

Walking In Him

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[0:00] Colossians chapter 2 is our scripture reading tonight. So we'll read once again Colossians chapter 2 and the first 12 verses.

! I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not met me personally. 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 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.

So then, just as you receive 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.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

[1:30] For in Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

In Him, you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead. Well, in verse 6, Paul has given us the general direction of really the entire book of Colossians. The main point, he says, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him. That's the general idea. That's the big picture. And now, he's going to begin to unpack what that means.

So last week, we looked at verse 6, which just showed us, what does it mean to become a Christian? Well, you become a Christian when you receive Christ Jesus as Lord.

[2:49] It's not turning over a new leaf. It's not getting your life in order. It's a very personal experience of receiving Christ Jesus as Lord.

And then we said, this has happened to you, Christians. This wonderful blessing of Jesus Christ coming and attaching Himself to your life and you beginning to live in Him as Him being your Lord. That has happened to you. And because that has happened to you, this is Paul's command. Now continue to live in Him. Continue to walk in Him.

And now verse 7 is what we are going to look at today. Paul begins to look at some particulars. What does it mean? What does it look like to continue to live in Him?

And particulars are so important. Particulars are so important. What would you think if you were to get into your car and you were getting ready to go off somewhere that you've never been before and so you have your nice GPS there, your smartphone with the GPS on it and you put in the address and you fired it up and it just simply said, go south some distance or go south a ways.

[4:03] Well, that wouldn't be good enough. Or think you're almost to the, this is what happens to us. We get almost to the place where we're going and it's always the most difficult at the very end where you're with all these streets that you've never seen, you've never been there.

And that's when you want your GPS to give you particulars. I'm going to turn right in 200 feet. If it was just to say, turn right up ahead, that's not good enough.

We need particulars. Or if you're putting something together, you want particulars, especially if you're not a handyman. So I put together our entertainment center and it would have been awful if the directions would have just said, use glue.

Well, I need something more than that. Thankfully, it gave me 300 steps and I was frustrated anyways, but it was my fault.

The particulars were there. Well, I want to know what it means to live in Christ. If this is the heart of Christianity, the shared life, then I want to know what it means to live in Christ.

[5:15] I want to know what it means to walk in him and with him. I need particulars. And Colossians 2.7, Paul gives us the particulars.

He doesn't just leave it at continue to live in him. He helps us to fill that out and he gives us four particulars. What that means. What does it mean to continue to live in Christ?

As a mom, as a dad, as a child, at work, in my life, in my life, and my life isn't lived here.

My life is lived in difficult places. Your life is lived in your family with sinners. Your life is lived at work with sinners. You're a sinner. You have pains and you have joys.

You have that relentless, it can be monotonous life of doing it all over again. Well, what does it mean to live the Christian life in your life?

[6:14] What does it mean to continue to walk in him tomorrow morning and then Tuesday morning and then Wednesday morning and then, men, you come home from work and it's the same, same things again and again.

Well, Paul shows us. He gives us four, they're participles, they're four particulars, four things that are explaining what it means to live in him and the first is, it means that you're rooted in Christ.

First, it means you're rooted in him, verse seven. So what does it look like to walk in Christ? Funny enough, it looks like a tree not going anywhere. A Christian is a tree that is tied to Jesus Christ.

His life and Christ's life are inseparable. So we looked at John 15 last week where it said, Jesus said, I am the vine, you're the branches. You can't separate vine and branches.

The branch lives with the vine and the vine lives in the branches. You can't divide them. That's the Christian life. It's rooted in Jesus Christ.

[7:21] And so, a Christian isn't, to live as a Christian is not living just with the ideas of Christ or just the teachings of Christ or just the words of Christ.

Isn't that the problem with so many children? They're raised in the Christian home and a Christian family and they've heard these stories and they've heard this truth and so they somehow think that they're a Christian as if just to live with the words and the ideas and the teachings of Jesus Christ. A Christian isn't living just with those ideas. He's living with a person. He's sharing a life with a person. And so, dear believers, that's you.

