

A Pastoral Appeal to Lead a Life in Christ

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[0 : 00] us in Colossians this morning, the book of Colossians, and I'm building on a theme that we talked about in our men's gathering yesterday morning.

Next time we meet, the goal is for the men to hear more of what I'll share with you this morning, particularly in one verse in the chapter that I'll be dealing with.

Let me introduce the message with the title here, A Pastoral Appeal to Lead a Life in Christ. A Pastoral Appeal to Lead a Life in Christ will be in Colossians chapter 2.

I'll begin in verse 1 and read down through the verses that we'll be dealing with. There's just three this morning. For I want you to understand how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea and for all those who have not seen my face in the flesh.

So Paul begins here in chapter what we call chapter 2, speaking about his pastoral desire to minister to these folks, and yet he's constrained from doing that.

[1 : 08] Now he's going to pour his heart out to these folks. And in verse 2 he says, so that their hearts may be encouraged, having been held together in love, even unto all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding.

That is, unto the full knowledge of God's mystery, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. Now that is his theme in this early section of chapter 2.

I don't want anyone to come into your life or into the life of the church and delude you, deceive you into believing something that will draw them away from a very sincere and pure devotion to Jesus. He wants them to lead a life in Christ, that is, to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ in an intimate understanding of who he is, knowing that he is the treasure of wisdom and knowledge, as he says in verse 3.

[2 : 21] Now verse 5. This is what rejoices the heart of the apostle.

He is being told, reported to, that they are standing firm in their faith. And so he's rejoicing to see that they're in good order and stable, stable.

We'll talk about what all that means. Verse 6. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

That is wonderful. Having been firmly rooted and being built up in him, and having been established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and abounding with thanksgiving.

That's as far as we'll go in the text. I'm going to zero in on verses 5 through 7 for this morning's exposition. Now you know that we're in a season right now where there's a lot of hype on the TV, on the news, and the papers, and that kind of thing, about the election coming up.

[3 : 39] And people are saying all kinds of things, but one of the things that they're talking about is how to unify the nation. You've picked up on this, right? And both sides of the fence, in terms of the choices that we have for our next president, both sides of the fence are claiming that they have the pathway to unifying what they perceive to be the divisions in our country.

You've seen this in past elections where there's been a thin margin of victory in the candidates where it seems like half of the people vote this way and the other half, and there's some kind of contingent right around in this mid-zone that can sway it one way or the other.

Well, as you've listened and probably heard some of the promises that are being made and some of the pathways that are being outlined for unifying our nation in a common cause and purpose, you recognize that it's just all a bunch of mark.

Just ugh. You listen to it, I listen to it, and I think, how in the world are you going to pull that off given the divisiveness that we see in our country?

In the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, in the world, you tell everybody to be who they are. You can't have it both ways.

[5 : 01] They're either going to be who they are, right? Or they're going to get on somebody else's page. How do you make an entire nation of people get on somebody else's page beyond their own?

Well, I'll tell you how you answer that. In Scripture, we have a very clear answer, regardless of who you think you're going to vote for. The answer in Scripture is that we follow a person.

And that person is not a person on this earth. We follow the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is by love for Jesus that we're brought together in a common bond.

A true unity that passes human understanding. A unity that teaches you and I to deny myself and take up our cross and follow Him.

And so we find ourselves doing that. And we look around us and we see that other people are also denying themselves, taking up their cross to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 00] And we find ourselves on that road together as His people. But what is the common denominator in that unity? Love for Jesus Christ. A sincere and pure devotion to Jesus Christ is what brings us together as disparate people, as selfish people, greedy people, lustful people.

How do we find ourselves putting all that aside in order to rally around something bigger than ourselves? And that something is a someone, isn't it? This is the beauty of the gospel.

It brings us together in different colors of skin, different places of our birth, different ways that we were raised, all the baggage that we bring, the perhaps different languages that we speak.

All the kinds of things that make us different from one another are brought together in a beautiful, hear me now, unity. A unity grounded in who?

Jesus and love for Christ. So that we are made by His blood, brothers and sisters in the gospel. We really are brothers and sisters.

[7 : 13] We really are. We're not trying to psych ourselves out to get through a hard life. We're not telling ourselves weird stuff that we really don't believe or that really isn't true.

We are really made one in Him. So this ought to tell us as a church family, to the degree that we are all pursuing the Lord Jesus and denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following Him, we will experience a unity of love in Him.

What gets in the way of that? Well, the number one reason that we won't do that is self. Self. So we need to get over our selves and unify our selves in Him.

Now, this is a message that is not popular. However, this is why you will not see in our country a man standing forward in his integrity and basing his political stance on the love that he has for Jesus Christ being elected to the President of the United States.

Because he cannot compromise that sense of unity that calls people to faith in Jesus. If he wants to really unify our nation, call them to Christ. Period.

[8 : 30] Period. Because you and I both know that there's too much self to get over and the only way we're going to do that is in the power of the Gospel. We know that.

We've lived it and we live it every day. The reason that you and I are able to get past ourselves each day and embrace the truth of the Gospel and do as I challenged the men to do yesterday, truly invest everything that we are in helping another person or persons follow Jesus more faithfully.

The only reason that we would do that because it's messy and it's inconvenient and it shows us a lot of stuff about us that we'd rather not see because I don't want to be inconvenienced.

