

WALKING IN CHRIST

Colossians 2:5-7

Intro: I hope you all are continuing to read Colossians even though it has been a couple of weeks since we have considered it together. My hope is that we all will be reading it at least once a day. I know that most of you are reading your Bible through during the year, and perhaps are doing reading other reading in the Bible as well, but the regular, daily reading of any book of the Bible, or any section of the Bible, will give us all insights into the Word of God which we cannot get in any other way. It doesn't take long to read Colossians, but I don't want you to think about how quickly you can read it. Instead, we need to be considering about how *carefully* and *thoughtfully* and *prayerfully* we can read it. The only way any of us can be convinced of how profitable the reading and re-reading of Scripture can be, is for us to do it. I guarantee that if you start such a practice, you will never stop it.

One thing that will surely be impressed upon your mind as you read this short epistle, is that it was a good church. It was a godly church. And it was a godly church because the Colossian believers were godly people. The only way to have a godly church is to have godly people who make up that church. Although Paul had never been there, and although most of them had never seen him personally, yet the Lord had placed these people upon Paul's heart in such a way that he could not forget them. He indicated as much in the first verse of our text for today: Col. 2:5.

But let me go on to say that although the people were godly, and the church was godly, yet it was not a perfect church, nor were the people perfect. There have been many godly churches, but there never yet has been a perfect church.

But it was their godliness that made them a special target of the Enemy. And the Apostle Paul knew this, and it is especially important for us to see the action which he took. And surveying his actions will help us to review what we have covered in this epistle so far.

When the Apostle Paul first heard about the church in Colosse, it was already prospering spiritually. Nevertheless, knowing the Lord, and knowing the Enemy, the Devil, and knowing the Lord's people – how prone we all are to let our guard down when things are going well – the first thing that the Apostle Paul did when he first heard about the good

things going on in Colosse, was *to pray!* (See the first part of 1:4 and 1:9). His prayer is recorded for us. But note that it was not only a prayer of intercession, but a prayer of thanksgiving. (See 1:3 and 2:5, in our text for today.) Isn't it true of us that usually what moves us to pray are problems? But not so with the Apostle! He got ahead of the Enemy by praying. And yet, in spite of his praying, we later in the epistle that the Devil had gotten his strikes in through false teachers. But that did not discourage Paul from praying. Like a true soldier in battle, a setback only made him intensify his praying.

Paul knew the people were not able to handle the Enemy and his cohorts, and he knew that he was not able to take care of the church himself. *But he knew that God could and would protect the work in Colosse, and so he appealed to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for blessing.*

But he did a second thing: He wrote a letter to the church at Colosse. And he told them in 4:16 that he wanted his letter to go to the nearby "church of the Laodiceans," and he wanted them to read the letter he had written to the Laodiceans. In addition to the fact that the Holy Spirit had moved upon Paul to write, and what to write, in addition it is very evident that Paul, who could not at that time go to Colosse because he was a prisoner in Rome, desired to write what he did write, and which has been preserved for us so that we, too, can profit from it.

However, notice the difference between the kind of a letter which Paul wrote as compared with what you and I might have written. He did not complain about his imprisonment, asking them to do what they could to intervene for him. He did not tell them about his health, nor did he go into details about how things were going with him. *He got right down to business writing about that which was the theme which was of the utmost importance to him, and that was **the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!***

Not all expositors agree as to the exact nature of what has been called "the Colossian heresy," but Bishop Handley Moule, a Church of England bishop who lived in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, has made some helpful statements about what was threatening the work in Colosse. He said, "It was a doctrine of God, and of salvation, which cast a cloud over the glory of Jesus Christ . . . It put Jesus Christ in the background" (p.9). These false teachers had come in to set the believers straight. They wanted the Colossian believers

to know that “what they did not fully understand that Jesus Christ might be much, *but He was not all*” (pp. 9, 10 - italics mine). Jesus Christ was not “the Son of God with power.” These false teachers came with a new Gospel. But there cannot be a new Gospel. But these heretics who claimed to be teachers of religion, minimized the place of Jesus Christ. He was not “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” These false teachers had many things to say, but the Lord Jesus Christ was not what Bishop Moule called “the magnetic Center of their discourses” (p. 12).

