

‘Living in Christ’
Colossians 2 v 6-15

Becoming a Christian isn’t so difficult. *Staying* a Christian can be quite a challenge! Just as in Jesus’ Parable of the Sower, where many start off very positively but seem to come unstuck along the way, the world is full of people who once became Christians. Maybe it made good sense – they realised they needed help from a higher power and started to pray. Maybe their conscience was troubling them and they needed to feel some forgiveness and inner peace, so they were glad to hear of One Who suffered for our sins to be washed away.

Receiving Christ is not always the biggest problem. *Continuing* in Him, following Him daily, growing in faith and obedience as one of His disciples – here’s where we can start to meet hurdles! Temptations to indulge ourselves with sinful worldly pleasures persist and we feel weak and ashamed. Opposition or ridicule from non-Christians make us afraid. Or the attitudes of others in the Church disappoint us, leaving us hurt and disillusioned.

In such instances it’s easy to backslide in one way or another. Some openly throw in the towel, stop coming to church, immerse themselves in the things of this world more than ever. Others keep coming but hold back, keeping to a safe, formal distant style of religion with little warmth or prayerful devotion. Such people are easy prey for false legalistic teachers who encourage us to think, “Don’t worry about all that spiritual devotion to Jesus, just do this, this and this, just tick these religious boxes and get a good reputation with others and everything will be ok”.

The Apostle Paul has no time for that sort of religion – he spent too many years in it himself. Now he works, struggles, even suffers passionately for what really matters, for what really makes a difference- knowing Jesus in a living way.

So he writes (from prison no less) to a group of Christians he has heard about but never personally met, to urge them to “continue to live in [Christ], rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Col 2 v 6 & 7)

The secret of successfully keeping going and growing and maturing as Christian disciples is in knowing the risen, living Lord Jesus better and realising who and what we are because we are united to Him. It is less about impressing one another with outward rules and traditions and more about experiencing His liberating, transforming presence in our thinking, feeling, speaking, living.

Paul’s 1st century letter to the Colossians contains some of the most amazing passages about Jesus. He is more than a gifted amateur preacher with a background as a tradesman. Yes, He has come as a flesh and blood human being but listen –

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created ... in heaven and on earth ... He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy ...

In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

There is no one else like our Lord Jesus. No one else can do for us as He can do. All sorts of amazing things start to become possible as we maintain the living daily connection he has established with those He has redeemed.

Let’s focus again on v6:

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him.”

Note three things:

- Continue
- To live
- In Him

1. We are to ‘continue’ to live each day in the light of ‘that’ day when we first trusted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, the day God first forgave our sins and redeemed us from punishment in Hell, rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of grace.

That day was a radical turning point, a new beginning (but only the beginning) of a new life guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit of Jesus.

We must continue what began that day. We must follow through on that initial trust and commitment with a daily practice of humble submission to His will and pleasure, allowing Him to transform us from within. As we continue in such an attitude, the various pleasures and challenges of life become opportunities to practice the spiritual fruit He is cultivating in our hearts, things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

So this Christian thing is not a once long ago, ‘done and dusted’, over and done with thing. It is ongoing, present, continuous!

2. Secondly we are to ‘live’ in Him. It is a living thing! Christ is a living Person and He has ‘regenerated’ us, making us alive like never before by the Holy spirit. How can we settle for a dull, mechanical, more-dead-than-alive kind of religion? The living reality is Christ so prayer must be as necessary as breathing, Bible study as natural as regular mealtimes. We may feel it more at certain times than others but from the moment we wake until we drift back to sleep we should consciously live as in the company of the risen Lord. He is witness to our work, our conversations, our private recreation. He is the “Vine” supplying the sap, the strength, the light of His love to sustain and

make us fruitful in His service for the eternal kingdom so we must do all from our side to maintain this living connection.

3. Recognising thirdly that it is all about Him. We benefit as Christ is discovered and known and uplifted and glorified. As He shines in and through us, our lives become beautiful in Him and bring His influence on those around us. What makes us effective ‘fishers of men’? Being hooked on Jesus! What makes us useful parts of the church, His ‘Body’? Remaining connected to Christ our Head! So let us give Him the praise and honour He deserves, trusting that as we ‘continue to live in Him’, He will continue to live and work in us His Church, that in time ‘all men shall see His glory’.

Amen