

Walk in Him

For many years, I have had an interest in learning to draw, and so six years ago during my sabbatical, I spent a good bit of my time focusing on drawing . . . pencil sketches. One helpful resource that someone recommended to me was a book called, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. I bought the book and began reading it and doing the exercises. After my sabbatical I continued to spend time drawing on my days off.

Six years ago, I was exposed to the content of that book. I received the information and began to put it into practice in a regular consistent way. Even though I'm not very good, I found it life-giving to get lost in the activity of drawing. But over time, I got distracted. My attention got pulled away to other things. I got bored at times with the hard work of learning how to draw. And eventually I stopped. It has probably been three or four years since I last pulled out a notebook and my pencils and sketched anything.

Sometimes I think we can experience that same thing in our relationship Jesus. We are introduced to Him. We embrace the message of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection on our behalf. We begin to make it a regular practice to seek him and to grow in him. We find it life-giving to do so. But over time we can get distracted. Our attention gets pulled away to other things. And we get bored at times with the hard work of a daily walk with Jesus. And unfortunately, we can sort of set him aside in our lives.

Today, we are looking at Colossians 2:1-7. This is a passage in which Paul addresses this issue of making a start in Christ, but not continuing to walk in Him. As we look at this today, let me encourage each of us to be honest about where we are at in our journey with Christ. Are we walking with him in a daily, consistent way, or has our attention been drawn away to other things? Paul wants us to walk in Christ. That's the point of this passage.

And so, let's look first at 2:1-5 where Paul continues his description of his ministry that he started in 1:24. In these verses Paul communicates his heart that the Colossians keep centered on Christ.

I. Keep Centered on Christ (2:1-5)

¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have in your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

In 1:24-29, Paul talked generally about how he toiled and struggled to see the gospel established among the Gentiles. Here he focuses in on how he struggles specifically for the Colossians, as well for the church at Laodicea, and *for all those who have not personally seen [his] face*. Paul wants them to know that though they had not met him, he is working on their behalf. His struggle probably includes his prayer for them; this letter in which he is pouring out his heart for what he longs for them. I'm sure he carried an emotional burden for them as well. All of this was part of the struggle he had for them.

The purpose of the struggle, Paul says, is . . .

² that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and that they would attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Paul wanted *their hearts* [to] *be encouraged*, so that they would arrive at a place where they have *full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery*. He wants them to come to the place where they have confidence in what they understand about Christ. He doesn't want them to be walking in any kind of confusion or uncertainty about God's plan of salvation. He wants them to have *true knowledge of God's mystery* and that mystery is Christ.

When we think about the heart being encouraged, we tend to think in terms of emotional encouragement. In the biblical world, when Paul wrote this, *heart*, meant the center of a person's personality. The heart was the source of willing and thinking. And so, to have one's heart encouraged involves being strengthened in beliefs and conviction as well as emotional encouragement.

Now, notice that Paul says that experiencing this kind of encouragement is connected to their unity. That's what he is talking about when he says, *having been knit together in love*. Later in 2:19, Paul will talk about how when the body, in other words the church, functions together well it builds itself up. It grows. And part of this growth is coming to a true knowledge about Christ. This kind of unity that leads to growth happen *in love*. In other words, *love*, is the means by which the unity is experienced.

And so, Paul struggles on behalf of the Colossians that they might come to the place of having confidence in their knowledge of Christ. Paul then says this in verse 3 about Christ . . .

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Remember the context of the letter. There are false teachers seeking to pull the Colossians away from Christ. They were putting forth other ways to wisdom and knowledge found in their doctrine and practices. But Paul's point here is that they have everything in Christ. There is no need to look beyond Christ, because in Him they find *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*.

Wisdom is all about the ability to understand reality from God's perspective and to live accordingly. *Knowledge* has more of an intellectual focus. All of this, Paul says, is found in Christ.