You do live with the words of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Jesus Christ and the ideas of Christ. But it's because you live with Him.

So, your children live with your ideas for better or for worse, parents. Your ideas about finances, about giving, about how you order your life, about how you keep the house, ideas about life, they get those from you.

[8:34] And much of it comes just because they're living with you. So, your children live with your ideas and they live with your words and they live with your teachings because they live with you. They live in the circle of your life.

They live in the realm of your life. They live in the midst of your lives. And that's how we live in Christ. We're rooted in Him.

And that word should just naturally draw us to the thought that my strength then comes from Jesus Christ.

A root gets its strength, its life, its water, its nutrients from the ground. And so, just in the same way, living in Christ means that that's the source of my strength. That's the source of my power.

That's the source of my life. So, the root draws its water and its nutrients from the soil. And you draw your life and your strength from Jesus Christ.

[9:31] Very hopeful, isn't it? I don't have to look at the measure of my life and say, that's all I have. Instead, I look at the measure of Christ's life and say, this is what I have.

And so, life is hard and that grind never ends and we don't live on the heights. We live in the trenches. We live in those mundane moments and it's relentless.

So, where do you get the life to live that kind of life in a God-honoring way, in a way that pleases God? Well, there's no other way except for Christ.

Have you found another way except Jesus Christ? If He doesn't help me, if He doesn't give me strength by His Spirit, then I'm doomed.

Have you felt that weakness? So much of our life is going into trials and difficulties so that we feel it, that we need Jesus Christ, that I have to pray, I have to, I need Him, I need Him to act, I need His strength, I need His grace.

[10:39] And so, how can I get to get up and preach week after week? Every week. It's the same for me, it's the same for you. There's a mountain to climb. There's work to do.

Well, how can we do that? It's Jesus Christ. Well, rooted, you get your nutrients from Him. Rooted also means that you get your stability from Jesus Christ.

Your stability, your groundedness, your anchor from Him, your ballast. ballast. You know what ballast is? If you're in the Navy, you probably know what ballast is and since, or if you do boating, you know what a ballast is.

It's the weight that you put around the hull of the ship in order to keep the ship from falling over with every wind.

There's ballast. Well, Christian, where do you get your ballast? So when the wind comes, you don't just tip over. Where do you get your stability to keep going when it's hard?

[11:45] Well, we're rooted in Jesus Christ. The ground roots the tree. It grounds the tree. And so our culture is turning and people are saying we're doomed and some people are saying, well, I don't even know about having children in this world.

So why don't we have to be afraid? And I mean, why don't we have to be enslaved by that fear and that fear drive us and motivate us? Why shouldn't that kind of fear control us?

Why shouldn't we just tip over when it gets tough? Well, we saw something of it this morning, right? Faith takes us into the suffering and it keeps us there and it upholds us, but it's faith in Jesus.

It's not just faith in general, it's faith in God. And so what about Jesus gives us stability in these days that we're living in? Look at Colossians 2, verse 10. I've been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority.

So, things are bad, government's bad, things, you know, everything's going bad. Why am I not afraid? Jesus is the head of every authority and power. Or we've already looked at chapter 1, verse 16.

[13:05] For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.

He created government in heaven, he created government on earth, and so when my faith lays a hold of Jesus Christ, that changes the outlook of this world, doesn't it?

It changes my perspective. It changes what I'm going to be ruled by and so what does it mean to walk in Jesus Christ, live in Jesus Christ? Well, it means that when you see all the bad that's going on, you lift up your eyes, you look higher and you see Christ seated at the right hand of God, ruling and reigning over all and knowing that, you know what, all of these governments, all this authority in heaven and on earth, it's for him.

He hasn't given up ownership of any of it. He's using it all for him and so you take a deep breath and you go on. You don't stumble but with confidence you go forward.

our faith is not a mindless, brainless optimism. It's not the opiate of the masses, it's not blind hope. Our faith is rooted in a person, in Jesus Christ and he's the firstborn over all creation.