I don't want to have to give this up to go meet with you. I don't want to have to take that phone call in an inconvenient time so I can encourage you. That's us.

That's us. The only reason that we would do any of that is because we have come to love Jesus Christ and we take the commission that He puts before us and that commission being make disciples seriously.

[9 : 40] And we allow it to define our lives. We don't allow earthly things to negate our calling to be people who follow Jesus and turn to help others follow Him faithfully.

That's our life on this earth. And if we're missing that, we're missing the main thing. This is the message that I brought to the men in so many words yesterday and the message that Greg and I will continue to talk to them about in greater detail over the next couple of times we meet.

So let me jump right into the text this morning and share with you the first point that I want to highlight for us, a pastoral affirmation of faithfulness that we see here in verse 5 of chapter 2 in

Colossians.

For even though I'm absent in body, nevertheless, I am with you. Now, how so, Paul? Well, I'm with you in spirit. And I'm rejoicing in my own spirit to see your good order and the stability of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For even though I'm absent in the body, nevertheless, I am with you in spirit. Now, one of the things that we understand Paul speaking about here is that he's in prison.

[10 : 54] He is currently in prison for the gospel, the sake of the gospel and of the sake of Jesus. And so he wasn't literally, he was not free to come and be with these people face to face in body form.

So, it seems best to understand this expression as Paul's declaration then of his own heart being knit with them in Christ. I am with you in spirit.

In other words, I am with you in love and common bonding and unity in Jesus. I share in Christ the same thing you share.

Him as the treasure. In other words, he's not simply saying that he's with them in his thoughts and prayers. We say that sometimes and that's fine. But that's not what he's saying.

He is building on what he's just told them about truth and love in Christ, knitting together, or I could say it even more powerfully, welding together, entwining their hearts together.

[11 : 57] What is it that cements our hearts together in a true sense of camaraderie, brotherhood, sisterhood, unity? It is a common love for Jesus. He's affirming that they share in the same truth.

It's the truth of Jesus. We're all operating by what Jesus commands us to live life by. We're taking our marching orders from Him. It is our heart and our love for Jesus that constrains us in this movement forward in the truth, His truth.

That's how we want to love Him. So they have this shared spiritual union with Jesus. And Paul says, I share that with you and so that puts me right there with you.

Even though I'm physically absent from you. Paul is in Jesus Christ. They are in Jesus Christ and therefore Paul is there with them as they share in the spiritual bond of being in Christ together.

We are made one in Him. Paul takes that so seriously. He says, I can be physically absent from you and yet still there with you in spirit.

[13 : 11] And he means it. Literally. This is what brings us together. Friends, this is so powerful because listen, no other religion, no other religious experience has this kind of shared spiritual union.

None. Only Christianity that exalts the Lord Jesus Christ can know this kind of union. Now you and I both know, think about it with me. You think about other religions and what they're called to and how they begin to operate.

What you actually see and hear from them as they move out. And what is so often these religions built around. A personality.

Is that not true? A personality. A given personality. If we're not careful, can we see that happen in Christian circles? Alright.

You're with me. You're tracking with me. What we want to be able to do as Paul here is doing is call us to a spiritual unity around a common love for Jesus.

[14 : 17] I am willing to give my life on the altar of loving the Lord. Whatever He calls me to be or to do in my expression of love for Him, that is what I want my life to be about.

Now what happens when you get a whole room full of people with that singular mindset? What does it do to us? It brings us together. As long as we understand it's a common love for Jesus that's doing that.

It's not the hoo-rah-rah of the pastor. I can only give you so much of that. You can only borrow on my zeal so much. But if you have a zeal of your own for the Lord and the love of the Lord and the truth and the truth is just coursing through you, oh my goodness.

That catches fire, you know. And people come into the fellowship and they sense it. They sense these people are alive. They're glad to be here.

They really are. I don't see a bunch of faces out here that feel like, oh, Jiminy Christmas. I know. I gotta be here this morning. Oh, bless me.

[15 : 26] Bless me. We don't want to be like that. You ever been in that? I have. I've actually come to church like that at times. I say, Jeff, has that been recent?

Well, I'm not gonna tell you. I don't know. I'm thrilled to be here with you guys. This energizes me. This is better than caffeine, bro.

This is better than caffeine. Well, what defines, let me ask this. What defines and makes possible our unity here? No issue.

What is it that makes for Christian harmony, agreement, trust, submission, and like-mindedness, especially when you think about we all have opinions. We all come from different backgrounds, different parts of the country, all that kind of thing.

We all bring baggage into this. Just very similar to a marriage. How do you take two sinners and bring them together for a lifetime and they not kill each other? Well, the love of the Lord. The love of the Lord.

[16:26] Well, Paul tells us the answer to this. He goes right to it. Well, it's because of a full knowledge. Isn't that beautiful? Man, I love the way Scripture is so specific in these ways.

A full knowledge of God's mystery. Well, what is it, Paul? That is Christ Himself. It is Christ Himself that is the answer to the question.

Our shared spiritual union to Jesus spiritually unites us and produces our spiritual unity as brothers and sisters.

We are unioned with Jesus spiritually. We're saved, born again, bought with a price, cleansed by His blood. We are union to Him for eternity.

And that union with Jesus spiritually unites us in this common brotherhood of love, sisterhood of love for Christ. And what does that produce in us?

