

**June 15, 2008**

*Colossians 2:6-7*

Alright good morning – and Happy Father’s Day. I hope you have your Bibles this morning. Let’s take them out and turn to Colossians chapter 2. We’ll move forward through the next 2 verses this morning in our study of the book of Colossians and these two verses are both challenging and encouraging and will have a special sense of application for our father’s today. So let’s look at them together.

**Col 2:6-7**

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

Verse 6 begins with “so then” which is like seeing a “therefore” – you need to look to see what it is there for – what is it connected to. When Paul says “so then” he is building at least on verses 4-5 where he said *“I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.”*

He’s saying – in order to not be deceived by fine-sounding arguments – in order to continue to be orderly and firm in your faith in Christ – so then, what?

He says – *“so then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him...”* (repeat) That’s pretty straight forward isn’t it? Let’s look at it. First of all take it together – you received Jesus as Lord now you live in Him. Folks we have seen this multiple times in every book of the Bible we have studied and here it is again. **Your belief is going to determine your BEHAVIOR.** There is no such thing as receiving Jesus and not having it impact your daily life. Like we said last week, you can say you believe whatever you want. You can say you’ve accepted Jesus – you can say you believe what He says is true – you can say that The God is your God – but if you aren’t living it, you don’t believe it. We make decisions every moment based on what is true in us – what we really believe. We can’t help it. It’s how we’re wired. Which means just real practically today, that you and I can get a pretty good gauge on our relationship with Christ by just looking at our lives – by how much we hate and are grieved by sin in our lives, by what entertains us, by how we spend our free time, by where we spend our money, by how we treat our families and friends, and on and on. He says “just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him” – **if you have put your faith in Jesus, it cannot NOT show up in your life.**

And there is another key issue there – that of faith. He says just as you received Jesus, continue to live in Him. In the same way that you received Him, in that way live in Him. Well – how did we receive Jesus? By faith. So how do we live? By faith. **2 Corinthians 5:7** says *“We live by faith, not by sight.”* **We live by FAITH - based on what we believe about Jesus – we live based on our acceptance of this book as the Word of God – we live based on the leadership of the Holy Spirit – not by SIGHT – not by what logic says or culture says or what my peers say or even by what I might selfishly want.** Paul says in **Galatians 2:20** *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

That’s what we saw last week in verses 2 & 3 – I take what I know in my head and put it to practice in my life because of faith – because I believe it’s what God has said – and the result is I find it to be true & it becomes my conviction and it enables me to know Jesus even better. So we are saved by faith and we live by faith.

But Paul emphasizes not just *how* we received Jesus but how we received *Jesus*. In other words, not only the means but the result. We received Christ Jesus as what? As Lord. If that doesn’t communicate to you then think King. Whatever it takes for us to understand supremacy, sovereignty,

ownership, priority. The wording that has been traditional in churches for years and years where you are invited to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord is really unfortunate. Because it seems to imply that they are different. That you can have one without the other. That you can get Jesus as Savior, but not take him as Lord. And I think that may be a uniquely American conceptual problem.

When I was a junior in high school, I went to Brazil on my first foreign mission trip and on one night I was preaching and I had this whole message based on that idea. Is Jesus your Lord or just your Savior? And I noticed my translator talking way more than I was. So when we got done I asked him what was going on and he said he was having to explain the difference in the two words – that where I was from they could be different when it came to Jesus because to the Brazilian believers I was talking to, it was one & the same. You come to Jesus – he is Lord. And because He is Lord, then He is Savior. That's what Paul is saying here. **You received Him as LORD, now live like it. The continuous conduct of your life should be CONSISTENT with the commitment you made at conversion.**

That's what the last half of verse 6 is all about. Continue to *live* in Him. Folks that shouldn't sound weird to us. That's the vision we have been embracing and hammering for the past two years. Hopefully every one of you could quote this from heart at any time. We exist to be doing life in Christ one step at a time together. Christianity is not just a religion. It is not just an endgame deal where you go to heaven when you die. It is an incredible life. And that life is "in Him." Some of your versions may say "walk in Him." This verse is talking about daily conduct. **1 John 2:6** makes it clear: *"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."*

I know this principle has been marketed, mocked, and maligned by our culture so much that Satan has effectively erased it from our minds as having any real purpose, but folks this boils down to asking ourselves "what would Jesus do?" **In every conversation, in every situation, in every decision – what would JESUS – what would my Lord do?** That's the exact context we saw last week. Go back and look at verses 2 & 3 with me. *"My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* I get the truth in my head – I put it into practice in my life – I end up with the conviction that Jesus is who He says He is and will do what He promised to do – so I make my life's goal to be like Him – to make my lifestyle like His lifestyle.