Paul calls the wisdom and knowledge found in Christ, *treasures*. It is likely that Paul has Old Testament wisdom literature in mind. For instance, in Proverbs 2, where the father seeks to instruct his son about the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, he uses the language of treasure. In fact, he calls it "hidden treasure" (Prov. 2:4). Christ is the source of this treasure! In Him *all* of this is found. The Colossians have EVERYTHING in Christ. There is no need to go elsewhere to seek wisdom and knowledge about God's will and plan. In Christ they have everything they need to understand reality and to live a life that was pleasing to God.

Paul wants them to understand this to guard them against false teachers.

⁴ I say this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments.

This is Paul's first warning about false teachers. There were people seeking to *deceive* them through their *persuasive arguments*. The NIV says "fine-sounding arguments." This anticipates what Paul is going to say starting in 2:9, where he talks about the false teachers seeking to take the Colossians captive through "philosophy and empty deception."

Their arguments at some level sounded convincing. But if the Colossians know that in Christ they have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ then that will be a safeguard against these false teachers and their *persuasive arguments*.

And so far, Paul is encouraged by what he knows about the Colossians. In verse 5 he says . . .

⁵ For even though I am absent in body, I am nevertheless with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your orderly manner and the stability of your faith in Christ.

Paul would love to be in Colossae to confront the false teachers directly. But he is in prison. It's not possible. He is not there physically, but he is *with* [them] *in spirit*. God had given Paul authority as an apostle and so through the Spirit, through prayer, through concern, and through this letter, he is with them in spirit, and he speaks with apostolic authority as if he was there.

Now, certainly Paul has concerns about the things he is hearing about the false teachers. But his concern is about the future, not what is currently going on, because he says that he rejoices to see their *orderly manner and stability of your faith in Christ*. They were doing well. They remained centered on Christ.

How are we doing? Would Paul rejoice in what he sees here at Faith? I think in many ways he would. But I also think that Paul would speak the same warnings to us about deceptive messages that have the potential to draw us away from a life centered on Christ. Make no mistake there are teachers, and books, and websites, and blogs out there that offer arguments about truth, and reality, and how to find true life that sound plausible, and yet they are contrary Christ. And if we are not careful, we can be led astray.

If we are going to avoid this drifting away from Christ, we need to stay centered on the One in Whom we find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This passage suggests two aspects of how we do this. We do this by being in God's Word, and by being with God's people.

It is through the Scriptures that God reveals Christ to us. It is through God's Word that we deepen our understanding of Christ. We find wisdom and knowledge as we continually fill our minds with the truth of God's Word. Now here's the thing, we need more than a 30-minute sermon on Sundays to do this. We each need to develop a rhythm of being in God's Word regularly

and consistently in addition to this time on Sunday mornings if we are going to stay centered on Christ.

This passage also suggests that need to do this together. We need to be with God's people. Our hearts are encouraged in true knowledge as we are knit together in love. The danger of being led astray by deceptive arguments is much greater if you are not connected to the body of Christ. And by this, I'm talking about more than just showing up here on a Sunday morning. We each need to be knit together in love with at least a few others in a way that we share our lives, and speak truth to each other, and pray for each other.

Do you have these kinds of relationships? If not, I would encourage you to begin to begin to develop them. Pray for them. This is why we do Rooted. This is why we have life groups. We want to help foster this kind of connection. They help us stay centered on Christ.

And so Paul urges the Colossians to keep centered on Christ in these first 5 verses. As we come to verses 6-7, Paul goes on to urge the Colossians to keep walking in Christ.

II. Keep Walking in Christ (vv. 6-7)

⁶Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

When I was in college, I was taught the meaning of this verse in the following way. I was asked, "How did you receive Jesus?" My answer, "By faith." I was asked then, "And so how are you to walk in Him?" My answer, "In the same way, by faith." I was taught that this verse is about walking by faith in Jesus just as I received him into my heart by faith. And while this is true, this is not exactly what Paul is saying here.

