

# Rooted in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Colossians chapter 2. Now, we're going to read verses 6 and 7, and that's short. It's shorter than we normally read. This will be the shortest passage that we'll look at in all of Colossians, but I wanted to single it out because, really, you can think about this passage as if it's the thesis statement for all of Colossians.

Really, everything that we've done up until now is the introduction, and now Paul's getting into the meat of what he wants to tell these people and one way to think about these two verses is you could memorize verses 6 and 7, and you can carry these two verses around with you and use them as a way to measure every day of your life.

That's how kind of fundamental verses like these are to the Christian life. So we're going to read Colossians 2, verses 6 and 7. Paul writes this, Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Amen. This is God's word. If you were like me and you were raised, especially in the 90s and the 2000s, you know, we were maybe light on confessions of faith, but our four-word mantra, right, was, What would Jesus do?

That was a statement that was posted everywhere. You would wear it as a bracelet, and you still see it around every now and then, but it's kind of gone out of fashion a little bit. What would Jesus do? And it was a way of asking ourselves, you know, as I'm going about my normal daily life, how would Jesus do this?

[ 1 : 41 ] And it's a great question to ask. How would Jesus live the life that I'm in? And, but Paul would say, you've got to ask that question, but you can't stop there.

What would Jesus do is actually not enough. And Paul here in 2 Colossians 2, in verse 6 is the first command, actually, that he gives in this whole book.

And it's a command that summarizes the whole book. And, you know, what we've read so far, you can tell that Paul loves these people. He thinks they're great. He encourages them. He prays for them all the time, he says. But he's also worried about them.

He's worried about them getting lost. And we'll see more of the reason why next week. But you can see what his antidote already is to getting lost. He says, you've got to learn to walk in Christ.

And really what he's saying here, if you want to put it in our context of what would Jesus do, he's saying the only reason that you can, the only way to walk like Jesus, the only way to do what he did is to walk in Jesus.

[ 2 : 41 ] So Paul uses that word in, that preposition several times here. He says, walk in Jesus, be rooted and built up in him. And so what we're going to do this morning is to say, well, what does that mean? What does it mean to be in Jesus?

And then secondly, what does it mean to walk in Jesus? What does it mean to walk in Christ? Two things, really simple this morning. What does it mean to be in Christ? And what does it mean to walk in him? And the first one is, what does it mean to be in Christ?

And Paul here, he uses the imagery of being rooted, like a tree sending its roots down. And he says, before you walk, you've got to realize that you're already rooted.

The word rooted there is passive, which means it's something that's being done to you. It's something that's already been done to you. And he says, listen, if you're going to walk in Christ, you've got to realize that you're rooted in Christ. And one translation of this says, having been rooted in Christ, that's one way to think about it.

And what's Paul doing here? Well, Paul, like any good theologian, is stealing, shamelessly stealing his best ideas from somebody who's come before him. And that person is Jesus. Do you remember Jesus in John 15?

[ 3 : 48 ] He used this language when he was talking to his disciples about what it means to be a Christian. And he says, I am the vine. He uses a metaphor. He says, I am the vine, and you are the branches.

He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without me, you can do nothing. Now, that's a, it's a beautiful imagery. You know, you're in a vineyard, and Jesus is saying, I'm the vine.

You're the branches. You're connected to me. But have you ever wondered what does that actually mean? You know, what is he really saying there? And what he's saying is, to be a Christian means that you're connected to Jesus somehow.

You're actually connected to Jesus, like a branch to a vine. And what is a, what is, what's the metaphor telling you there? You know how plants work. He's, you know, it's the vine that gives life to the branches.

And so somehow, you and I, if we're Christians, we're connected to Jesus in such a way that he is actually giving life to us. And that means that when we talk about, you know, we say he's a Christian, she's a Muslim, they're a Buddhist.

[ 4 : 57 ] You know, usually when we, when we identify people like that, we're saying, what do they think? You know, that person's a Muslim. They, they believe in all the things in Islam. And so when we say that person's a Christian, usually people mean they, they think all this stuff is true.

But when the Bible talks about what it means to be a Christian, yes, it does mean thinking something, but it means something way, way deeper than that.

When we say, when we, when we identify someone as a Christian, we're saying this person is united to Christ. They're actually joined to them in a way that, that to be honest, surpasses all metaphors that we could give, but they're joined to them.

And when you become a Christian, something happens to you. That's what Jesus is getting at here. You become united to him. And if you, when you read the Bible, the word Christian rarely appears.

