



D. Todd Cravens
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Be Rooted & Built Up In Christ

Rejoicing in the Glories of Jesus

Scripture: Colossians 2:6-15

Sermon Series: *Colossians*

Topic: Maturity, glory of Christ



Introduction

The greatest source of knowledge is not found in a book or a library. Neither is it found in an institution or a religious center. The greatest source of wisdom is not the collected sayings of

old men now dead. The most valuable and soul-satisfying mysteries of the universe are not found in space or in sex. The most expansive treasuries of knowledge are not found in the oldest universities or in the most ancient manuscripts. The greatest source of wisdom and knowledge are not found in print, or in a place, but rather in a person. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Jesus of Nazareth. All of God's mysteries are revealed in His only Son, Jesus, who is the Christ (i.e. the messiah). Every longing of the soul finds its satisfaction in Jesus. The greatest goal of life is to get to know Him and enjoy Him!¹ This was the point of last week's sermon.

"God's mystery is Christ Jesus and in Him are hidden (i.e. stored up) all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

Paul made this point so that the Colossian Christians would not be persuaded away from Christ by anyone's *"plausible arguments"* (Col. 2:4). Then he concluded the paragraph by stating that he was rejoicing in their *"good order and firmness of their faith in Christ"* (Col. 2:5). As he continues the letter, he gives several solid reasons for maintaining faith in Jesus and for treating him as the greatest treasure in all of life.

In the text this morning, we will discover six reasons to keep your faith firmly fixed and deeply rooted in Jesus, six reasons for treasuring and cherishing Christ. These reasons will urge us on to a deeper and more mature faith, they will reveal the beauty of Christ, they will lead you to love and worship Him, and I believe they will give you strength and fortification against anyone or any argument that seeks to pull you away from an unshakable faith and unwavering confidence in Christ.

As You Received Christ Jesus the Lord...

Before Paul gets to these six reasons to cherish Jesus, he first explains his aim.

Colossians 2:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 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.

To *"receive Christ Jesus the Lord"* is to believe in Him. Paul is taking the Colossians back in their minds to that moment in the past when they heard the gospel of Jesus and they believed it. He is taking them back to when they heard about Jesus' perfect, sinless life, His

¹ As first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Source: https://reformed.org/documents/wsc/index.html?_top=https://reformed.org/documents/WSC.html accessed 10 Nov. 2018.

authoritative and wise teaching, His bold and costly obedience of God the Father's will, His sacrificial and atoning death, those three dark days in the tomb, that glorious morning when it was discovered that He had risen from the dead, the undeniable fact of his resurrection as He was physically with his disciples over a period of 40 days—teaching them and opening their minds to the truth of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself, and then that final moment when, before the eyes of His dumbstruck disciples, He ascended up into heaven. Paul takes them back to that moment when they heard this news, believed that it was true, and received Jesus as the only chosen authoritative Son of God and the all authoritative Lord of all.

He is calling them back to remember their love for Him, their joy in Him, their delight in this life-changing news, their excitement of this mighty work of God, and their complete trust in Jesus as the Lord of life. Jesus was not some mere rabbi. He is the Son of God. Jesus is not merely a great teacher. He is God's only chosen messiah. Jesus is merely a cultural revolutionary. He is the risen Lord who is sovereign over all creation. This is what they were taught about Him and this is the truth they believed when they received Him.

So Walk

So Paul instructs them to *walk* in this truth. By '*walk*' he means 'daily conduct.' In other words, he is instructing the Colossian Christians not to allow a day to go by without being mindful of who Jesus is and what he has done. The Christian must never forget who she is nor what her Lord has done for her. Christians must never allow the the daily routine of our lives to cause us to forget that we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to us. We must begin every day recalling to mind that Jesus is our Savior and our Lord. Thinking this way must be an intentional part of the daily routine. He is the one who shed His blood to save us from our sins. He is the one who possess all authority over our lives. He is the Lord who reigns over the tiniest details of our lives. We must make our way through every day knowing that we belong to Jesus, body and soul.

In Him

Christians are to conduct daily life very cognizant that we are *in Him*. If you are a Christian, then when you go to work, you go *in Jesus*. When you go to school, you go *in Christ*. When you go to the bank, you go *in Christ*. Christians are never disconnected from Christ. Wherever you go and whatever you do, you are to do it as thought you are *in Him*, because you are in fact *in Him*. Your life is wrapped up, surrounded, and secured *in Him*. Your Savior has surrounded you and grounded you in His own nature. By the power of His Holy Spirit, Christians are united with Christ. In the truest sense, we are *in Him*.

