

*Many years ago, Dr. Purnell Bailey wrote a religious column for the Goldsboro News-Argus in Goldsboro, NC. Here's what he once wrote in his column.*

*I once visited an orange grove where an irrigation pump had broken down. The season was unusually dry and some of the trees were beginning to die for lack of water. The man giving the tour then took me to his own orchard where irrigation was used sparingly. "These trees could go without rain for another two weeks," he said. When asked to explain why, he replied "When these trees were young, I frequently kept water from them, and this hardship caused them to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of moisture. Now mine are the deepest-rooted trees in the area, and while others are being scorched by the sun, mine are finding moisture at a greater depth."*

Just like these trees, we are to be deeply rooted in Jesus Christ which is a way of describing our spiritual connection with Him. For the Christian, deep strong roots are a necessity to tap into our source of nourishment for spiritual growth and fruitfulness. Deep strong roots are essential in experiencing a full and meaningful life and fulfilling the work that God has called us to do, and deep strong roots serve as anchors to weather the tough seasons of life that come our way. Deep strong roots help us to hold onto Jesus and that's what we are going to talk about this morning – being deeply rooted.

Now before we get going, I need to remind you of the background. If you remember, the Apostle Paul is writing the church in Colossae – a church he did not know – a church he had never visited. At the time of this letter, the church was about five years old. They were a young congregation, and to their credit, they were described as faithful and loving. They seemed to be a healthy and thriving church – but false teachers had slithered into the region and were trying to wiggle their way into this church. These false teachers were presenting a different Jesus and a different gospel – it was twisted version of Christianity, and Judaism, and other eastern philosophies, and there was a real concern this young church could become confused and possibly lose their way.

Well, this prompted Epaphras – a leader in the church to travel some 1000 miles, one way, to visit Paul in Rome and explain his concerns, and what Paul learned from Epaphras inspired this letter to the Colossians about knowing and following the true Jesus. In their confusion – not sure what to believe, Paul sought to center their attention on the truth about Jesus Christ – for to Paul, the Christian life was all about Jesus, and if it wasn't – the church would be in trouble.

Now if you recall from last week, Paul talked about how he had suffered for the sake of Christ and for the sake of others. As a humble servant, Paul shared that he was working to the point of exhaustion, he was laboring and agonizing in the ministry, but he was doing so according to the mighty power of God working in his life. This calling to share the gospel truth about Jesus was Paul's passion but also his burden – and on that note, we come to **Colossians 2**, beginning with **verse 1** where Paul gets a little more personal. He says,

**<sup>1</sup>For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

Paul wants this church in Colossae to understand the personal struggle and the conflict he is engaged in on their behalf and also on behalf of the church in the neighboring city of **Laodicea**. **Now where have we heard about Laodicea?**

If you remember in our study through the book of **Revelation** – some 30 years later, Jesus had some words for this church in Laodicea through the Apostle John. Jesus told this church you are not *hot* – you're not warming and cleansing, and you are not *cold* – you're not refreshing. You are *lukewarm* and I will spew you out of my mouth. **So, what was going on with this church?**

Well outwardly, this church, just like the wealthy and prosperous city it was in, had become self-reliant and self-sufficient. This church had become so comfortable and so complacent that they had become unconcerned about the things of God.

Yes, this church may have sounded spiritual, they may have met on Sunday to feel good about themselves, they may have sung hymns about God, they may have professed their devotion to Him, but in reality – in the way they lived their lives day in and day out, God really didn't matter to them, and it made Jesus sick to His stomach. He wanted to vomit.

You see, this church was rich and their faith rested on their material wealth rather than on Jesus Christ, and so they got complacent and comfortable, and they became unconcerned about the real need for God in their lives – forgetting that He is the true *Source* and the *Sustainer* of all things.

So, Paul was concerned about the church in Colossae and the church in Laodicea. Paul had never met them, but he agonizes over them – his heart aches for them, and in **verse 2**, he shares what he wants to see for them.

Knowing the false teachers posed a real treat against the church, right out the gate, Paul says to these congregations that he wants to see their hearts **encouraged** – filled with courage fed by the truth, inspired by the Spirit because he understood that discouraged Christians are easy prey. Paul also wanted to see them **knit together in love** – united, unified, and like-minded, and I think he says this because he knows these false teachers will attempt to splinter the congregation – creating within them a divisive *us versus them* mentality which is completely contrary to the Lord's desire for His church.

