

CONTINUE TO LIVE IN CHRIST

Colossians 2:6-23 (Key Verse 6)

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.”

The Colossian believers were bombarded with all kinds of false teachings, temptations to live a life of gospel compromises. We too in our times are challenged not to continue to live our lives in him. Usually this is not obvious, however we can easily know by looking at our attitude towards the word of God. How prepared are we for bible studies, what is our attitude towards Sunday services? and God's commands. What in our lives has taken the role of Jesus, such that we feel we feel worthless when we do not have it. Is Jesus Lord and king over our lives? Today just as Paul is encouraging them to continue to live in Christ Jesus, it is my prayer that we too be encouraged to continue to live in Christ Jesus. However, what does it mean to live in Christ Jesus? May we learn through this passage how we can continue to live in Jesus. Amen!

Let us all read verse 6, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,” Apostle Paul is reminding the Colossian believers to remember how they received Christ Jesus, to continue to live their lives in him. In the past the Colossians were their own lords. Their lives had been their own lives. They had lived in their own way. They had done their own thing. They had no commitments other than the commitments they had in their daily lives and common to most people. But no sooner they heard the gospel and believed it, they had made Christ the Lord of their lives. Not only did they receive Christ, but they received Him as Lord. What does this mean? It means that their human desires and feelings were no longer lord but Jesus Christ. Jesus had become the king whom they looked after for direction in their lives. Instead of living based on what and how they felt, they submitted themselves to the teachings of Jesus. The word of God the bible did not simply become a nice book to read but rather, it became the word that gives life. They could start seeing life through the lens of the word of God. The word of God could take authority in their lives and lead them on how to live a life pleasing to God. So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him.

In other words, it is either we received Christ Jesus or not, we cannot be in between, one leg in and one leg out. We cannot be lukewarm, either we are hot or cold. It is a life that we cannot fake because how we live and respond to live circumstances reveals a lot on whether we are living our lives in him. When I have offended someone, do I pray and strive to apologize rather than wallow in my ego and pride. Are we humbled by the word of God, if someone had offended us and they apologize. Do we pray and ask the Lord Jesus to help us forgive or do we continue to uphold our anger instead of laying down our lives as Jesus did for us. When things don't go our way, do we fall into despair or do we all the more place our hope in Jesus Christ. Are we driven to make more money in order to live a comfortable life? Are we greedy and not willing to lend a helping hand when we see a need? Since we became saved are we living our lives in Jesus as lord?

As I indicated before it is actually not easy to live our lives in Jesus. Let us see how does this passage help us to live our lives in Jesus. Look at verse 7, “**7rooted** and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” **First, to live our lives in Jesus, we should be rooted in Jesus.** What does this mean? As a root eloquently takes hold and buries itself in the soil to anchor itself in it, so also a Christian must anchor himself, root himself or herself in Jesus and in his words. We must take root in him, so deeply that nothing can remove us from him. Taking root in Jesus demands that we love him and love his words and his ways above all else. Paul used these words so that the Colossian Christians commit their lives to Jesus completely. Many believers even think that taking root in one place, or making a commitment is not good, that it is better if a man or woman remain free to go where they want. But in truth it is only an excuse to maintain the freedom they cherish more than they do Christ. Taking root is essential in order to remain and live in Jesus.

Secondly, we can live our lives in Jesus, by being built up in him. After the roots have taken their place, the time comes for the plant to build up its stems and leaves so as to be able to bear the fruit of its life. If we are not rooted in Jesus we will end up building on human philosophies and different teachings that seem appealing and good, but which are empty and hollow and have no spiritual content. We become like those who build their houses on sand. Ask any builder, the foundation is key. In Paul's time, there were those who did not believe the full Gospel. They believed in their own way. They did not listen carefully to the teaching of

Jesus. They did not take spiritual life very seriously. They made excuses why they were doing so. When their foundation was so shaky, their houses were on the verge of disaster. But we are not talking about houses here, but talking about a man's destiny in life and after life. We cannot afford to build on sand. We must build on rock. Building on rock is building on Jesus' words. Building on rock is to take Jesus at his word, to take it to heart, to embrace it, keep it, hold it and struggle to obey it.

Thirdly, we can live our lives in Jesus, by being strengthened in the faith. This world is very discouraging, urging even Christians to live by the ways of the world, to submit to the worldly ways. We are being forced to embrace same sex marriages, when the bible clearly teaches marriage is between a man and a woman. When we stand on our beliefs we even lose family membership because we do not share similar beliefs on ancestral worship. Social media teaches us that if you not traveling the world, seeing places you are not living the fullness of your life. Then we easily lose the contentment to rejoice always in the Lord. Whereas to really live a full life is by living your life in Jesus and for Jesus. Many have travelled the world, been to fancy restaurants conformed to the world values and yet they are empty and frankly speak are pitiful. But God urges us that the righteous, those who are in Christ Jesus, who have tasted the grace of God, should live by faith to the end. (Romans 1:17) So to live by faith we must continue to deny ourselves, and live by faith in him. Paul must have really prayed that the Colossian Christians' faith may be strengthened in all situations. **As you were taught,** - They were taught by those, esp., Epaphras who brought the Gospel to them.

Fourthly, we can live our lives in Jesus, by overflowing with thankfulness: to continue living in Christ the Christian must be thankful. In spite of his hardship Paul himself set a good example and remained thankful to God. He suffered so much. But he remained thankful. He would not let a spirit of bitterness or anger rule him. Paul wanted the Colossians not to be just thankful but overflowing with thankfulness.

