

A sermon “**Walking in Victory**”
From *Colossians 2:6–15*
Preached at Plymouth Presbyterian Church
St. Helens, Oregon
By Rev, Peter Blank
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Today’s scripture is a letter—a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians at Colossae. Let’s open this letter together and see if it just might be addressed to us as well.

Colossae was a modest town in Asia Minor, long past its prime. It had once been a hub of trade and culture, but by Paul’s time, it had faded into obscurity. Not long after he wrote this letter, the city was destroyed by an earthquake and never rebuilt.

Yet from prison, Paul writes to this little church in this little place with a message so big that it shakes the very powers of the universe. A message of thanksgiving. A message of freedom. A message of **victory**.

The believers in Colossae lived under the shadow of what Paul calls “*the powers and principalities*.” These were not just metaphors. These were the spiritual and social forces that governed the world as they knew it. Every part of life was under the rule of some power.

- If you were going on a voyage, you prayed to **Poseidon**, god of the sea, or else you risked disaster.
- If you wanted your crops to grow, you honored **Demeter**, goddess of the harvest.
- If you needed healing, you made an offering to **Asclepius**, god of medicine.
- If you hoped to have children, you prayed to **Artemis**, goddess of fertility.
- If you were going into battle, you offered sacrifice to **Ares**, god of war.
- And if you wanted wealth, you lit a candle for **Plutus**, god of riches.

These gods—these powers—were everywhere. They were behind the scenes, above the empires, and woven into the fabric of daily life. Ignore them, and you did so at your peril.

Now before we roll our eyes at these so-called deities, we should ask: **Who rules our world today?**

We no longer believe in Zeus or Artemis. But that doesn’t mean we’re free. We have our own powers. Our own systems. Our own invisible forces that shape our world.

We talk about “the economy.” Ever seen it? Touched it? But it decides whether you get hired, whether you can retire, whether you sleep at night. We speak of “the system”—the educational system, the healthcare system, the justice system—but nobody seems able to change it, only to survive it.

We don't run the system. **The system runs us.**

Our ancestors named their powers: Mars, Demeter, Plutus, Aphrodite. We name ours: Profit, Security, Youth, Productivity, Fame. We tell stories about them too—only now they’re in advertising, economics textbooks, and political speeches. We may know more facts than the ancients, but I’m not sure we know any more about how to resist these powers.

And Paul writes into this world—**their world and ours**—and declares something revolutionary:

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him...” (Col. 2:6–7)

“...For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.” (v. 9–10)

Do you hear it? Paul is saying, **you don’t belong to the powers anymore**. You don’t have to serve them, fear them, or obey them. You are in Christ—and in Christ, you already have everything you need.

How can that be? Because of what Christ has done:

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in the cross.” (Col. 2:15)

Let’s remember what the powers did to Jesus. They turned their full weight against him. Rome arrested him. The temple elite rejected him. The crowd mocked him. He was stripped, beaten, crucified. And above his head, they nailed the charge: *King of the Jews*. A cosmic joke. A final humiliation. A warning to anyone else who might claim power that didn’t belong to Caesar.

It looked like defeat. It looked like the powers had won again. Another rebel, crushed.

But Paul flips the script.

“He stripped the powers naked...”

“He made a public example of them...”

“He triumphed over them in the cross.”

The cross, meant to shame him, became his throne. The weapon of fear became the instrument of victory. The place of death became the birthplace of new life. **He didn’t lose to the powers—he exposed them. He embarrassed them. He broke their illusion of control.**

And now—because of that cross—you and I are free. Verse 14 says the record of sin that stood against us has been canceled. The bill has been torn up. The debt has been erased. The chains have been broken.

Paul is echoing the Exodus here: *“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son...”* (1:13–14). Just as Israel was freed from Pharaoh’s hand, we have been freed from the grip of every oppressive force.

The war is over. The enemy has been routed. **Now we walk in victory.**

That doesn't mean we'll never struggle. But it means we struggle in the light of a final victory. The decisive battle has already been won. The war is over. The cleanup is underway.

So how do we walk in that victory?

- **Every time you pray, “Thy kingdom come,”** you are proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord—and the powers are not.
- **Every time you bless your food and give thanks,** you are rejecting the myth that your livelihood comes from capitalism or your own effort—it is a gift from God.
- **Every time you come to the communion table,** you are joining the victory feast—the banquet of the slain yet risen Lamb, who now reigns.

The church's job—our job—is to keep reminding ourselves and the world of what's true:

Jesus Christ is Lord—

And Poseidon, Demeter, Artemis, Ares, Mammon, Caesar, Wall Street, social media, anxiety, and despair are not.

The battle has been fought and won. The powers have been stripped and shamed. The King reigns—and now we walk in his victory.

Let's live like it.

Amen.