

The Fullness of Christ: Foundation and Vision in Challenging Times
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Introduction

The situation the Colossians were in and the challenges they faced parallels challenges we face today.

- The Colossians were new believers. They had not met Paul. They heard the Gospel from Epaphras.
- They faced challenges from heretical teachings that diluted Christ's uniqueness and sufficiency.

Other church communities faced similar challenges. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to a group of long-term believers (probably located in Rome).

- They were long-term believers not newer believers. But they still faced challenges also.
- These challenges were different but parallel in effect.

The encouraging and equipping answer that both groups needed was found in deeper and fuller views of Christ.

- O'Brien The title of one of his chapters is this:
"The Antidote to Error: Christ in All His Fullness."
- Wescott said the challenges the Hebrews faced "will find their solution also in fuller views of the Person and Work of Christ."

We face challenges too.

Transition: My text - from the center of Colossians

Colossians 2:6, 7

My text is Col 2:6, 7. Key verses / theme text of the epistle. The things Paul says before are related and they lead up to these emphatic verses. Also, everything follows is an elaboration and extension with application what he is saying here.

"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." (NASB)

The NIV says it like this, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were, and overflowing with thankfulness."

I. **Powerful terms in the first part of these verses:” Received,” “Lord,” ”in Him”**

The main verb/exhortation is to “walk”. It is introduced by “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord or as Lord.” These words: Christ, Jesus, and Lord are loaded with content and spiritual impact.

Note that Paul takes the Colossians/and us back to the beginning.

- **Illust.** If we are having a challenge with something sometimes/often it’s necessary to say wait a minute let’s go back to the beginning.
 - **golf swing.** In running if I get an injury. **Mistakes in guitar**
- Epaphras is reporting to Paul. They are concerned about the new Colossian believers. He writes the letter and takes them back to the beginning.

The beginning: “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him ”

What happened in faith when received Christ at the beginning, continues in our walk. It’s the faith at the beginning that leads to the growth that comes later.

(Note: The word “received” has a nuance of welcoming what/whom was received.)

A. **Amazing Titles -- “Christ Jesus, the Lord.”** There are three main elements in Jesus’ name & titles:

- **Christ** – Anointed, Messiah, Mashiach. The one in whom the Davidic promises are fulfilled.
- **Jesus** – His humanity. In which he is savior by suffering death and being raised again. His humanity. Perfect God and perfect man. So that He could be the all sufficient sacrifice. And not only so; He is also our perfect High Priest. He can sympathize. He knows you not only by divine omniscience, but also by true human experience.
- **Lord** – submission of ourselves to the Lordship of Christ is an aspect of faith in him.

B. **Receiving him. See**

John 1:12

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

C. Lordship. See

Romans 10:9, 10

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

D. More than “Master”

Psalms 110:1

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

In this prophetic psalm, the anticipated Davidic king (Messiah) is exalted as Lord (Adonai). The LXX translates both *YHWH* and *Adonai* as *Kurios* – Lord. The earliest confession about Jesus (after Peter’s) is “Jesus is Lord” – Rom 10:9, 1 Cor 12:3.

Peter quotes this OT verse in Acts 2:34-36.

The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

E. Jesus is Supreme

Colossians 1:15-17

He is the image of the Invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

“Image” has the sense of exact image. “First born” has to do with inheritance. See Psalm 89:27. It does *not* say first created. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.)

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Jesus Christ is supreme as Lord, as the Logos, and as being (as the later confessions summarize) of one substance/essence with the Father.

F. Jesus' Lordship is NOT some type of burden.

See 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

1. *This is not modalism.*
2. Lordship gives liberty. Liberty in the sense of freedom & peace. Liberty from legalism. Liberty from works-based attempts at righteousness. The Spirit is opening new vistas and opportunities. Liberty to enter the new things God has.
3. Question: Are we holding onto something too tightly? It could even be something God has given you. If so, will you release it Him so that it can be what it should be. If it's not something he has given you, will you release it to Him so He can replace it with his will, which is far better.
 - Abraham. God gave Abraham Isaac. Abraham needed to place Isaac on the altar.
 - Illustration -- A young lady was having a struggle about her career. "I didn't give him permission to do that."
4. Submission to Jesus' lordship is not selective. Jesus is not a smorgasbord.

