

Colossians 2 (Part 2) v6-8 • Rooted and built up in Jesus

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All right, Colossians chapter 2, this is our second installment. You'll notice up on the screen that I've given the title to this message "Rooted and built up in Jesus." I don't know if you've had a spiritual checkup lately, but we're going to do that here today and I think it's kind of fitting, from the standpoint that many of you have been out of fellowship for well... I have. I've been out of fellowship for a long period of time other than the fellowship I've been able to have with my wife and then, in the last couple of weeks, we've been meeting together as a staff. Isn't that fun doing Zoom meetings? If I never see a Zoom meeting again, I'm going to be okay with it. They're exhausting. Everybody's talking at the same time, people don't mute their mic, and their dog starts barking, and oh, it's just wonderful.

But, anyway, because of the fact that we're kind of coming back together after this period of time away, I think this is appropriate; that here we are in Colossians, and Paul is kind of making us stick out our tongue and say, "Ah." And he's checking us out, looking us over with these verses, and telling us some critically important things about what it means to walk with Jesus.

We're going to read verses 6, 7, and 8. I planned on going further, but this is as far as I got. Follow along with me in chapter 2, beginning at verse 6. He writes,

"⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ." (ESV)

We're going to stop there. Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Word today, and speak to us we pray, through these scriptures. We ask it in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen. Amen.

The very first statement that Paul makes here in verse 6, is one of the most important, I think, in the Bible. But I think it's very easy to miss if we don't pause long enough to think about it and to ponder what it means. And what he

says here in verse 6, beginning here in this verse is, “*Therefore,*” And remember, the word “therefore,” you always got to stop and ask yourself what is that word “therefore” and it always points to what came before. And what Paul has been doing previous to this is he’s been talking to us about the Lordship and the deity of Jesus Christ. In light of those things, therefore, he says to you and I, “*as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,*”

And that's a very simple statement actually, but you'd be surprised how many Christians miss it and miss the essence of what it actually means. Paul says as you received Him, walk in Him. Just as you received Him, walk in Him, right? How did you receive Him? By faith, right? That's how you received Christ Jesus as Lord, by faith.

And so, he's saying just as you started this whole walk with Jesus, by faith, now, walk out your relationship with Him in the same way, as you started keep doing, keep going. You might be kind of looking at this and kind of going, this is dumb. This is obvious. No, you'd be surprised. Let me show you first of all, how Paul wrote something to the Romans, and I like the NIV rendering of this. Check out this, he says,

Romans 1:17 (NIV)

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

“For in the gospel (in the good news) a righteousness from God is revealed (or made known), a righteousness (he says here) that is by faith (and look at this phrase) from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

And then he's quoting Habakkuk there (Habakkuk 2:4), at the very end of that. Now, I want you to pay attention to what he said here in Romans, because that phrase that is translated in the NIV, “*from first to last,*” in the Greek literally means “from faith to faith.” Now, you and I don't necessarily talk that way. We don't say “from faith to faith” because we just don't and that's why I think the NIV kind of grabbed this phrase and made it more understandable. What it means is from start to finish, live by faith. From the start you started off with faith, right? You put your faith in Jesus Christ, right? At the very beginning, right? Now, keep doing that all the way through, progressively, throughout your entire walk with the Lord.

And this is, again, where some of you might kind of say well, wait a minute, of course we live by faith. What other way is there to live? I'll tell you how. I'll tell you how a lot of Christians live after they come to faith in Jesus Christ. They

live by human effort. It happens all the time. People, it's rampant. We are saved by grace through faith and suddenly, well, I shouldn't say suddenly, it's actually a little more subtle than that, it seeps in slowly over time. Eventually, we're living our lives by human effort, and it's kind of like that frog in the kettle sort of a scenario, you don't even realize it's happening. You think you're living by faith, but there's just little things that happen, and you see how somebody else lives and you're like, I'm going to try to live more like that, or I'm going to do... and then somebody might come along and put something on you about something you have to do. Well, are you doing? Are you doing? And then we're thinking, oh, I got to do. And pretty soon, we've moved from this place of faith to the place of human effort where I've got to do it, I've got to get it done.