[17:22] It produces a spiritual unity as brothers and sisters that is seen. It's palpable. You see it in action as you minister to each other.

It takes life because it lives in you. Right? Jesus lives in you and moves you forward to live this kind of life. Listen, otherwise, here's what you do.

You do one of two things. You would shelter yourself away. I know you guys. Some of you would be very content to just kind of shelter yourself away from the world.

Then there's another contingent of you that would be very happy to go out in the world and be around people and do your thing, but it would be for ulterior motives. That's the selfishness and greed of our hearts.

There's always an angle. That's us. That's who we are. Jesus blows all of that away. And He makes it about what?

[18:21] He makes it about bringing glory to God. So He won't let you hide and He won't let you move out and make it about you out in the world.

He's going to challenge that. We are learning to follow Jesus together which brings us together. Walking with Jesus together brings us together in Him.

That's the way it's supposed to be. Spiritual union to Jesus makes us possible and makes us who we are as a family. We will never grow tired of saying this because over and over and over again in the Bible it's said.

So one practical outgrowth of our union, our spiritual union to Jesus that the God of all glory comes in the power of the Holy Spirit to take up residence in you.

Jesus lives in me. In my soul. Wow! Well one outgrowth of that union is the nurturing of unity in our relationships with each other.

[19:33] They will know me by the love you have for one another. Spiritual union with Jesus makes for spiritual unity among God's people.

So Paul is simply and very tenderly I think saying I'm with you. No, no. I'm really with you. I don't just believe in you.

I don't just hope the best for you. No, no, no, no. Listen. I am with you. I am bound to you for eternity in Jesus Christ.

You hear that? I'm bound to you for eternity in Jesus Christ. So you better get to know me and like me because you're going to be around me for a long time.

So we need to work at it. We are in the Lord Jesus Christ in heart and soul mind spirit. Now there's room here I think for misunderstanding and even the possibility of damage being done in Paul's relationship with these Christians.

[20:45] And here's the issue. They don't really know Paul personally or well. There are many commentators that throughout have picked up on the language here and thought through Paul

probably had not yet met these people in person.

I believe that he eventually did but by the time of this writing I don't think he had. So Paul tries to reassure them that the lack of knowing him face to face and in his absence from them physically doesn't necessarily lessen his love for them.

It doesn't diminish the reality of his sense of deep connection with them through union in Jesus Christ. He's saying if you're saved if I'm saved we've been brought together by the blood of the Lord and we are unioned for eternity in him.

We'll share heaven together as a family. We'll all be around the throne praising and honoring God. So let's practice. Let's get into good practice here. Now friends listen please don't make the mistake of underestimating or even neglecting the vital importance of prayerfully reflecting on your spiritual connection to each other by way of your shared spiritual union with Jesus.

Jesus. Please don't let yourself take that for granted. This is a tremendous privilege and responsibility of your faith. That you are sitting next to people beyond your family members who are going to share heaven with you because they share a common love for Jesus.

[22 : 22] That is a powerful powerful thing that the world can't take from you. Our shared love for Jesus draws us together in love for each other.

Now perhaps nowhere is the tender union and unity of Paul speaks of here more threatened than in the area of dealing with our personal preferences.

I hope you are with me on that. You try to think of threats to unity in the church. I am talking about the context of the local church because that is exactly what Paul is writing about here.

He is talking to God's people specifically. He wants the people at Laodicea, the church in the city of Laodicea and now these people who live in the city of Colossae, the Colossian Christians to understand what he is talking about in this unified love for Jesus as a local body of believers.

That is what he is saying. And I think that one of the things we need to be aware of here is the tendency to exalt self. To make your involvement in church life about your preferences.

[23 : 35] Well, I don't agree with that. I just don't agree with that. I don't think we ought to be making as big a deal about that or about this or about the other or whatever. Well, one of the reasons that you have elders is because your elders are the guys who say yes or no to these matters that tend to float.

we bring you the word of God and we try and show you this is like yesterday with the men, for example. Yesterday the men were here and I laid out a very strong challenge to disciple making as the main thing.

I told them this is a slam dunk. This is an absolute slam dunk. And there are things that get in the way of us answering the call to disciple making. And if we allow those things to do that, we're abdicating our role as men.

Here's what I didn't say and I didn't mean to say and I didn't intend as a meaning. I know you've got to work a job. I know you have a career.

I know you provide for your family. I know you have things in your life that you enjoy. So this isn't your pastor dissing on the fact that you like to fish or you like to golf or you like to hunt or you like to work on cars.

[24 : 48] All of us have or you like to do a certain sports activity. Enjoy your life for heaven's sake. Enjoy your life. Isn't that what Ecclesiastes says?

Enjoy your life. But listen, not at the expense of the main thing. If you're pursuing life in a way where you're missing the main thing, you're abdicating, you're abandoning, you're neglecting, there could be a number of reasons why that's happening.

That's the message. You should be living your life in a way where you're keeping the main thing the main thing. And if you're not, there's a problem and that should give you cause for pause.

And that's a good thing. Your pastors want to rally to you and encourage you to keep the main thing the main thing. Why would we do that? Because by experience in our own life and by the testimony of scripture, we know what's waiting for you if you don't.

And it's not fun. It'll break your heart. It'll hurt your family. That's what disobedience does.

