

MADE ALIVE
Colossians 2:6-15

(Read Colossians 2:6-15)

Intro: A couple weeks ago Kathy and I picked Matilda up from Cleveland Hopkins Airport. As we drove away I noticed there was a warehouse being built on the site where the huge Cleveland Ford engine manufacturing plant once stood. The warehouse is equally as massive as the now demolished Ford plant ever was. What caught my eye was the high concrete block walls that ran as far as I could see. The walls were supported by wooden 2X4 braces (the photo I have on the wall is a poor representation since they are on walls that are dwarfed by the warehouse walls to which I'm referring). This kind of bracing is very necessary for something as small as what you see on the screen and even more so on the huge expanse that we saw outside the airport. This is because little more than a stiff breeze can easily bring it down in a dusty and dangerous pile of debris. This was brought very close to home just this past week when we received word that Kathy's cousin's grandson was killed when the newly constructed wall of a building collapsed on him.

It brings to mind Jesus's familiar parable as he concludes the Sermon on the Mount, *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."* Matthew 7:24-27. His teaching is clear: we need to build our lives on the deep and firm foundation of his Word and as we do that we will be able to withstand the storms of life and the hurricanes of adversity.

Paul is urging the Colossians in a similar way as he encourages them in the first verse of our text (Colossians 2:6) to . . .

Walk in Christ

- Not only that, we are to fully live in him! This comes out in Peterson's paraphrase, *My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now live him.* Colossians 2:6 (The Message).
- As it was for the Colossians, we still can count on the fact that what we believe and how we live it will be tested with great regularity. To that end we need to deepen your loyalty to Christ. Paul tells us to let our roots grow deep. In the woods behind this building is a huge maple that fell during a wind storm last winter. The surface roots interlaced with packed dirt that spread from the base of the tree are twice as tall as I am and that is the very reason the tree fell. It was not deeply rooted. Let's not be like that tree or like any Colossians who fell for the fine sounding arguments of false teachers. We need to be firmly rooted in the word of God. This is why I've been urging us to Remember: Try to read through Colossians at least once a week. The more time you spend in the word, the deeper your roots will grow.
- This takes day to day time with the Lord. F. B. Meyer writes in his picturesque language, *"The first act of the Christian life is to receive Christ, and every moment afterward we must continue receiving him. The act must become an attitude. Breathe in the love and power of Jesus. Take deep breaths. Then we shall we be rooted in him and built up in him"* and it will show in our outward walk and behavior."
- What comes out of that rootedness is gratefulness. Paul says in our text, we will be "abounding in thankfulness. Peterson renders, *let your living spill over into thanksgiving.* Colossians 2:7b (The Message). This is uniquely Christian. The people of God are thankful no matter what. Barclay points out *"The distinguishing mark of the true Church is an abounding and overflowing gratitude. Thanksgiving is the constant and characteristic note of the Christian life."* J. B. Lightfoot said something similar, *"Thanksgiving is the end of all human conduct, whether observed in words or works."* Last week after we received the tithes and offerings Ron had us sing the Doxology which reminds what we should always do, and that is to *Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*
- Moving on, Paul tells the Colossians, as they remain firmly rooted in Christ and the gospel, it will help to keep from falling for seemingly convincing arguments. You know by now, after close to a month in this study that he was coming up against the early teachings of Gnosticism. He's not specifically calling out

any particular false teacher here in verse 8, because the warning works for any attempt to lead them astray. But his point is clear, Christ Followers need to . . .

