrific pain and then died but death could not hold Him. It had no right over Him.

Guess what? If you know Him as Savior you are in Him. If you are in Him, then that death was your death and His resurrection is your resurrection. If anyone is in Christ, he is new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). Right now. The Book of Revelation says that when believers die, it refers to their death as the first resurrection. Was does that mean? It means when Pastor Reeder passed away, he took the first step into resurrection life. He didn't pass from life to death. He passed from death to life, which will then result in greater life to come because God is not done. He is going to come on the clouds with the sound of the trumpet and the dead in Christ will be raised first bodily to be received by Him so that they can be with Him forever.

This is the hope of the resurrection. Death where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? You have nothing. You want to tempt me and make me scared of death, you think that's going to chase me off from walking in Christ? Death has nothing on me. Death can't touch me. Jesus said in John 6:40, *[40] For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* If you believe in Him, you won't even see death. These are guarantees. These are promises from a God who died, bore our sins and rose from the dead, proving that He could keep His Word and raise us from the dead.

The third thing, is our enemies will try to get us off the path by accusation. They'll accuse us of our sin. They'll remind us of the ways that we've sinned against God and they won't be 100 percent wrong for we are sinners, guilty, deserving of death and punishment in hell. Paul says in Colossians 2:13-14, *[13] 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, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.* What did we do?

When Adam rebelled in the garden, he was declaring himself "I am the king and God is not king." What was nailed above Jesus' head on the cross? "King of the Jews." He died for our sin. He took our debt. That was our sin. We declared ourselves kings when we were not. We

usurped the King of the universe or tried to and He died as usurper. He died our death. We deserved to die because we declared ourselves kings, not Him but He was and is the King but He died in our place. That's what Paul is getting at – our record of debt – that was nailed to the cross above His head, literally so that it was canceled. Sin is canceled. He breaks the power of canceled sin for you're sin debt is canceled and you owe nothing if you are in Christ.

Martin Luther says this; “So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!" My paraphrase is ‘Yes, thank you for reminding me that I'm a sinner because you know who God saves sinners. He doesn't die for the righteous. He died for sinners and He died for all my sins. They're all covered and it would be unjust.’

I John 1:9 says [9] *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* It would be unjust for God to not forgive your sin if you confess it to Him, not unjust to you but it would be unjust to Jesus because He'd be demanding two payments for the same debt and He will not do that. So when you are accused by the enemy, remember if you confessed the sin then bank on the promise. You may not feel forgiven, but trust the promise that you are, that that death paid for you. How arrogant, by the way, to think that my sin could be so bad that even the death of the Son of God couldn't pay for it. Get over yourself if you think you think your sin can't be forgiven. He paid more than you're worth.

Finally, our enemies try to intimidate us because they're powerful. These demonic powers and things operating in the world want to intimidate us with their power and authority. God has something to say about that in Colossians 2:15 which says [15] *He disarmed (stripped) the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.* This verse pictures Christ as a victorious General in an ancient Roman battle returning to his city, leaving in his wake these captives stripped of all their weapons. That's why we see the word disarmed in some translations. They have been stripped bare. Many times Roman generals would lead them naked through the streets, stripped and being led as slaves behind their chariot to show their power. He's taking the great powers of the universe, the powers and principalities, the greatest authorities, the demonic powers and He has locked them up behind His train and He's leading them along, stripped naked as He says “They tried to conquer Me. They stripped Me but by stripping Me, I stripped them of all their power because I defeated death and now they're powerless.”

When dark powers or things want to intimidate you into disobeying, walking off the path, just remember they are humiliated in their defeat. They are powerless. They couldn't conquer Christ and He came with both hands tied behind His back and let them do whatever they wanted to Him. He chucked off death like it was a rag. That's the God you serve. That's the power behind the universe. So, keep watch as you walk in Christ for all the things that want to get you off the path and sing the more beautiful song. Remember the Gospel and that way you pass through all the disastrous wrecks of lives rejoicing in Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that in Christ, You have defeated, disarmed, and stripped these powers and principalities, these authorities in high places. You have made a mockery of them for as they stripped You, You stripped them of all their power and authority. You have conquered death and erased our sin debt. You have taken us into Yourself and have



filled us and satisfied us so deeply with Christ that we ought not to long for anything else to satisfy us. So, satisfy us, Jesus Christ, in Yourself that the desire and thought of sin just sickens us. We see sin as the mud puddle and You as the great glowing fountain. Thank You, Father, for these things I ask that You would bless us, strengthen us through Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You together with the Holy Spirit – One God forever praised, Amen.