

Continuing in Christ

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[0:00] Friends, it is good to open God's word. It is good to learn from the God who created us. How do you keep going?

How do you hold on? How do Christians keep going in Christ? When the news about Jesus was first moving across the Roman Empire, it arrived in this region of what we now call Turkey, called the Lycus Valley.

There in that valley were three cities, Hierapolis, which is funny because it was higher than the others, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae.

Churches in those cities grew up kind of at the same time and they were likely planted by the same missionary. Hierapolis was a city famous for its hot springs.

They were like healing pools where people would go who had ailments of various kinds. Colossae was known for its ice-cold spring water that came down from the mountain to the valley to the foot of that mountain where Colossae was.

[1:19] And Laodicea was known for its water too, but they had no water source of their own. And so the Romans piped in water from its neighbouring cities.

And when the hot water from Hierapolis and the cold water from Colossae combined via these very old way of doing it pipes, it arrived lukewarm, full of minerals, cloudy and tasting awful.

But at least Laodicea had water. Just yuck water. But when you have nothing, you're thankful for everything.

That's a phrase I heard this week at my first ever trip to Synod, which is the gathering of everyone from the local Sydney diocese who is a leader of a church or a lay member of the church.

Someone got up and reminded us that when you have nothing, you're thankful for everything. Even awful tepid tap water. Laodicea understood their dependence on the outside sources for their survival.

[2:39] So just like Laodicea, these three cities were learning about Jesus for the first time. About a saviour who would come from some other place far from them, from another people, with a source of life and connection to God so that they would be completely connected to him even though they were completely dependent on God and his gracious mercy, providing a missionary or someone to bring the word of God to them so they might live.

People who followed Jesus, like Paul who wrote the piece of scripture we've just had read out to us today, they would walk into cities carrying God's good news like piped in grace from God.

Now Paul was one who had planted many churches all across the Roman Empire but he couldn't go to these three churches in person. Instead he would write letters to encourage those churches and they would be read out exactly as Helen just read today.

When Christians got together they'd read a letter from Paul or they'd read something else. And this is the letter to Colossae which is why it's called Colossians.

Paul wrote to warn them. To warn them about what he'd seen and witnessed firsthand in churches that he had planted all across the empire.

[4:20] For in some, members of the church were leading one another astray. They were leading one another away from Christ with, in verse 8 he says, hollow and deceptive philosophies.

And he wrote to warn them because all Christians have the potential to be captured by something other than Christ. Be taken away.

Now, I have, went to university what is decades ago now and many of my Christian friends from that time are no longer following Christ.

We've baptised people in this building who no longer attend a church anywhere. And Paul had seen this trend too. He didn't want Colossae or any believer he didn't want Chatswood anyone who

follows Christ in Chatswood to drift away and leave behind all they could have in Christ.
So how do Christians keep going? What can Christians do to continue in Christ? To continue in our faith.

[5:44] Let's pray. Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, help us to remember and to respond to all you have done and all you will do in all of those who are in you.

Christ, our King, teach us through this word so that we may not drift from our first love but continue to follow you every day. Amen.

My three points today are from our passage in order. So verses 6 and 7, verse 8 and then the rest of the verses from verse 9.

My points are how to continue in Christ, how not to continue in Christ and learning to continue in Christ. That's Paul's flow so that's what we're going to be sharing together today.

How to, how not to and learning to continue in Christ. So how do we continue in Christ? Have verses 6 and 7 open.

[6:51] Now, Jesus taught each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People don't pick a fig from a thorn bush or grapes from briars.

This kind of logic is what Paul is using in these verses as he tells Christians who receive Christ Jesus as Lord to continue in Christ.

He's going to do it in three ways. He's not talking about fruit but he's saying as you have received, walk. As you have been planted, grow. As you've been taught, learn.

So firstly, how do you continue in Christ? Well, as you first received Christ, walk. Have a look there in verse 6. It says, continue to live your lives in him.

My translation is slightly different. It's called the ESV and it says, continue to walk in him, in the ESV. As you have received, keep walking.

[8:02] Have you ever watched the 4x100m relay race at the Olympics? Have you ever maybe done that yourself? Ever been a part of a relay where you've got to get a baton from someone and keep running?

Well, imagine someone trained, fit, ready for their teammate, standing in their lane, hand reaching back and then bam, they get the baton and they just stand there.

they stop. Wouldn't that be insane? Well, some people had become Christians at Colossae because other Christians had walked from city to city telling people about Jesus and it's still happening today.

I go to Sydney Missionary Bible College and I have met people who are planning to do the same, to take their faith to a far off place to hand it on to others. But the picture to compare to the relay race here is these churches who responded to missionary messages.

