

## **MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER**

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**Series theme: Colossians: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ**

**Text: Colossians 1:24-2:12 (focusing on 2:6,7)**

Our text for today is recorded in Colossians 2:6,7: **“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”** This is God’s Word.

“If a daily fitness walk could be put in a pill, it would be one of the most popular prescriptions in the world. It has so many health benefits. Walking can reduce the risk of many diseases — from heart attack and stroke to hip fracture and glaucoma.” So says an article in the American Association of Retired Persons newsletter.

It continues: “These may sound like claims on a bottle of snake oil, but they’re backed by major research. Walking requires no prescription, the risk of side effects is very low, and the benefits are numerous: managing your weight, controlling your blood pressure, decreasing your risk of a heart attack, lowering your risk of a stroke, and the list goes on and on.”

According to AARP any amount of walking is good, but for the best health results set a brisk pace and walk for thirty minutes at least five times a week. And of course, be sure to check with your doctor to determine the level of exercise that’s right for you.

The city of Colosse wasn’t known for its bustling retirement community, and Paul didn’t address Colossians to a group of senior citizens. But the apostle was a big advocate of exercise, and he did encourage the Christians in Colosse to make walking an important part of their daily lives. He didn’t care how many miles they walked each day, as long as Jesus was with them every step of the way.

The words of Paul before us today have to do with the Christian’s walk of faith, sometimes called a believer’s life of sanctification. And this morning the Lord encourages us to get some spiritual exercise, to grow in our faith, to live our faith, to...

## **WALK WITH JESUS EVERY DAY**

### **I. Rooted in him**

### **II. Strengthened in faith**

### **III. Overflowing with thanksgiving**

The church in Colosse was dealing with lots of issues. Some people were advocating angel worship. Some were claiming that they had a special, secret wisdom that had eluded others. And there were still others who insisted that a Christian had to do certain things (ceremonialism) and couldn’t do other things (asceticism) to get into heaven.

All of those problems were only symptoms of the real problem. The false teachers in Colosse were trying to convince people that the work of Jesus wasn't good enough. Jesus hadn't done enough. They were saying: "If you want to be truly spiritual, if you really want to be saved, you don't need to look to Jesus. You need to look within."

Paul recognized that teaching for the poison that it was. Without Jesus there is no forgiveness. Without Jesus there is no peace. Without Jesus there is no hope for heaven. But **"in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form...He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code...he took it away, nailing it to the cross" (2:9,13,14).**

With bold statements like these Paul made it clear that salvation depends in no way on what we do for God, but entirely on what God has done for us through his Son Jesus. And once he made that point, he could have stopped. To avoid confusion he could have limited his writing to what God has done for us and avoided any reference to what believers do for God. He could have, but he didn't.

Paul was a champion of the doctrine of justification, but he also recognized the importance of sanctification. Only the Holy Spirit can make people spiritually alive, but once they are alive God wants Christians to live, to live for God, to show their love for God, to serve God with God-pleasing lives.

That is why he wrote: **"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him" (6).** A more literal translation of that last phrase would be: "Keep on walking in him (Jesus)." As you go about your daily tasks, as you go from one day to the next, don't try to go it alone. Go with Jesus. Go with the assurance that your walk with Jesus began before you took a single step.

**"Continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him" (6b,7).** With these words the picture changes from a walking Christian to a growing tree. Trees are beautiful. Some trees grow to be very tall. Some trees can be seen miles away. But the most important part of the tree can't be seen. The root system anchors the tree. The roots gather much needed moisture.

Our faith is kind of like that. Even though we couldn't see it, it sprouted on the day the Holy Spirit brought us to faith (for many of us that miracle took place on the day of our baptism). And with God's blessing it grew. It put down deep roots in the rich soil of God's Word, and it grew. And as long as we remain rooted in Christ Jesus our faith will continue to grow.

Paul's words are encouraging words, but behind them there is also a word of warning. The encouragement to be built up in Christ implies that there are forces in the world, evil forces, powerful forces, that are trying to tear us down.

The devil is quick to suggest that all this talk about building and being built up sounds a little too much like work, and nobody likes to work. And then the world chimes in with a few lies of its own: "You don't need to worry about your faith. You don't need think about building up your

faith. You need to enjoy life. Do whatever you want whenever you want, and worry about the afterlife after your life.”