[26 : 07] And so what we're doing is calling you to obedience in the Lord out of love for the Lord. And we're saying to you, we're here to help you keep the main thing, the main thing. And the main thing is for you and I to follow Jesus.

And as we do that, to turn around and bring others with us as we follow Jesus. Help them follow Jesus with us. That's the Christian life.

If we're not doing that, we're missing it as a church. And so we want to stay unified in our efforts to walk faithfully with Christ and then turn around and bring others with us.

And of course that starts, I'll use Brian, that starts in Brian's family with Brian discipling his wife and his children. It starts there. And Greg and I want to encourage that in our men and in our fathers and our husbands.

We want to encourage that and build them up in that. But it doesn't stop there. Now Brian turns around and reaches out and he grabs a guy or two and he says, come here knucklehead.

[27 : 07] Follow me as I follow the Lord. Right? And that's what we do. That's the Christian life. And so Paul is telling these people we are bonded together in a common love for Jesus and we can't let our personal preferences, our stubbornness, our pride, our egos to get in the way of us serving the Lord in this way.

We can't. We can't afford to do that. That's what the world does. It doesn't matter if your preferences are related to doctrine or to church life or any other aspect of our relationships together.

This could even apply to relationships in our marriages or our friendships or our work environment. But it's especially applicable in the context of our passage which is church life.

What unifies God's people in local church life? Love for Christ. A commitment to sound doctrine as a way of loving the Lord faithfully.

We live the doctrine of Jesus because we love Jesus. That's why. So listen, he's making a big deal in this passage out of what? Notice, friends, being deluded.

[28 : 21] Being deluded. I say this, verse 4, so that no one will be deluded by persuasive argument. You're going to hear stuff out there and stuff's going to come into you and your walk and your church life and it's going to sound very persuasive.

Don't be deceived by it. So this was going on. He's having to write this because this is going on. And he wants to nip it in the bud as it were. Being deluded by persuasive talk is about preferences. You're deluded because you're giving in to preferences. And this is being sold to you as good doctrine for Christian living and it's not.

So Paul is not preaching and advocating personal preference, either his own or those of the Colossians. He's not telling the Colossians, you guys get together and do a group think and then vote and move in that direction.

That's not what he's telling them. He's saying you get together and you follow Jesus together and you do what he tells you to do. Can I say it more simply than that? That's the church.

[29 : 40] Now, why would we do that? Because we love him. Because we owe him everything. So I'm going to ask all the dads in here, are you helping your family love the Lord Jesus by following the Lord Jesus faithfully yourself and showing your family we're not going to give the lion's share of who we are and what we are as a family to earthly things.

We're going to make this as much as we can about loving Jesus and being faithful to follow him and what he commands of us. And you know what? As we go, we're going to enjoy life. We're going to enjoy life together.

We're going to do fun stuff. We're going to have time together. We're going to go off and do things together and it's going to be great, but not to the neglect of a priority on heavenly things.

And what is the main thing? Me walking with Jesus and bringing someone else along to walk with Jesus with me as I help them follow him more faithfully. If I'm not investing myself like that by lifestyle and by deliberate, intentional coming alongside, I'm not living it myself and then bringing somebody, then I'm abandoning the main thing.

Now, the reason that I do all this and say all of this, folks, is I don't want us to miss the main thing. And as I told the men yesterday, this is long as Greg and I, because God gives us breath, life and insight to do it.

[31 : 10] We're never going to change this. This is always going to be our message. The main thing. It's Jesus and following him. You say, well, of course. No, no, no, no.

It's you following the Lord in a way where you're giving yourself to bring others along and help them follow Jesus in faith as well. That's never going to change in our church because that is the life of what the New Testament tells us to be about.

Paul wants these people to be strengthened in their hearts and knit together in love through shared assurance of applying a true knowledge, a true knowledge of Jesus to their lives of living together as the church.

In other words, let me put it up here for you. Paul wants biblical principle to triumph over any kind of personal preference in the life of the church and in the matters where, you know, you kind of have this this tension between, well, should we lean more over here or more over there?

That's why you have pastors and that's why you better make sure those pastors and their character are loving Jesus and walking with Jesus. Those are the guys you want doing that because these are the men that are going to stand forward and say, I know we're trying to juggle between right and left on this and we're trying to be wise.

[32 : 32] And so here's where we've landed and this is where we're going to lead the church. And then we we bear the responsibility for that. That's leadership. That's eldering. That's what we do.

And it's not for the weak. Because we're going to incur double judgment from God on that. Now, I don't know how that even works. It makes my knee shake to think about it.

But I feel like if Greg and I just keep coming before you and saying we want to love Jesus and walk with Jesus and make the main thing about Jesus and let Jesus unify us in a common effort to serve one another as we reach people for Christ.

I don't know how to keep it more focused than that. We sing about it. We pray about it. We come together and we rally around it. Adherence to God's truth and to the person of Jesus will keep these people from disunity and disillusionment just like it will us.

Because there are persuasive people out there who want to draw us away to all these peripheral things that don't have any support for the main thing. And we don't want you to be pulled away like that.

[33 : 44] The priority should be the local church. Jesus died for the local church. He didn't die for all this extra stuff out there. He died for his people and his people gather together in a local assembly to worship the Lord.

This is the main thing and we want to safeguard it. We don't want it to dilute us. We don't want it to fracture us. Now it's so instructive and helpful for us to see what God himself values in the life of the Colossian church family because this is also what the Lord values at Grace Church as a family.