[14:36] He's the firstborn from among the dead. So not only is the ruler of the first creation, he is the beginning and the ruler of the eternal creation. He's the one who reconciles us to God and so it's not only problems out there, it's problems in here that would cause me to tip over.

So when I've sinned and when I'm backslidden and why don't I just go into despair and just give up and fall over? Well, it's Jesus Christ.

He's my righteousness. He's my redemption, the forgiveness of my sins. and so when I sin, I don't stay down.

I don't tip over and then sink because I live in the shadow of the cross. I am planted underneath the shadow of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for me and that shadow is always on me.

I'm rooted in him. So what does it mean to continue to live in him? It means he's your Lord, he's the Lord of the world, he's my Savior and my faith is attaching me to him and I'm holding on to him.

[15:52] Secondly, what does it mean to live in Christ? So Paul takes us from the garden and now he takes us out to a construction site and there's men working and there's a foundation there and there but the workers aren't done building that house.

They're working at it. They're putting up walls and there's a truck pulling in and there's windows being delivered. That's what it means to live in Christ.

We're built up in him. And so Paul changes it from a tree and a garden to now a building being built up. Growing up.

And so living with Christ means relentless advancement. Going on. Going on. And God is always showing up for work at this construction site.

He's always showing up. He never misses a day. He's always doing something and he's never satisfied. He's going to begin what he finishes and he's finishing you.

[17:01] These words rooted and built up are in the passive. Which, and theologians call them the theological, they call them theological passives because that means God is actually doing them to us.

And so Paul likes to use theological passives because it's saying we're participating in it in some way but God is the one that's being effective. He's the one who's doing this. And so we're rooted, he's rooted us in Christ and now the implication is so now stay there.

Get your life from him. And he's also building us up and so we are being built up. We are being added on to the construction processes going forward and Paul's saying participate with him in that. God is building, you build. God's at work and that means, and this is the good thing because I think sometimes we can get this idea that or we show up on the job site which is our life and we see oh, so much of it's unfinished.

So much needs to be done. and so it can be a very disheartening thing but this idea of being built up is not disheartening because God is at work.

[18:17] He's the one who's there and he's the foreman on the job site and he's saying now come on men, let's get to it, let's build this. And so you don't need to look at all the ways you need to grow and say oh, it will never get done.

That wall will never be finished, the roof will never be on. There's too much, I'm so tired already, will this house ever be done? Can't we stop now?

No, God is doing it. God is doing it. And so this isn't a reason to despair. Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is a hopeful call to go forward, to go forward.

God is always going forward. He's going forward on the mission field, he's going forward in our sanctification, he's going forward in victory over our enemies, it's a call to victory, it's not only a call to work, it's a call to overcome, it's a call to succeed, it's a call to be able to look back over six years of your life and say, you know what?

God has really done something. I was working and it was hard and it felt like day after day the improvement was never going to happen, but you know what? I am different than what I was six years ago.

[19:26] God has been building something in my life. And so the question I have for you, are you progressing? Are you progressing?

Are you being built up? Are you participating with God in what he is doing? Peter wrote, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love.

if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That last sentence is, I believe, very important. We know Christ. That's more than a head knowledge.

That's a we're close to him. We know him. But there is a kind of knowing him or there can be a way of living and knowing him that doesn't lead to productive Christian living.

[20:41] It leads to ineffective and unproductive living. And what does it, Paul says? What leads us to the place where here we are, we know Jesus Christ but so much of our life is unfruitful?

Well, it comes from not adding one thing to another, Paul is saying, or Peter is saying. And so what does it mean to live in Christ?

To walk in Christ? It means you put on your blue jeans and you put on your work boots and you strap on your work belt with all your tools and you go to work.

You go to work in the sun when it's cold, when you've smashed your fingers, you shake it off and you go and you get back to work.