This phrase is the dominate theme of this passage. This truth is referred to nine times in these nine verses. Paul obviously intends for this truth to be cemented in our minds.

The reason for the emphasis upon this fact is to provide these Colossian Christians, and thus all Christians, an understanding of where they will find security, stability, strength a solid foundation for their faith, as well as, the means for growth in maturity.

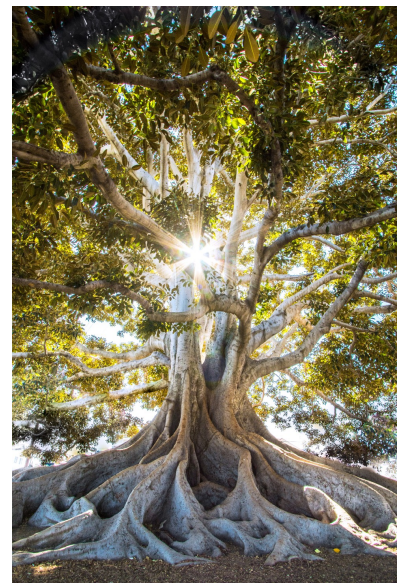
Colossians 2:6-7

"... so walk *in him*, rooted and built up *in him* and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

The way in which the Colossians Christians were to "walk in him" was by understanding that they were "*rooted and built up in him and established in the faith they were taught.*" They were to remember that their spiritual grounding and nourishment was found *in him*, that is in Christ.

Rooted In Him

Jesus is to the Christian what roots are to a tree. Jesus is the source of spiritual firmness, stability, and nourishment. Roots are grounded in the soil and thus keeps the tree standing. In the same way, Jesus is the soil of our souls and He it is who keeps us standing, firm in the faith. If we do not remain rooted in Him, then we will not remain standing or stay secure or grow strong. Just as roots are the source of life for the tree, so Jesus is the source of life for the Christian. He is the means by which life is sustained.



No Christian will maintain a vibrant and living faith who does not remain rooted in Christ. If you begin to drift from Christ, you will soon find that you have no strength to fight temptation and thus you will be quickly overcome by sin and the destructive consequences will begin to affect everyone around you. The tree that has no strong and deep roots has no power to remain firm when the winds of temptation come. If you want to remain in Christ, then the roots of your soul must go down deep in him.

How do we remain rooted in Him? In John 15 Jesus said that if we abide in His word, then we abide in Him. Abiding in Him means both reading His word and obeying His word. If you want to abide in Christ, then obey His teaching.

Built Up In Him

Not only must your roots go down deep in Him, but in Him must your strength be built up. Only in Him can you grow upward. Only in Him can your strength be built up. Only in Him can your faith be built up. Maturity comes about as you remain and grow in Him. You will be ever more established in your faith as you remain true to the gospel that you were taught. Paul is

saying to them. “Don’t deviate from the gospel that you were taught. Remain true to it. It will be like deep roots and firmness to your soul.”

Abounding in Thanksgiving

The final portion of Paul’s introductory remarks instructs the Colossian Christians, and us, to “*abound in thanksgiving*.” We are not to occasionally be thankful, but rather we are to *abound* in thanksgiving. In other words, we are to overflow with thanksgiving. We should be thankful frequently and for all things.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

No matter what circumstance you find yourself in, with the help of God, you can maintain an attitude of thanksgiving. This truth was brought to my attention this week by the words of **Lori Johnson**. Mrs. Johnson was a teacher at Lexington Christian Academy for over 30 years. All three of my children had her for at least one year and my youngest had her for two. This past Wednesday evening she died suddenly of a massive heart attack. She was an amazing teacher, a beloved colleague, and a dedicated Christian. Those of us connected to LCA have been mourning her sudden loss for the past four days.



Mrs. Johnson required each student to write what she called an “I believe” assignment, where students had to write about a belief they held and why they held it. As an illustration of how to do the assignment, Mrs. Johnson wrote her own “I believe” essay, entitled, “I Believe in Gratitude.” In it she describes the way her father, a preacher, began each church service by taking prayer requests from anyone who would stand up and share. The church was located in a poverty stricken, drug infested town in New Jersey. She noted that despite their circumstances a theme of thankfulness always came through.

