

## Alive in Christ

Scripture Text: Colossians 2:6-15

### Introduction

Today, we are continuing our look at Paul's letter to the Colossians. We do not know exactly to what Paul was responding in this letter, but it seems that some false teachers were causing problems in the church. Therefore, Paul took the opportunity to respond to the Colossians, to encourage them in their faith and to correct the false teaching. Last week, we saw how Paul reminded the Colossians of his work for the Gospel. Paul had suffered and labored so that people would hear the good news of Jesus Christ and the church would be built up in knowledge of Him. Though Paul had not personally planted the church in Colossae or had even met the people there, he labored for them in order to protect them from being deceived.

Today's passage continues Paul's encouragement to the Colossians by reminding them of their faith and what Christ has done for them. Paul shifted from writing about his own work for the Gospel to the dangerous teaching that was threatening the Colossian church. He delivered a series of warnings about that teaching and reminded them of the Christians' new identity in Christ. These reminders would help resist the arguments of the false teachers and help the church live lives worthy of the Lord. Even though the Colossians were doing well spiritually, they had to be on guard against false teaching and remember who they are and what Christ has done for them.

There are *four main ideas* I would like to consider from this passage:

1. Our Walk in Christ
2. Being Cautious of False Teaching
3. Remembering Who Jesus Is
4. Remembering What Jesus Did for Us

### Our Walk in Christ (vss. 6-7)

In the previous verses, Paul mentioned that he was not present with the Colossians; in fact he had not even met them. However, Paul said he was *with them in spirit* and rejoiced to see their "good order" and the "firmness of their faith in Christ." Some people point out that these two phrases are military terms. If so, they suggest the camp, being the church, was in order and the defenses were in place. The church had begun well. The combination of these terms revealed that any false teaching Paul was addressing had not been successful to this point. Paul rejoiced to see a healthy, thriving, church. He wrote the following in verse six.

**Colossians 2:6** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk in him*.

Wanting to see their faith firm, Paul wrote that they should walk in Christ, just as they had received Him. This probably reminded them of the Christ hymn from chapter one which

exalted Jesus as Creator and Savior. Paul had already mentioned in the first chapter of the letter for the Colossians to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Basically, Paul was saying, “Conduct yourself and live your life in such a way that honors Jesus as Lord.” They had accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They had believed in Him and placed their trust in Him; *therefore*, they ought to live their lives in such a way that honored Him as Lord. It was not enough for Paul to see people make a profession of faith in Christ, as important as that was. Paul’s ministry was not just to see people accept Christ but to present them *mature in Christ*, living out their faith in a way that honored Jesus Christ as Lord. So should we.

Paul expressed their Christian conduct in four ways:

- Having been **Rooted** in Christ
- Being **Built up** in Christ
- Being **Established** in Faith
- Abounding in **Thanksgiving**

Paul called the Colossians back to the foundational teaching they had received when they first became Christians. Remember, Paul had not taught them, he had not even met them, but he knew a fellow believer named Epaphras had taught them. He had heard that their faith was firm. So, Paul used images of a tree being rooted and a building being built up to remind the Colossians of their firm foundation in what they had been taught – Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their faith was firm in Christ. They should not trust in any rival teaching, anything that was contrary to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Likewise, our faith must be found on nothing less than Jesus. Jesus must be the all-sufficient reason and purpose for everything the church is and does. Lastly, Paul mentioned that their conduct should show thankfulness. Our Christian walk should exhibit gratitude for what God has done, what He continues to do, and what He has promised to do. Thanksgiving is a visible response to the grace of God in our lives.

### **Being Cautious of False Teaching (vs. 8)**

Having urged the Colossians to conduct themselves in such a way that would bring honor to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Paul addressed the issue of false teaching. This was a main concern for Paul in writing the letter to the Colossians. In order to be God’s holy people, we have to be careful of ungodliness creeping into the church. We have to be careful of false teaching easing its way into the congregation. I use those words intentionally. The way the enemy destroys a church is often not by a full on attack of its members. It can be through small, incremental, steps that lure God’s people away from trusting His Word and fulfilling their mission. We have to be careful of this! It is a very real threat. The false teacher (or teachers) in Colossae posed a very real threat to the church and its mission, as they do in any church. In verse eight, Paul wrote the following:

**Colossians 2:8** 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.

Essentially, Paul told the church to beware of dangerous teaching. The term “philosophy” was used much more broadly during Paul’s time than it is today. Paul was not condemning philosophy in general, the study of knowledge, but false teaching that was contrary to the Gospel. The imagery Paul used was of these false teachers carrying the congregation away from the truth and into slavery of falsehood. The danger was that God’s people might be lured away from the truth and enslaved in falsehood. The trust of this is that lies and false teaching can place us in bondage. Once we buy into false teaching, teaching that is not of God, once we go down that path, we will get off track, like a train derailed. We can become lost in deception. The history of the Christian faith is replete with examples of God’s people being lured away by falsehood and their witness destroyed.

