

**Read:** Co 2:6-12

**Message in a minute:** In Jesus Christ is fullness of life. People are all looking to all sorts of things to find fulfillment in life and will pursue whatever they believe will provide it. What happens if they don’t find it or if what they thought would provide it doesn’t? Keep looking? The true meaning of life is in Christ. God’s full power and presence is in Jesus. When God graces our lives with His presence through faith He radically changes our nature and we become new person’s in Christ (2 Co 5:17). Water baptism parallels the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and portrays the death and burial of our old sinful way of life followed by resurrection to our new life in Christ. Paul’s instruction for the believers in Colosse as well as for believers today is:

1. To live in Christ
2. To not be misled
3. To know all that Christ is
4. To know all that we are in Christ

That’s the message of Co 2:6-12 in a minute.

**Illustration:** Peter W. Law in “A Portrait of My Father” writes: Imagine you are on vacation, and you have an apartment overlooking the sand and surf. Sitting on the table in your room is a fishbowl, and inside the bowl is a small goldfish. Each day you swim and sun-bake and enjoy soaking up the delights of vacationing. Before long, however, you begin to feel sorry for little Goldie who is all alone in his bowl while you go out having fun in the sun. To make up for this injustice, you promise Goldie a little of the action. “Tomorrow,” you tell the goldfish, “You will begin to enjoy life too.” The next day you take a washcloth, lift the fish from the bowl, place it in the cloth, wrap it up, and put the living bundle into your pocket before leaving for the beach. As you reach the spot where you are accustomed to spending your day, you can feel the sun’s heat beating down upon your back. Excitedly you take your gilled companion from your pocket, lay out the washcloth on the sand, place the fish on the cloth, stand back, and say, “Now this is life, Goldie; live it up!” Can anything be more ridiculous or more foolish? Being in the sun on a hot beach is no environment for a goldfish – or any fish! It will die there, not live. It was never intended to be in that environment. For people, a relationship with God is the divinely designed environment in which life is to be lived and enjoyed. To believe that you can survive outside of this environment no matter how appealing it may seem is ridiculous and foolish.

**V6 “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord (*by faith*), continue to live in Him, (*by faith*)”**

There’s an essential starting point to the Christian life, but that’s what it is, a decisive starting point. It’s not the end all. The Christian life is not static – it doesn’t happen at a point in time and end there, it’s dynamic. It’s a day by day process of learning to be the new creation in Christ that you are and this can’t happen apart from a growing union with Christ.

Given Paul’s heart motivation for the spiritual maturity of the Colossian believers that he expressed in vv2-5, he continued to develop his heart felt desire for them in v6. They had received Jesus as Lord when Epaphras presented the Gospel message to them. He laid the foundation of Biblical truth concerning who Jesus Christ is and how they were to be living their lives as a result and Paul’s exhortation here was for them to continue to believe these truths and to maintain a lifestyle patterned after His. In 1 Jn 2:6 we find this exhortation, “Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.” Jesus provided the example ‘par excellence’ of how we are to live our lives by the way He lived His.

So, when it comes to life situations, it’s not a matter of saying to yourself, “What *would* Jesus do, as if this were a question in search of an answer, but rather, what *did* Jesus do in life situations like this one.” The Bible gives us all kinds of examples of what Jesus did. It’s a matter of making the connection with this and exercising faith in Jesus to respond like He did as the Spirit of God guides you. Paul goes on to describe what continuing to live in Him involves

in v7. Now, you can believe that life is to be lived in a variety of different ways, but you won't survive outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our lives, Paul instructs in v7, are to be patterned after Jesus' life:

**V7 “rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”**

There are three aspects to continuing to live in Christ that Paul addresses in this verse:

1. Being rooted and built up in Christ
2. Being strengthened or established in the faith
3. Being filled to overflowing with thankfulness

There isn't even a hint in either of these two verses of anything the Colossian believers were lacking in what they already had in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to live the Christian life. They had it all “in Him.”

Jesus is the foundation and cornerstone of the Christian life (1 Co 3:11; Isa 28:16; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pe 2:4-8; 2 Ti 2:19). The church of Jesus Christ is to be the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Ti 3:15).