So what God values is pointed out to us by way of what Paul rejoices in. He has a pastoral heart and so Paul isn't going to say that he rejoices in something that dishonors the Lord.

So he tells them I rejoice. Look what he says. Therefore as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in him. That's verse 6. Now take it right back up into the previous verse and look at what he's telling them that for.

Even though I'm absent from you I'm not physically there with you I'm with you in spirit rejoicing to see what? Your good order and the stability of your faith in Christ.

[35 : 01] Here's how he puts it. I rejoice to see your good order or your discipline. The discipline you're showing in your spiritual walk with the Lord and the stability of your faith in Christ.

I'm rejoicing in that. That's what we care most about for you in our labors as God's under shepherds. That you will live a spiritually ordered spiritually disciplined life that will help promote in your life a stability in your faith in Christ.

You'll stand firm in your faith in the Lord especially when life gets hard and dark and and maybe God seems distant and there's all kinds of ways life comes at us when you're weary.

Paul says I'm rejoicing to know that you are disciplined in your spiritual life in a way that is helping to make you stable in that faith in Christ. Good order here.

Good order is literally rendered ordered array. Ordered array. The idea is tied to what Paul said about them living in the full assurance of understanding in verse two.

[36 : 13] It goes back into chapter one verse nine where Paul prayed that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will. See there's where you stand. There's where you live from.

I am filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual that is of the Holy Spirit wisdom. This is the wisdom of the Spirit teaching you to live godly in Christ Jesus and to say no to ungodliness.

From Titus. I'm rejoicing and knowing that you are living an orderly life. In the truth. You're applying the truth of Jesus in your relationships with each other.

Oh that just thrills my heart he says. Your lives are lining up with God's truth for holy living. The words that he's using here the two terms that he's using good order and stability that has the idea in

the military parlance it has the idea of soldiers that are drawn up in formation for battle. So if you think in your mind's eye what it looks like especially you see this in ancient times where lines and lines of soldiers drew up together in certain formations so that they could move forward in the context of something more solid more stable.

[37 : 37] They didn't want their ranks to be broken because of piercing in their ranks and any divide that the enemy could create would then create havoc so that they could go deeper into the lines and that would that would disorder all of the battle movement that the army wanted to make.

And so Paul is saying we don't want that. We want you to stay ordered. Stable. Hold your position. And he said I'm rejoicing to see that because that's going to help safeguard you from this delusion. This deception that this the world wants to foist on you as a family. You're helping to safeguard each other. You're doing your part.

Paul said that that's just thrilling my heart. Your lives are lining up with God's truth for holy living and relating. Praise the Lord. Then Paul also rejoices in this.

Notice the stability of their faith in Christ. They're not being blown around in their Christian life by all kinds of doctrines and teachings and fads and ideas and all that kind of thing because those things will undermine their faith in the Lord.

[38 : 49] So they're not they're not for the most part running from one spiritual fad to the other. They're not following false teachers and submitting to them because they sound sophisticated and they're telling the people what they want to hear.

You know itch in ears kind of thing. No no. I'll put it up here at the bottom. Good order. This is one of the things that one author used to sum up how he understood the heart of the Apostle Paul behind all of this.

Here is what brings a smile of approval to the face of our heavenly father. Faithful Christians who set their personal and corporate spiritual experience in that order set forth in scripture.

You're saying you're like you live by the scriptures. Here's what evokes a heartfelt well done from our great and glorious God. People whose lives are fixed and riveted on Christ alone.

There it is. Boy, we just can't miss that, can we? Who's faith does not bend with every blast of new doctrinal wind? Whose commitment is not compromised by threat or fear of persecution or loss of personal convenience or comfort?

[40 : 09] So good order in our personal life, good order in the life of our church and a steadfast faith in Christ, that's enough for the Apostle Paul. He doesn't have to have all the bells and whistles and the smoke and the mirrors.

He says this is enough. It's obviously what God values in a church family. Be steadfast. Be firm. Hold your position in the line. Walk with the Lord.

So these elements, look, these elements of Christian living, which are so valuable to God, are present in their lives because. Why?

Because they have received Christ Jesus the Lord. That's what the text says. Verse six. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord.

You've trusted him. You've given your life to him. You're looking to him for the forgiveness of your sins and you're looking to him alone. And so here is where number two comes in.

[41 : 11] Now we move from that first one. We move from a pastoral appeal, a pastoral affirmation of faithfulness to a pastoral appeal for fullness.

He wants them to live a full Christian life in the Lord Jesus Christ who has saved them. Don't miss that. This isn't just fire insurance.

You've been called to a life with him. So what does it mean to receive Christ Jesus? The answer is in the title, isn't it? Christ Jesus, the Lord.

I've given my life to his lordship. He's the boss. I follow him. If we look back into the context of what Paul's already said about Jesus Christ as Lord, we can find this.

If you go back into the text with me of chapter one, just look at this with me. Let me get you busy here for a second. And look at verses 13 and 14 where he makes the statement in chapter one, who rescued us from the authority of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the son of his love in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[42 : 31] Jesus Christ is God's only beloved son or son of his love who frees us from sin by forgiving us for our sins.

That's his work. Then in verses 15 through 20, look what he says. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation for in Christ.

