

Horsley Evangelical Church (www.horsleyec.org.uk)

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Colossians 2:6-10 The Great Adventure!

Many see the first verse of our passage this morning to be the start of the main section of the letter, where Paul really gets down to challenging the strange teaching that was threatening the church at Colosse. But the way Paul addresses the problem is by turning eyes to the Lord Jesus. Paul teaches believers about *the fulness of life* that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's focus is not on error but on the truth - of Christ, who he is, what he has done for us and the amazing potential of the new life God has given to us in his Son.

And this section of what we call 'doctrinal teaching' is worth the effort in studying because it is from our understanding of who Christ is and what God has done for us in his Son – it is from such knowledge that a new lifestyle flows. And we see this order in many of Paul's letters. First comes the doctrine and then after the doctrinal teaching we come to the practical exhortations to live out who we are in Christ. Doctrine affects behaviour. The Christian lives out who he understands himself to be – with God's help.

Now let's look at three things the apostle Paul says to the Colossians in these verses this morning. First in verses 6, 7 Paul is saying to them, **Continue in Christ**. [Read verses 6, 7](#). Some see these two verses as summarising the whole letter. Here is the essence of what Paul is saying to the Colossians. Here in many ways is the Christian life. [Read verses 6,7](#).

It begins with *receiving Christ Jesus as Lord*. In Paul's mind this not just the believer asking or receiving Jesus into their heart. It does mean that. But it means more. The Colossians' *receiving Christ Jesus as Lord* began when they heard the truth about Christ from Christ's apostles. They heard it from Epaphras who in turn had heard it from Paul. They received the truth about Christ - the stories or traditions about Christ. They heard about his life; his teaching and miracles and claims about himself. They heard the facts about his crucifixion and subsequent resurrection from the dead. They received the truth about his ascension into heaven, his place in glory at the Father's right hand and the promise that Christ would return one day to judge the living and the dead.

The Colossians had first received the truth that Christ Jesus is Lord, that he is Lord of all. They understood that all authority had been given to Christ. They knew the Father's command that all people should repent and believe in the name of his Son for the forgiveness of sins. And the Colossians had done that. They had received Christ into their lives as Lord. The Colossians had repented of their sins and trusted in the name of Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They had made the decision to put him first, to allow their lives to be shaped by Christ. They had decided to live to please him. This after all is what it means to be a Christian.

But Paul is now saying to them, "Just as you began this way, so now continue in the same way. For the new teaching was saying, in effect, "Well you have begun this way and you have entered 'elementary school' as it were, but now you must progress onto 'higher things'. You began with Christ - fair enough, but now you must seek the next level, and to reach the next level you must move on from Christ to what we will teach you." And Paul is saying, "No, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue* to live in him." The important word in the verse is 'continue'.

Having received Christ Jesus as Lord is vital, but it's just the beginning. You must indeed go on to greater maturity. But to do that you do not 'leave Christ behind'. For Jesus Christ is Lord. This is how

you received him, and this is how you must now *continue* to live in him. And then in verse 7 Paul mixes his metaphors. [Read verse 7 again](#). First Paul likens the Christian to a *plant* that has been rooted in the soil which is Christ. You have already been planted or rooted in Christ. And now the plant must grow. But the plant will not grow by taking it out the soil. It can only grow in the soil. Therefore let your ‘roots’ go down into the Lord Jesus. Let the plant take from the soil all the nutrients and moisture and stability that it requires to grow. Continue to live in him.

Then, changing the metaphor, Paul tells the Christians to keep building their lives upon the *foundation* which is Christ Jesus the Lord. This time the picture is of a building going up. The building has started on the solid foundation which is Christ. And the superstructure must keep going up. But the building does not go up by moving it off the solid foundation! No, it has to remain on its solid foundation. And that foundation is Christ the Lord.

Then Paul reminds them to continue in the teaching they had heard. They must continue in ‘the faith’. If they want to be strong spiritually, they need to keep in mind the truth they had already heard – the apostolic truth about Jesus.

And the sign that spiritual growth is real is that their lives will be overflowing with thankfulness. They will realise more and more the wonder of what they have in Christ, and the fact that this has all come from God as a gift. And so they will not have a proud heart but a thankful heart. As they continue to live in him their life will be like an overflowing jug of water. They will overflow with thanksgiving to God for what he has done.

You received Christ Jesus as Lord. Very well, now you must continue in him. There is no other way for the Christian to live. There is no other way to go on. You must remain in Christ and continually look to him, the Lord. You must grow up in Christ. You must go on to realise the tremendous potential you have been given by God and the infinite possibilities for spiritual growth in Christ. **Continue in Christ.**

Now *we* must take careful note of these words this morning. For this is a favourite starting point of either dodgy or heretical teaching. The teaching will say something like, “You have received Christ. Fine. Very good. But now of course you must go on to something higher. There is something else you must either know or experience.” Often such teaching is dressed up in spiritual language, but it suggests there is another spiritual level for you to reach which other, ‘elementary school Christians’ have yet to attain. But we must make sure that our focus is never taken off Christ. All Christian growth in joy and understanding must be consistent with its beginnings. And we began with Christ. We received Christ as Lord. He is the narrow gate. His is the only way. Therefore continue in him.

But the other thing to remember from these opening verses is the potential for growth which God has given us in his Son. When you become a Christian, it’s just the start. It’s like a baby being born. The potential of the baby is amazing because it will grow. And the potential of every Christian, rooted in Christ and having the foundation of Christ, is fantastic. The Christian life is the great adventure. Our relationship with Christ is the greatest investment imaginable. And whatever growth is achieved will have eternal significance. And of course the growth is not just down to our struggling. We have the help of God - remember 1:29. [Read 1:29](#). **Continue in Christ.**

Then secondly Paul warns the Colossians to **Guard against Rivals**. [Read verse 8](#). Here is the second warning of the letter, more direct than the first one given in 2:4. [Read 2:4](#). The ‘fine sounding arguments’ are also ‘hollow and deceptive philosophy’. But notice now where the deception leads. It leads to being taken *captive*. People are taken captive by an enemy. And when taken captive, they lose their freedom. Now Christ has set the Christian free, but there are teachings which seek to take the believer captive again.