Transition

After taking us back to the beginning Paul tells us how the Christian is continued, based on Christ's fullness

So as you received Christ Jesus the Lord so WALK. Live, live out life. But how can I actually do this?

Paul says we do this *in Him*. (Occurs 2 times in these verses.) "*In him*" is the spiritual sphere in which we now live. We have been placed in Christ.

II. **Paul takes us to living out the Christian life.**

(Back to Colossians 2:6, 7)

“. . . so walk *in him*, **having been rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.**" (NASB) ."

Paul gives us **4 accompanying expressions** that describe how to walk: (Some grammar). Foundations for living. Basis for a fruitful walk. Paul says:

Walk (1) having been rooted, (2) being built up, (3) being confirmed (in the Faith), and (4) abounding in thanksgiving.

A. ***Walk rooted.***

"As you received Jesus Christ the Lord so walk in him *having been rooted . . .*"

Paul is using the image of **a firmly rooted tree or plant.**

How do I walk rooted?

1. I need to know that I am rooted.

a. I need to recognize that that I have been *rescued* from darkness and *transferred* into Christ's kingdom.

Colossians 1:13, 14, "For he rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."

Illustration: Story of a long-time prisoner, fully conditioned by the routines. Although he was informed that his sentence has been commuted. He still responded to things as if he was still a prisoner. Fish in an aquarium trained not to attack other fish. They don't think they can.

b. I need to know (Rom. 6:6) that when I believed I was placed in union with Christ. See Romans chapter 6. I need to

consider myself dead to sin and alive to God through the death and resurrection of Christ. This is the objective truth for the believer. I don't make it happen by understanding it. It's already true objectively and positionally for the believer. However, there is a release of its results when its truth is revealed to the heart by Holy Spirit. Rooting has results.

Romans 6:6, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him."

Romans 6:11, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

2. Why is this important? if I don't believe/know it then I will try to replace this with something else -- human effort and works. Instead, I need to walk in a way that rests in faith on Christ, as that is taught by the scriptures and real in apprehension by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

1 Cor. 2:9, 10, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard . . . these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit."

John 16:13, 14, "When the Spirit of truth has come he will guide you into all the truth . . . He will take what is mine and disclose it unto you."

Eph. 1:16-18, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know"

3. A little grammar (not too much I promise). The **tense of verbal "rooted" is perfect**. Perfect tense expresses completed action in the past which has results continuing in the present. Walk counting upon the rooting you have in Christ. A rooted plant or tree grows and produces fruit. For a plant to grow it is rooted in soil. Spiritually the soil is Christ and his word the scriptures. To press the metaphor the Holy Spirit the water. Proper rooting results in living growth.

Illustration:

Trees in Bonelli Regional Park after a windstorm. The trees on the flat grassy part had roots running along the surface. Many of them were toppled by the wind. I noticed the natural trees on the hill and ridge tops did not have this problem. The growth there had pushing roots

deep into the soil. They had strength from deep rooting to withstand the wind.

4. See Psalm 1:2, 3 and Jeremiah 17:7, 8. Meditating on the Word. And Trust.

Application – be nourished on Christ.

B. Walk *being built up*.

1. The tense/aspect of “**being built up**” is **present**. Paul is talking about a *continuous process that flows out of being rooted*. And that ongoing building happens due to our relationship of being in him.

Paul seems to be changing metaphors here. He moves *from trees and rooting to building* – as in a structure. But not so fast. Did you know the human body grows by *building with cell division*? Did you know that plants and trees grow by cell division? Cells called **meristems** constantly divide to produce new cells. The new cells once produced then absorb water and stretch significantly in size. A plant or tree grows by being built up.