By one count, the word Christian is in the Bible three times. And almost every time it's derogatory, you know, like those Christians, it's not how Paul describes people who believe in Jesus.

[ 5 : 57 ] He doesn't use the word Christian. Instead, what he almost always does is he uses this kind of idea of being in Jesus. If you look at the beginning of the letter, he says in Colossians one, two, he says to the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

He doesn't say the Christians. He says to all you people who are in Christ, who are connected to this person somehow. And what it means to be in Christ is you're connected.

But as a part of that connection, you begin to receive benefits from Christ. That's why it matters that you're connected to Jesus. And if this language is new to you, if you're a Christian, you already kind of believe it anyway, because what we're saying is, how can you be forgiven of your sins?

Because you're connected to Jesus. And so when God looks at you, you're so closely related to Christ that God sees Christ's righteousness so that you're not guilty of your sins anymore.

Christ begins to give us the things that belong to him. He gives us that, that innocence, his innocence, his declaration of his legal innocence, I should say.

[ 7 : 03 ] That's how you can be forgiven of your sins is because you're united to Christ, but it doesn't stop there. And this is where it gets important for this morning. When, when Jesus died for you and when he died for me, he died to save you and me completely.

And that means he didn't just die to forgive you of your sins. He died to make you and me a new person. You know, someone could be declared innocent. They could be forgiven of their sins and they could still have a lot of sinfulness in them.

And so when Jesus dies for you and me, he dies in order to forgive us of our sins, but also to make us into, to make us perfect again, to make us, to be the person that we were always meant to be.

Uh, uh, through the power of the Holy spirit. So when you become a Christian, you're united to Christ, the Holy spirit comes in you. Sometimes the Bible calls it the spirit of Christ.

That's how close they are. And that spirit begins to work in you. It begins to work in us so that we become transformed over time to be more and more like Jesus. Uh, he's fixing our sinful hearts.

[ 8 : 05 ] Um, there's a guy named Rankin Wilburn who was a pastor in our denomination. And he wrote a really helpful book called union with Christ. And he, he wrote a metaphor that's always stuck with me. He says union with Christ.

If you want to picture it in modern day language, he says, it's more like Spider-Man than Batman. Okay. Because if you think of what, what, what makes Batman heroic, Batman is heroic because he puts on all the gear that makes him strong.

But what makes Spider-Man, Spider-Man, something has happened inside of him. Remember he gets bit by a spider and his DNA is transformed. He's transformed from the inside out so that he is no longer the same person that he was.

And Paul is saying, that's what union with Christ is. It is that when you believe something has gotten inside of you and has begun to transform you so that you're not the same person that you were before you believed.

It's not just a change in your thinking. It's a, it's a total change in your person. And, um, you know, but the one, the one way that that illustration falls apart is when you and I are united to Christ, it's not like we become superhuman.

[ 9 : 12 ] It's not like suddenly you and I, we wake up in the morning and suddenly we're no longer tired for our quiet times. Life is just so much easier because, you know, we've got the spirit in us. So everything's easier now.

It's not like that. What the Holy spirit does for us when we're united to Christ is it makes us not superhuman. It makes us truly human. That that's God's wish for you and me is that through the power of the Holy spirit, we would become more and more the humans that God made us to be truly human.

Um, I heard, uh, one, one pastor put it like this one, a theologian. He said, uh, he was talking about heaven. What happens when you get to heaven or, or the new heavens and the new earth. And he says, you know, when, if you, when you see people in the hospital who are almost to the point of death, so often, what do we say?

Well, how do we describe them? We say, you know, they're laying, they're lying there in that bed. They are a shadow of their former selves. Um, they're, they're not, they're not the person that we knew.

They're not the person that we love, that we cared about. They're, they're a shadow of their former selves. And what the gospel says to each of us is if you abide in Christ, you, the hope that you have is that you, right now, you are a shadow of your future self.

[ 10 : 31 ] That one day, one day we're going to see the real Beth Sampert. One day we're going to see, uh, the real Carly Nicholson. One day we're going to see the, the, the, the, the version of us that's not encumbered anymore by the sinfulness that hangs on to each one of us.

You know, that's what union with Christ does. It begins to free us from, you know, it's so often, doesn't the Bible talk about sin like it's slavery? Uh, we're enslaved and we can't even see it sometimes, but when we're united to Christ, the spirit of Christ begins to break those chains off of us.

You know, not necessarily like Samson tearing down the walls, but that we're renewed. We're made into the person that we were always meant to be freed from sin.