The rainbow of people at Northside [chapel], mostly African Americans with a few Hispanics and Dutch people added to the mix, had come to worship despite the ongoing pain of poverty, drug abuse, disease, and a world of sin weighing them down. But what did they pray for? They thanked God that He brought them through the week and gave them the chance to worship him. I will never forget... their hearts of gratitude.

At the core of our life as Christians, we need to live out our gratitude for the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ. It always comes down to how we respond to that gift of forgiveness and grace. For 18 years of Sunday mornings in that little chapel in the poverty-stricken city of Paterson, New Jersey, I learned that all of life, the painful and the beautiful, is a gift.²

This describes the kind of *abounding in thanksgiving* about which Paul is speaking. It's not just thankfulness during the easy days, but rather it's thankfulness to God "for all of life, both the painful and the beautiful."

Let No One Take You Captive

After this summary section, Paul now commands the Colossian Christians not to allow anyone to pull them away from their faith and trust in Christ.

Colossians 2:8 (ESV)

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.

Evidently there was someone among the Colossians who was actively trying to deceive them and draw them away from Christ and toward embracing some sort of philosophy or human tradition, so Paul was warning them. His point is clear and relevant for us, we are not to let anyone—whether it's grandma, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband or wife—to pull us away from faith in Jesus as God's only Son, our sacrificial lamb, and sovereign Savior. There are such treasures to be found in Jesus that Paul labors to draw you deeper in love with Him. He piles up six reasons why Jesus is the most wonderful savior and the sweetest Lord to be found.

1) In Him Is Full Divinity

The first reason to love and worship Jesus is because in Him is full divinity.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ For *in him* the whole *fullness of deity* dwells bodily,

In Him dwells the fullness of deity. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Jesus is not lacking in any quality that His Father possesses. The full essence of God dwelled bodily in Jesus. This is a miracle, but this is true. And it is true of no other god or human. Jesus possesses full humanity and full divinity. The author of Hebrews says this fact is wonderfully sweet because it enables Jesus to be merciful to us since He too had to endure the sufferings that we humans endure.³

² Lori Johnson, "I Believe in Gratitude," essay on file in the library of Lexington Christian Academy, 48 Bartlett Ave., Lexington, MA.

³ Heb. 2:17.

Furthermore, His humanity enables him to “sympathize with all of our weaknesses.”⁴ You can rejoice that Jesus was fully human. He understands your suffering, your pain, and your weakness. But, the best truth of all, is that He is also divine. Therefore, He has the power and knowledge to help you in your weakness, pain, and suffering. Jesus has divine power to sustain His suffering children.⁵

Philippians 4:12-13 (ESV)

¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Not only does He have the ability to understand the difficulties of our human weaknesses and frailties, but He also has the power and resources to overcome those weaknesses frailties and to perfect grow and strengthen us through them. Rejoice in Jesus since He is fully man and fully God.

2) In Him You Are Filled

The second reason to love and worship Jesus is because in him we are filled.

Colossians 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and you have been *filled in him*, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Jesus is easy to love since He shares His fullness. Paul speaks in the past tense to these Colossian Christians, in Him they “*have been filled*.” He understands them to have already been filled in Jesus. This is what happens to all people who surrender their lives to Jesus and receive Him by faith. He fills His people with His own Holy Spirit. Jesus pours Himself into His people. He fills Christians with Himself.

Additionally, and most amazingly, the Jesus who gives Himself to His people is the Jesus “*who is head of all rule and authority*.” Thus there is no need to fear or be intimidated by evil spiritual “powers and authorities.”⁶ Those who are in Him, need not fear anything for all things are subjected to His power and His authority.

3) In Him You Were Circumcised

The third reason to love and worship Jesus is because in Him you were circumcised. Obviously, this requires a bit of explanation.

Colossians 2:11 (ESV)

⁴ Heb. 4:15.

⁵ Phil. 4:12-13.

⁶ Col. 1:16.

¹¹ *In him* also you were *circumcised* with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Paul is clearly here not talking about physical circumcision since he describes it as a "*circumcision made without hands*." In the NT, the phrase "made without hands" always refers to something that God himself has done.⁷ Then he describes this circumcision as the "*putting off the body of the flesh*" which is done "*by Christ*."