How do we grow? From *grace to grace (John 1:16, 17)* and from *faith to faith (Romans 1:16, 17.)* As a plant cell is produced and then is filled with water, so the life of believer increases and grows. This happens when there are new situations requiring faith and that new place for faith for increase of faith is then filled with the faithful one Jesus Christ in the life-giving dynamic of the Holy Spirit. As Paul says elsewhere, Christ in you is the hope of glory. It’s interesting that once the new cell is produced and expands there is cell differentiation. This reminds us that as we are built up in Christ, the Holy Spirit progressively produces the differentiated fruit of the Spirit within us/within the believer – “love, joy, peace, patience, etc.”

Did you know that you can see a *profile of a tree’s growth* by looking at the *growth rings*. You see the years of abundant rain and the years of draught. Some rings are closer. Rings are formed by Earlywood in Spring and Latewood in Summer/Fall. Wood that alternates between spring and late season growth has exceptional linear strength. The Latewood of Summer/Fall has darker, denser, thinner bands preparing for winter dormancy. Latewood provides the primary linear, tensile strength of timber. In the same way we can see the profile of our life of faith. The hard rings from the Latewood seasons and growth of each Spring. Growth is ongoing. The constant is Christ, and Christ relied upon in each step of the way.

The hard Late wood growth makes the wood stronger. Wood that has grain has linear strength.

Difficult times in faith, e.g. waiting, are like Late-wood growth. There doesn't seem to be as much happening as with Springwood. But the strength of the tree is in them.

Cf. also **John 15:1, 4. "I am the Vine. You are the branches."**

2. This being built up takes place "in him."

C. Walk being *confirmed in the faith* (some translations say "your faith").

1. Confirmed. The word means "confirmed" or "established." It refers to making a person to be firm in commitment. It means to be established and strengthened. (BDAG)

How are we confirmed in the faith?

2. **Just as you were taught.** Jesus works in us thru his word to strengthen.

1. The Colossians were initially taught by Epaphras. Next, they were taught by Paul in this epistle.
2. We need to know something about teaching/being taught. There is **an outer, and an inner teaching**. The teaching of the word must be accompanied by the inner "teaching" of the Holy Spirit to the heart.
 - The teaching of the Word and doctrine. In proclamation, preaching, and study. (This happens for us individually and in community.)
 - The teaching of the Spirit in and to the heart – taking the things of Christ presented in word and showing them unto us. This is the inner teaching. Having the eyes of our hearts enlightened.
 - So, it's not just understanding the teaching/doctrine. But it results in a deepened relationship with Christ personally.

D. Walk *abounding in thanksgiving*.

1. Thanksgiving is mentioned last by Paul because it flows out of the previous things.

2. Thanksgiving reflects the believer's strong position of joy. Joy and thanksgiving are closely related.
3. Thanksgiving points to the victory we have in Christ. It's a Romans 8:31-39 kind of victory.

See the quote: Romans 8:31-39

3. **So, how is your thanksgiving?** Have you checked it recently?

Illustration:

Thanksgiving is like the oil light in your car. *Except it operates in reverse.* When the oil light comes on in your car, it means something is not quite right. In spiritual life, in the life of faith in Christ, when the light of thanksgiving is "on" things are as they should be. My faith is healthy. When the light is dimmed or goes out then that indicates something is not quite right. I need to check what's going on.

4. Thanksgiving is **not** some sort of meritorious work. Instead, it is us responding to what God has already given us, when that is seen with eyes of faith.
5. Thanksgiving even in times of stress and suffering.
6. We are to give thanks **in** all things, and **for** all things. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:18 & Eph. 5:20.)

Conclusion and Application

- Have I submitted everything to Christ as Lord?
- Have I taken a stand in my position in Christ by faith?
- Am I being built up by the teaching of the Word, and by the Spirit's teaching based on the Word?
- How's my thanksgiving?