

Receiving, Walking, Building

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Colossians chapter 2. And if we could read Colossians chapter 2, reading at verse 6.

Therefore, as you have 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.

Paul, as we know, was a great encourager. We often tend to think of Barnabas as being the great encourager, and Barnabas certainly was a great encourager.

But so was the Apostle Paul. Sometimes we tend to think of Paul more like an enforcer, because sometimes his writings could be quite harsh.

But Paul was never harsh or critical just for the sake of it. When Paul, and you go through some of his letters, whether it's like to the church in Galatia, and sometimes to some of the church in Corinth, some of what he was saying could be quite cutting and very much to the point.

[1 : 1 3] But Paul wrote in this way, and always to correct error, and he was always seeking the building up of the church, the building up of the Christians, and seeking to lead them in the right way.

And so that's why Paul was sometimes, people tend to think of him more as a kind of an enforcer rather than an encourager. But when you begin to look at Paul's writings, every letter, really, it is so full of encouragement.

And Paul is encouraging the Christians here. And of course, part of the reason why Paul's ministry involved a lot of encouragement was that the church was living in very difficult times.

It was tough being a Christian in the early days, in the days of the infancy, you could say, of the Christian church.

The fires of persecution were beginning to burn, and many people were suffering as a result of becoming Christians. People were losing their rights, their privileges, their jobs, and very often their freedom and their lives.

[2 : 2 1] So it was a tough environment, and Paul was very conscious that as the Christian faith was beginning to spread and develop, that it needed to be kept from error and had to be kept in the right way and the people encouraged.

And so you'll find there's a lot of encouragement in Paul's writings. And Paul, of course, wrote mostly from prison. And when he was in prison, he would have time to think, to reflect on how things were.

And so it gave him an opportunity to really get to grips with how the churches were. And of course, we know that he had the mind of the Lord, as he wrote.

So Paul, as we say, was very conscious that the forces of darkness were out to try and destroy the Christian faith. And in many ways, we're living, although we're not living in the times like the times of Roman persecutions, there are places in this world that the persecution is ferocious and very intense against the Christian faith.

And even in our own day here in our own land, we're very aware that more and more, the influence of the Christian is becoming less and less. And we're living in a society that would want, very many would want that Christianity would, if a person is going to be a Christian, they'll say, that's all right, as long as you're a Christian in your own home, in your own church.

[3 : 55] But don't bring your Christianity into the workplace. Don't bring it into society at large. Feel free to worship, but keep that to yourself. And there are many people who have this idea that they want God moved out from society.

And you know, you can't think of something worse than to try and remove God out of society. And the worst thing that can happen to a nation is the Lord will say, all right, I'll give you what you want.

If you don't want me, I will pull back. I will take my presence away. I will take my influence away. I will leave you to yourselves, to your own judgments, to get on with it yourself.

And when you think about it, there's not much worse that could happen. And that is why we really need to pray that the Lord will never leave us and that he will always be a presence for good within our society.

So as we say, Paul is encouraging the church. And in verse 5, he's saying, For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

[5 : 07] So the news that Paul was getting of the church was good and that they were firm in Christ. And this made him rejoice. And you know, that's one of the wonderful things we take, we so often took for granted, is the kind of minds we have.

We can go anywhere in our mind. And do we really stop to think of how wonderful that is? That we can, in a moment, our mind can go to Australia, can go to any, we can travel the seas, continents, we can go from prison to palace, we can go anywhere in our mind.

And it's an incredible blessing that we have, where we have this ability just at any moment to go anywhere.

And with that, that is, of course, we bring this into the spiritual realms where we can think of anybody, not just transfer our mind to places and to what's going on, but to people.

And, of course, this is part and parcel of the Christian life. The Christian faith is where we think of people and we pray for people. And it's as if we were there with them and we're able to pray for people all over the world.

[6 : 29] And that's one of the wonderful privileges that we have. And that's what Paul was doing in prison. He was very conscious of these different churches, the groups of Christians in these different places, in Ephesus and Galatia and Corinth and Colossae.

And so he was writing to them. But again, he's telling of how his mind is going to them and he's rejoicing in spirit with them. And then in verse 6, Paul gives us here, really, a definition of what it is to become a Christian.

Because it says here, therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord. Now, the Bible tells us that good unto all men or good unto all people is the Lord.

And today there's many people who don't think that God is good. And there are many people who don't think about God at all. But the Bible makes it very clear to us that it's in him that we live, that we move, that we have our being.

