

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good! I want to give a quick shout-out to my people joining us in our online community! I'm so glad you are a part of the Foothills Family and that you're with us in worship and studying God's Word from wherever and whenever you're at. Well, if I haven't been able to meet you, my name is Doug; I'm one of the Pastors here, and I would love to connect with you on the patio after we worship together. So, be sure to come and say hi.

We're continuing our way through Paul's letter to the Colossians. So if you've got your Bibles, which I hope you do, if you could open up with me to Colossians, chapter 2, that's where we'll be.

This letter to the Christians in the city of Colossae was written by Paul; now a quick reminder on who Paul is. Paul was previously a Jew, but not just your average Jew, Paul was a religious leader, he was highly intelligent, he "perfected" the religious life and was passionate about destroying every piece of the current heresy his people were facing that came from followers of a man named Jesus. He was on a mission, to arrest, physically harm, and even kill anyone who followed the teachings of Jesus.

In a surprise turn of events, after Jesus had been crucified, Jesus appeared to Paul and revealed that He, Jesus, really is the who He said He was, and that is God in the flesh. So, Paul has submit his life to Jesus and lives solely for Him the rest of his life.

Where Paul is now as he writes this letter to the Christians in Colossae is Rome and he's imprisoned there for spreading the Gospel of Jesus.

As Paul was writing to the Colossians, the early church was facing various challenges, including the rise of false teachings and the blending of Christian beliefs with elements of Jewish legalism and pagan philosophy.

Colossae, in particular, was influenced by a mixture of Jewish, Greek, and Eastern mystical beliefs, which posed a threat to the purity of the gospel message.

In response to these challenges, Paul wrote to the Colossian believers to encourage them in their faith, to affirm the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ, and to warn them against the dangers of false teaching. He wanted to reinforce the foundational truths of the gospel and to emphasize the centrality of Jesus Christ in all aspects of their lives.

So, with all of that in mind, let's pick it up starting in verse 6,

**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.

To "walk in him" as Paul directs the Christian to do here is to live a life deeply rooted and established in Jesus Christ. To be deeply rooted and established is more than just acknowledging His existence or professing belief in Him; it's more than coming to church every so often or when it's convenient, it's about actively living out that belief in every aspect of our lives. It is to have a strong, unshakeable foundation in Him that permeates every aspect of our being and shapes the way we live our lives.

When we "walk in him," we are aligning our thoughts, actions, and attitudes with the teachings and example of Jesus. It means allowing His love, grace, and truth to permeate every area of our lives, shaping our decisions, our interactions with people, and dictating our priorities.

Just as we when we first received Jesus as our Lord, as our Savior—by faith, with humility, and with a willingness to surrender control of our lives over to Him—we are called to continue in that same posture. It's a daily choice to follow Him, to trust Him, and to allow His Spirit to guide us.

Walking in Him, being rooted, built up, and established in Jesus involves:

1. **Faithful Dependence:** Trusting in Jesus for every step we take, knowing that He is the source of our strength, wisdom, and direction. This is an all-encompassing trust; trusting Jesus implicitly, believing that He is faithful to His promises and that His plans for us are good, even when we don't understand or see the way forward. Even if you're sitting in a prison in Rome potentially waiting to be put to death.

Faithful dependence means surrendering the control of our lives over to Jesus, acknowledging His Lordship and sovereignty over every situation. We relinquish our own agendas and desires, submitting to His will and His timing. That means, surrendering our children, our careers, our finances, our time, friends, our health. It is surrendering to the Sovereign King and depending on Him in every area of our lives, not on ourselves, our own ideas, or abilities.

Walking in Jesus and being deeply rooted and established in Him is through...

2. **Intimacy and Relationship:** Cultivating a deep and personal relationship with Jesus through prayer, study of His Word, and fellowship with other believers. Showing up for 60 minutes once a week and listening to someone else read the Bible does not create an intimate relationship with Jesus.

I mean, sorry, not sorry. I've never been known to beat around the bush, I just don't think that will help you. The reality is that if you desire an intimate relationship with Jesus, there are a number of things you can do to foster that.

For instance, prayer. Set aside regular time for prayer, both individually, on your own each day, like morning and evening, maybe during your lunch time. If you have time to look at social media, you have time to pray. If you have time to eat food, well, you have time to pray. If you have time to drive a car, you have time to pray. But, it's not just praying individually. Pray corporately. Together. The expectation for a Christian is that they are plugged into what we have coined as a "small group." This is a large group, but every Christian should be in a "small group" where they are doing life with one another more closely. Celebrating life, grieving life, growing together, learning together...and praying together!

