

Rooted and built up in Christ.
Colossians 2 v 6 & 7

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, Ruler over His creation. Eternally existing before the universe, everything is held together by Him. He is the prototype of resurrection and the universal Saviour. Lord of creation and Lord of the 'new creation' – the Church – the worldwide fellowship of sinful human beings – we who are being forgiven and recreated in Him.

All the 'fullness' of God, all the greatness of the Almighty actually lives in the Lord Jesus and Paul writes to the Colossian Christians that we have been given 'fullness in Christ'! Christians are much more than your average flawed human beings, trying to make the best of things in our own limited strength. Because God in grace has saved us, giving us the faith to turn from sin and take refuge in Christ, we are part of His new creation, His re-creation, His restoration of heavenly paradise!

Those who have become Christians are described by the Apostle as being 'in Christ' and because this is a living link with a real Person something of His divine character and power and "fullness" are at work in us. The Lord Jesus is graciously sharing not just His righteous status with us, He shares something of His authority over evil and effective power over sin. The results are that we are enabled to treat our old way of life with its sinful habits and negative attitudes as dead and buried and live increasingly free and positive lives as children of God and citizens of heaven.

The more we appreciate of who Jesus is and where we stand in Him the more joyful and the more fruitful we become as Christians. But this requires constant awareness on our part. As we read last week this is not doctrinal theory which we take as read and file away. It is living truth which we must think and rely on daily as we prayerfully "continue to live in Him".

Let's look how the Apostle spells this out in the next verse (v7):
“rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness”.

Psalm 1 describes a person who delights themselves primarily in the Lord and His righteousness as being like “a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither”.

When we are “rooted” in Christ, drawing strength from Him, constantly refreshed and enlivened by His Spirit flowing within us we flourish as people and our lives become fruitful. We develop qualities like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control much more than we would on our own. Like our Master when he was on Earth, we make the world around us a safer, kinder, more healthy, peaceful, charitable and just place. Christ-like Christians are good for a community! And we will almost certainly be used directly or indirectly to bring others to saving faith in Jesus. There are few joys more satisfying than the privilege of helping someone else find salvation and new life in Jesus!

In John 15 the Lord reminds His disciples how vital it is to retain a close connection with Him just like branches depending on the main stem of a vine. He says, “If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”. He also teaches that God like a Gardener may at times need to ‘prune’ our lives, cut us back, curtail us in some way. This may be very painful and humbling for us as individuals or as a fellowship but He only does so that we may depend on Christ more closely and flourish again more fruitful than ever!

The next image Paul uses is that of a building. The Israelites used the finest cut stone to build a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. Though they knew the whole earth and sky could not contain God's glory this was symbolically His ‘house’, His dwelling on earth among His people. Peter, in his 1st letter tells us that we Christians now make up God's Temple. There is no longer a temple at Jerusalem nor any need

for one. For God now lives by His Spirit in the heart and life of every Christian, those who have built their lives on the foundation of Jesus and all He has done for us. We are the ‘living stones’, says Peter, and our fellowship the spiritual dwelling God delights to inhabit on earth.

We are to be individually “rooted” in Christ and we are to be “built up” together, corporately as a fellowship, like bricks in a wall, strongly constructed on the common foundation stone which is Jesus.

Paul tells us next quite literally what he means by these two illustrations of plant and building. We as Christians are to be continually “strengthened in the faith as we were taught”. We grow strong in our Christian life and practice as we continue to exercise our faith in what we have been taught from God’s Word, namely that Jesus, Son of God has died for our sins but risen victorious and ascended to rule. The fullness of God dwells in Him and this fullness He shares with us. His Spirit lives in us. Our old life with its guilty record is dead and buried. God looks on us as His beloved children, risen and already seated with Christ in Heaven, therefore enabled to live a new life of righteousness and practical holiness and joyful service here upon earth.

Rooted and built up in this wonderful truth of Who Jesus is and who we are in Him we can become God-pleasing and effective Christians and therefore we cannot help but rejoice. The backslider who will not surrender their sin or spirit of bitterness is the most miserable person alive. But the Christian who is learning to live a new life in Christ cannot help but overflow with thankfulness.

Thank You Lord, not just for saving me, he or she says, but for taking such personal interest in me, investing so much of Yourself to renew my life, my thoughts and feelings and attitudes. Thank you for such patience and kindness shown to such a woeful failure! Thank you Lord for your love and Your generous pouring out of Your Spirit to help me every day.

And so we could go on!

In our prayers let us be faithful in giving thanks to our Lord Jesus, submitting ourselves afresh to His transforming will and power and to Him with the Father and Spirit be all the glory.

Amen.