You get dirty and you get tired, but you're going to work. The call to the Christian life is this call to efforts, to building, to doing something constructive.

[21:45] I was in McDonald's the other day and some guys were in front of me and you could tell they were just on their lunch break.

And they had their blue jeans on and they were dirty and they had their work boots on and they had their cut off shirts. They weren't anything that you would take into a fancy restaurant.

They were real salt of the earth kind of people. And something about me is always drawn to those kind of people. It's like those guys are workers. So they were obviously just taking a break.

And I'm just wondering does your Christianity look like that or feel that way? You're not a prince. You're not a princess getting everything handed to you.

No, you're going to work. And you're adding things. You get out your hammer and your nails and you add walls of virtue, walls of character, the roof of godliness.

[22:49] And you get a saw out and you cut off sin. You're building a building for God. And so you tie everything back to Jesus Christ.

He's the foundation. And so you tie everything back to that foundation. You don't pour the foundation and quit. You build. And you're looking at the blueprint. Jesus Christ is the blueprint. And you're looking. This is what he was. This is who he is. This is what I'm growing up into. And so you go to work every day. And every day is a day to go forward.

Every day is a day to advance. Every day is a day to kill sin. Every day is a day to build character, to put on holiness, to put on Jesus Christ. That's what it means to live in him.

It's a wonderful life. It's a beautiful life with purpose and meaning and something to do and something to grow into. It's a blessed life to live in Christ.

[23:46] Paul says third, strengthened in the faith as you were taught. Or probably better, established in the faith as you were taught. He's talking about convictions here.

Convictions. So this morning we heard about people who had convictions. there's going to be a better resurrection.

I'm convinced of that. This is a conviction. And this conviction carries me through the pain and the suffering. That's what Paul is talking about here.

This word established was used in legal text to mean a guarantee, a sure thing, something that's firm, that here you can count on this.

This is something that's not moving. You can build on this. People can depend upon this. And Paul is saying, ground yourself in the faith. And I believe he's saying the faith.

[24:53] Not ground yourself in faith, but ground yourself in the faith. The truth about Jesus. He's talking about doctrinal truth. Bible truth.

faith. All kinds of people were saying all kinds of things about you need this and you need that, you need this philosophy, you need to do this. You have Jewish folks saying you need to watch what you eat and drink, you need to be circumcised.

You have Gentiles saying no, you need to have this some sort of ecstatic experience, you need to get to know angels, you need something. And Paul's answer is the book of Colossians.

And it's interesting. Colossians is four chapters long. It's not a 40 page paper about all the details and the errors of these other systems.

It wasn't this detailed analysis of what's wrong with them and why isn't that true. His answer is simply here's Christ. Here's the truth.

[25:57] Does this and all this line up with the truth? And he lays down the stone hinge sized stone of Jesus Christ. And he says, now, look at this.

Here's the facts. Here's doctrine. Here's why you don't need that stuff. Here's why all that stuff is wrong headed because of this. A conviction about Jesus Christ.

So what do we need in this day and age? Parents, what do your children need? what do we as pastors need to give to you?

We need to give you the truth. The faith. Once handed down. And we see, we need to give you the truth and then we need to say, no.

What then? What about your life should change because of this truth? what about your life and the way you handle difficulties and the way that you handle persecution and the way that you handle temptations needs to fall in line with this truth.

[27:10] We need to develop these convictions about the truth so that the convictions, the I am sure about this, I am sure about Jesus Christ and so when I see and when I smell something else coming along the line, I know that's not right because I know the truth.

So how often, how often does Paul, does Jesus, do the prophets say now this is the truth, this is the truth and here's how you should live because this is the truth.

And so often we don't live like we ought because we haven't developed convictions from the truth.

We're not established in the faith. And so what do young Christians need?

Well, you need to know the truth. And so I would beg you and I would plead with you, learn to study, learn to read, learn to think about the truth.

Get to know the truth. Get to know and understand what the Bible is saying, what the Bible is teaching.