Um, now that that's what that's union with Christ in a nutshell. And that's what, that's kind of the basis of everything Paul is saying here is he's saying, you've got to realize you, if you're a Christian, you've been, you've been rooted in Christ.

You have been rooted in Christ. And that means that your life, you know, what makes you alive? What makes you truly alive is the fact that your roots are buried into Christ.

[ 11 : 41 ] And he is, he's giving you the life force that you need to be truly human. Okay. Uh, but then he says, he says, you know, if you believe that, and he tells these people, he says, I know that you believe this because he says, um, in verse six, as you received Christ, Jesus, the Lord, he says, I know you, you, I came in.

Well, Paul didn't go. He knows that someone else came and gave them the gospel message. And he knows that they believed. And he says, you believed that Jesus was Lord. You believe that he was all that you needed. And I am telling you now, when you walk, when you live your ordinary life, believe the same thing, you know, just as much as when you came in, I don't know how they did it.

Maybe they came up to the altar and confessors, believed in Jesus, however they did it. The day that you believed, believe today, just as much in the power of the Holy Spirit and of your need of him as you did back then.

Okay. So what does it mean to walk in Christ? Uh, that's, that's the second idea here. Walking in Christ is taking that idea of union with Christ and just saying, all right, that, that thing that I believe about me being united to Jesus through the Holy Spirit, I need to figure out how to make that, how to, how to live in the light of that in every single thing I do.

That's what, that's why when, when Paul uses this idea of walking, he's saying, you know, just your life, your walk is your life. It's who you are day in and day out. And he says, you've got to bring union with Christ into your everyday life.

[ 13 : 05 ] And maybe there's two ways to think about it. Uh, it's active dependence. Okay. So it's active because Paul, Paul doesn't just say God's grace is so good.

You don't have to do a thing. It kind of says that what, what he says is God's grace is so good. And you, you've been saved. Now you need to learn to walk in the light of that.

Um, growth in grace is a war. You know, it's, it's an irony. Kevin DeYoung pointed this out when we went to a conference a couple weeks ago. He says, you know, the gospel both says at once that you are, uh, you have more, a Christian has more peace than they could ever imagine.

And that they are in violent warfare with themselves at the same time, uh, because we're fighting the sinfulness that's in our hearts every day. And there, there's a kind of faithlessness that says, uh, because the Christian life is all grace, which is true.

Therefore, I just need to sit back and not do anything. And Paul saying, Oh no, no, the Christian life, you've got to walk in it every single day. You've got to bury your roots down into those truths and let that feed you.

[ 14 : 15 ] So it's active. And, you know, what does that mean for us? You know, one thing it means is that you and I have to take practical steps to stay in the gospel, to, to, to fight the fight, um, you know, structure our days so that when we wake up in the morning, maybe we, we, we read the gospel.

Not that that's a law, but, but sometime in the day, we need to remind ourselves of God's truth. We need to pray to God because we know that we need him. You know, we, we've got to worship with the believers, even though some days, don't we wake up and we say, I'm not really feeling it today, but it doesn't matter whether you're feeling it or not because you come because you say, I need this.

I need this. Even when my heart doesn't, isn't lined up with it. I need God's grace. I need to fight for righteousness. I need to fight for holiness. Um, I need to repent and confess my sins.

Even when it hurts, I've got to fight, walk, walk in him. That's what it means to walk in him to be active. But at the same time, you know, you're walking, but you're always walking in him.

So it's this active dependence, uh, because there's also a kind of faithlessness. And this is probably the kind of faithfulness, faithlessness that the Colossians had where they said to themselves, Christ did a wonderful thing for me.

[ 15 : 29 ] And now I need to finish what he started. Uh, that that's one of the greatest challenges that every generation of the church has always faced is this idea that Jesus is great.

And now I've got to finish the job. And isn't that how we think about it sometimes? He forgave me of my sins. And now I've got to live a righteous life. You know, Jesus does look at his disciples.

And what does he say on the Sermon on the Mount? Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect. He calls us to be righteous, but he never says you've got to do it in your own strength because that would crush us.

That would crush us to do it in our own strength. think about it like this. And we have to walk in Christ with just as much dependence on him.

As we go to him for forgiveness, we've got to lean on him with just the amount of strength in both those parts of our lives. And the problem with the Colossians, and we'll see this next week, was they said Jesus is wonderful.

[ 16 : 28 ] And there's so many other practices that we need to put in place to be a truly holy people. Practices that the Bible doesn't give us. We'll talk about it next week. It's called the Colossian heresy. What is that? We'll find out.