Those arguments appeal to the sinful nature inside each one of us. That part of us doesn't like to hear about work or service or sacrifice. We don't want to be told what to do. We don't like to be told what we can and can't do, even if it's for our own good, even if God has our best interests in mind.

The attacks on our faith are real. They come day and night, night and day. They come from outside of us and within us. They make us wander away from the path God has laid out for us. They make us forget that Jesus is the Way. And the longer we drift, the farther we stray, the greater the distance that separates us from God.

The best way to get back on the straight and narrow is to never leave it in the first place. That's easy to say, but it's not so easy to do. So how do we do it? How can Christians make sure that we will walk with Jesus every day of our lives? Paul tells us how: **“Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught” (2:6,7).**

Most people want to be strong and healthy. Most people believe that exercise is important. But all too often there is a disconnect between knowing what to do and actually doing it. We might call it the difference between talking the talk and walking the walk.

What is true physically speaking is also true when it comes to spiritual things. No Christian has ever told me that his faith is too strong. No Christian has ever told me that she wants a weaker faith. Christians agree that a strong faith is important, and I hope that you would agree too.

But just saying that I want to strengthen my faith doesn't make it happen. Spiritual growth takes spiritual exercise. And the key to spiritual growth, the key to a stronger faith, can be found in those four little words: **“as you were taught.”**

The false teachers in Colosse didn't necessarily reject everything Paul was teaching. They just added to it. They had something new. They had something different. They had something better. Or at least that's what they thought.

But Paul said: “No!” Paul warned the Colossians: **“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” (2:8).** Paul encouraged them: “Remember what you were taught. Remember that Jesus is sufficient. Remember that Jesus is supreme. Remember that Jesus is all you need.”

We need Jesus too. And in his Word he reveals himself to us. In the Bible we learn that Jesus loves us, that he was born like one of us, that he lived a perfect life for us, that he died for us, that rose for us, that he has prepared a special place in heaven just for us.

God's Word teaches us everything we need to know about Jesus Christ, but the Bible is also filled with instruction for the life of the Christian. It tells us who we are (special creations of God). It tells us why we are here (to serve God). And in Paul's final piece of encouragement God explains why Christians live to serve God. We are **"overflowing with thankfulness."**

Imagine that it is the middle of the night. You are sleeping soundly until the beeping of the smoke alarm tears you away from your dreams. A fire is blazing just outside your door. The smoke is quickly filling your room and your lungs. You can't escape. You can't jump. You come to the realization that you are going to die.

But then a figure appears in the doorway. He grabs you, puts you on his shoulders and carries you to safety. Once you are outside you look at the firefighter who risked his own life to save yours. Nothing you do will ever be able to repay him, but you want to do something. You want to express your gratitude for this selfless act of heroism, but with all the strength you can muster all that comes out of your mouth is "thank you."

This isn't just a story. The scene I just described isn't something I saw on television. It is real. It really happened. It happened to me and to you. Because of our sin our situation was just as hopeless. We had no way out. We had lost all hope. We were doomed to die.

But then Jesus appeared. He rescued us from our sins. He gave up his life to rescue us from death. There is nothing we can do to repay Jesus. There is nothing we can say to pay him back for what he did for us, but we can say "thank you."

And we can say "thank you" without saying a word. We thank Jesus when we put him first in our lives and when we don't take God's name in vain. We say "thank you" when we gladly hear and learn his Word. Our lives overflow with thankfulness when we honor our parents, when we respect God's gift of life, when we love our spouse, when we treat our friends and our neighbors and even our enemies with respect.

Some people golf. Some people play tennis. Some people go to the gym. What do Christians do for spiritual exercise? We walk. We walk with Jesus. We walk with Jesus every day. And as we do our roots will go deeper, our faith will grow stronger, and our lives will overflow with thankfulness. Amen.

**Prayer:**

**I walk with Jesus all the way; His guidance never fails me.  
He takes my ev'ry fear away When Satan's pow'r assails me,  
And, by his footsteps led, My path I safely tread.  
In spite of ills that threaten may, I walk with Jesus all the way.**

**My walk is heav'nward all the way; Await, my soul, the morrow,  
When you farewell can gladly say To all your sin and sorrow.  
All worldly pomp, begone! To heav'n I now press on.  
For all the world I would not stay; My walk is heav'nward all the way.**

**(CW 431:5,6)**