Develop a prayer routine that includes praise, thanksgiving, confession. Be authentic and transparent in prayer, sharing your joys, struggles, doubts, and hopes with Jesus. And make time to Listen attentively for His voice through prayer, being open to His guidance and leading.

Walking in Jesus and being deeply rooted and established in Him is through...

3. **Transformation:** Allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside out, conforming us more closely to the image of Christ. We do this several ways. For instance, spiritual surrender. We must repeatedly acknowledge our need for God's transforming power in our lives and surrender control to Him. We need to continually be yield our will, desires, and ambitions to the leading of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to have His way in us. We must cultivate an attitude of humility and openness, recognizing that true transformation comes from God's grace, not our own efforts.

Transformation comes from the renewing of our mind. If we want to be deeply rooted and established in Christ, we have got to be engaged in regular study and meditation on God's Word, allowing it to shape our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs. Friends, we allow music, and television, social media, and the news to shape our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs far more than we allow God's Word...just because of the amount of time we spend in those areas. We need to decrease our worldly influences and increase our Godly influence from His Word.

Like I previously mentioned, we need to be in environments where we are surrounded by godly community and accountability. This happens in small groups. We need surround ourselves with a community of believers who can support, encourage, and challenge us in our journey of transformation.

Be open to feedback and correction from fellow Christians, allowing them to speak truth into our lives and hold us accountable. We hate that, it's uncomfortable, it's awkward, but it's necessary for a life of transformation.

There are many other ways, but this is just to get the juices flowing, for you start considering or increasing.

So these are foundational aspects to walking in Christ and being deeply rooted and established in Him. But Paul doesn't stop with this. He starts there because that's merely the foundation. What Paul knows is that a strong foundation in Christ will sustain and protect you as you move through life. So, he continues in verse 8,

**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.

Paul is warning about the dangers of being led astray from the truth of the gospel of Jesus by deceptive philosophies and human traditions. For example, in our time, these deceptive philosophies would be things like relativism, the belief that truth is subjective and varies from person to person, culture to culture, or situation to situation. Relativism leads people to embrace a "whatever works for you" mentality, which undermines the objective truth of the gospel. These deceptive philosophies would include secularism. The worldview that seeks to marginalize or exclude religious faith from public life and decision-making. Secularism often promotes a materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle that prioritizes worldly pleasures and pursuits over spiritual values. How about consumerism? Consumerism is a culture of excessive consumption and materialism, which equates personal worth and happiness with the accumulation of wealth, possessions, and status. Consumerism fosters a mindset of greed, envy, and discontentment, leading people to prioritize temporal pleasures over eternal significance.

I could keep going, Individualism, Post-modernism, legalism...please don't just hear me as a Dougie downer or that I'm on some anti-world rant.

This is what Paul, empowered by God is trying to communicate to us as Christ followers. Philosophy itself is not inherently wrong, Paul is warning against philosophies that are contrary to the gospel and lead people away from the truth. See, these deceptive philosophies may sound convincing and appealing, but ultimately, they are empty and devoid of the life-giving truth found in Christ.

In the same breathe Paul highlights the danger of human tradition. Here he's talking about customs, rituals, or teachings that are based on human wisdom or cultural practices rather than on God's Word. As a lover of traditions I see the value they play in expressing and preserving faith, but they become harmful when they are elevated above the authority of Scripture or when they contradict the teachings of Christ.

Then Paul finishes this thought as he mentions "elemental spirits of the world." Here he's referring to the reality of spiritual forces or powers that are opposed to God and seek to influence human life. These elemental spirits may reveal themselves in various forms, such as superstitions, occult practices, or false religions.

Again, by emphasizing that these spirits are "of the world," Paul is contrasting them with the true spiritual reality that is found in Christ.

So what Paul is teaching the Christians in Colossae and at Foothills the importance of discernment and steadfastness in the face of deceptive

influences. He urges us to remain rooted and grounded in Christ, who is the ultimate source of wisdom, truth, and salvation. Rather than being swayed by human wisdom or cultural norms, we are called to submit ourselves to the authority of Christ and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through the truth of His Word.

From here, Paul goes on to emphasize the sufficiency and completeness that is found in Jesus.

He starts by affirming the deity of Jesus, stating that all the fullness of God dwells in Him bodily. Through our union with Jesus, believers are made complete, lacking nothing, because Christ is supreme over all rulers and authorities.

Paul then explains the spiritual realities that we as believers experience in Jesus. Through faith, we undergo a spiritual circumcision, where their sinful nature is cut away by the power of Christ. This spiritual transformation is symbolized in our baptism, where you hear us say that we are buried with Christ and raised to new life, sharing in His victory over sin and death.

God's forgiveness and grace are central to this transformation.