All that we are in this world is as a result of him. And so it's imperative that we dwell on that and we give thanks to God for all that he has given to us.

[7 : 46] But the greatest thing, of course, that he has given of all is the great gift of salvation. And that is his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is, I think, what we have to understand.

And I think it's one of the hardest things for people to understand. When you're trying to explain to somebody what it is to be a Christian, I think one of the hardest things for people to get hold of is that salvation is a gift.

And what do you do with a gift? You receive it. It's not a gift if you don't receive it. Receiving is an essential part of any gift.

If I was to come to you with some particular gift and I said, look, here you are, and you were to say, well, that's very kind of you, but actually I don't want it. That gift wouldn't become yours.

You would reject it. And sadly, that's what an awful lot of people are doing with the great gift of Jesus Christ. Because the offer of salvation comes out. And God has said, I have sent my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into this world.

[8 : 58] Jesus himself says that he is the way of salvation. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And he invites people to come to him. And it is in order, to become a Christian, you receive Jesus Christ by faith.

And this is a problem because we think we have to do something. That's our nature, to work, to do. God, they say, I've got to do something.

And it's so hard for us to understand that all the doing has been done and we are the ones who simply receive. And it's by faith that we receive.

And that's sometimes very difficult. And it's when you become a Christian that you realise how simple it is. But beforehand, it's so difficult. Because our nature is saying, oh well I've got to do something for it.

And God says, no. All you have to do is receive. And that's what we've got to do is say, Lord, give me the faith. Give me the grace to receive.

[10 : 06] And you know, you may be a Christian here for many years. And today, I'm not meaning just today, but maybe even today, you're saying to yourself, you know, I don't know if I'm a proper Christian.

Because when I started out, I didn't, I hear some people give their testimony and I didn't have, I can't think of any time that I just, that I did, laid hold upon the Lord in a proper way.

And maybe I've never really begun. And sometimes God's people can be tormented with that. But you see, it comes back to this, that that's true, in a sense, you didn't do anything.

But you received Jesus. And part of the proof of the pudding in that you received Jesus is that you're continuing to follow him. All these years down the line.

And there have been plenty of times when you could have turned round and gone back. But you never did. Because you're following. Why? Because his grace touched your heart and you received him by faith.

[11 : 19] And you might not have been conscious of a particular moment, but your heart is, that's where it's maybe from a child, from a young age. This is what's happening. You've been going out after him.

And you can't turn away. It's like Peter said, to whom else can we go? Because you've got the words of eternal life. You've been elsewhere. You know that there's no one else that you want to follow.

So, it's a receiving, becoming a Christian is receiving Jesus. And the proof of having received him is that you follow him.

And as Paul then goes on to say, as you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him. Now, if we're walking, if you're going to walk in a way, you walk from a starting point.

And that's what happens within a Christian walk. There's a point where we start walking. Maybe, maybe for some of you here, maybe you started so young, you can't, you can't remember a particular time when you weren't walking in that way.

[12 : 24] But the thing is, as a Christian, you're walking. You're walking in a particular direction. You're walking, following the Lord Jesus Christ. We're on a journey, a journey to glory.

So, every day, we're walking by faith. We're not to be stopping or loitering, but we're to be making progress. We're to be moving on, going all the way, because we have a distance to cover.

There's a lot of ground to cover as we journey on our way home. And as we walk, we're to forget the things that are behind and we are to press toward the mark or the prize or the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And so, it tells us here that as you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him.

Rooted and built up in Him. Now, as we grow into Him, the more we grow into Him, the more the roots, the root of our faith, the deeper it goes, the stronger our faith becomes.

[13 : 39] And, this is absolutely essential in our Christian faith. Because, we live in a world that is full of trials and temptations and difficulties and sorrows and all kinds of things come along.

And, there are loads of things that have come into your life that have shaken your faith. There have been days, there have been periods where your very faith was shaken. But, you know, after these periods you come out stronger.

And, you will find that you look at a tree and the roots have gone down deep. And, the wind will come and that tree sometimes you'll hear sometimes you'll hear the trees creaking and they're lurching maybe with the strength of the wind but they remain.

Sometimes they don't, they fall. But, very often they'll remain steadfast there because the roots have gone down so deep. And, that is what is important in our Christian life.