But they were always saying to themselves, Jesus is wonderful, but let's go to the next step. Let's go deeper than Jesus into the faith. And that's always going astray.

Every part of the Christian life is an act of dependence on Jesus for what he's done for us. Charles Spurgeon, there's a famous Baptist preacher in the 1800s.

There's a story that was told that he had a bigger pulpit than me. He had a lot of steps to walk up. And the story goes that every step that he took up into that pulpit, every single time he went up there, he would say, I believe in the Holy Spirit.

Every step he took, he would say to himself, I believe in the Holy Spirit. And that says a lot of things. I mean, it says that he knew that he could not do what he needed to in that pulpit in his own strength.

[ 17 : 29 ] But he knew, he knew that every part of the Christian life was dependence on the Holy Spirit. And if his preaching was going to do anything, it was only going to do something through the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ.

And we've got to live like that. We've got to live in such a way where every step we take, effectively, we're saying, I believe in the Holy Spirit. Now, one of the hard parts about this is, it's one thing to say, I know that I need to depend on Christ.

And, and, and to, to try to depend on Christ. It's another thing to actually live in the light of that. But if you think about a child, children don't need to be taught to depend on their mom and dad, right?

It is, it is instinctive. Sometimes it's painfully instinctive how much they depend on their parents, right? Everywhere they go, mom, mom, dad, dad. And, but they just know, they just know that my mom and dad are where I need to be.

And wherever they are in the room, they have an eye on where mom and dad are, right? And, and the gospel is saying that that's, that's, we were born to live in that kind of a relationship with God where, you know, where we're depending on him as instinctive.

[ 18 : 35 ] It's something that we just naturally do as much as, and more so than a child depends on their parent for everything they need. And so growing in grace means learning, learning to get back to who we were made to be, learning to say, you know what?

Um, um, the Bible tells me I, I am rooted in Christ. And the Bible tells me that everything that, everything about me that's meaningful comes from Christ. I've got to learn to live in the light of that.

Um, and there's all kinds of ways that we do that practically. When we pray, we're bringing ourselves before God. We'll talk about this this Wednesday and saying, God, give me my daily bread. You know, I think I'm a hard worker.

I think I've earned my bread, but really and truly every, it comes from you. Everything I have in this life. It's meaningful as a gift from you. Okay. Um, Jesus comes to us in the gospel.

We're going to a close here. Jesus comes to us in the gospel and he looks at you and me and he says, do you know your need? Do you know your dependence? Um, because it's, what would Jesus do?

[ 19 : 36 ] That question, what would Jesus do? Um, if that's all the Christian faith, were, was, it would crush us because how many times do we look up and we look at the past day and we say, whatever Jesus would have done is not what I did today.

However, Jesus would have handled that relationship is not how I handled it. And every day we have to look at Christ and say, not only are you the one who forgives me of my sins, but Jesus lived the life that we never could have lived ourselves.

You remember, what did we tell the kids just a moment ago? We said, Christ became a man so that he could obey and suffer in our place. You know, it's not just that he went to the cross.

It was that he lived a perfect life. And that when God looks at us, he sees the righteousness of Christ. And, and the hope that we have is every single day, the more we abide in Christ, the more we have union with him, he is giving us his righteousness.

And that's not the thing that makes us righteous. God's art. God already declares us righteous in Christ, but he's making us new every single day. The more we stay close to Jesus, the more he's transforming our hearts.

[ 20 : 43 ] Notice the last thing this passage says, just to close. He says, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

It's almost kind of throwaway statement, right? He just says, you know, walk in Christ, be rooted in him, be built up in him. And then at the end he says, and give thanks. But, but if you've lived the Christian life for any length of time, you know, giving thanks is not just an optional tack on, because thankfulness is something that we're commanded to practice.

And what you find is when you practice thankfulness, when we, when we come together, like we do this morning, we worship God. What is it? It's doing something to us. It's reminding us that we're dependent.

It's reminding us that every step we take in this life is meant to be taken. And in Christ. And that's the good news this morning, that, that we have a reason to be thankful because Christ has done for us what we could have never done for ourselves.

And he is with us today so that we can walk in him. Let's pray. Lord, how good it is to remember all of your promises. So often we simplify the gospel and yet it is, it is so beautiful and there's so many aspects to it.

[ 22 : 02 ] And we pray that you would help us today to simply walk in Christ, to be rooted in him and to never forget who we truly are. In your son's name we pray. Amen.