

AM Colossians 2:6-7 A Christ-centred Life

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Date: 02 February 2025

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn now to the Word of God and two readings. The first is from Ephesians chapter 3, verse 8, reading through into chapter 4, verse 6.

We're actually going to be looking at Colossians, continuing our studies in Colossians, but Ephesians and Colossians are very similar, and we have some similar teaching here.

So, Ephesians 3, reading from verse 8. That is on page 1176 of the Church Bibles.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

[1 : 51] So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask, or think according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

And now just a couple of verses from Colossians chapter 2. We'll be looking at these verses later.

[4 : 02] Colossians 2 verses 6 and 7 on page 1184. 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.

Let's bow. Well, let's turn now to the Word of God and Colossians chapter 2 verses 6 and 7 on page 1184.

I'll read it again just to fix it in our minds. 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.

small words can sometimes have a big meaning. There is a little phrase repeated twice here.

I wonder if you noticed it. In him. Verse 6, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

[5 : 42] Verse 7, rooted and built up in him. That little phrase, and others similar to it, occur many times in Colossians.

chapter 1, verse 2, the letter is addressed to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae. In Christ. Chapter 1, verse 14, he speaks of Christ in whom we have redemption. Chapter 1, verse 17, in him all things hold together.

Chapter 1, verse 19, in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Chapter 2, verse 3, in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

and so on throughout this letter. Quite simply, everything that we have as Christians, we have in Christ.

[7 : 02] That is the grand theme of this letter. The glory and the sufficiency of Christ. And here in our text, we see how the Christian life is entirely Christ-centered.

He speaks of receiving Christ, walking in Christ, and being rooted and built up in Christ. In other words, the Christian faith, living and growing, are all Christ-centered.

Hence, my sermon title today on the notice sheet, Christ-centered life. It's very important for the Colossians to understand this, and it's important for us too, because sadly, it is possible for even experienced Christians to lose their Christ-centeredness.

focus. I'm a keen photographer, and I know how important it is to focus properly. Get it even slightly wrong, and the picture is blurred.

Likewise, spiritually, focus on Christ, and all is well. Focus away from Christ, on yourself, or on the world, and it all gets blurred, and your life is not what it should be.

[8 : 46] I want us to consider today four marks of a Christ-centered life. A Christ-centered conversion, Christ-centered walk, Christ-centered growth, and thanksgiving, which is the result of Christ-centeredness.

First, though, let's look at the context. The word therefore links verse 6 to the previous verses. What has Paul been saying? Well, Paul is writing from prison in Rome.

He has heard good reports about the church at Colossae, and he is delighted for them. but he is also concerned. In the verses just before this, he has been speaking about the false teaching that is spreading.

Paul doesn't want them to be deceived or drawn away from Christ. Therefore, he urges them to keep focused on Christ.

So, let's see what he says. First, he speaks of a Christ-centered conversion. As you received Christ Jesus the Lord.

[10 : 15] Here you have a very simple description of conversion. And it is 100% Christ-centered. What does he mean by receiving Christ?

Well, Paul describes what had actually happened to these Colossians back in chapter 1, verses 5 to 7. Speaks there of the word of the truth, the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing, as also it does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

So we receive Christ by hearing and believing the gospel. And what is that gospel? It is the gospel that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

That God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

These Colossians had heard that gospel and believed it, and it had borne fruit in their lives. they were like the good soil in the parable of the sower.

[11 : 57] The reason why it had borne fruit in them is that they had through the gospel actually received Christ himself.

They hadn't just heard some words and agreed with them. They had received the living Christ.

received Now the word received can be taken either in a passive sense, as in receiving a gift, or in an active sense, as in accepting a gift.

And you can take it either way here. In the passive sense we receive Christ into our hearts as God's gift to us.

Remember how Paul says in Ephesians 3, which we read, that his prayer is that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Extraordinary thought. I can't understand it myself. Christ is in heaven. How can he be in my heart? But both are true. Both are taught in the scriptures.

[13 : 09] scriptures. In the active sense we accept him as our Lord. We recognize him as the Son of God and Savior of the world.

And we willingly accept him as our Lord and our Savior. John also speaks of receiving Christ in that active sense.

In John chapter 1, he came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, he gave the right to become the children of God.