Guys if you are here today to punch your church card, to do your good deed for the week, to renew your Christian rep, or even if your reason to be here has nothing to do with you – you just want your kids to be here so you come, too – you are missing the point. It does us no good to be in a church service on Sunday unless we are taking what we hear there into our lives the rest of the week. Going to church does not make you a Christian any more than being in a garage makes you a car. The proof of your relationship with Jesus is not just where you are Sunday morning, but how you live every where else. And here's the deal in context, it is living that life in Christ that keeps us from being deceived by fine-sounding arguments. Because we can tell the difference between truth that we're living and lies we're being told.

Ok. Now if that is the first challenge, if that is what we are to do – to live in Christ – to do life walking by faith with Christ as Lord letting what we say we believe determine our behavior all the time, then the next few phrases are the encouragement while we do that.. Look at what he says, *"continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."*

Now here is where doing some study into the Greek in which Paul wrote this letter helps us understand it. All of these phrases are participles – rooted, built up, strengthened, overflowing. That by itself is no big deal, but the tense and voice of these words is a big deal. The first three are all in passive voice. Now go fishing in the back of your brain to remind yourself what that means. For some of us we have to fish a little deeper & farther back – but being in passive voice means the three

things that Paul says here are not things that we are challenged to do like the verse 6, instead these are things that are done to us – that happen to us. So catch this – **being rooted, being built up, being strengthened are all things that God does TO us & for us while we are living in Him.**

Now check this out – let's take the first one – rooted in Him. This one is passive in voice but it is perfect in tense. Which is an awesome thing in this context. Perfect tense here means Paul is referring to something that happened to us in the past but has continuing results in the present and through the future. So what happened – the best wording would be – continue to live in Him having been rooted in Him.

Now when you think of roots, you think of trees and that's the metaphor Paul is using here. That **at SALVATION – when you received Christ Jesus as Lord, God planted you – rooted you – in Him.** **Jeremiah 17:8** talks about that when it says, *“He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”* The fact that this is in perfect tense means that this is a once and for all experience, that **we are PERMANENTLY rooted in Him.** That if God takes you and plants you in Himself, then like **Romans 8:38-39** says, nothing can uproot you. But also, we are rooted in Him – in Jesus. And just like the roots of a tree grab into that which is their source of nutrients and growth, **we are rooted in Jesus because He is the SOURCE of our lives.** One of the verses I quote maybe more than any other is **2 Peter 1:3**, that *“his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”* Folks when God roots you in Jesus, he is giving you everything you need from then on. Awesome.

But not only are we rooted in him, we are being built up in him. Again passive voice, but this time it is present tense. And present tense doesn't just mean for the moment, it means now and ongoing – it is a continuing action. As we live in Him, Jesus is constantly building us up – like a potter with clay, shaping us into what He wants us to be – making us more and more like Jesus in our character. You know what that means? It means you aren't finished yet. You are still under construction. **You have not yet BECOME what you will eventually be.** “God isn't finished with me yet” isn't just a catchy phrase, it's the truth. And thank God for it! That **as we live in Him, He builds us up – he takes our POTENTIAL and makes it our reality.** Awesome.

Then the third phrase is “strengthened in the faith” or in passive voice, being strengthened in the faith. And “in the faith” is important here. **“Faith” in this context is not referring to our belief or our trust, it is referring to the body of TRUTH we believe in.** It is that body of truth in which the strengthening happens. God makes you strong – again present tense so this is an ongoing process – **God continually makes you stronger in your knowledge of the truth. It becomes REAL to you.** As we live in Him, all those treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Christ from last week become our possession. God consistently takes us past the elementary truths of the gospel and into the deeper realities of the faith – from milk to meat as the writer of Hebrews says – which makes it harder and harder for us to get pushed around by false information – to be deceived by fine-sounding arguments.

And Paul says strengthened in the faith “as you were taught.” We'll come back to that in a minute, but I want you to see that Paul is assuring the Colossians that they are right – that they were taught correctly in the beginning, when they first heard the truth Epaphras taught them about Jesus – it was true then and it is true now so don't waiver now that some time has passed and someone is telling you something different.

So look at this with me – not only do we have responsibilities when it comes to being a Christian – I mean the proof of your salvation is not that you prayed a prayer at a certain age in a certain place. That doesn't prove anything. The proof of your salvation is obedience – is living in Christ the same way you accepted Christ – by faith & as Lord. But **not only do WE have responsibilities as**

**Christians, GOD is continually active in us.** Nourishing us, building us up, strengthening us. He doesn't give us salvation and set a date to meet us in heaven and then wander off to leave us on our own, he takes up residence in us, makes us his own, and is constantly at work in and on us. **Philippians 1:6** says "*being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" **Phil 2:12-13** says "*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*"

And that's what leads us to the last phrase. He says "*continue to live in Him...and overflowing with thankfulness.*" Now this is where it changes. This is still a participle and it is still in present tense, but this one is in active voice. That means this isn't done to us – this is us in action – this is our response to the first three truths Paul wrote. **We are to be – present tense – now and CONTINUALLY overflowing with thankfulness.** That word overflowing is one of Paul's favorite words – he uses it more than 26 times in his letters. Like a river overflowing its banks, we are to be continually bursting with thanksgiving.