In the Old Testament circumcision was the sign that marked you as a member of God's covenant people. It was outward and physical and was performed by the priests (on males only upon their eighth day). However, Paul is talking here about something completely different. The circumcision about which he is here speaking is inward and spiritual and is performed by Christ. This is the work of Christ which marks one as being part of the New Covenant people belonging to Jesus. Paul speaks of this same reality in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 2:28-29 (ESV)

²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

The "circumcision made without hands" is an inner work of the Spirit on the heart of a person, going on in the very depths of the innermost being. Becoming a child of God requires an inner work of Christ's Spirit upon our sin-hardened hearts. Before anyone ever makes a decision to receive Christ, the Spirit of Christ must first do His inner work of circumcising the spiritually dead, sin-sick heart. Before anyone ever sees Jesus as lovely, the heart that loves sin must first be cut away. This is what Jesus does for us. In this, Jesus fulfills the New Covenant prophecy of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

This is the circumcision of Christ, as He by His Spirit cuts away and removes from His children the dead heart that enjoys sin and replaces it with a heart that is tender toward God, a heart that now enjoys obeying Him. Jesus is wonderful and lovely because He gives His children a new heart.

⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 115.

When a person turns to Christ, Jesus “*puts off the body of the flesh.*” This certainly does not mean that one has his physical body ripped away. What is put off from us is the dominating tendency to give in to the sinful desires of the flesh, that tendency within us that yearns to indulge in sin. When you come to Jesus by faith, He removes the dominion of the sinful nature. When a person surrenders to Jesus, heart and soul, Jesus rips you out of the dominion of darkness and transfers you into the kingdom of light. In Him, the sinful desires of the flesh are no longer your master. Jesus is now your master. This is why true freedom only comes through Jesus. “*He who the Son sets free is free indeed.*”⁸ This is what it means to be born again. This is what it means to have new life. This is dying to an old way of life and coming alive to a new way of living. But how is this unseen circumcision of the heart, this work that is done without human hands, how is this demonstrated? How do we know it has happened? How is this inner spiritual reality pictured before the world? The answer is through baptism.

4) In Him You Were Buried & Raised

This brings us to the fourth reason to love and worship Jesus, because when we are united with Him, by faith, His death becomes our death, and His resurrection becomes our resurrection.

Colossians 2:12 (ESV)

¹² having been *buried with him* in baptism, in which you were also *raised with him* through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Baptism represents being buried *with Christ* and being raised *with Him*. Believers are symbolically buried with Him as they are submersed under water and then symbolically raised with Him when they come up out of the water. But the most important point to see in this verse is the fact baptism is only effective when it is done “*through faith.*” We are buried with Christ and raised with Him, *through faith*. If there is no faith in Jesus, then baptism is no more effective in transforming the sinful heart of a person than is taking a bath.

Notice the order that Paul is describing. Notice that he first describes the inner circumcision of the heart that takes place and then the outer demonstration of that work happens in baptism, but the spiritual realities of being united with Christ in His burial and resurrection is only effective *through faith*. If there is no faith, then there is no having been buried with Him or raised with Him. However, if your faith is in Jesus, then praise God you ought to love and worship Jesus because in Him your sins have been buried and in Him you have raised to walk in newness of life.

5) In Him You Were Made Alive

The fifth reason to love and worship Jesus is because in Him you were made alive.

Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV)

⁸ Jn. 8:36.

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God *made alive* together *with him*, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Apart from Christ we are dead to God because of our trespasses. Trespasses refers to our willful, intentional sins. It does not refer to accidental sins, but to the intentional ones. It refers to all the times we knew what the boundaries were and we crossed them anyway. We knew what we were supposed to do, but we refused. We knew what we were not supposed to do, but we went ahead and did it anyway. When this sinning dominates our lives, we are dead to God and that's what life was like before we put our faith in Jesus, but when we did, then God *"made us alive together with Him."*

When a person puts their faith in Jesus, and thus are united with him by that faith, then God looks at the death of Jesus as being effective and applicable to that person. So when Todd Cravens put his faith in Jesus, then God the Father looks upon the long list of my sins as being forgiven because they were nailed to the cross through Jesus. My sins are why Jesus was nailed to the cross. And since in Him my sins were paid for, thus, the record of my debt is canceled. The legal demands of justice—that every sin be paid for—have been fulfilled in Him. All my sins make me worthy of the death penalty and that is exactly the penalty that Jesus bore on the cross. Therefore, by faith, my debt is cancelled, as also are all the legal demands against my sins.