Jesus said all men will know you are My disciples if you have love for one another. Out there, we live in a world that attempts to divide us and splinter us, but in here, we should love and care for one another. Yes, we can have different opinions on a variety of topics, and yes, we can approach things in various ways, but no matter what, we must be united and like-minded – loving and caring for one another.

The third thing Paul was concerned about was their **full assurance of understanding** – not only are they to be encouraged in the truth and loving towards one another, but their assurance comes by seeing God at work when they do these things. It's when we live these things out in our lives that we gain confidence and come to fully understand and experience **God's mystery** – namely Jesus Christ actually living in us and through us.

That's where the assurance comes from – living it out and letting God work, creating within us a settled conviction about Jesus. When you have a settled conviction as to who Jesus really is – speaking of His nature, His character, His goodness, His faithfulness, His righteousness and holiness, then you can take Him at His word, you can trust that He will care for you, you can accept that everything will be alright even though His purposes and plans may be difficult and very different from yours, and you can rest in His promises because you know your life is truly in His hands. So, everything we need – **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** are found in Him.

*The story is told that in the days of the Roman Empire, a certain wealthy senator became estranged from his son. When the senator died unexpectedly, his will was opened and read by the executor. It said, "Because my son does not appreciate what I've done, I leave all of my worldly possessions to my loyal*

*slave, Marcellus.” That’s what it read, but there was more – actually something for the estranged son. The will stated, “Because I am a man of grace, I bequeath to my son one of my possessions of his choosing.”*

*“Sorry,” said the executor to the son. “You can only take one of your father’s possessions. **What will it be?**” To which the son replied, “I take the slave Marcellus.”*

That’s the idea. When you have a settled conviction as to who Jesus is, you come realize that He is all you need, and the false claims by these teachers who suggest that Jesus is not enough seems totally ridiculous – and on that note, Paul continues with **verse 4** where he says,

**<sup>4</sup>I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. <sup>5</sup>For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.**

Paul was concerned for these young churches, and rightly so, because he doesn’t want to see them **deluded** by the enticing spiritual words and by the persuasive arguments these false teachers would use to deny that Jesus is God and His sacrifice was not enough to save.

That word **deluded** or *deceived* or *beguiled* depending on your translation literally means *to reason alongside* – and if it helps, think about it as reasoning with words alongside the truth. In other words, if the target of the false teachers is the deity of Christ and His sufficiency to save, then their tactic was to present something alongside the truth that sounds and looks very similar to the truth.

These false teachers would swoop in on new Christians – swoop in on those who just didn’t know any better and they would say, *“You know, Jesus was a good start, and yes, He was a great man, and yes, He saves to a point – but you got to do more. If you really want to get right with God, if you really want to know the deeper stuff, if you want to learn the mysteries of God that are hidden within you – and it’s all about you not Him, then what you need is what we have to offer.”*

It sounded good, it seemed like the truth, they spoke like church people, they seemed religious, they seemed spiritual, they claimed to be greater and holier than the apostles, but what they offered was nothing but clever and subtle lies – lies which closely resembled the truth in an attempt to pull believers away from the simplicity of Jesus Christ.

You know, today is no different. False teachers and preachers will use enticing words and spiritual words and even quote Bible verses to subtly deceive you – to get something from you – usually your money, and remember even Satan himself quoted Scripture to try to tempt Jesus. These false teachers aren't going to tell you their doctrine is a lie – they are deceivers – that's who they are and that's what they do, and what they say will often be so similar to the truth that its dangerous.

**So, how are believers to defend themselves against these deceivers?** Well, Paul says he knows they are hanging in there, he's supporting them in **spirit** since he is confined in Rome, and then he says I **rejoice** because of your good **discipline** and **stability**. In the Greek, these are military words, and with those words, Paul was describing a military formation where each Christian was mustered in their place on the battlefield. Paul had confidence because they were standing together as a church, dug in and disciplined in the truth, lovingly like-minded – ready for battle in their minds and in their hearts, and it was together in their ranks that they would put up a solid front and stand against the attack.

Since they are encouraged of heart, united in love – since they had a settled conviction about Jesus, they were holding the line against their enemy. Paul rejoiced to see them standing their ground, and beginning with **verse 6**, he really gets to the heart of the matter. He says,

**<sup>6</sup>Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,  
<sup>7</sup>having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.**

I think this is the whole theme of the letter and a guiding principle for Christian living. Just as we have received Christ, we are to continue to **walk in Him** the same way.