Now that by itself would be a huge contrast to our culture wouldn't it? I mean how many people do you know who this phrase describes? This is hugely absent from our world. Instead of gratefulness, a sense of entitlement and pride permeates just about everyone around us and too often us. Simple thank you's are rarely heard and true gratefulness is an endangered quality because I deserve whatever you do for me. It's all about me. So if we live in contrast to that, we bring attention to ourselves and from ourselves to our God. So there's that in mind here, but really Paul is interested in two other reasons.

First of all, this last phrase is a response to the first three. Because God has rooted us in Christ forever – and in that has given us access to everything we will ever need. Because God never gives up on us but is continually building us up from the inside out to be what he knows we can be – to be our utmost for his highest. Because God is never content with what we know of Him but constantly is strengthening us in the faith – showing us more and more of Himself. Because of that, we should be overflowing with thankfulness. **When really get what a relationship with Jesus means, we won't be able to stop the GRATITUDE that flows from our hearts.** Which means just real fast in terms of application for us to measure our lives by, **when there is more COMPLAINT than thanks, then something is out of whack between me and Jesus.**

But remember that all of this is built on what Paul said in verses 4 & 5. Paul's "so then" in verse 6 means in order to not be deceived, in order to stay orderly and firm in your faith. And thankfulness is huge in that. Listen to **Romans 1:21** "*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*" If our hearts do not respond to God with gratitude, our minds and hearts will be darkened and we will basically surrender ourselves to the blinding work of Satan. John Piper explains it this way – "Gratitude is the guardian of the lamp of the soul. If the guardian dies, the lamp goes out. [You've got to] Guard yourself with gratitude."

**Philippians 4:6-7** "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" Try praying & giving petitions without thanksgiving. You know what happens – the peace of God won't come to guard your hearts and minds. It is the thanksgiving along with the prayers that is the evidence of trust and humility before God. It is the thanksgiving that paves the way for the peace of God to guard your heart.

**Ephesians 5:4** "*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*" You know how you guard yourself against a foul mouth? How can we guard ourselves against a mouth foul with criticism, bitterness, blaming, defensiveness, resentment, complaining, sarcasm, ridicule, silliness, trivialness? Fill your mouth with thanksgiving.

**We are to be overflowing with thankfulness not just because of who God is – not just because of all God has done – not just because of all God is doing – but because thankfulness GUARDS us from sin.** That's what these verses are telling us. Now there is one more phrase I want us to look at in this passage.

Today is Father's Day. Because of that I want to point out one phrase in here that is crucial. Look back at the passage with me. *Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.* What every father wants for his kids is right here. To know Jesus as Lord. To live in Him. For Jesus to be the source of their life, for God to be obviously building them into the highest potential for God's glory, for God to make them strong in the faith to withstand any attack from life or enemy. But do you see where all that starts – it says as you were taught. Parents – dad's especially – **none of this can happen unless your kids are TAUGHT the truth.**

And that means intentionality on your part. The greatest responsibility you've got in life outside of your own relationship with Jesus is to teach your kids Jesus while you can. You know how you do that? **One – by WORD. You have to actually talk to your kids about the truth – about Jesus – about what the Bible says – you have to look for teachable moments when you can bring Jesus to them at every age.**

**Two – by EXAMPLE.** Not only must you speak the truth, you must live the truth. **More is caught by your example than is taught by words alone.** Are you living the life you want your kids to emulate? Do they ever see you pray? Do they ever see you studying the Word? Do they ever see you serving your spouse? What do they hear you say? What do they hear you laugh at? Are you teaching them with your life?

**Three – by COMMUNITY.** God wants your kids interacting with His church family more than he wants them in sports, more than he wants them in music, more than he wants them working, more than he wants them first in their class at school. Are those things important? Yes. Do they matter eternally? No. Not unless they are the outflow of Jesus in your kids.

The truth is the greatest responsibility you have in life outside of your own relationship with Jesus is teaching Jesus to your kids every chance you get until they establish their own life outside of your home. The church cannot replace you in that task – but God gives us to each other to supplement – to help – to come along side each other in it. And **though you are not responsible for their RESPONSE to what you teach, you are responsible to God for WHAT you teach – by word, by example, and by involvement in His family.** So if you don't want your kids – at any age – to be deceived by fine-sounding arguments of the enemy in this world, then step up and teach them the truth.

And then you'll have one more reason to be overflowing with thankfulness.

Let me close with a quote from Thomas a Kempis. When we see what Paul has explained today – what we have been given in Jesus in salvation, what God has done and continues to do in and for us all the time – we really should be overflowing with thankfulness today. What Thomas a Kempis said should inform that thankfulness every day – he said, "If the majesty of the Giver be considered, nothing that is given shall seem small and of no worth, for that is not a small thing which is given by the Most High God." Amen?! Amen!

Let's pray.