Jesus willingly received in his flesh, the penalty of my sins, and he died for them. But He didn't stay dead. After Jesus had made full atonement for the sins of those who, like me, would put my faith in Him, He rose from the dead and thus His victorious life God now grants to me! *In Him God made me alive.* And you too, if you are *in Him*. And so can be anyone who will put faith in Jesus. Now that all my trespasses have been forgiven, by debt has been cancelled, there is nothing left to keep me from God and so together with Him, God made me alive! If you are a Christian, then in Him, your debts are cancelled, your trespasses have been forgiven, and you have been made alive!! Oh praise the LORD for Jesus. We all ought to love and worship Him.

6) In Him Is Triumph Over the Devil

Lastly, in Him is triumph over the devil and his evil angels.

Colossians 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by *triumphing* over them *in him*.

Before the death of Jesus on the cross, Satan had legal grounds to complain to God for not immediately enforcing the death penalty on all sinners. Satan is the accuser. That is what his

name means. According to Revelation 12:10 he would day and night stand before God accusing God's children because of all their sins, and he was right. All sinners justly deserve to die. However, after Jesus came and died for sinners, perfectly atoning for all their trespasses, there is no longer any legal grounds to accuse the children of God. Jesus has fulfilled the just requirements of the law. All sinners deserve to die, and thus on behalf of those who put faith in Him, Jesus died in their place and atoned for all their sins.

Thus Satan and all his evil angels have been disarmed. They no longer have any grounds to accuse God's children since all their sins have been atone for in Jesus. Now they have been put to shame. They once claimed that God was unjust to allow the guilty to go free, but in Christ's death all has been put right. In Him the devil and his angels have been disarmed and defeated. God triumphed over them in Him! Praise the LORD for Jesus. How can you not love and worship Him for what He has done for us? In Jesus the devil has lost his teeth. He still has a big mouth, but he absolutely has no teeth.

Conclusion

Do you see why Paul understood Jesus to be such a great treasure? In Him is found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Him is to be found life and salvation, freedom and victory, forgiveness and mercy.

Have you received this Jesus? Are you deeply rooted in Him? Does this truth not build up your faith? Are these words not great cause for abounding in thanksgiving?

Don't let anyone pull you away from Jesus. He is greater than all the financial treasures this world has to offer. Don't turn from Him by running off after some philosophy or new man-made doctrine constructed according to human tradition.

In Jesus is found all the fullness of God himself. In Him you have been and will be filled up. In Him your dead, sinful heart has been circumcised and transformed into a living spiritual heart. Jesus did this by His Spirit. In Him your sins were buried and in Him you were raised up to a new way of life. In Him you were baptized and in Him you were forgiven. In Him you have faith. In Him your debts are paid and your trespasses are cancelled. In Him your sins were nailed to the cross and you were freed from the accusations of Satan. In Jesus there is nothing but hope, victory, and triumph. In Him you are rooted and in Him you are built up.

Rejoice in His love for us and the work He has done for us.

Discussion Questions

1. Think back to the moment or season in life when you “received Christ.” Compare your relationship with Him now to what it was back then. What is the same? What is different?
2. How would you define “walking” in Jesus? Give examples of what this might look like.
3. What is the difference between being rooted in Christ and being built up in Him?
4. Have you ever been “taken captive” by a particular philosophy, tradition, or persuasive personality? If so, describe what brought you out of it.
5. Why do think Paul points out that “fullness of deity dwells bodily” in Jesus? What benefit might he been trying to provide to the Colossians by stating this fact.
6. In what area of your life might it presently be helpful to be reminded that Jesus “is the head of all rule and authority?”
7. What thoughts do you have about Paul using circumcision as a metaphor for the inner work of the Spirit upon the heart? What does his use of this metaphor tell you about his audience?
8. Do you remember your baptism? If so, what stands out about that experience?
9. How does the fact that in Jesus you have been forgiven of all your trespasses make you feel? Reflect for a moment on the fact that your sins were nailed to the cross?
10. Discuss the notion that in Jesus God “disarmed rulers and authorities.” Look back at 1:16 and discuss who these might be.
11. What one truth from this section stands out most in your mind?