The Colossians started with a simple piece of truth – by faith they received the Gospel summarized with a simple saying, "*Christ Jesus is Lord.*" This summarized everything that Paul had said. *Jesus is Lord*, and if you know that He is the Lord, then you must daily walk with Him. *Jesus is our Lord*, and that guiding principle should influence everything we are and everything we do.

**So, what does our walk – our life guided by that principle look like?** Well, Paul says that as we daily move through this life with Him, we are being **firmly rooted** and **built up** in our faith. Now, I think with these two images, Paul is saying the same thing – he's just doing it this way to make sure his point hits home.

First, Paul begins with an *agricultural* image of a tree being **firmly rooted**, and in the Greek the tense of that word means “*once and for all having been rooted.*” Christians are not to be tumbleweeds blown around by “every wind of doctrine” instead we are to be deeply rooted in Christ to draw our nourishment from Him – and it’s also in Him that we are to be rooted so as to withstand the storms that come against us.

When we placed our faith in Christ, God rooted us in Him – a spiritual connection was made with Jesus. That’s what God does at the moment of our salvation – God rooted us in when we got saved, and as we spend time with Jesus – and it takes time with Jesus, we sink those roots down deeper. This is the personal part of our walk with Christ that others typically don’t see. It speaks to our heart before God as we spend time alone with Him in prayer and in His word. It’s in Christ, with our hearts turned towards Him – giving our undivided attention and time to Him, that we find our nourishment and become stronger and more stable.

**Are you deeply rooted in Christ? How do you know?** Well, roots hold you down in the storm. Wait for the next storm to hit in your life, and whatever you are hanging onto – that’s where your roots are.

Secondly, to drive home the same point, Paul uses a *structural* image to describe our spiritual progress by saying we are constantly being **built up**. Tree roots go down, and buildings go up. As we walk in Christ, as we move about this life with Him, as we experience His work in us and through us, we find ourselves under construction becoming stronger and more stable, or as Paul says we are being **established** in our faith. Both the tree and the construction must be established on unshakeable ground – that being Christ who is the solid rock on which we stand by faith. Jesus is the object of our faith, and while the world around us seems to be falling apart, He is the firm foundation on which we are established.

Lastly, Paul mentions that we should be **overflowing with gratitude**. Now listen, if you are walking in Christ, deeply and intimately rooted in Him, under continuous construction by Him, if you are understanding what He has done for you, if you are appreciating the simplicity of Christ and His Gospel, if you are grateful and thankful – then it is evident that you are growing as a Christian and you will be very hard to deceive.

This is how Paul describes walking in Christ. If our spiritual roots are deep in Christ, we will not want any other soil. If Christ is our sure foundation on which we stand, we have no need to move. If we are studying and growing in the Word,

we will not be easily enticed and deceived by false doctrine. And if our hearts are overflowing with gratitude and thanksgiving, we will not even consider turning from the fullness we have in Christ. A *grounded, growing, grateful* believer will not be easily led astray.

As Paul said, just as you have received Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him. Rooted and built up in Him. Start with Jesus and walk with Jesus. Grow deep and grow up.

So, as I come to a close, I want to say this. No matter where you are in your spiritual growth, you need to keep your spiritual roots healthy, deep, and strong. **But how do you do that?** Let me suggest a couple of things you can do to apply Paul's teaching, and some of this comes from the insights of Charles Swindoll.

First, *every day, commit yourself to some personal time with Jesus* – time in prayer and time in His word. Maybe it's just for a few minutes – I get it, but be *persistent* in this until you become *consistent*. I know that stories tend to resonate more with people, so how about read the story of Joseph beginning with **Genesis 37**. Read a chapter a day and ask God to give you some insights about it.

Second, *once a week, encourage another believer*. Just as Paul went out of his way to encourage other believers, you can do the same. You'll find that this love and concern for others, not only helps to strengthen them but it will also strengthen you. Make yourself available, showing that those brothers and sisters in Christ are not alone.

Lastly, *once a day, think of something for which you're grateful and tell the Lord, "Thank You."* Thank Him for what He provides and for the people He has brought into your life. Thank Him for your deliverance from various temptations, and for the perseverance in your trials. Thank Him for salvation in Jesus Christ and the hope of eternal life. Thank Him for big things and little things. Don't let a day go by without expressing your thankfulness and gratitude to the Lord for all the good things He had done.

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