

Saturday, July 29, 2017 - Day 209 – Ecclesiastes 7-9, Psalm 21, Colossians 2

Some of the strongest, most faithful people I have ever met are recent converts to Christianity. These are not cradle Episcopalians who remember the '28 prayer book with fondness, but are mature, thinking adults who recently fell in love with Jesus and are absolutely on fire to do God's work in the world and tell you about it. Without proper tending, though, that flame burns bright indeed, but it also burns quickly. I have watched with sadness as those same people, so recently radiant with light of Christ, dwindle and, in some cases, even wink out, under the twin pressures of time and culture. I think this is, in part, the phenomena Paul is addressing in the second chapter of Colossians when he writes, "...continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

As a convert himself, Paul knows well the temptations the world offers, how time might erode one's zeal, and how the prevailing culture can infringe on an idealized faith. These are the things I think he means when he uses the strange phrase, "elemental spirits of the world." He's saying, "Listen! Just because you've found this faith and just because you are now a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ doesn't mean that the rest of the world, the rest of your community, even the rest of your family, are going to suddenly get on board with the new you! Be ready for that!" The basic building blocks of our world, of our societies, are not going to suddenly realign with your newfound religious fervor. This is why we have to be strong, this is why we have to maintain our rootedness in Christ, because even though we have now changed in how we regard the world, the world has not changed in how it regards us. And if it has, it's not the way you think; the world may now treat you more harshly. This is why it's doubly important to be firm in your faith, and that's a hard lesson, especially when we're brimming over with joy in the love of Jesus Christ.

By The Very Rev. Ryan Whitley