And what Paul says here to the Colossians is, just as you started with Christ, so walk in Him. Continue to walk in Him throughout the course of your Christian existence because the temptation is very, very subtle but very easy for the child of God to begin to take on human effort. And this is really the essence of what Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia when he was confronting in them the whole fact that he brought the Gospel to the churches in Galatia, he brought the good news. And what is the good news? Jesus died on the cross for you. There's nothing you have to do except just receive Him. There's no work. Just receive Him by faith, and you're saved. That is good news, and he brought that good news to the churches in Galatia. Guess what they did? They started giving way to these teachers who were coming in saying, yeah, faith, that's great at the start, but now you got to do. And they were throwing things like circumcision on them. Look what Paul wrote to the Galatians, chapter 3, verse 3, he says,

Galatians 3:3 (ESV)

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, (and that’s faith in God, right? Having begun through the power of the Spirit, activated by your faith, he says) are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

And the word “flesh” there speaks of human effort. Are you now trying to be made perfect by human effort, right? I mentioned to you guys last week, for those of you who were tuning in our study of Colossians and have been keeping up with this, but I talked last week about how I am witnessing this more and more, this whole idea of believers falling into the same error that the Galatians fell into. Of course for believers today it's not the issue of circumcision. Nobody's coming into our churches and saying you're going to be circumcised, but that was what they were dealing with. What we're dealing with is different, but it always goes like this, Jesus saved you, and you put your faith in Him, His

death on the cross, and you're saved, but in order to stay saved, now you have to do, and you can fill in the blank. We've had a couple of thousand years to fill in the blank and add all kinds of things. And I'd love to think that people have gotten it through their hearts that there is no blank, that it's just Jesus alone and what He did on the cross. I'd love to say that. Remember what we kept saying over and over again in our study through Galatians? Remember the line? It was kind of our mantra throughout that entire study. Jesus is enough. We kept saying it over and over again, Jesus is enough, Jesus is enough. That's what that study is all about.

I'd love to think that Christians throughout the world have gotten that through their hearts in their minds, but you'd probably be shocked to learn how many believers actually hold to the conviction that once you're saved, you have to obey the Ten Commandments to prove your love and obedience. I hear it from a lot of people. It's not an isolated thing, but again, I want to remind you what Paul said, “(Just) *as you received Jesus Christ, so walk in him.*” (Colossians 2:6) By faith, our life in Christ begins with faith, and it is faith that carries us through to the end. We are saved by grace through faith, we are kept by grace through faith and that is so important to remember.

And then Paul explains how we walk out our relationship with Jesus. Look at verse 7 in your Bible here in Colossians. He begins to describe this walking out of our relationship, he says, that you might be ⁷“*rooted.*” I love that word. By the way, that’s the name of our young adult group, they picked that word. That single word is the name of the group, and I love it. They call themselves Rooted. That’s a great word. “*rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*”

Let me put these up on the screen for you. Four keys to walking with Christ. You can see them there in case you're taking notes, maybe that'll kind of help you.

Four KEYS to walking with Christ:

- Rooted
- Built up
- Established in the faith
- Abounding in thanksgiving

And the first one is rooted. That's a picture of...you know what roots do, they go down into the soil, pull up the nutrients, anchoring the tree or plant or whatever it is to the ground in such a way that it creates stability and so forth.

Why is it important? Why is it important that Paul would say to you and I, hey, be rooted in Christ. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 14 gives us the answer,

Ephesians 4:14 (ESV)

...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Yeah, when you're anchored, when you're rooted in Christ, then when something weird comes along, some crazy doctrinal jargon, you're not going to be pulled away. You're going to say no, I'm rooted in Christ, rooted in His Word, what He says. They're not going to follow that mumbo, it's not in the Bible or whatever the case might be.

Some Christians, frankly, rather than being rooted, they're like tumbleweeds that have been disconnected from the root. And they just roll wherever the wind happens to be blowing and then we hit them with our car as we're going down the freeway. Have you ever done that? I did it just a couple of days ago. We were going to Boise, these huge tumbleweeds I nailed them all. Bam! You're picking them out of your grill for about a week and a half. We don't want to be uprooted. We don't want to be rolling with the wind and so we are to be rooted in Jesus, rooted in the Word.

Next, take a look at the next area again. We're to be built up.

