

**Alive In Christ Colossians 2:6-15 bible-sermons.org February 28, 2011**

Last week we heard the Apostle's instruction and commendation relating to the health of the organism we call the church. The church is all the individual members united in love, encouraging one another, certain in our knowledge of Christ, plumbing the depths of the riches of His wisdom, and moving forward in an orderly and tight battle formation against the darkness of this evil world.

He continues, in our passage today, to encourage the Colossians with exhortation, warnings, and doctrine that no doubt came out of his wrestling in prayer for them. <sup>6</sup> *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him*, Ephaphras had shared the good news of Jesus with them and they had accepted Jesus as the Lord of their life. Paul is reminding them that since they had received Him as Master of their life, then they should walk, or we could say "live", in Him. (1Thessalonians 4:1) Wait for His instruction each morning. Ask for His leading throughout the day. Sing to Him. Worship Him. Lift up prayers to Him. He is the best master anyone could ever hope to know. He's a master that cares about His servants and loves them so much that He wants to live in them.

This is one of several one line commands that can guide your life and be indicator of your spiritual health. **If you received Christ Jesus as the Lord of your life, are you living in Him at this moment?** (1John 2:6) Are you constantly aware of His presence?

At church this morning, this verse asks us if our mind is on the Word that is being proclaimed, or is it wondering off to something else. (Hebrews 4:2) At work, living in Jesus might challenge us in our response to an angry customer. At home, He may ask if we are treating our spouse as Christ would treat them. That is walking in Him. If He is Lord, then we obey His instruction. If we are not obeying, we need to ask ourselves if we ever really received Him as Lord of our life. Living moment by moment in His presence is victorious Christian living, and that is true success.

This also tells us that walking in Christ as Lord is not automatic. Paul had to remind them to live in the Spirit. The next verse goes on to describe in more general terms what that means. <sup>7</sup> *rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving*. He is encouraging them to stay rooted in Christ, to have their foundation upon Him. That is what Epaphras taught them.

Roots not only secure the tree but draw up nourishment from the ground. It is a perfect analogy for Paul had told them previously that the depths of wisdom and knowledge were in Christ. (Ephesians 3:17) *If they are to grow in wisdom and understanding, they need to draw upon Christ Jesus. Surely Epaphras taught them what he was taught from*

**Commented [Paul1]: 1 Thessalonians 4:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

**Commented [Paul2]: 1 John 2:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

**Commented [Paul3]: Hebrews 4:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

**Commented [Paul4]: Ephesians 3:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Paul, the Apostles doctrine of the life and teachings of Jesus. Paul will elaborate on that in the next few verses. (Acts 2:42)

"Built up in Him" means to add to what was started. Don't stay in the infant stage. (Hebrews 5:12) Roots are for the purpose of feeding what is above so that it may grow. We need to be moving forward in our spiritual maturity or we are moving backward. A plant grows or dies. There is no in-between.

"Built" reminds me of weight lifters. They keep adding more and more resistance to gain more and more muscle. The same is true spiritually. We have to keep stretching and not get comfortable. (Acts 20:32)

They were also to be established in Jesus. The teaching they received of Jesus is their foundation to which they are to be secured. (Ephesians 2:20) Someone was trying to get them to turn back to the shadows in the Old Testament instead of the substance that was in Christ. The foundation is Jesus. The laws were a blueprint. We'll have more on that next week.

Essentially he is saying to stay faithful to what they received and become more and more certain of it. Remember your first love while growing in conviction of the truth. (Revelation 2:4) Jesus is the power that changed their lives and ours as well. When we get away from that foundation, if we fail to sink our roots in deep, the next wind of doctrine that blows will turn us in a different direction. (Hebrews 13:9)

This is the second time in two chapters that Paul has exhorted them to be thankful (1:12), and before the short letter is over he'll remind them again. (4:2) When we see all that God has done for us in Christ, all that He offers us, all that He has planned for us, thanksgiving is the only right response. (Ephesians 5:20) If we are not abounding in thanksgiving, we are taking for granted the incredible generosity of our holy God. We have forgotten our former condition and what we actually deserve.