When Paul says, *therefore*, he is indicating that this is a conclusion to what he has been saying. And one way to summarize what he has said up to this point about Jesus is that He is Lord. The gospel they heard from Epaphras declared this truth and the Colossians had received that message about Jesus. And so, Paul is not primarily focusing on a personal decision of faith to accept Jesus into One's heart; he is focusing on the fact that the Colossians had been communicated a body of truth about Jesus (e.g. He is Lord) and upon hearing it they had received it by faith.

And so, when Paul says, *so walk in Him*, he is saying that just as they received and believed the content about Jesus' lordship that had been communicated to them, so now they need to walk daily in light of that truth. They needed to continue to think and live out the truth that Jesus is the Messiah and Lord.

This is the first command in this letter. *Walk* is in the present tense and so he is talking about an ongoing, daily process. Paul is urging them to live lives that are consistent with their confession about Christ moment-by-moment each day.

In verse 7, Paul lays out what walking in Christ and living a faithful life looks like. He writes:

⁷ having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

And so, walking in Jesus starts by being *firmly rooted* in him. This is something that had happened in their lives. They had heard the truth about Jesus, and had believed the gospel, and as such they were already *firmly rooted* in the truth about Jesus.

Having been rooted, they were *now being built up in Him*. This is present tense. It is ongoing. This is a metaphor from the world of construction. The Scriptures teach that all believers are incorporated into the body of Christ and this body, like a building, is being built up (Eph. 4:16).

Next, Paul says *established in your faith*. Some translations say, *your faith*, others say, “THE faith.” In a context that is emphasizing the message they had received, I think “in the faith” makes the most sense. Paul is pointing to the content of what they had believed. The fact that he adds the phrase, *just as you were instructed* seems to confirm taking it this way. And so what Paul is saying is that they continue to walk in Christ by remaining firm or steadfast in what they had believed.

Finally, he says *overflowing with gratitude*. Thanksgiving is an aspect of how they would continue to walk in Jesus. Regardless of what difficulties life might bring, through the act of thanksgiving they stay rightly related to the sovereign God. Thanksgiving expresses a kind of trust that God is in charge, that He is leading and guiding.

Keep walking in Jesus. Just as you received the true message of Jesus and who He is, keep walking in light of that truth. That’s the point of this passage. That’s the heart of this whole letter! As Paul goes on, he is going to get specific on what walking in Jesus is going to look like and how it should affect our lives, but here he is just giving a big picture command.

And so, in light of this big picture command that Paul gives, I want to ask a big picture application question. If you are a believer in Jesus, if you have received Him, are you walking in Jesus? Are you regularly, consistently, daily, living in light of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and the Lord? Are you allowing how you think and act be governed by the supremacy of Christ?

As we continue to make our way through our study of Colossians, Paul is going to address several areas of life that we need to bring under the lordship of Christ. And so, we are going to be able to think about this question in specific areas of life, but for now, just sit with this big picture question. Are you walking with Jesus as your Lord?

Today, as we celebrate the Lord’s Table, let me encourage you to ponder this question. As we eat the bread, and drink the juice, we are reminded that Jesus’ body was broken, and His blood was shed to pay the penalty for our sin that we might be forgiven. He redeemed us that we would not only find forgiveness, but a new way of life lived under His lordship. Open your heart to God during this time. Allow Him to search you. Are you walking in Him?

Some of you, without a doubt can give a resounding, "Yes!" You know you are not perfect, but you are seeking to orient your life around Jesus every day. Give thanks and ask God to continue to strengthen you in this way of life.

Others of you, however, know that you have not been centered on Christ. You have been drawn away to other things, and you are no longer walking in a daily walk with Jesus. My encouragement to you in these moments is to reflect on Christ. He demonstrated His love for you by dying for you. He gave everything that you might have life in Him. Ask God to help you really "get" what Jesus did for you. Ask God to open your eye again to the beauty of Jesus, the supremacy of Jesus, and that you have everything in Him. Walking daily with Jesus is really a response to seeing Jesus clearly. Ask God to help you stay centered on Jesus and to return to a daily walk with Jesus.

Before we eat the bread and drink the juice, I'm going to pray and then give you a few moments to talk to God about these things.