They received the baton with joy and belief and baptism. They changed their whole lives but then gave up on their faith. Sometimes these race runners just stopped.

[9:21] At the root of that is that Jesus, yes, is our Saviour. He's the one who we've heard about in this whole term.

In Christ He blesses us with so many things. In Christ Christians are saved, justified before God, freed from our sin. We're made holy.

We're unified. Even empowered to bear fruitful lives. But Jesus is also our Lord. Lord. Look at verse 6.

You receive Christ Jesus as Lord. That's what those who drift in their Christianity forget. Take a moment to reflect yourself.

Consider this. How does your life reveal that you have handed over to Jesus the right to rule your life?

[10:27] One writer says that Christians are prone to love being freed from the penalty of their sins much more than they love being saved from a life continuing to chase after those much beloved sins.

You hear the difference there? to continue in Christ we must take our faith far more seriously than we might. Walking as followers of our Lord and Saviour and not as followers of our Saviour as our own Lord.

When we receive the baton of our faith discover ourselves saved in Christ and discover all that that is we still have a race to run following and living for our Lord.

As you have received walk. Secondly as you have been planted grow. Paul uses another image there in verse 7 for those continuing to live in Christ.

He says rooted be rooted and built up in him. Now you can take your pick here with the original language. It's either a seed that grows into a plant or it's a foundation that gets turned into a building but we're going to go with a plant because like a seed Christians are to grow from there and grow into an established plant.

[12:07] my children sing this cheesy Christian song which gets in my head every time I think of it and as soon as I started thinking this week about this sermon it was in my brain.

Apples don't grow on pear! Trees! Apples don't grow on pear Trees! Apples don't grow on pear trees! It goes on and on and on forever.

And bananas don't grow on plum trees! I mean of course that makes sense. Anyone who's ever seen or grown or eaten from a plant understands that the seed from which the plant grows the fruit demonstrates the nature of the seed.

And just like those in Christ we are to bear the fruit of Christ in our lives. The seed from which our Christian life has grown. Christians keep walking in line with all we received in Christ and we bear fruit in the likeness of our seed.

That is what we are to grow as. And thirdly as you have been taught learn. On Thursday night we had our discipleship explored finale session and we had nearly 20 people there.

[13:30] and they were asking questions and sharing their thoughts and reflections about what they've been taught. And the teaching was from another letter from Paul to a different city called Philippi.

And every time we do an explore event or run a service like this or we have a community group or any time one of you opens your Bible or even having conversations as Christian friends these are all places where we come to learn about Christ.

Learn more about Christ. Learn more of Him and who we are in Him. Learning is a huge part of Christianity. It's why we explore the Bible together so often.

It's why John encouraged everyone if you've missed teaching and learning from this series in Christ. You can go back and you can go and explore it.

Embrace that teaching and apply it to your life. As we learn in Christ our thoughts become reflections and decisions and applied wisdom for our life.

[14:50] Teaching that is as you were taught about Jesus that flows from that same source is how we got here and it's how we're going to get to where we're going.

Learning in Christ is a choice that we need to keep making. It's a bit like going to the gym. If you want to get stronger you've got to keep showing up and more than that you've got to get out of the car you've got to go up the stairs to the gym you've got to walk in the door you've got to say hi to people and you've got to sit down you've got to pick up something heavy and lift.

Learning is like choosing to lift yet unlike other things that you can learn and you can learn them once and you can remember them and they stick in your brain and that's done.

Instead the Holy Spirit has unending things for the Christian to discover even in the same words over and over again. In my community group we're in the book of Luke at the moment and it is so shocking to me that there is a moment where Jesus raises someone from the dead I think in chapter seven that I had forgotten about even existed much earlier in his ministry career than when he raised Lazarus from the dead.

It was wonderful to read and I reckon I have read Luke a few times and I had forgotten it. Well maybe I had read it remembered it and enjoyed it and I needed to enjoy it again.

[16:32] That Jesus has the power over death. The same words over and over again continue to teach. In our pursuit of new learning we must be consistent with the learning it must be consistent with what we've learnt in the past.

And we've got to measure what our minds discover and compare to what we've received. What we first grew up. What grew us up. Is it in harmony with what we were first taught?

Paul is teaching here a command of ongoing learning. And it's dead against Christians who imply or sometimes straight up say that they've grown out of needing the Bible to teach them anything new.

A member of this church in that space out there said exactly that to me earlier this year. Be no friend of your own complacency.

That is not how to continue in Christ. But if you look at the passage there you will find strength strength to continue in Christ as you learn.

[17 : 57] Remember how Colossae was one of three churches in this valley. Three new churches. Paul actually starts this chapter if you go all the way back to verse one in your Bibles.