The believer that is not abounding in thanksgiving has either not seen what has been done for them, or has allowed the world to dominate their thinking. If they haven't seen, then they need to get into God's Word and realize the wonder of salvation. If the world is dominating our thinking, we need to take our thoughts captive. (2Corinthians 10:5)

There are believers that only speak of their difficulties. They say they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, that they trust Him for their salvation, that they are bound for heaven, but the dominate topic is their ills, or their troubles, or their conditions. You

**Commented [Paul5]: Acts 2:42 (KJV)**  
<sup>42</sup> And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**Commented [Paul6]: Hebrews 5:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

**Commented [Paul7]: Acts 20:32 (ESV)**  
<sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**Commented [Paul8]: Ephesians 2:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

**Commented [Paul9]: Revelation 2:4 (NIV)**  
<sup>4</sup> Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

**Commented [Paul10]: Hebrews 13:9 (NIV)**  
<sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them.

**Commented [Paul11]: Colossians 1:12 (NIV)**  
<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

**Commented [Paul12]: Colossians 4:2 (NIV)**  
<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

**Commented [Paul13]: Ephesians 5:20 (NIV)**  
<sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Commented [Paul14]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

surely have met people like that, and you may realize you fit into that description to one degree or another. We all do at some time. What's wrong with that picture?

There are times when we allow the temporary things of life to capture our soul. We think about them constantly. We speak of them every chance we get, when what we should do is capture them and take them to Jesus and leave them with Him. (1Peter 5:7) The more we meditate on all that we have in Jesus and the more we are in the Word, the more we see His gracious hand in our lives and thank Him for all His goodness. (Joshua 1:8) I can't start a prayer without thanking Him first. He's so good that He defines goodness. Are you abounding in thankfulness?

*<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.* The language here is of someone being taken as a slave. There were all kinds of philosophies in both the Jewish and Greek world. "Empty deceit" is saying that their lies have nothing substantial to offer you. Human tradition is what Jesus sometimes referred to, all the extra-Biblical rules that had sprung up in Judaism through the traditions of men. (Matthew 15:3) Paul says these are also according to elemental spirits of the world.

After further study, I have discovered that Paul is not so likely to be referring to the ABCs of Gnosticism but rather evil spirits or what is called doctrines of devils in 1Timothy 4:1. Though early ideas of Gnosticism were around at that time, the usage of the Greek word in circulation then referred to demon angels. (See στοιχεια – in the Testament of Solomon)

Why can we ignore all the other philosophies according to man's traditions or any other teaching that is not according to Christ? *<sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,* Every spiritual teaching that is outside of Christ either was made up by men or demons. Every truth is found in Jesus for in Him the fullness of deity dwells in a human body! Yes, I know that is intolerant. Years ago we had people leave the church that had attended for years because I said Buddhism and Islam and Hinduism are not equal to Christianity. If you really think that all religions are equal, I challenge you to go to the countries where those religions are dominant and see the dark side that doesn't show up in text books. (Matthew 7:20) Read of the sexual activities and lust of their gods. Watch the worship of snakes. Watch the neglect of helping the suffering "because it is their karma". Or in Islam see the abuse of women. Read of how Mohammed rose to power. Then tell me they are all the same. The historical evils of Christianity are because they disobeyed the teachings of Jesus. The evils I mention in the other major

**Commented [Paul15]: 1 Peter 5:7 (KJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

**Commented [Paul16]: Joshua 1:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

**Commented [Paul17]: Matthew 15:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

**Commented [Paul18]: 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

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religions are because they are consistent with their religion. That's not politically correct, but it is honest.

In Christ, all of God took on a bodily form. (John 1:14) When we see Jesus, we see God. His reactions were God's reactions. His words were the very words of God. There was nothing of God that was not in Jesus. (Colossians 1:19) As we have seen several times previously, by this time in Paul's presentation of the Gospel, he declares unequivocally that Jesus is one with God. He is the Tabernacle that houses Shekina. You don't need to go anywhere else to get anything else! It's all in Christ!

<sup>10</sup> *and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.* You are filled in Jesus! (Ephesians 3:19) You don't need anything else. He is the head of power. He has the final say. He has all wisdom. What more do you need? If He doesn't fill you up, nothing will. That God shaped hole in your heart is so big that He is the only One that can fill it. You have been filled in Him!

Like the Colossians, we need to be reminded that this is the case. Not because we've found Jesus lacking, but because we take our eyes off His all sufficiency. The world is constantly enticing us. Every commercial says, "This is what you need to be happy, to really feel fulfilled." When we take our eyes off of Christ, when we stop walking in Him, experiencing His presence moment by moment, the world is right there to tell you that satisfaction can be found in something else. We must continually experience the fullness we have in Jesus or we will be distracted.