1. ‘rooted’ is in the Gr. perfect tense, which speaks of an action that has already taken place in the past with the results of that action continuing on in the present, so the sense is ‘having been rooted and still being rooted’ in Christ resulting in the continuing process of becoming more and more like Him (this is the idea of ‘built up’, which is a present tense participle indicating continuous action in present time).
2. If the roots of our faith (notice the text says, ‘the faith’ – the foundation of Biblical truth – the truths of Christian doctrine) ... If the roots of our faith are not firmly planted in Christ then we will fail to withstand the heat, the storms of life which will inevitably overtake us (Mt 7:24-27). Jesus is our foundation as Paul so clearly elucidates in 1 Co 3:11 “... no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” In Eph 2:19-22 he refers to believers as “members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”
3. If there’s any spiritual quality that is sorely lacking within the Christian community today, it’s a lack of thankfulness for all that we have in Christ in spite of the sometimes harsh realities of life. The writer to the Hebrews says in He 13:15 “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise ....” We have the insurmountable riches of God in the person of Jesus Christ who is within us. We have all that Christ is as a permanent possession. The more in touch we are with this, the greater will be the depth of our thanksgiving to God for the inexhaustible spiritual riches that He has placed within us in Christ.

John MacArthur in his commentary on Colossians (p. 93) captures the essence of spiritual maturity well. “By studying the “word of His grace, which is able to build you up” (Ac 20:32), believers will “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pe 3:18). And they will come “to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

God divinely designed us to live in a relationship with Him not outside of this relationship. We can’t survive in any other environment. To think that we can is ridiculous and just plain foolish.

**V8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”**

The Gr. term ‘*Sylagogeō*’ was commonly used of the plundering of a ship’s cargo. This is precisely what the false teachers were doing. They were attempting to rob the Colossian believers of all that they had in Christ by minimizing who He was and what they had in Him. If they would just look outside of Him they would truly find life.

When we settle for less than what God offers us (1 Ti 6:20; 1 Co 5:10) we rob ourselves not only of the truth that sets us free from sin but also of the joy of our salvation and the blessings God has for us in a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

Paul is not condemning philosophy per se here. The Bible presents us with a Biblical philosophy of life. What Paul is denouncing is a worldly philosophy of life (Gr. *'stiocheia'*) based on worldly principles. Peter referred to this as the empty way of life that they used to live in (1 Pe 1:18). We are not to be conformed to the pattern of this world (Ro 12:2). We are to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions (Ti 2:12). We are not to love the world or anything in the world which will all amount to nothing in the end (1 Jn 2:15-17).

The word philosophy comes from two Gr. words, *phileo*, 'to love' and *sophia* 'wisdom.' Philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom. Man's relentless search for the meaning of life has driven him beneath the line of despair. In Ro 1:21, 22 Paul describes it in this way, "They became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise they became fools." When God is left out of His universe man is left in the darkness of his own ignorance.

**V9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,"** Who is Jesus Christ? What does this verse offer us by way of instruction? Jesus is God! He created life, He gives life, He is life. Fulfillment in life cannot be found outside of Him.

**V10 "and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."**

In this remarkable statement, Paul is affirming that believers in Jesus Christ share in His power and authority over every other power and authority that exists. In Eph 1:20, 21 and 2:6 Paul says it this way, God "seated (*Christ*) at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come ... And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." We have everything that we need in Christ and need nothing outside of Him to have all the fullness of life now and forever. We need not fear anything given our exalted position in Christ.

Living out the truths of the Bible is the greatest safeguard against being misled by the false philosophies of this world. In Jn 8:31, 32 Jesus said, "... If you hold to my teaching (*if you live your life the way I am teaching you to live it*) you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The Colossian believers had personally received Jesus Christ as their Savior by faith. Paul admonished them to continue living by that same faith. Some well meaning but mislead people paint a picture of the Christian life that couldn't be further from the truth. Believing in Jesus doesn't mean your troubles are over, in many ways they're just beginning.