Jesus himself used the word in that way. John 13 verse 20, whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. These Colossians had received Christ in both senses.

they'd recognized him as their Lord and they had received him into their hearts. And I hope you have too.

[14:19] Experiences vary of course. Some of you have heard the gospel since earliest childhood. Some of you children here have already known the gospel of Christ for five, six, seven years.

Others like myself, we heard the gospel much later in life. I didn't really hear the gospel until I was in my early twenties. Then it came to me as something new and astonishing.

But either way, the question is, what have you done with that gospel? Not when did you first hear it, not how long have you known about it, but what have you done with it?

Or more precisely, what have you done with the Christ of the gospel? Have you received him? Or have you rejected him?

Or have you perhaps just kept him waiting? He is the Lord and he won't be kept waiting forever. These Colossians had received him.

[15:33] And so must we. But that's only the start. Secondly, here we have a Christ-centered walk. As you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

In other words, as you began, so you must continue. As you have trusted in Christ, so now you must follow him. Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount of a gate and a way.

The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. Having gone through the gate of conversion, we must then keep walking in the way of Christ.

Christ. There's a vivid picture of this in Isaiah 62 verse 10. Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people, build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up a signal over the peoples.

Isaiah is speaking there of the restoration of Israel and I don't want to take away from the historic meaning, but it does have a very striking spiritual application.

[16:59] We might even say that Paul is clearing away the stones when he warns them of false teaching. Perhaps today we would talk of filling in the potholes.

That way needs to be prepared for the people of God to follow. Paul wants them to walk confidently in the Christian highway.

He uses the expression walking as a metaphor in that passage we read in Ephesians. As I said earlier, Ephesians and Colossians are very similar.

They're written to neighboring churches with similar needs. And you may have noticed in Ephesians 4 and verse 1, he urges them to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

A little later he says they must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. Later still he says they must walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us.

[18:10] walking is a very simple matter. One foot in front of another. And yet it has to be learned.

I'm told that baby giraffes walk as soon as they have been born. Baby humans don't. Little Isabel is not walking yet and we wouldn't expect her to.

But in due course most babies do learn to walk. And they gradually get more and more confident.

Before long they're running across the room and climbing on the furniture if you don't stop them.

As they get older then they're confident enough to walk up mountains. They can cope with anything. And they can walk faster sometimes than we can.

Likewise with the Christian life the newborn baby in Christ may be very unsteady on its feet. We may get many things wrong.

[19:20] May hardly understand what Christian living is all about at all. But as we learn more of the word of God so we become more and more confident.

We're able to walk in the Christian highway one step in front of another still but now more and more confidently even over the rough ground even up the steep hills through all the troubles of life.

But it is a learned process and we learn it through the word. But why does Paul tell us to walk in him? is to remind us that we are dependent on him even in this.

As Jesus says in John 15 without me you can do nothing. Paul himself once worked a miracle in Lystra in Acts 14 where he commanded a lame man to stand upright upright and it says he sprang

up and began walking.

Now that was a miracle but it's a picture of what happens to us in conversion which is also a miracle. We stand up and begin walking in the ways of righteousness.

[20 : 52] We couldn't do that before. It's Christ who is giving us the strength. Christ who is enabling us to live as Christians. Just as we received him as our Lord and Savior so we have received him also as our life and strength.

We're dependent on him and we will never outgrow that dependence. Baby eventually walks on its own but we can never walk spiritually without Christ.

How easy it is to forget this and to try to live the Christian life in our own strength. We can't do it. We need to look to Christ constantly for strength and direction following him as sheep following the shepherd and as disciples following their master.

Thirdly we have Christ centered growth rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught. Paul uses two metaphors here one relating to plants the other to buildings but they go together.

They describe growth both downwards and upwards rooted down into Christ built up in Christ. First he speaks of being rooted in Christ.

[22 : 27] Now you may see there's a mixed metaphor going on here. How can we walk if we're rooted in the ground? Is this a case of men as trees walking?

But I don't think Paul is too troubled about mixed metaphors. He's simply using every image he can to get the truth across to us. As I said to the children we need to put down strong spiritual roots by trusting in Christ and drawing spiritual life from him.