Four KEYS to walking with Christ:

- Rooted
- **Built up**
- Established in the faith
- Abounding in thanksgiving

And actually the whole phrase is “*built up in Him.*” And the words “built up,” by the way, are in the present tense. Do you remember your verb tenses from school? And the present tense means ongoing, right? It's not past tense, it's not future tense, it's present tense, so it's always happening. You are always being built up in Him. It's a constant thing that we need. I hope that you're here today because you want to be built up in Jesus and continually built up in Him. And Paul wrote to the Romans related to this. Let me show you this, Romans 14:19 says,

Romans 14:19 (ESV)

So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

Let's pursue those things. I'm supposed to be thinking about what's going to build you up, you're supposed to be thinking about what's going to build me up, and then we're supposed to do it, okay? We're supposed to do it for each other, right? Then Paul wrote to the Corinthians, check out this passage from 14:26. He says,

1 Corinthians 14:26

What then, brothers? When you come together...Let all things be done for building up.

And that speaks now of the church gathering. He says when you come together, don't do anything that's going to tear anybody down. Don't do anything that's going to cause any problems with anybody. Do things always when you come together that are going to build people up because we need to be built up. And then from Ephesians, I like this passage too from chapter 4, it says that,

Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)

...he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

“... he gave the apostles, (he gave) the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds (which are pastors) and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, (oh, look at this) for building up the body of Christ,”

Even the ministry giftings are given to do that. And we are to be about the business. You're to be actually thinking about it. What can I do? What can I do to build people up today? When I come together on a Sunday, on a Wednesday, when I get together with my small group during the week, what can I do? What can I do to build people up?

Next on our list, we are to be established in the faith.

Four KEYS to walking with Christ:

- Rooted
- Built up
- **Established in the faith**
- Abounding in thanksgiving

And this is also in the present tense, so it's continual. To be established means to be settled, to be resolved, right? And since the words, “*in the faith*,” refer to the truth of God’s Word, we understand that basically what he's talking about here

is about what we believe and what we hold to be true. He says be established in what you know to be true.

Are you established? I'm not just saying, do you know what you believe? I'm saying, are you established in it? Do you understand the difference? Because you see, I can believe something, but if I'm not established in it somebody can come along and they can change my mind. Or I can hear some weird wacky doctrine or something, or somebody can yip yap in my ear, and I can kind of start going, oh, really? That tells me I'm not established, see? It's very important that we ask ourselves this question, that's part of our checkup today. Are you established in your faith?

You might say well, how would I know? Well, you can know whether or not your faith... if your faith can be shaken, then you are not established in it. If it can be shaken, right? And there's a lot of things we believe. There's things we believe about salvation. There's things we believe about God Himself. There's things we believe about heaven and hell, and judgment, and reward, and there's a lot of things we believe. But whatever can be shaken about those things, those are not established. But obviously what we need to be established in the most is our salvation and what it is to be saved.

Sue and I were just talking about this yesterday and Sue was mentioning...we actually went out for a motorcycle ride, and we talked to each other while we're riding because we have these headphone thingies, these intercoms, and there's a story that goes with that, but I'm not going to tell it right now because I'd be telling on my wife. But anyway, she was saying to me if somebody read just a few of the last chapters of Revelation, they might come away with the idea that salvation is all about what we've done to earn the reward because it talks a lot about that there. And I came back and said well, yeah and there's a lot of...I mean, the book of James could be a really confusing book to somebody who's not established in their faith.

Do you understand that there are passages in the Bible that can be confusing because people are not established enough in their faith to understand what's being said. Do you hear me? I'm not saying the Bible is confusing. I'm not saying that. I'm saying people get confused because they're not established in their faith.

And what I'm talking about is the idea that my salvation is given to me free, free of charge by faith, okay? Now, when I know that and then when I'm established in it, things might come along to rattle me on that particular topic, but I don't get rattled because I know what's true. And so many times when people ask me

questions about something related to salvation, which they're confused about, and they'll say okay, now, I read this in the Bible, and this is kind of confusing me. And you know what I have to go back and do? I have to go back and say okay, how are you saved? Well, what do you mean? How are you saved? By putting my faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. Okay, that's your foundation. Don't move from that, okay? Everything else proceeds from that foundation.

You with me? Now, once you've established that foundation and you've been established in your understanding, I am saved by grace through faith, this not of myself, it is the gift of God so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 9) Once that's there and it's laid down and it's secure, now I can go through and I can look at these other things in the Bible and I'm not going to get rattled by the assumption or the appearance of some of these verses that might suggest somehow that it's all about good works because Jesus frankly said some things that, if you don't have a solid foundation about how you're saved, He might say some things to you that could cause some confusion.