That we are rooted in Jesus Christ. That we're really rooted into him. and, the wonderful thing to know is that the Lord Jesus Christ, when we receive Jesus, that's exactly what happens.

[14 : 54] We receive him forever. When we come to faith, it's not just that we receive Jesus for a little. We receive him forever. He's there.

And he has a special interest in us forever. And he's with us whether we're conscious of it or not. He's with us all the time. Through the Spirit he's within us.

But he's also in heaven interceding for us. He's praying to the Father on our behalf all the time. Just as Jesus prayed for Peter, remember before Peter fell badly in his denial of Jesus.

Jesus said to Peter, Simon, Simon, he said, you know, Satan has desired to have you. That he will sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith won't fail.

He didn't pray that he wouldn't fall. Peter fell badly. But he prayed that his faith wouldn't fail. And that's exactly how it was. Peter's faith, although he collapsed in what he did, and he went out broken hearted into the night, into the darkness of the night, weeping bitterly at how he denied his Lord with oaths and with curses.

[16 : 16] But his faith didn't fail. And Peter grew on and grew on and grew on as he was restored by Jesus to become just this great apostle. You read his letters in 1 and 2 Peter.

And that's what the Lord is doing for you and for me as well. He is interceding on our behalf all the time. And he is presenting himself before the Father, his finished work.

And so, as we walk in Jesus, as we have received Jesus, we receive him in all his offices. We receive him as prophet. He's a prophet for our life.

Now, what does a prophet do? A prophet brings God's word. And so, Jesus is the word of life. He is the rule of our life.

God's word is the rule for our lives. And so, we receive Jesus as prophet. We receive him as priest. The priest's work was to sacrifice.

[17 : 19] And Jesus is both the one who sacrifices and the sacrifice himself. And so, we don't look to ourselves. We look to him. And we say, well, Lord, everything is in Jesus.

And we accept him as king for our lives. We bow before his authority, before his rule, before his dominion, and we say, yes, Lord.

So, to be a Christian, you have to accept Jesus in these offices as the word for your life, as the sacrifice for your life, and as the rule for your life.

And a Christian wants to do that. You're happy with that. Because, you know, that's one of the great stumbling blocks for so many people. People might say, I want to be a Christian, but I still want to have control over my own life.

I want it my way. And you see God's word and you say, I don't like that, and you'll turn the page. Or sometimes people may say, well, yes, I'm a Christian, but I still feel I've got to do something myself to earn my salvation.

[18 : 29] Or people may say, you know, it's all very well, yes, I'm a Christian, but I'm not ready to submit myself completely to Christ. Well, we have to.

We take Jesus as our word, as our sacrifice, and as our king. These three are non-negotiables in the life of the Christian.

And so, this is how we walk in him. And so, as we walk, of course, we discover more and more of our own weaknesses.

But you know, the wonderful thing about being rooted up in Christ is that a tree and a house are very, very different. If you're going to build a house, or you're going to see a house develop and grow, you gather all the materials first, and then you bring the materials together and you build it up.

But a tree, it's like from the very, it's like just from a seed, from a heart, and it goes down and it grows within itself up and up and up and out.

[19 : 36] And it grows up and it grows down. And you know, that's how it is with a Christian. Because it is God's seed entering into our heart, in and through the Holy Spirit bringing Christ.

And there's this little seed and it grows and it grows. things. And so our faith in Jesus, it grows up and it grows down, rooted in him.

And we become firm in him. And that's why when I was saying that you can't help but following him. Because the roots of Christ have gone deep within your heart.

You just can't let go. Or he won't let you go. And that's part of the reassurance that we have from this. So the tree, as we say, grows down as well as it grows up.

And again the tree is receiving from its roots so that the tree flourishes and grows through the roots as it's receiving from the ground.

[20 : 40] And so it is with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. He is the source of our life. He is the source of our vitality.

We don't walk in our own strength. If we do, we don't go very far. We walk in him. It's in his provision, in his strength, in his grace. So in a sense he's walking, as we walk, he's within us and he's in front of us.

He's within us all the time. But he's also in front of us because that's the way we walk, looking unto Jesus who is the author and the finisher of our faith. We have to have our eyes upon Jesus.

You know, it's part of the problem as we walk through this world. There's a version of the Bible that says that the eyes are never satisfied with seeing. And that's so true because so often it's through the eye that we fall.

It was part of the very beginning. Remember in the temptation in the garden when Eve saw the tree that was beautiful to look at. It was part of the temptation.