[28:19] So much of the word of God is not the most simple. Everything that you need to know to be saved is simple and children can understand it, but that's not everything that's in the Bible.

Paul tells you to think. The Bible calls us to think, to understand. And we can't say, oh, that's not for me. The truth's not for you.

the word of God is not for you. You're going to live according to something. You're going to live according to some doctrine.

And if you don't believe and think the truth, then you will believe something. So theology, convictions about the truth, it's so important to living in Christ.

Well, let me give you a very mundane example. Very mundane, simple example. And maybe some of you would just be like, oh, that's too easy.

[29:26] But for some of you, it might not be. And so young people, you're a teenager, we'll say, and you're going off to college, and you know what happens, especially on big colleges, you show up on campus, and so do a lot of business businesses, and banks, they show up on campus, too.

You guys are prime real estate. So there's someone that comes up to you, someone so friendly, and they say, here, why don't you sign up for this credit card?

And you're a freshman, you don't have one, and so now what do you do? How do you think about that? Maybe you already have the answer, but how do you as a young person think about that?

What theology is going to inform you about what decision I should be making here? What truth are you going to be falling back on? What kind of convictions, what kind of thoughts, what kind of truth you have already stored up so that you are ready to face just this simple decision that you have to make?

And then there you see there's ten other people and they're signing up. Well, what should you do? What shouldn't you do? What does the Bible say?

[30:40] What does the Bible say about debt? What does the Bible say about God being your provider, about Jesus being your righteousness, and he's the one who gives you some sort of status with God?

Well, how do you make a decision biblically? I'm not going to give you any kind of answer, but the point is, how do you make decisions just as simple as that?

When it's the spur of the moment, when you're not expecting it, and you're called now to put your faith into action, you're called to put wisdom into truth, into action.

If all you know are some Old Testament stories, and some bare idea that Jesus died for sins, that's good, but there's more than that in here.

There's wisdom. wisdom. There's truth. There's commands. There's directions. There's examples. There's stories. And all of it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness that the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[31:50] It's all useful, and you need all of it. But if you don't know it, and if you don't understand it, and it's not been put into your heart, and it's not a conviction, then it's not going to do you any good.

So the call to live the Christian life is a call to think, to understand. And I would just beg you to be those kind of people.

Have that Berean spirit that searches the scriptures, that thinks, that studies, that takes advice.

Growing in biblical convictions is not an easy thing, and it doesn't happen in a day or a week.

It is a difficult process. And some people, and some Christians, never grow very strong because they never go through that process.

They refuse it. They don't think if it's not handed to them on a silver platter, if it's not soft and already chewed up, they don't want it. And I'm just saying don't be that way.

[32:58] A warm heart and a full mind are not opposites. They go hand and glove. So what does it mean to live in Christ? It means living firm in the truth, having convictions.

Now fourth, what does it mean? What does it look like to live in Christ? Well, it means to be overflowing with thankfulness, overflowing with thanksgiving. It does seem like there is some sort of progression to what Paul is saying.

You're rooted, you're built up, now you're established, and then the fruit comes, this overflowing with thankfulness. Christianity in full flower produces abundant thanksgiving.

Let me repeat that. Christianity in full flower produces abundant thanksgiving. So how do you know if your flowers are fully grown?

Well, there's a flower on the top, isn't there? There's something that's showing that's beautiful. How do you know if you're a fully growing, maturing Christian, there is this abundant, overflowing thankfulness?

[34:16] Thankfulness. And so you're grateful. You're grateful a lot of the time. you're amazed that you have anything good in your life.

You know what a sinner you are, and you're so thankful that Jesus Christ has mercy on sinners. You're overflowing with thankfulness. And so we see how much we need to grow.

if we only give thanks at Thanksgiving or as a polite way or as sort of something rote, but it's never in our heart, that says there's something there that needs to happen.

We need to mature. And so what marks you? Fear? I'm trying to think of opposites of thankfulness. Fear, complaining, worry, envy, disappointment, anger, doubt.