Just as the root draws goodness from the soil. Generally speaking the larger the plant the deeper the roots. My little orchid only needs a few inches of roots.

But a great oak tree needs huge roots. believers are described as mighty oaks. In Isaiah 61 Christ came with the anointing of the spirit upon him to change people's lives that they may be called oaks of righteousness.

The planting of the Lord that he might be glorified. Do you want to be a mighty oak? then you will need to be firmly and deeply rooted in Christ.

[23 : 55] The parable of the sower warns us what happens if we're not. The seed on the rocky ground had no roots. And when the hot sun came up it withered and died.

We find this image too in Ephesians where he speaks of being rooted and grounded in love. What is that but to be rooted in Christ who is love incarnate.

Secondly here he says that we must be built up in him. That's another common image in scripture. Jesus uses it himself when he says upon this rock I will build my church.

Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 3 no man can lay a foundation other than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Once again a great building needs a deep foundation and we have a deep foundation in Christ.

So long as we build in him we can build to the sky. But if we're building on our own ideas it will all come tumbling to the ground.

[25 : 12] Paul elaborates on this in the words that follow. Established in the faith just as you were taught. These Colossians had been taught by Epaphras and they'd been taught well.

And what would he have taught them? Well he would have taught them about Christ. Who he was, what he came to do. He would have taught them the one and only way of salvation through Christ. he would have taught them what it meant to follow Christ. To be established in the faith is to be established in Christ.

They must keep to what had been taught and not be drawn away by any false teachings. Indeed they were to deepen their roots, strengthen their foundations by studying the scriptures.

He speaks later in chapter 3 of letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. And we must do the same. Finally thankfulness, which is the result of Christ-centeredness, abounding in thanksgiving.

[26 : 29] Paul speaks repeatedly of thankfulness in this letter. Chapter 1 verse 3, we always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you. Chapter 1 verse 12, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Chapter 1 verse 15, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts and be thankful. Chapter 3 verse 16, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Chapter 3 verse 17, whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Thankfulness is the supreme expression of Christ-centeredness. If we're trusting in ourselves, then we've no reason to give thanks to anyone. But if we're trusting in Christ, then we give thanks to him for everything, for saving us, for all the blessings he's given us, and for all the help he gives us day by day.

Let me give you a little challenge to be thankful, not only in your heart, but in your conversation. If you stay afterwards for coffee, let's see how thankful we can be in our conversation.

[27 : 59] No miserable conversations about all the terrible things that are happening to us, or all the terrible things that are happening in the world. Let's have some thankfulness for what the mighty God has done, and is doing, and will do.

Remains only, as we draw to a close, to ask you, how Christ-centered are you? Are you trusting in Christ for your salvation?

God, are you looking to him to guide you and help you to live the Christian life? Are you rooted and grounded in Christ alone?

Are you constantly giving thanks to God for Christ? This whole verse depends, of course, on you being saved.

That little word, as, in verse 6, is the key to it all. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, take that out, and the rest just falls away.

[29 : 08] If you haven't yet received Christ Jesus the Lord, then you need to put that right, first of all. However old you are, or however young you are, trust in Christ as your Lord and your Saviour.

But if you are his already, keep focused on him. How easy it is to lose that focus and get distracted by the world.

How easy it is to get drawn away onto the broad way that leads to destruction. You see, the whole world around you, following that broad way.

The simplest thing is to follow them. And then you will lose sight of Christ. Even just a slight diversion can take you away.

There's an old song. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

[30 : 22] That's true. But the opposite is also true. Turn your eyes away from Jesus, and the things of this world will grow strangely bright.

The pleasures of this world will seem more alluring. The cares of this world will become more worrying. We need to get life back into focus with Christ at the centre.

Nothing must take the place of Christ in our lives. Not even the good things. Our work, our family, our friends, these are good things. But Christ must come first.

And he will give sense and purpose to everything else. If Christ is at the centre of your life, then all the storms of life will have very little impact upon you.

Paul says in Romans that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. If that is what matters to us, the love of God in Christ Jesus, then even if we lose everything in this world, it will matter very little.

[31 : 43] We still have Christ who is infinitely precious. May the Lord help us then to live totally Christ-centred lives and maybe be eternally thankful for being in him.

Amen.