Through Jesus's death on the cross, the record of our sins is completely canceled and taken away. Jesus' victory over sin and death disarms spiritual rulers and authorities, publicly shaming them and demonstrating His triumph.

And with this in mind, Paul begins to warn us against legalistic practices and human traditions that seek to condemn Christians. He emphasizes that these rules and regulations are mere shadows of the reality found in



Christ. He urges us as believers not to be swayed by false teachings. At the time he wrote this letter, some of those false teachings were self-denial as seen in Gnosticism, or the worship of angels. For us today, the false teachings can be seen in the prosperity gospel, or the word of faith movement, or the greatest of modern heresies, the New Apostolic Reformation as they call it that is sweeping northern California and the world.

Paul is saying that these teachings are disconnected from Christ, who is the head of the body—the Church and ultimately, Christ holds the entire body together, nourishing it and causing it to grow. We as Christians are to remain rooted and grounded in Jesus, recognizing His supremacy and sufficiency in all things.

And with an exclamation mark to this portion of his letter to Christians Paul writes in verse 20,

<sup>20</sup>You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, <sup>21</sup>“Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!”? <sup>22</sup>Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. <sup>23</sup>These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires.

In 60-62 A.D. as Paul was sitting in prison writing this letter the people in Colossae he was aware of the challenges that these Christians were facing; the rise of false teachings, blending Christians beliefs with other religions and the influence of multiple cultures in the region. All of these

things were potential distractions and a threat to the purity of the gospel of Jesus.

Friends, I see no difference with us today. I see a rise of false teachings... right here in our own backyard! The blending of Christian beliefs with other religions who "claim to be Christians." All these things were potential distractions and a threat to the purity of the gospel of Jesus then, and today. And if we are not walking in Christ, being deeply rooted, and established, grounded in Him, we will be easily swayed to believe lies.

Paul's warning against anything that will detract from the sufficiency of Christ. He addresses Christians, questioning why they continue to subject themselves to the religious rules as if they were still living in the world.

Paul reminds them, "<sup>20</sup>You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. All these false teachings, argues that such regulations—such as "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch"—these corrupt philosophies are based on human commands and teachings rather than on the teachings of Christ.

Instead, Paul wants the Christian to focus on Christ's sufficiency. We are to resist the temptation to try and earn our salvation, thinking that if we are nice enough, give enough, serve enough, or whatever else you think you must do, we are to resist the temptation to work for our right standing before God and understand that our right standing comes from Jesus alone.

Paul is teaching us to guard against legalism. It's essential to guard against the tendency to rely on external rules or traditions as a measure

of our spirituality. This is such a popular problem in some Christian churches. To dress a certain way, to worship a certain way, to only preach and teach a certain way, and anything apart from their tradition is a lesser Christianity. Instead, Christians, we should focus on cultivating a heart of obedience and a relationship with Christ, allowing His Spirit to guide us in righteous living. Not our preferences on how we do church.

Paul is calling us as Christians to live in freedom, not bondage. He's reminding us that Jesus has set us free from the bondage of legalism and human traditions. We are no longer slaves to rules and regulations but are called to live in the freedom that comes from knowing and following Jesus.

And the last two things that Paul is urging us to is the pursuit of true transformation and walking in Spirit-led obedience.

Rather than focusing on the external behaviors, or your "Christian appearances," we should prioritize true heart transformation. You may have heard me stress before that for the Christian, the goal is not "behavior modification, but heart transformation." This involves allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us, shaping our desires and motivations to align with the will of God.

And then walking in Spirit-led obedience. Our obedience to Jesus should flow from a heart transformed by His love and grace, rather than from a sense of obligation or fear. We should seek to obey His commands out of love for Him and a desire to honor Him in all areas of our lives.

Friends, we need to keep in front of us Paul's central thought in this letter, the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ in our lives. Just as the Christians

in Colossae were urged to walk in Jesus, deeply rooted and established in Him, so too we are called to live out our faith in a way that reflects the transformation that Christ has done in us.

In a world filled with deceptive philosophies, human traditions, and spiritual distractions, we are called to stand firm in the truth of the gospel and to guard against anything that would detract from the centrality of Jesus in our lives.

Church as we navigate the joys and challenges of life, faithfully depend on Jesus, trusting in His sovereignty and seeking His guidance in everything. Cultivate intimacy and relationship with Him through prayer, devouring His Word, and having relationships with other Christians. And don't live a two-faced life, a church life and the other six days life, but recognize that true transformation comes from knowing and walking closely with Him.

So, may we go from this place, deeply rooted and established in Jesus, grounded in our faith, and confident in who Jesus is. And may our lives be a witness to the truth of His gospel. Let's pray.