[21 : 50] And so often in life as we go through our eyes lead us into problem. Very often what we look at in and of itself is not sinful. But very quickly lust or pride or greed or covetousness or just a list of different things will come in fed through the eye into our heart.

And so that is why we have to seek that the Lord will help us to walk focused upon him. Because if not, then we'll be all over the place.

And so it's imperative that we walk with our eyes focused upon Jesus. And naturally speaking, when we live out our days every day, we're always seeing something new.

Don't we say that regularly? Oh, I never saw that before. Well, that's a different colour, that's a different shade. Or we see something like at this time of the year when the leaves start and going from the green into the yellows and the browns and so on.

The change in the colour or the change of this or the change of that. We're always saying, I never noticed that before. And it's true spiritually as well. That as we go through life in the different circumstances and the different experiences tied in with God's word, that we're seeing things in a new way.

[23 : 16] We should be asking the Lord every day, Lord, help me, open my eyes, as the psalmist said, that I might behold wonderful things out of your law. Every day we should be asking the Lord as we walk, that our eyes might light up as we see something new.

All things made new. That's what the Lord is able to do. The word of God that we might be familiar with, we've read it over and over and over and here we read it again today and it's new, it's fresh.

We get something again for our souls. And so this is what we should be asking the Lord every day as we're rooted in him and built up in him and established in the faith.

And then we see that as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving. This is something that we are required to do, that we are abounding in thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving should be at the very heart of our Christian life. when we say, and every Christian should say, you know, God is good.

[24 : 25] When we say God is good, we mean it with all our heart. It's not just a statement, it's not a pious statement, but it's something we say, you know, God is good.

And it's an amazing number of times I've heard Christians going through a difficult time. And I say, but you know, this is tough where I'm going, but I'll tell you something, God is good.

And they mean it, you hear the way they say it, you know that they actually really mean what they've just said. Because it's very often in these times that you discover just how good God really is.

And so there is to be this great sense of thanksgiving. When you go through the Bible, and you will find all the great saints, whether it's Abraham or Moses, or whether it's Hannah or Mary, or David, or Peter, they all knew how to praise and thank God.

You look at their lives, look at their writings, and there's always that. Psalm 40, the first psalm that we sang, it talks about the thanksgiving, talks about the song, about how the Lord took us from the fearful pit and miry clay.

- [25 : 36] You know, if you're in a fearful pit and miry clay, you're bogged down. That's it, you're stuck. You can't get out the pit of slime. But he took you, he rescued you from it.
- And he put your feet on a rock, solid foundation, and you started to walk. That's exactly what we're doing. But along with that, he put a new song in your mouth.
- And you know, once you start singing that song, it becomes part and partial of your life. And in a sense, at the very heart of that song, there is thanksgiving. the Lord is looking for our thanksgiving.
- Remember when Jesus healed the ten lepers? He said to them, go and show yourself to the priest. They were lepers when they turned round from Jesus and they headed off to show themselves to the priest, which was a great step of faith on their part.
- And one of them, remember the Samaritan, he looked at himself and he saw he was healed. What did he do? He didn't go all the way to the priest, he turned back. And he fell down before Jesus.
- [26 : 43] And with a loud voice, because the ten lepers before, they had cried to Jesus with a loud voice, this healed leper fell down before Jesus and with a loud voice, it tells us, began to thank Jesus for what he had done.
- And what did Jesus say? He asked a question, where are the nine? Did I not heal ten? Only one came back and Jesus said, the only one who came back to thank me was a Samaritan.
- And as we know, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. But that question Jesus asks, where are the nine? It's a question that we don't want him to be asking of ourselves.
- Because if you're a Christian today, he's healed you. That's the greatest healing that you'll ever require. although we may need other healings as well. But if we've been, he's looking for your thanksgiving, so that you're able to say to him, Lord, thank you for what you've done for me.
- Let us pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks today for the great Savior that we have. We give thanks that this is a gospel of grace, not of works.
- [28 : 04] grace. And yet, Lord, we are required to work and to walk, but it is by faith depending upon you. We pray that you will bless each and every one of us.
- We pray if any here today do not know personally Jesus Christ as Savior, that they might be given the faith and the grace to receive Jesus.
- By grace you are saved through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. And so we pray that our boasting might be in Jesus. And so we pray to bless us.
- Take each one of us home safely. Do us good. Part us with your blessing, taking away sin in Jesus' name. Amen.