In the same chapter he says I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those in Laodicea. for all who have not met me personally.

Paul was contending fighting for Colossae and Laodicean Christians. Fighting for their faith because all Christians tend to drift from their Lord if they do not set their minds on learning all they have and are in Christ.

sadly we know that a few years later Jesus himself speaking to the disciple John in a vision called out the Laodicean church for this very thing.

The church Paul had been contending for according to Jesus had become spiritually blind to their love of money and self sufficiency that was leading them away from him.

[19 : 19] Jesus tasted the fruit of this church and threatened to spit it out like lukewarm bad tasting water from a Laodicean tap.

they were neither hot nor cold neither gunning for the faith and following and continuing in Christ neither giving him up completely they were just uselessly tepid as Jesus once taught no one can serve two masters either they will hate the one and love the other or you'll be devoted to one and despise the other you cannot serve both God and money Christians in Chatswood we are too weak to fight the power that financial security has over our lives without rejecting it we're too weak to fight the financial security power over us unless we reject it and seek to be strengthened by a continuous life of learning to follow

Jesus as our Lord that's our choice so reflect with me what is it for you that is more just as exciting just as wise just as enjoyable in competition with Jesus is it your financial state or your credit rating or your self dependence Jesus said to Laodicea and perhaps to you these words you say I'm rich and I've acquired wealth and I do not need a thing but you do not realize that you are wretched pitiful poor blind and naked and I'll add these words here for Jesus without me without me you have nothing Laodicea without me

Chatswood you have nothing in Christ we're completely dependent on him just like Laodicea were for their water and we are completely dependent on Jesus to continue on in Christ and in verse 8 we see that Paul knows the drift from Christ that's present in Laodicea's neighbor Colossae he first summarizes how they are drifting away and then he debunks each of their specific teachings so we're going to look at those he says that there are some trying to literally kidnap them with hollow and deceitful philosophies in verse 8 so just have a look at verse 8 in your Bible there these deceiving voices claim that simply being in Christ is not enough being in Christ is deficient it's a less than full boring hollow

Christianity and that there is some extra special teaching that can fill you to a true fullness in your faith another way to say it is simply being in Christ is not enough you need something else you need something that only they have Paul calls these misleaders kidnappers and their teachings hollow there are at least two hollow teachings undermining this church and I think we need to pay attention to them the first is that of traditionalism it's the idea that human traditions see in verse 8 the rights and practices of the church must be lived for Christians to get saved and stay saved rather than trusting that we were saved in

[23 : 44] Christ by the grace of God alone and then the second deceptive philosophy is this the idea that spiritual forces of this world still need to be overcome or that through extra spiritual engagement we might protect or make our salvation more sure than it already is in Christ these two deceptions are still issues in the Christian church today never forget that words written 2000 years ago are still as relevant now do you rely on anything you do as a Christian to save you do you rely on spiritual experiences in your life to be certain that you are safe and saved well Paul won't leave us in reflection mode for long we're going to look at the rest of this passage now from verse 9

Paul wanted the Colossian church to unlearn these deceptive philosophies and so in these following verses Paul gives us a pattern of learning to continue in Christ so that in the next chapter in Colossians he's going to summarize this by saying setting your heart and your mind on things above in Christ that's what learning to continue in Christ looks like setting your mind and your heart on things above in Christ so let's look at verse 10 to challenge these hollow teachings he declares those in Christ have been brought to fullness just as in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in

bodily form in Christ all of

God dwells in him completely if you follow Christ and accept him as Lord over your life and saviour of your soul you are in a spiritual and true sense complete and so to combat traditionalism Paul talks about circumcision now this was likely one of those traditions that the Colossians had added to their Christianity but Paul pulls apart its value completely in verse 11 so have a look he declares our bodies that were once ruled by the flesh and human hands were done away with when Jesus circumcised us now that doesn't happen literally but Jesus did cut off our whole old self and gave us a new life his complete new life if we were to add any tradition or condition to be saved that had anything to do with our bodies or to remain saved to keep doing then it would be a denial of the perfection and the power of Christ's life which he gives to all those in Christ so examine your walk in Christ so that you never rely on a Christian activity to be saving there is nothing you need to do to protect yourself spiritually verses 10 and 15 declare verse 10 that

Christ has not only head is not only head and over every power and authority as he who has already disarmed the powers and the authorities in verse 15 we know these are spiritual powers as he triumphed over them by the cross a spiritual act of spiritual power over the spiritual forces against those who would follow him all kinds of spiritual power that stands against Christians died when Jesus died on the cross there is nothing that can pluck the Christian out of his hands so examine your walk in Christ so that you never rely on a new or practiced spiritual experience to make you feel certain or make you certain that you are in