Jesus said some things like unless you take up your cross and follow me, you're not worthy of being called mine. And somebody reads that verse and they come back to me, and they go okay, wait a minute. And then Jesus says unless you hate father and mother and love me more than all the others, you're not worthy of being mine, and somebody reads that verse and they go okay, Pastor Paul, I got a problem here because Jesus just said...

And to them, you see, they've been shaken a little bit because they're not established in the rock-solid foundation of how our salvation takes place in the first place. By grace through faith it's not of yourselves, it is the gift of God lest no one so no one can boast. You with me? When that's laid down and established, you can read those other verses and say well, that's obviously not talking about salvation because I know how I'm saved. Now I can begin to move on to a greater and deeper understanding of what some of these other passages are saying and so forth.

It is very, very important that we be established, as Paul is saying here, in the faith. And then the last thing he mentions here is *"abounding in thanksgiving."* Your Bible may say *"overflowing with thankfulness"* or even *"overflowing with gratitude"* if you have a different translation. And again, the tense is present, so it's continual. You're to be continually abounding, overflowing with thanksgiving but we don't always feel thankful, do we? Sometimes we feel, in fact, quite the opposite but it's not about feelings, it's to be a continual thing, and

even a habitual thing. Imagine that. Can you imagine somebody being habitually thankful?

Think about it for a second. I got this habit. I'm just habitually thankful. Hey, I'll take that one, right? I mean, there's a lot of things you can make as habits in your life. That's a good one. Let me show you what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 18. He says,

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It is God's will for you. Pastor Paul, I just really want to know God's will. Well, first of all, it's God's will for you to be thankful. And we ought to learn to be able to find things that we're thankful for. It's like, well, you know, here all this COVID 19 stuff, how can I be thankful for that? Well, be thankful that you didn't die, for one thing. You're still here. Can you be thankful? Can you find something to be thankful for?

I found something very interesting online that I want to share with you. It was on a website that is hosted by Harvard University and here's what it said, I'm just going to read this to you. It says, two psychologists did some research on gratitude or thankfulness. In one study they asked, and by the way, this is not a Christian study, but in one study they asked all the participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics. One group wrote about things they were thankful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations, things that displeased them, and the third wrote about events that had affected them with no special emphasis on whether they were positive or negative. After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude, listen to this, this is on Harvard's website, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. They also exercised more, had fewer visits to the doctor than those who focused on sources of aggravation. (Pastor Paul slaps the table) Ow! So there, right? Isn't that good though? I mean, it's like, be thankful. I hit my right on the little thing that holds your pencil right there.

But, you know, be thankful. Have gratitude in your heart. It makes a difference, it makes a difference in your emotional health, it can make a difference in your physical health. And as believers, I got to tell you something, we ought to be the most thankful people on the globe. I thought about some of the other benefits of thankfulness. Let me put these on the screen for you just in case you're taking

notes. First thing, being thankful and expressing thanksgiving, the first thing it does is it,

Being thankful and expressing thanksgiving...

- keeps our hearts in right relationship with the giver of all good gifts

And what I mean by that is that it reminds us that He's the One who gives good gifts, as the Bible says, every good and perfect gift comes from above, right? (James 1:17) And so when I'm thankful, it keeps me in that understanding. It keeps refreshing me about that idea. Secondly, it

Being thankful and expressing thanksgiving...

- keeps our hearts in right relationship with the giver of all good gifts
- it reminds us of how much we actually have

And that's an important thing. And then, thirdly, it,

Being thankful and expressing thanksgiving...

- keeps our hearts in right relationship with the giver of all good gifts
- it reminds us of how much we actually have
- saves us from harmful emotions and attitudes that rob from us the peace of God

Like dissatisfaction and then later on down the road, bitterness, because I don't have. There's something I want, but I don't have it. Why won't God give it to me? I'm going to sit and focus on that, you see. Instead of being thankful for what I do have, I'm going to sit and focus on what I don't have and what's that going to do for you? Well, I'll tell you right now, it's going to sink your Christian testimony with other people. And they're going to look at you and kind of like, boy, stay away from that person. They can sour a glass of milk at ten paces. But instead, we ought to just be thankful because we have so much to be thankful for but there's another very important aspect to being thankful and the expression of that is praise, right? Let me show you this from Psalm 100. It says,

Psalm 100:4 (ESV)

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

“Enter his gates with (complaining. It doesn't say that. It says enter his gates with) thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!”