And so what line did the Apostle Paul take in writing to the church at Colosse? Let me quote again from Bishop Moule:

From first to last the dogmatics of the Epistle consist in just this, the infinite glory of the Person of the Son of God, and the grandeur of His finished work, and the abundant fulness of His Grace. And the noble ethics of the Epistle are just this, the Son of God applied to the believer’s daily path, in this perfection of what He is and what He has done (pp. 15, 16).

Paul insisted upon the preeminence of Christ in salvation, as the Final and Complete revelation of God, as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and as the Head of the Church. And this is what we had in chapter 1. So not only must we know that Christ cannot be set aside altogether, but He cannot be minimized in any way. “Christ in you” is your only “hope of glory,” and my only hope as well! See how chapter 1 ends in verses 27-29. Christ not only died, but He rose again, and He is the One Who works in us to assure our ultimate perfection.

We have seen at the beginning of chapter 2 that the Apostle Paul again expressed the great burden, the “conflict” in prayer, that he had for the Colossian believers, and what he rejoiced in as they were faced with the false teachers who were spreading their false teaching. A spiritually strong church is the safest from the evil effects of false teaching. (Read 2:1-7).

Now let us look especially at verses 5. Here the Apostle Paul was rejoicing in:

I. THE CORPORATE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH (Col. 2:5).

This was his prayer for them according to the first three verses of this chapter. (Review.)

Paul “in spirit” felt just as close to them as if he had been personally present with them. Their battle was his battle with them. And you can see that he was greatly encouraged by two things which he knew were true of them:

- 1) What he called, “your good order.”
- 2) “The steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”

Both of these statements show that Paul was using a military metaphor as he referred to the church at Colosse. In the first he was recognizing the solid relationship that they had with each other. They were standing shoulder to shoulder as trained and united soldiers of Jesus Christ, ready to stand against the enemy. We can understand that this was one reason why the Lord Jesus prayed so fervently in His high priestly prayer in John 17 that His disciples would be one. If there is disunity, the Enemy has a situation which he can use to his own advantage. It is very, very important for believers in our conflict with the Devil that we stand together, united in our desire to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is the Christian life a warfare, but the ministry of the church is also a warfare. Paul went into this aspect of our lives in Eph. 6:10-18.

The military metaphor continues in the words “the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” The Apostle Peter made reference to this in 1 Pet. 5:8-9:

- 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
- 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

It is of the utmost importance that in our conflict with the Devil and the world we in the Church stand united especially in our knowledge of Who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and what He has done as our Savior. And in far off Rome it gave the Apostle Paul special joy to know that the church in Colosse knew that they were in a warfare over the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they were standing shoulder to shoulder ready to die if necessary in their stand together for the truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are in the same conflict today. Even some Christian leaders who in the past have stood solidly for the Gospel, are willing to say that there may be people in heaven who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, even people who follow other religions in the world. And one reason for this is that they are deficient even in the understanding of what the Bible

teaches about God. The false teachers who had come into Colosse would, as I have pointed out, minimize Christ, and the grace of God. And when this happens they have to minimize the depravity of man and thus make human works meritorious toward salvation. So the grace of God is abandoned in favor of the works of men. No such teaching would have been acceptable in the church in Colosse, and this caused great joy in the heart of the Apostle as he was “beholding” their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.

But there was one area where the Devil might yet gain an advantage over the believers in Colosse. And this led to:

II. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE EPISTLE (Col. 2: 6-7).

This was the first, but there are many more which follow. But being the first, it obviously occupied a major place in the thinking and praying of the Apostle. As in all of Paul’s epistles he was not only concerned that the people of God understood the truth, and stayed faithful to the truth from a doctrinal position, *but he was concerned that their knowledge of the truth would be applied to their lives. And so we come to a verb of major importance in the teaching of both the OT and the NT: the word “walk.” It focuses attention on the way the people of God live.*

Although the language of the OT is Hebrew, and the language of the NT is Greek, yet we can say that this word “walk” has its roots in the OT. Let me cite some OT examples of where it is used.