Christ and Paul would lead you to overflow with some kind of excitement and joy here because he can't help but just tell you more about what it looks like to be in Christ in verse 13 he says God made you alive in Christ alive like you cannot be not in Christ alive spiritually alive truly and all we need to continue to really live in Christ is living in us already it's past tense we were made alive you were once dead in your sins yet in Christ verse 12 we have been raised with him to everlasting life it's already started Jesus made us alive in a trade for our death and we all once had in verse 14 this charge of legal indebtedness to God against us and condemning us but now that charge is cancelled and taken away by Christ for the first before he forgave us all our sins

[30 : 25] Jesus gave us past tense his sinless life and took all our sin nailing it to the cross my children are sick of me saying this but in describing how to approach being purposeful in life and making good choices and standing by your word I say all the time people do what they want it helps you understand why people don't show up don't follow what they say they want to do because really people always do what they want Christian do you want to continue in Christ well then follow this teaching in your daily life as you have received Christ walk as you have been planted grow as you've been taught learn set your hearts and your minds on things above in Christ and hold tight to his teachings like your life jacket in a stormy sea hold on to all you have all you are all you do and all you will always be in him for you are alive in

Christ and Christians what is the effect on you when you hear teaching like we've heard over the last few weeks nothing that you need do will ever get you to God because the cost is too great and you are too weak to do it yourself and yet God himself will do that for you and give it to you what is the effect on you when you hear about the cross where Jesus died in your place how do Christians feel when they learn more of what they already have and will never lose in Christ the effect is thankfulness I said at the beginning of today when you have nothing you're thankful for everything that's the reminder for the

Christian without Christ we have nothing but in Christ we have everything thankfulness overflows that's why in verse 7 the effect of walking growing learning in Christ is that we overflow with thankfulness with your mind and heart set on Christ that your mind on Christ your heart will follow in thankfulness so does thankfulness in Christ mark your everyday life Christian do you feel thankful for Christ every day now your answer at best might be well no not every day but sometimes and if that's your answer then that's good that's okay that would have been the

Colossians answer that might be most Christians answer but I want to encourage you then to keep making the choice to get up walk grow and learn in Christ and you will find strength as you do keep going you will find thankfulness to inspire your steps and to share with others too many people I have loved have drifted from their place in Christ into traditionalism they've been kidnapped and tricked into thinking that the things that they do need to be added to what Christ has done or they've become over spiritualized chasing experiences and spiraling into the doubt that comes from worry that everything Christ has already done isn't yet quite enough for them to feel spiritually safe some

of them are no longer in

Christ at all chasing hollow things like money and comforts and yet so many of you so many Christians I know continue to inspire me continue my walk with Christ in spite of the brokenness and the hardships in their lives currently happening to them they have this persistent and authentic thankfulness in Christ and that to me is like light in the darkness those who lead me by example through their consistent learning and looking to the Bible to explore everything that they have and are and will be in Christ forever that's sometimes my only motivation to do the same because I want what they have I want what I've frankly tried to go find in the world and has let me down

[36:14] I want the knowledge they've got that makes them so thankful thankful for what we currently share in Christ already that I am so prone to forget can be tricked into adding on to or even doubt that I truly have in Christ and so just like the race I mentioned earlier as I was passed the baton of faith by Vivian and Chris and David and Johnny and Stuart and Sam and Steve I need to walk just as I received it and hand it to you that is our task as we continue in Christ together I want to give you some good news Laodicea who we've heard were drifting far from their faith so far that

Christ himself called them out in a teaching that has gone through to every church for two millennia the good news is that that church that was lukewarm and drifting from faith turned off the cold tap of the world and destruction and competing good from the world around them turned off the cold tap and continued hot and fruitful in Christ for as long as that city stood they continued to preach Christ faithfully in Laodicea so if you're listening today and you have not taken a step of faith in Christ let me say to you there is nothing better in the world than all Jesus has to offer you Jesus offers you a purpose to walk through this life and you're going to find that purpose nowhere else because Jesus hung on the cross you can walk in his steps Jesus plants you in the soil in the sun to grow into all he created you to be you'll find your true identity in nothing else he was killed on the cross so you could live his life Jesus is all you need to begin and continue in this faith truly all you need and you will only find more and more strength for contending with this world as you learn his word for Jesus was silenced on the cross to strengthen you with all that he said and then Jesus you will never run out of riches to be thankful for riches that can never be taken will never spoil never fade you will only find everything your heart desires in him

Jesus looked beyond the horrors of the cross everything that was before him he looked beyond it and saw you and was joyful and he went to the cross so you could live thankful in Christ he he he he he he