Those are opposites of thankfulness. And they are all big arrows. They're blinking lights on the dashboard.

[35:30] They're big arrows saying you need Jesus Christ or you need to grow in Jesus Christ. You need to go back to Jesus Christ.

You need to be living in him. So living on our own, and what I mean by that is so we're living on our own strength and we're day by day doing that grind, that difficult life, and we're just doing it looking at ourselves.

It never, that life never produces thankfulness. It never produces thankfulness. It might on the good days produce self-congratulations emotions and pride and self-satisfaction, but on the bad days, when it's not working out, it's going to produce fear and worry and anger and envy.

And so these are big arrows pointing us to Jesus Christ. These emotions, they're just not out there. They're God's signal saying, Jesus Christ, you need more of him in your life.

They're saying there's parts of your life here, parts of your identity, parts of your soul that Christ has not come in and dominated and controlled and his shadow has not come there yet.

[36:40] And so embrace him. Live in him in a deeper way. Rejoice in him. Rejoice in his righteousness. Rejoice in the power of his resurrection.

And if you do that, where your eyes are looking at Jesus and you're feasting on the gospel, you will overflow with thankfulness. But I think there's more to say than that.

It seems to me that there are two errors to avoid here. The one is just to say, oh, I need to be more thankful, so I will start saying thank you all the time.

Well, thankfulness is definitely a reaction to something good being given to you. So we just can't say, well, I'm going to just automatically be more thankful. No, we need to be growing in our appreciation of Jesus Christ.

But then, on the other hand, I think the other danger is just to wait around until I feel thankful. Until I just feel thankful. I wait around until Thanksgiving happens to me.

[37:47] Like, I can't overflow with thankfulness until I feel thankful. I just have to wait for it to come to me. Well, thankfulness is a sweet virtue, but it is also a command.

It's a command. So we are rich in Christ. That's a fact. If you're a Christian, you are rich in Christ. You are strong in Jesus Christ.

And because of Christ's life and his death and his righteousness, your life has taken a drastic turn for the good. And so you should be thankful.

You should be giving thanks. We sang about so many of these things this morning. I should be giving thanks because I'm free. He cut the chain off of me.

My sin and my guilt and my shame and my doom. Jesus Christ is this mighty Savior and he came and he set me free. And so there's freedom for sinners in Jesus Christ.

[38:50] Jesus Christ is my strong tower and ever present help. There's a reason to say thank you because when I am in danger and when I am in trouble and when I have reasons to fear, I have a tower to run into.

Jesus Christ loves us. He loves us and that's surely a reason to say thank you. And so Paul says overflow with thankfulness.

Jesus Christ now on his way to Jerusalem Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

And as he was going into a village ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice Jesus master have pity on us. And when he saw them he said go show yourselves to the priests.

And as they went they were cleansed. One of them when he saw he was healed came back praising God in a loud voice and he threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him.

[39:57] And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus asked we're not all ten cleansed. Where are the other nine? What a question.

What a question for us. What a question for us. We're not ten cleansed. Where are the other nine? Let's pray. Heavenly Father we do not want to be like those nine men who were cleansed and then weren't thankful.

We don't want to be like that ungrateful servant who was forgiven a huge debt and then went around and strangled his fellow servant because he wouldn't pay back a smaller debt.

so will you by your spirit work thankfulness into us and help us to be diligent in putting on thanksgiving to be sure that we are overflowing with thankfulness.

will you please help us by the spirit to continue to live in Jesus Christ rooted and built up in him established in the faith as we were taught and overflowing with thankfulness.

[41:17] Will you please save sinners bring them into the freedom of Jesus Christ and his salvation and his righteousness.

Thank you that there is a gospel for them and I pray that it would be good news of what Jesus has done for them. So I pray that you would send us on our way praising God and thanking our Lord Jesus just as that one Samaritan man did.

It's in Jesus name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.