This is what ought to be coming out in our lives. This is what ought to be rising to the surface in our lives. This is what people ought to be seeing in you that don't know the Lord. People you work with, people you rub shoulders with, they ought to see in you a spirit of thankfulness. I'm thankful. I'm thankful to God about this and that. And if you can't find something to be thankful for, the issue is yours, not God's. And it's something you need to investigate.

And then verse 8, look with me in your Bible. Colossians 2:8, *“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”* And this is another very important verse. I'm not crazy, to be completely honest with you, about how the ESV rendered part of this verse. You'll notice that they talked about not according to the elemental spirits of the world. Your Bible may say “elementary principles” or “basic principles,” which I honestly think is closer to the Greek meaning. But let me also share this same verse out of the NIV. I kind of like this from the '84 revision. It says,

Colossians 2:8 (NIV 1984 rev)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

And I like that wording because Paul is making us aware of something that's very important for you and I to be aware of and that is that Christians can be taken captive. You are not impervious to the kinds of things that may come along and actually captivate you in a very negative and bad way. We are not impervious to those things. He says, *“⁸See to it that no one takes you captive.”*

Now, obviously there were things, and we're going to see this as we get into the next chapter, Paul is going to address some things in the church in Colossae they were potentially being captivated about and Bible scholars debate on what exactly those things were, it really doesn't matter. What matters to you and I is that what we're facing in the world we're not taken captive by those things that sound so plausible. The Bible talks about plausible arguments that come our way, and they sound really good. We're not dealing with Gnosticism today like

they were in the early church, and that's probably part of what Paul was addressing here with this church.

What we're dealing with are all kinds of other things. You say, well, pastor, what's taking Christians captive today? Evolutionary thought is taking Christians captive today. It sounds very plausible, it sounds very “scientific.” Fact of the matter is, it's really not very scientific at all, but people are captivated by it all the time. And evolution, guys, is the atheist's version of how things got here. That's all it is. Because when the atheist considers the possibility of the origin of all things, for him, God's not even on his radar. He's not even going to consider God.

What's he got left? Well, the only thing left to the atheist is natural. It has to happen naturally. And so everything comes from natural origins. And so the atheist thinks naturally he is, and the Bible refers to him as the “natural man.” And the Bible says the “natural man” cannot understand the things of the spirit, for they are spiritually discerned, because natural is all he has. You have natural and spiritual. You can consider both possibilities. But when the possibility of God is off the table, you got to come up with something. So, it just happened, right? It all evolved. Well, that's something that is grabbing people by the throat, and yes, Christians.

And there's all kinds of other things, worldly thinking that we just get dragged away by these things. Statements like, you can't love others until you learn to love yourself. That's worldly, human thinking that takes hold of people's hearts.

And living together outside of marriage is necessary to see if you're compatible. I had someone say to me one time when I mentioned that living together was biblically forbidden. They said well, how do you know if you're compatible? It's like you spend the rest of your lives working it out, right? Compatible. Are we compatible? We're not, are we? How long have we been married? 42 years? Yeah, we're not compatible. First of all, I'm a man and she's a woman. That just takes us on...we're in different universes. We don't even speak the same language. Most of the food she likes to eat, I can't stand the smell of, and vice versa. I choose to love her regardless. And she chooses to love me, regardless of my dietary choices. That's marriage.

See, the world's got it all messed up because they've been dragged away. They've been taken captive by worldly thinking. Homosexuality should be accepted as normal and good. And there's a lot of Christians who are really struggling with that one. And they take people captive. But in the end, they are hollow, and they are deceptive, as the NIV states. And they are predicated on the basic principles of the world, rather than the revelation of the Word. And

that's where our worldview needs to come from. The Word, not the world. Paul says, do not be taken captive by such thinking. And then as we get into the following verses, which we'll do next week, we're going to see how Paul is going to begin to lay out how Jesus Christ is the fullness of deity and how you and I have been given fullness. We're going to talk next week about what that means. It's a very important study, a very important thing that we see in the Word of God. You've been given fullness. So many Christians think that they're limping on one leg and their glass is half full. And Paul says you've been given fullness in Christ.