You don't become any less human when you become a child of God, in fact, you become even more aware of your humanity. From physical birth you learn to become more independent as you mature. From spiritual birth you learn to become more dependent as you mature. Reality is what it is, there's no changing it. Things unfold in life that really challenge our faith that God loves and cares about His children. What can change is our ability to respond to the hard things that happen in ways that reflect God at work in our lives, and that in spite of what happens to us or those we love, we remain strong in our conviction that God is for us and not against us.

**V11 "In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,**

The spiritual work of God removes the sinful nature and its controlling influence in our lives and creates within us our new spiritual nature in Christ. The circumcision referred to here by Paul is spiritual circumcision of the heart (Ro 6:6; 2 Co 5:17; Php 3:3; Ti 3:5).

In Ga 5:22 Paul says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. So, he continues in v25 “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

**V12 “having been buried with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.”**

The centrality of Christ to successfully live the way God wants us to is age old. When God placed man in the garden paradise He created and prepared for Him – the garden of Eden, He provided absolutely everything that Adam and Eve could have possibly needed for a fulfilled life. But God did not want to force them to love Him above anything else. He wanted them to choose to love him above anything else. Love is not freely chosen if there are no alternatives, so God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose to love Him.

Water baptism identifies the believer with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Ro 6:4-6; Eph 2:6). Dying and rising with Christ signifies death to the power of sin and Satan and empowerment to live the new life that Christ calls believers to live patterned after Him (Ro 6:3-11).

Let me offer you a few observations based on these verses:

1. The watchword in vv 6,7, even though it appears only once, it is understood twice in v6, is “faith.” Faith by itself would be undefined, that’s why it always has an object. We have faith in something. Faith, in fact, is defined by its object. Biblical faith has only one object – God. If your faith is rooted in anything else, it is not Biblical faith.
2. Christ is the central figure in every one of these 7 verses. They are about Him and revolve around Him.
3. The fullness of life (v10) is in Christ, and that’s what we have been given through faith in Him.
4. The circumcision of the NT is circumcision of the heart, which v 11 instructs is done by Christ Himself. It marks us as God’s possession on the inside not the outside.

What does this mean for you and for me?

1. Faith in Christ alone qualifies us as true Biblical believers. If Christ isn’t ultimately Who our faith is in, we are not true disciples of Jesus and we make ourselves susceptible to being misled by the hollow and deceptive philosophies of this world.
2. Jesus is to be the central figure in our lives. Our life is in Him and is to be about Him and is to revolve around Him.
3. The fullness of life can only be found by placing your faith in Jesus Christ who is the fullness of life and gives fullness of life as a gift by His grace.
4. There is nothing that we can do on the outside of our lives that can make us God’s possession; it’s only what God does on the inside of our lives that marks us as His for eternity when we place our faith solely in Him.

What does believing in Jesus mean – believe what? It means to believe that Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and rose from the dead to save you from having to pay the penalty for your own sin and to give you the gift of eternal life. 1 Co 15:2-4 provides us with this explanation. Jesus did this because He loves you (Jn 3:16). Outside of a personal relationship with Jesus you will die in your sins (Ro 6:23). Every person is born in sin (Ps 51:5) and is a sinner by nature and by choice (Ro 5:12; 3:23). Only God can forgive sin (Mk 2:7); Jesus died on the cross for our sin in our place as our substitute (1 Pe 2:24). How do you believe in Jesus? Ro 10:9,10,13 tell you how, “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” When you believe in Jesus, God becomes your heavenly Father and you become a child of God (Jn 1:12, 13).

If you have never believed in Jesus, but you want to, simply say these words along with me as I say them, “God, I admit that I am a sinner and that Jesus died on the cross for me. I accept what Jesus did for me and the forgiveness that

He offers me and I receive Him into my life as my Savior and Lord. Help me to learn from the Bible what being a child of God is all about and to live in a way that pleases you. Amen.”

If you’ve prayed this prayer, come talk to me, or tell someone you know who believes this that you do now too.

**Benediction:**

“Now to Him who is able to establish you by the Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him – to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ.” (Ro 16:25-27)