Paul calls the new teaching in Colosse *hollow and deceptive philosophy*. It's a bit like standing in front of a building. And as you view this building it looks very grand indeed. There appears to be much promise inside. And so you open the door, only to find there is nothing really there. What you have seen is only a 'front', only a façade, only a stage prop. And this is how Paul describes the new teaching.

It looks good on the outside and sounds good at least on the surface. But actually the teaching is based on *human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ*. What does this phrase mean, – 'the basic principles of this world'. Lots of research seemingly has gone into this and the consensus opinion of the scholars is that it refers to a view where the world is 'very much at the mercy of angels and demons'. It's a way of looking at the world where 'personalised spiritual forces were thought to have influence over day to day existence'.

This ties in with what Paul said back in 1:16 where the apostle talks about Christ being over 'things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities'. And again this fits with what Paul says in 2:15 and again 2:18.

'The world is full of angelic and supernatural powers and to know freedom and spiritual fulness we need to take these things into consideration and navigate a way round them'. This seems to be at least a strand of the strange teaching in Colosse.

But if you think about it, the same *hollow and deceptive philosophy* is still around today. You see it in horoscopes and astrology. We see it in all kinds of superstition. Why is it good luck to see a black cat cross the road? Why is the number 13 unlucky. Why is it unlucky to walk under a ladder – that sort of thing. And we see it in beliefs about ancestral worship, tribal religion and animism etc. It is the belief that there are things out there which can either harm us or help us, and they are free to do as they wish. So we have to beware of such things and get on their good side.

But what is Paul's assessment of such philosophy? He says it all *depends on human tradition*. In other words, such belief is not based on any revelation of God. It does not come from the word of God and is therefore not based on divine truth. That's not to say that such beings do not exist, because they certainly do. And that's not to say that we must be careful not to open ourselves up to such things and their influence. But the mistake is to be *afraid* of such forces. And the mistake is to assume that such things operate freely and without any control from the living God. They do *not* operate freely. God is sovereign and they do *not* have any power that operates independently from God. He reigns and is all powerful.

But to believe in such things is to be taken captive. What the believer is to rely on is not human tradition but divine revelation. We trust not in elemental spirits but in Jesus Christ who is Lord.

But then the third thing Paul says to the Colossians in this passage is that they must **Find fulness in Christ**. [Read verses 9, 10](#). The Colossians are being offered spiritual fulness by the strange teaching. Now to their credit, they want to 'go on' in their spiritual lives. And we should all want to 'go on' spiritually. We should all want to experience a richer and deeper spiritual life. But the question is, where do we find it? How do we acquire it? There is only one person through whom we can find fulness and freedom and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Colossians' minds and hearts are being tempted to look to other things. But Paul says to them, "You already have fulness. It's found in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there to 'progress' on to?"

You have been given fulness in Christ. You have received him as Lord. You have been reconciled to God through him. You have Christ in you, the hope of glory. Understand then that there is no 'fulness'

outside of Christ. You already have the solid foundation to build on. You already have the rich soil in which the plant will grow. Find your fulness therefore in Christ.

And then Paul for the second time in the letter makes a statement about the incarnation. [Read verse 9 again](#). The first time Paul made a similar statement was 1:19. [Read 1:19](#). Now we may nod our heads in acknowledgement of these verses and agree with them. But who can really comprehend what they mean? [Read 2:9 again](#). The new teaching almost certainly used the term 'fulness'. It offered to people fulness. But the fulness of God lives in bodily form in Christ.

Reading between the lines, the strange teaching also probably looked down on the physical body. But Paul emphasises here the physical body of our Lord and Saviour, just as he emphasised it back in 1:22. [Read 1:22](#). But again, who can comprehend this thing that has happened?

God is presented in the Old Testament as the Creator. He is the Eternal One, without beginning and without end. He is the Sovereign Ruler over all things, without rival. His power is infinite and his wisdom unfathomable. He is the Holy God, without error or darkness. He knows all things. In him alone is life and he sustains the life of every creature and every lifeform. He is everywhere present by his Spirit and his eyes sees all things.

These are some of the things that Paul would associate with the word 'God' or 'Deity'. And yet he says here that in Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form. And Christ is in you, the hope of glory.

Why therefore would the Colossians be in the least concerned with supernatural created beings? How can *they* help us to reach fulness? How can *they* protect us? What does Paul say here? [Read verse 10](#). Christ created them all. Christ controls all their movements and actions. Their very existence is in the hand of Christ. Why would the Colossians look anywhere else for either fulness or freedom? Why would we?

And so Paul says to these Christians – and to all of us, **Continue in Christ**. You have received him as he is - the Lord. Now **Continue in him**. **Guard against all rivals**. Do not look to anything else for fulness. There is no fulness outside of Christ. And Paul says to us all - **Find fulness in Christ**.

Do you remember the parable Jesus taught about the treasure found in the field (Matthew 13)? A man came across treasure hidden in a field. Such was the value of the treasure, that he hid the treasure and went away and sold everything he had and bought the field. So that treasure was his.

Now the Christian has found infinite treasure in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has reconciled us to God. He is in us and in him we have the hope of glory. Together, we are his Bride, and one day, and then forever, he will show us the full extent of his love for us. Continue in him. Guard against rivals and being taken captive. Fulness is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.