All things were created. Did you know that in all in all things that we know that are created on this earth were created by Jesus, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether there are thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, you know, all that has been created through Christ and for Christ.

It's being created through Jesus and for Jesus. It's all about Jesus. This whole world is about bringing honor to Jesus Christ. Why? Because this world is alive because of Jesus Christ. No Jesus, no life, no world. Verse 17. He is before all things. In Jesus Christ, all things hold together.

[43 : 37] And Jesus is the head of the body, the church. Greg and I take our marching orders from Jesus, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself will come to have first place in everything.

First place in everything. Is that your life? For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him, through Christ, to reconcile, bring near to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross, through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Well, that's a lot to unpack. He alone, Jesus alone is God. He alone is sovereign Lord of creation, the head of the church, the author of our salvation.

He's it. He's the pinnacle. And then in verses 21 and 22. Although you were formally alienated, separated and enemies in mind and in evil deeds, that is from God.

Now he reconciled you. He brought you near in the body of his flesh through death. Jesus had to die to bring you near to God in order to present you before him.

[44 : 56] Holy, blameless and beyond reproach. Folks, do you celebrate the fact that you have been made holy, that you have been made blameless and that you stand beyond reproach, beyond accusation, beyond judgment, because Jesus has done this for you.

This should make you eternally thankful. Christians should be the most thankful people on the face of the planet. Every single day of our lives, we live under this reality that nothing can ever change.

You say, Jeff, what about my sin? Well, what about it? Jesus paid the penalty for your sin. He took the judgment for your sin. That doesn't give you license to go out here and sin all the more.

Paul said, oh, heaven forbid. What it does is humble you and makes you realize that as an ongoing sinner, God will never hold any of that against you. Never.

You will go into eternity not judged, not condemned, not being brought before the Lord so God can shake his finger in your face and rehearse all of the nastiness of your life, but so that you can be brought into his presence to be loved by him because Jesus, his son, took all of that punishment for you forever.

[46 : 16] And now you remain free in the Lord. That's the gospel. Shouldn't we get up every day with some sense of gratitude about that? You need to think about the things that rob you of thankfulness before the Lord.

What are the kinds of things that you are allowing to steal away your gratitude to God for simply one thing and one thing only? You have Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

That's the most important thing about you. And nothing in all the universe can take it away from you. And there's just something that ought to be going on inside of us as our feet hit the floor that morning.

No matter how. Oh, oh, yeah, that's good. That's going to be tough today. But thank you, Lord. I'm breathing and I have the Lord Jesus in my heart.

You know, so come what may, the worst thing that can happen is I can fall over and die. And then I ain't got that to deal with no more. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And I'm with the Lord.

[47 : 21] Dr. MacArthur sent out a little statement recently. He's been having all kinds of health problems, 85 years old. And he was talking about how his organs are failing now.

There's not a lot the doctors can do for him at this point. His organs are starting to fail. And he can't get rid of the fluid that's collecting.

Some of you nurses and all out there will understand better what I'm talking about. But here's what he said, and I'm paraphrasing. Suzanne was reading it to me last night, and I was trying to sit there and listen to it. I love that guy so much.

The world is going to experience a great loss when that man goes to be with Jesus. But he said, I'm just an old war horse. I'm just an old war horse.

And I'm about wore out. That's how you want to go out. You want to go out, wore out. Give it all for Jesus, friends. Give it all for Jesus.

[48 : 24] You cannot find a better way to invest your life. You cannot find a better reason to give everything that you have. For the cause of Christ who purchased you away from sin and death by his own death.

Let's rejoice. Let's rejoice in him. In chapter 2, verse 3. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Oh man, Jesus is our only source for wisdom in living out God's will. So this is Christ Jesus the Lord living in you. Lead a life which shows his life in you.

That's what Paul is saying. Live a life that shows the life of Jesus living in you. That's the kind of life you want to live. I want to show the world the life of Jesus living in me.

He's what makes me who I am and what I am. We've seen this before in chapter 1, verses 9 and 10. It's just a beautiful display of God's goodness in us.

[49 : 33] Now look, let me put this up here for you. What is it? What is it that makes possible a life lived worthy of the Lord? How can I know for sure that my life is a life being lived worthy of the Lord?

It's a life pleasing to him in all aspects. Well, verse 9 gives us this. If you look at chapter 1, verse 9. For this reason also, since the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may notice, be filled with the full knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And what is the purpose of being filled like that? What is the purpose of you being filled with a full knowledge of God's will in Jesus Christ and in all spiritual wisdom and understanding?

That is, the Holy Spirit teaching you how to live for Jesus. Purpose, verse 10, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, so that you are bearing that spiritual fruit in every good work and multiplying in the full knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father.

Please don't blow by that. Joyously giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Why should I be so full of joy?

[51 : 04] Because he has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. In other words, he has qualified us to be in heaven. We are sharing in the goodness of God with other people by the goodness of God working in our lives.

Paul appeals to these people then to walk in a fullness of the Lord Jesus. He talks about all the wealth of the full assurance, a true knowledge, the inexhaustible treasures of Jesus' divine knowledge and wisdom.

All of that's combining to help you properly order your life in following the Lord. So, look, in response to this privilege, to live in the fullness of life only found in Jesus, you do that by obediently expressing the wealth, assurance, and knowledge of His life in you.