One of the big dangers the church is facing today is the false teachings or teachings that are not centered on Christ Jesus. Look at verse 8, **"8See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy,** which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ." The teachings have the power to hold a person captive, like a strong hold. Like a prisoner whose rights to live for Jesus have been taken away. Apostle Paul says, these teachings are hollow and deceptive. Like a raring lion with an empty teeth. Their philosophy depends on human tradition and the elementary spiritual forces. This means, it would not be a teaching from where the messenger or the pastor made a mistake and could rectify. It is a teaching that is built of a human tradition based philosophy. Moreover, it is a teaching that also has its roots from the elementary spiritual forces. These elementary spiritual forces can be traced back to demonic spiritual forces. I believe that is the reason they can hold one a prisoner to that pastor or messenger. I once watched documentary on how a number of African pastors wanted the power to influence their members. How they would have to sacrifice a loved one, some blood had to be shed and they would travel to one of the African countries to do some ritual in order to gain these powers. These powers would allow them to make people fall down in their services and hold their members captive to their teachings. This is something that is rampant in South Africa, such ministries are big on prosperity gospel and you would hear them being called daddy by their members. They would also usually like to focus on saying profound or powerful statements. And you would hear members saying wow that is so powerful, whereby it is actually empty with no power to release one from sin because it is void of Jesus Christ at the core. These pastors are untouchable, members of their church would never allow to talk ill of them. I have a close family member whom I believe is under such a ministry. Apostle Paul says keep watch that no one takes you captive of such nonsense.

In our ministry we too have some traditions, for example 1:1 bible study, testimony writing and marriage by faith. If any of these practices are done to please us the shepherds or leaders of the ministry then that is not living your life in Jesus, but rather a prisoner of man. Churches have traditions on how they practice their faith, however all must be done by faith to live our lives in Jesus. Nothing must force us to live under the approval or validation of human beings rather than to live lives in Jesus. As though when the person is pleased then our salvation is secure or if they are pleased then God is also pleased. Why should we be living our lives in Jesus rather than man or anything else? Why Jesus and why it is not even an option?

Look at verse 9-11, **"9For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. 11In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ,"** **Firstly, it is because, In Christ Jesus**

all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. This means that Jesus is fully God, he is the head over every power and authority. What then is human authority or power, it's a joke. No human can save anyone from sin, however powerful or authoritative they maybe. They too need Jesus for salvation. Like that famous word of God, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." [Matt 10:28]. When we were dead in sin, because of his death and resurrection we were made alive. Our debt on sin has been cancelled and no one should make us feel as though we need something else. In verse 15, we read that, Jesus has disarmed the powers and authorities, making a public spectacle of them because of the cross. Nothing should ever take the place of the cross. In other words we should never find ourselves placing our hopes in something which the cross of Jesus has already achieved in our lives. Always ask yourself, why am I feeling this way when Jesus has saved me. Only Jesus truly liberates and only Jesus gives life because Jesus is God.

Secondly, it is because, in Jesus we are brought to fulness. What does this mean? Let us look at 2 Peter 1:3-4, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." Through Christ everything we need for life and godliness has been given to us. In the past we were doomed due to our corruption. To be full means to lack nothing, we lack nothing pertaining to living a life in Jesus. We can live our lives fully in Jesus, there is nothing we lack in order to live a life in Jesus. We lack nothing to live a godly and holy life. We can live a purpose driven life, a focused and disciplined life. Now what does this mean practically? For example when we are wronged and the person asks for forgiveness we can forgive. When we need to serve or love someone in Jesus love. We can deny ourselves and serve. All these things may feel like we are becoming like a dirty mat for that person to wipe their dirty feet on. In Jesus we are brought to fulness and in Jesus we can become a dirty mat and allow that person to wipe their dirty feet on us. This we can become because it is what Jesus did for us, he took away our filthy sins upon himself, not only that, went to the cross and laid down his life for us. This is God's grace for us. How, then can we refuse to lower ourselves before others when Jesus did so much more for us. If we indeed live in Jesus then we know God's grace and we are brought to fulness. I was driving the other day, and the other vehicle just went onto my lane so carelessly, the person even ignored me as though I was not even there. I became so infuriated in my blood, wishing that he could hit something and damage his vehicle. however I remembered that In Jesus I am brought to fulness. Which, meant that in Jesus I could refuse to be angry and refuse to wish something bad happened to them as a form of punishment. Rather in Jesus I can actually wish and pray for their goodness even though they had acted irresponsibly and completely ignored me as though I was nothing. Indeed, when I thought of this truth I could let go though not easy. May we live our lives in Jesus because in Jesus we are brought to fulness. Amen!

Let us also look closes at what exactly were the false teachings that were spread among the Colossian believers? Apostle Paul informs us of three, first from verse 16-17, Jewish legalism, Angel worship (18-19), Asceticism (20-23). I have come to realize that something as coming to Sunday worship service can be legalistic if not done by faith. For example if we are here to please someone or a leader or because you have to, it is then legalistic for you and you are not living that part of your life in Jesus. When it comes to angel worship a number of people believe that our loves one who pass on become angels. That why some people would even visit a gravesite to request permission to marry someone. In the Zionist Church, they have prophets who can call upon your grand parents or parents to help you decide on your marriage for example. Asceticism made all kinds of rules and regulations, such as "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" They thought that by keeping these rules they could make themselves pure and righteous. But these rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. They have an appearance of wisdom, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence [20-23]. Verse 17 says, "These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

In conclusion, we should never forget how we got saved, how we came to faith. We are reminded today how to continue to live our lives in Jesus. The gospel truth may not sound all powerful and grand, we should not be tempted to look for more. Jesus is enough all the fullness of God rest in Him. In Him we are also brought to fulness to live our lives in Jesus. I pray that we may not be deceived by anything or anyone that bears the name of Jesus, yet deny what the cross has achieved. May we live our lives in Jesus. Amen!