<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,* Even in the Old Testament times they understood that circumcision was a picture of the circumcised heart. (Deuteronomy 10:16) It was a cutting away of the world and being separated from it. Made without hands is meant to be a contrast to the phrase, "made with hands" which always referred to idols in the Old Testament. (Psalm 115:4) Paul is implying that religious ritual had become idolatry. **Relying on methodology rather than God is idolatry!**

Putting off the body of the flesh was to put away the desires of the old nature, the things we once put between us and God. That was what was supposed to happen in our hearts. (Romans 2:29) The sages believed that this is what the Messiah would do for us when He came, and they were right. (Deuteronomy 30:6)

Paul continues with the description of how Christ circumcised our hearts. <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.* This is the verse which we

**Commented [Paul20]: John 1:14 (ESV)**  
<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Commented [Paul21]: Colossians 1:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

**Commented [Paul22]: Ephesians 3:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**Commented [Paul23]: Deuteronomy 10:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

**Commented [Paul24]: Psalm 115:4 (NIV)**  
<sup>4</sup> But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men.

**Commented [Paul25]: Romans 2:29 (ESV)**  
<sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**Commented [Paul26]: Deuteronomy 30:5-6 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.  
<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.

have on our baptismal. Baptism was a declaration that a person had been associated with Christ in His death and raised with Jesus to newness of life. That death is the putting off the body of the flesh. It doesn't mean that we deny all desires as in Buddhism, but rather that Christ is now our great desire and all others are subservient to Him as Lord. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, (1Timothy 6:17) but in moderation and in their proper time and place. It is the Adamic fallen nature that is put off as dead.

**Commented [Paul27]: 1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Our new life is the result of being raised with Him through faith in the God who raised Jesus. If you are having trouble realizing you are a new creation, it comes back to having faith that the God who raised Jesus can, by the same power, transform your life. (Ephesians 1:19-20) Do you believe He can? Then you act on it and live it out by faith.

**Commented [Paul28]: Ephesians 1:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

Every time the old nature would rise up, we continue to count it dead by faith. Remember faith isn't always something you see, but it is something you can always act on! We fail to walk in victory because we quit seeing who we are in Christ. We lose heart because we don't appreciate our position in Christ.

*<sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him,* Before we believed by faith, our spirit was dead. We acted out of our soulish nature, our desires and thoughts that were of the nature of fallen Adam. Our actions and our desires showed that our spirit was dead. The spirit is a part of our being created for God to inhabit, but without life there, we can only sin. But then we believed and accepted the work of Christ on our behalf on the cross. When He died, we died to our old self with Him. (Galatians 2:20)

**Commented [Paul29]: Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*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.* Every sin of which we were guilty and for which a just and holy God should punish us was put upon Christ. His death was the payment we deserved. The record of our sins and the debt we owed was legally cancelled. Upon that debt was written, "It is finished!", or we could translate it accurately, "Paid in Full!" (John 19:30) Your bill for every evil thought, every selfish desire, every intentional and unintentional evil act from your young age to your death is nailed to the cross on the body of Jesus. (2Corinthians 5:21) *Jesus paid it all!*

**Commented [Paul30]: John 19:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**Commented [Paul31]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

But that isn't the end. He rose victorious over death. In doing so, <sup>15</sup> *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* God won the battle with the evil powers that opposed Him and mankind. God triumphed over them all in Jesus. He shamed them by showing them that sacrificial love was more powerful than all the selfish evil they could muster. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Paul prayed in the opening chapter of Ephesians that we might know <sup>19</sup>... *his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,* <sup>20</sup> *which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,* <sup>21</sup> *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.* <sup>22</sup> *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,* <sup>23</sup> *which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.* Ephesians 1:19-23 (NIV)

Are your sins cancelled, nailed on the cross? Are you living in Jesus? Is He your Master? Are you raised with Him in baptism? Are you filled? Are you, by faith, living in resurrection life?

#### Questions

- 1 What does it mean to "walk in Jesus"?
- 2 What does it mean for Him to be Lord?
- 3 What are the implications of verse 7?
- 4 What does thankfulness or lack thereof indicate?
- 5 What things does Paul say will enslave us?
- 6 Where can we find everything of God that we need?
- 7 How are we filled in Jesus?
- 8 How were our hearts circumcised? What does it mean?
- 9 What happens to a believer's sin debt?
- 10 What happened to the evil powers that would feed us empty deceit?