This requires obedience. And so, look with me at verse 7 of chapter 2, if you would. Having been firmly rooted and being built up in Him and having been established in your faith just as you were instructed, and, how does the verse end?

Abounding with thanksgiving. Abounding. To lead a life in Christ, Paul tells you that you need to build your life on the truth that you're learning from the Lord.

[52 : 24] The question is this, are you learning the truth from the Lord? Are you feeding yourself on the truth of Scripture? You say, Jeff, you know, the Bible doesn't have a big place in my life. I get the Bible when I come to church.

Then you're missing it. Missing what? You're missing what it means for you to build your life on the truth that you're learning from Jesus. You're not letting Jesus teach you.

Don't allow for anyone to persuade you with a Jesus-plus way of living. All right? Now, look. This is how I'm going to move toward a close.

What does it mean? What does it mean for us to live like this? To be filled with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding for the purpose that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

What does it mean for us to live a life like that? Well, we've got four things. Four things that He wants to put in front of us.

[53 : 29] Let's see if I got them up here. Walking in Christ consists of a progression of four things that He outlines real quickly. And I'll just show them to you, make a couple of comments, and keep moving.

All right? The first one is this. Having been firmly rooted. You see it right there in the verse. Verse 7. Having been firmly rooted. The question is, are you firmly rooted?

Are you rooting yourself? God has once for all rooted you in Christ by your salvation. Now, notice this is stated in the past tense.

Having been. So, with this spiritual rooting, God has begun a spiritual process in you. Are you giving yourself to that process? Friends, please hear me as your pastor and your friend.

Are you giving yourself to the spiritual process that it took Jesus dying for to initiate in your life? Are you giving yourself over to that growth process in Him?

[54 : 24] Are you learning of Him? Are you a disciple? Are you following Christ? Roots bring life to the plant. That's the imagery here.

So, God has rooted you permanently in Jesus. Your fruit, that is the life you live, is the fruit of His life, His character at work in you. It's not your fruit. It's the fruit of Jesus working that fruit out of your life.

The Holy Spirit lives in you and brings you this fruit, doesn't He? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. So, you want to work out what God has worked in through your relationship with the Lord.

And you do that by obedient living. In John chapter 15, we have that whole vine branches thing going on.

And what does He say? It's impossible for you to do anything apart from Me. What does He mean by that? You can't get up and go to work without Him? No, no, no, no. Lots of people out there who don't know the Lord get up and go to work every day.

[55 : 24] That's not what He's talking about. We should be praising Him for that because He sustains everything. He's talking about the spiritual good work produced in your life. That's Him.

It's impossible for you to do that without Him. This is what we're talking about. Number two, look. Being built up in Him. Now, this is a really...

And you see that word up there? Look at that. How in the world? Why would I put that up there for you? All right? So, this is *epoi kodo mumenoi*.

epoi kodo mumenoi. That is such a cool word. I don't know how these people said that. How they put that in a sentence and kept right on going.

I guess they just were used to it. But it's such a cool word because it's such a rich word. And it translates simply being built up. Being built up.

[56 : 22] It's a rich word with the idea of being brought nearer to fullness. Isn't that good? Nearer to completion. It means to be constructed further. So, when we talk about we really are a work in progress, we are.

We're God's work in progress. You're under construction. Now, look. Is God having to bring a jackhammer into this thing?

Or is it... He said sometimes. Or is it more like, okay, you know. Because you're teachable. You're cooperative. You're willing. You're placing yourself on the altar of following the Lord Jesus and learning from Him.

Listen, it's not fun to have the Lord use two-by-fours. It's not fun. But He will. He will. And that story's another time. Taking in God's Word teaches you to walk by faith with the Lord and to know Him.

Knowing Jesus builds you up in your faith. It makes you more spiritually fit. It's the only way. That's how you know fullness. Number three.

[57 : 34] Having been established in your faith. Established is the idea of you being confirmed or stabilized so that you're settled securely and unconditionally.

This is just so great. The wisdom of God choosing these words to communicate these deep truths. So your relationship with Jesus is established on the firm foundation of faith in Him.

Sound doctrine. So that you're walking with Him on spiritually solid, trustworthy ground. That's what makes you stable. You say, Jeff, how can I stabilize myself in my faith?

How can my Christian walk become more stabilized where there's less of this in my life? Well, it's right here. You return to the foundation of being rooted in Christ.

You understand that you're drawing your life from Jesus. You're drawing your life from Jesus. That's the only way to do it. Notice that the text says, will you look at your text with me and notice what he says?

[58 : 38] In my text, it actually has hyphens separating it. Just as you were instructed. Just as you were instructed points us to the content of what makes up biblical doctrine.

That is, biblical teachings from Jesus. The prophets. The apostles. Sound doctrine. Instructed, if you look up here, instructed, carries the idea of teaching that seeks to shape the will of the learner. Don't we all need that? We all need our wills to be shaped by the will of the Lord. Your heart is informed and shaped by God's truth so that you can then exercise it in the direction of what pleases the Lord.

If you find yourself constantly struggling with pleasing the Lord, you need to come back to the beginning here and ask yourself, well, how much of my life is being given over to following the instruction of Jesus?

Well, that's a problem for me because I'm not spending any time really learning much about the Lord. I don't spend time in the Bible. Well, you got a problem. How are you going to follow instruction you don't know anything about?

[59 : 54] How are you going to bring somebody else along to help them grow in their faith of following Jesus when you haven't been there and you're not doing it? It's not going to happen, is it?