Look no further for a Savior

- The false teachers taught that Jesus Christ and his teaching and work were not in themselves sufficient for salvation. And Paul is saying that when Jesus is not good enough the teaching that is pushing it is not good. AT. ALL!
- He uses wonderful word pictures to make his point. He tells them in verse 8, “*Don’t be kidnapped by hollow deceit*”. The word which is translated as “*take you captive*” which is how my ESV renders it, is a word that literally means to kidnap. Other commentators have rendered it, “*Don’t let anyone plunder you, or carry you off as plunder.*” And you can almost picture the pirate Blackbeard coming over the rail of a helpless merchant ship. That is because these are forceful words and they warn against falling away. When attractive words tempt you to fall for a false message – resist them. Stand on the word of God which you know is true. Don’t give in because for all its luster, man-made philosophy is empty.
- Barclay points out that one of the elements the false teachers were pushing in addition to false philosophy was astrology which has been a distraction at the least but outright demonic at worst for all of history, right down to the present day. Paul told the Colossians to resist it and I say in 2022, don’t fall for it.
- Other false teachers, the Jewish ones were pushing that Jesus wasn’t good enough and that circumcision was needed (v. 11) Barclay puts it this way, “*The charge Paul makes against these teachers is that their teaching is a human thing; it has no basis in Scripture. It is a product of the human mind; and not a message of the Word of God. To speak like this is not to drift into fundamentalism or submit to a tyranny of the written word, but to hold that no teaching can be Christian teaching which is at variance with the basic truths of Scripture and with the Word of God.*”
- The teaching of the Old Testament, which is the scriptures, Paul followed, because they are the word of God, point out that the rite of circumcision was only the outward mark of a man who was inwardly dedicated to God and that is why it was referred to in such picturesque ways in the Old Testament. Such as uncircumcised lips (Exodus 6:12), a heart which was circumcised or uncircumcised (Leviticus 26:41; Ezekiel 44:7; Ezekiel 44:9; Deuteronomy 30:6); of the uncircumcised ear (Jeremiah 6:10). To the godly people who recorded the Old Testament being circumcised did not mean having a certain operation carried out on a male child, but instead, it meant having a change effected in his life. Circumcision was, indeed, the sign of a person who is dedicated to God by his parents; but in Paul’s mind, because of Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross and because of baptism, the dedication no longer lay in the cutting of the flesh but in the cutting away from the life of the Christ Follower, everything which is against the will of God.
- So the point is, watch out for additions to Jesus – Jesus is all we need. We’ll talk a bit more as I wrap this up. Just know this, the elemental spirits that Paul refers to in verse 8 are overcome by Christ. This is exactly what John meant when he wrote, . . . *you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 1 John 4:4.
- This is because in Christ, *the fullness of deity dwells bodily.* Colossians 2:9. It’s this simple, Christ is GOD! FB Meyer, writes, “*If we have Christ, we have all God’s fullness. Like Jacob’s ladder he links us with God. What need have we for celestial beings, like those invented by the Gnostics, or for the rite of circumcision, as insisted on by the Jews? We have everything in Jesus.*”
- And Paul then refers to baptism with “*You are a new creation and your baptism is its evidence.*” In fact, this is where Paul infers that the new circumcision is baptism.
- We didn’t have baptism last month as I’d hoped because I had no candidates make themselves known. But this is good because baptism is serious business. We don’t baptize a person unless they are requesting it, knowing full well what it means for them. So we don’t baptize babies because they don’t know what is happening to them. And when someone comes to me requesting baptism I make sure they know that they are consenting to proclaim by that baptism that they have died to sin as Jesus dies on the Cross, buried under the baptismal waters as Jesus was buried in the tomb, and raised again out of that water as Jesus rose from the dead. A person who has been baptized has risen again to symbolize his or her new life.

- If you think about your baptism and the symbolism that it gives, you know that it is not a washing away of sin. Because that is what was already done by the blood of Jesus. Instead it is a symbol of being buried and raised again a new creation. To do anything else is to blend our faith with human or satanic concoctions.
- And finally, Paul points out . . .

Our debt has been wiped out and nailed to the Cross

- For the Christ Follower life is inseparable from a right relationship with God. And he shares how that right relationship comes – it is by forgiveness of sins and he uses picturesque language to do it. The ESV uses the words “*cancelling the record of debt that stood against us.*” (v. 14), but the original language gives a vivid picture of the writing on a document being wiped away. The debt has been satisfied and the note burning service can begin. The payment has been made in full. There is not even an IOU. Because we are in Christ the debt is paid in full.
- The proclamation has been nailed to the Cross and everything has been fully satisfied. Christ is the Victor – and because of that, we are too. We have been made alive. Completely and totally alive.
- Let’s finish there and we will continue in Colossians next week. Amen.