It was used first in telling us about Enoch. See Gen. 5:21-24:

21 Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methusaleh:

22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

23 And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

This speaks of Enoch’s fellowship with God. It means that Enoch lived to please God. He did God’s will. We have a comment on Enoch in Heb. 11:5:

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

And it is in connection with Enoch that we are told in the next verse, Heb. 11:6,

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Next we are told in Gen. 6:9 that “Noah was a just man and perfection in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” And after that we come to Abraham in Gen. 17:1 where it is recorded that the Lord said to him, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

Right here in Colossians we had this word in Col. 1:10. And we have it again in Col. 3:7 and 4:5. Paul used this word many times in all of his epistles written to the churches, from Romans to 2 Thessalonians. So it is an extremely important Biblical word. Before we were saved we walked one way, but now that we are saved we are to walk in an entirely different way.

But the word not only speaks of how we live, but just as we walk to get from one place to another, so this word in the Bible speaks of the fact that there is to be progress in our relationship with the Lord, in our fellowship with Him, in our obedience to Him.

Paul is strong in his teaching that when we are saved, we are in Christ and Christ is in us. We are eternally united with Him. Verse 6 relates our salvation to our walk: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” How did we receive Him? We received Him in absolute faith that He could save us, and that salvation was not possible through anyone else. We are to trust Him in our daily lives in the same way: He is the only One Who can enable us to obey God and to please Him in every aspect of our lives – what we are, where we go, what we say, and even in what we think. Our lives are to lived in continual fellowship with the Lord and in complete trust in Him. We are to live knowing that without Him we can’t do anything to please God, but we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

Now the word “walk” is a present imperative. It is addressed to everyone in the Colossian church. No one is excluded. It means that they are to walk in dependence upon Christ now, and to keep walking in Him. And if anyone is not walking he or she is to begin immediately, and to keep walking in Christ continually. It is to be a way of life which goes on

without any interruption. As we began with Christ, so we are to continue in Him.

But now look at verse 7. Paul describes the Christian life here using two figures of speech. The first one is like a plant; the second is like a building. You don't need me to tell you that roots are under the surface of the earth, but a building is above the surface. Roots are unseen, but the building is very visible. Both are important in our walk with the Lord.

The only other time this word "rooted" is used in the NT is in Eph. 3:17 where Paul in one of his prayers prayed that the believers would be "rooted and grounded in love."

It is only as you and I get stronger in our roots, that it will become more apparent to others that we are becoming stronger as the buildings of God. If the building, our outward appearance and behavior is weak, it is because our roots are weak. As you read the Word, and believe it, and obey it, your roots are being strengthened, and that in turn makes your building stronger. And it all comes about as we become more and more established in the faith, that is, in the great doctrines of Scripture, beginning with the doctrine of Christ, and going on to all that God has given us in His Word. That's why you need to be reading your Bible. That's why you come to Sunday School and church. This is the object of our fellowship with each other. We all need to keep growing. As we are strengthened in our roots, our lives outwardly become more pleasing to God, and we find ourselves complaining less and less, and abounding more and more in thanksgiving.

Concl: Now the question remains: Are you and I really walking in Christ? Is the Lord Jesus Christ really your Savior? Are you walking in dependence upon Him and in fellowship with Him? Is He your dearest Friend? Can you really say that He is preeminent in your life? Is your main object in life pleasing Him? Is your building a little shabby because you haven't been paying enough attention to strengthening your roots? Are you interested in accumulating a lot of knowledge about the Bible, but are slow in praying that it will have a transforming effect upon your life? Oh, that Col. 2:6 and 7 were more descriptive of my life! There is no excuse for the failures in our lives because we have an all-sufficient Savior. Everything is too difficult for us, but there is nothing impossible with Him. How wonderful it would be if this sixth day of July 2003 would mark a big step ahead with all of us in our walk with the Lord and in the Lord.