This is how the church gets in trouble. This is how the church starts crumbling. This is when our foundation starts getting shaky. And this is where people start running off in preferences.

Why? I'll tell you why. Because you get bored. You get bored with the status quo. And so you want to go out and start looking for something more flashy.

Be careful. Paul said, don't be deluded. Don't be deluded. And finally, this last one, to me, sews it all up so that without the last one, the other three are just, it's just duty.

It's just duty. It's legalism. Look at this last one. And abounding with thanksgiving. There it is. That's the key. If I had to pick one of these four, that's the key.

[61 : 02] Abounding with thanksgiving. Why is this so important? Because ingratitude fosters, look at this, do I have it up here?

Yes. Look at this list. Ingratitude fosters apathy, anger in your Christian life, rebellion, unbelief, unbelief, in moments of unbelief, unkindness, lack of concern, discontentment, moodiness, irritability, I could put in patience, and a lack of commitment.

That's just to name a few. All of that is rooted in an ungrateful heart. All of it. Every single one of them. Folks, I'm telling you, we struggle most in our Christian life largely due to ingratitude.

It's just true. Whereas, now look at this one, whereas, being thankful to God, what does it do? What does this abounding in thanksgiving do? Why would Paul make such a big deal of this?

Being thankful to God widens your gaze. Please hear this as I close. Being thankful to God refines and refocuses your perspective about yourself and your situation.

[62 : 25] Gratefulness takes your eyes off you and puts your eyes on God. You are thankful for Jesus and to Jesus. Thankfulness. Thankfulness helps you get out of a stubborn fixation on yourself and your problems.

Why? Because you rehearse God's blessings to you in your walk with Christ. You worship Him as a good God doing good things in your life. Even if you don't understand it all.

You see and receive and order your life by what is the bigger picture of God working His purposes in your life. You say Jeff now look when I'm in a challenge a trial or I'm suffering are you saying that I'm supposed to go to God and thank God for this loss in my life or for this terrible experience that I'm going through that's just tearing my heart out?

You don't have to say thank you to God for the pain and the grief of human weakness and sin and what sin does to our lives.

What do you thank God for? You thank God for what you know hasn't changed. What hasn't changed? He's a good God doing a good thing through His Son Jesus Christ who lives in you.

[63 : 44] And that hasn't changed. Circumstances will not rob you of that. And so in the moment of that darkness in the moment of that trial that challenge that circumstance that seems to be getting worse you can still say to God I'm abounding with thankfulness in my heart to you and I'm not going

to let my circumstances or any of this other stuff I'm not going to allow it to rob me of being grateful to you for one thing and one thing only.

Thank you for Jesus in my life. He's my life and if I die like this if I die like this I'm going to be ushered into His presence for all eternity and I won't even remember any of this.

This is a blink and it's gone but eternity. Thank you that you have helped me purchase eternity and that this isn't my eternity.

Thank you. You see what does that do? It widens your gaze. It opens your perspective. It helps you see that God is good and doing a good work even if you don't understand it all.

How could you? How could I? How could I? That's why Paul ends this way. You can't overflow with something that you are not first being filled with.

[65 : 12] If I don't have a bucket and I pour water on the ground and I'm expecting it to get full I better pour the water in the bucket and keep pouring because it's not going to overflow if I don't keep pouring.

I've got to fill it up. You cannot overflow with something you're not filled up with. So leading a life in Christ should produce a spilling over of gratitude towards the Lord and towards one another.

And so I say to this, I say this in my prayer, may our cup runneth over in the Lord Jesus. Let's pray together. Dear Father in Heaven, I thank You first of all for Jesus.

I thank You for His cross. I thank You for the love of Your heart to send Your only Son to put Himself willingly on a cross to be tortured to death as You laid our sins on Him.

And then He paid the penalty for those sins. Not His own sins, but our sins. Standing in as our substitute, paying a price that we couldn't pay, offering a sacrifice we couldn't offer, because He was sinless and righteous.

[66 : 33] You could accept it and receive it for what it is. Thank You, God, for Jesus. Thank You for the gospel of good news that tells us the truth about who He is and why He came and what He's done.

Thank You that Jesus lives in us by faith. The gift that You've given us to believe and to trust in Him and in Him alone. If there's anyone in our congregation today who is struggling with this doubt, this nagging against their soul, am I really born again?

Am I really trusting God for the forgiveness of my sins through Jesus and Jesus alone? I pray that You'd send them up here to talk to us so that they won't leave today with that nagging any longer.

We also ask, dear God, for those in our midst who are listening to this message and taking it to heart and feel the convicting challenge of upping their spiritual game in their walk with God, I pray that You would help them to know Your love and Your kindness, that You're not beating us over the head with the truth.

You're appealing to us as a Father who loves us, to make the main thing the main thing and bring this walk into a daily issue for us so that we will know peace that passes understanding.

[67 : 55] I pray that You will teach us how to be grateful people, teach us how to be thankful, God, if for nothing else and mainly for Jesus Christ Himself, who is the treasure of wisdom and knowledge.

Help us to treat Jesus as the treasure. Help our hearts to long for Him and to follow Him. And as we do that, help us to love one another in the true spirit of Christ.

Thank You for Your Word and thank You for Your faithfulness to us as a good God doing a good thing. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.