Paul identified the source of this false teaching as “human tradition” and spirits or forces outside the church. Paul was likely referring to demonic spirits. Although this false teaching was handed down as human tradition, it could ultimately be traced to the influence of demonic forces. There was probably some sort of spiritual warfare occurring. Satan will attack God’s people, through active disobedience to God and through false teaching that is not in accord with God’s Word. We have to test everything to see if it is in accord with what God has already revealed to us. If someone tells you something that does not agree with the inspired and inerrant Word of God, you can be assured that it is not of God. The fundamental problem with the teaching Paul was warning the Colossians was that it was not in accord with the gospel of Jesus Christ that was originally proclaimed to the church.

### **Remembering Who Jesus Is (vss 9-10)**

The good news was that there was help for this dangerous teaching. The church has resources to combat false teaching. The answer to any false and dangerous teaching is to focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Church has everything it needs in Him. Since our sins are forgiven by virtue of the cross of Christ and we are already living a new life in Him, we have no need to turn to anything or to anyone else to “complete” our spiritual well-being. There is nothing else we need to grow in our Christian “walk” than what God has provided. Paul’s answer to the false teaching was to remind the Colossians who Jesus is and what He has done for them.

Paul had already mentioned earlier in chapter one about the nature of Christ. He wrote, “In Christ all the fullness of God dwells.” Also in chapter one, Paul exalted Jesus in what is commonly called a “Christ hymn”, praising *Jesus as Creator* and *Jesus as Savior*. In chapter two, Paul reminded the Colossians again who Jesus is:

**Colossians 2:9–10** ...in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Jesus Christ is the visible expression of God. He is *God in the flesh*. God pitched His tent in human flesh and dwelt among human beings. Jesus is one hundred percent God, but at the same time, He is also one hundred percent man. He is our Creator. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. There is no other person or being we should follow. Because of our union with Christ, we have all we need. Paul affirmed that all believers share in Christ's power and authority over every ruler and authority because of their union with him. Paul wrote, "You have been filled in Him." This could be the main theme of Colossians – God's "fullness" is in Jesus, and believers are "filled in Christ." Therefore, the Church has everything it needs in Christ. We do not need any other teaching to become what God expects of us. This would have been encouraging and helpful for the Colossians who were facing a real threat of demonic forces plaguing the congregation with false teaching.

### **Remembering What Jesus Did For You (vss. 11-15)**

The second answer to this false teaching Paul provided was to remind the Colossians of what Jesus had done for them. He wrote that in Christ, the Church had entered a new covenant that was not based upon the legal demands of the Old Testament law, such as circumcision. The Church had entered into a new covenant based on the spiritual union with Jesus Christ through His work on the cross. The people of God have now been transferred to the kingdom of Christ and live through Him, under His lordship.

Paul then mentioned a symbol of this new covenant. As Baptists, we observe two ordinances that Jesus Christ gave to the Church. One is the Lord's Supper, which many churches observe quarterly. The other is Believer's Baptism. Baptism is the symbol of a believer's entrance into the new covenant. To be clear, it is a symbol. I am not saying that a person enters the new covenant, or is saved, through the act of baptism. It represents what a person has already done – turning from sin and placing trust in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote that baptism represents a believer being united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Being immersed in water and being raised out of the water represents the death of the old self and the rising to new life in Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus, our sins have been forgiven. Paul referred to it as a debt. We all were indebted to God because of our sinfulness; but thanks be to God, who sent His only begotten Son, through His sacrifice on the cross, canceled our debt of sin. Jesus nailed our sin to His cross and redeemed us, paid our debt, and reconciled us to God. God has mercifully resolved the "sin problem" for all who place their faith in His Son. And the problem is serious. Scripture declares that we were dead in our sins. Jesus did not come to heal us and to make us better people. Jesus did not come to tell us *how* to be good. Jesus came to raise the dead. He literally did that to Lazarus and Jairus' daughter and even to Himself. But, Jesus came to give life to all of us – to those who were *dead in sin*. The Gospel is about God restoring His creation to new life through the life-giving work of His Son. The passage today declares that believers are *alive in Christ*.

**Colossians 2:13-14** 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, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

We were once dead in our sin but we have been made alive in Christ. Baptism is a symbol of the old man being buried and the new man being raised to new life – like Jesus dying and being resurrected. Christ gives us new life. Not only do we have new life, but we also have victory. Paul wrote that Jesus disarmed the “rulers and authorities,” triumphing over them. The cross of Jesus Christ marks the decisive defeat of the demonic powers. On the cross, they were stripped of their power to accuse Christians before God. Nevertheless, these forces continue to exist and to exercise power to incite evil, so the Church must continue to struggle with them. We have to deal with them, but their defeat has been assured.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, we can expect trouble in our Christian walk. We know the enemy is like a prowling lion seeking to destroy us. But we also have the promise of God’s Word that His defeat is certain. We have the promise of God that salvation is secured for those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who place their trust in Him. Scripture declares that true life is found only in Jesus Christ. We are made alive in Him. Jesus has not only given us eternal life, but He has given us spiritual life here. Satan does not want you to have that. He desires to distract the church, to see the church not fulfill her mission. He desires to see you live an unfulfilled life. The challenge for us is to rest in the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ. We must trust Him and trust His Word. We must be focused on following Jesus and fulfilling the mission and purpose of this church – to make more followers of Jesus. We must be alive in Christ, laboring for the gospel until He calls us home. That is good news! Amen!