



# Central Peninsula Church

Catalog No.  
1216-7  
Colossians 2:6-7  
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Dec. 16, 2001

## Adjusting Your Walk

**SERIES: Colossians: Complete in Christ**

Sometimes we need to make an adjustment; we need to make an adjustment in our walk. It's a sad state of affairs when we fail to see that and continue stumbling. Everyone around us can see what's happening, but we continue on. Maybe it's an addiction or a habit that is causing us to stumble and wreaking havoc in our lives. Maybe it's an unhealthy relationship. Others watch us being destroyed, but we keep stumbling through it. It might just be a way of thinking about ourselves or life or even about God that trips us up. We sense that something is wrong, but we don't change.

Paul addresses the issue of how we walk in the Christian life in Col. 2:6-7.

**“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.”**

The Colossians had started out well in their walk with Christ, but they were in danger of stumbling badly. They needed to know how to adjust their walk. Paul tells them that to keep from stumbling, to keep from scraping their spiritual knees, they should continue to walk in a way that is consistent with how they started out.

There are times in our lives when we need to get back to the basics. There are times when we have to remember the first principles of how to walk with Christ. It's like Paul tells you to pull out the home movies of when you were a toddler. Watch very carefully as you took those first steps of faith. Study how you put one foot in front of the other. Observe how you kept your balance. Now continue to walk like that.

### **I. We start out by receiving Christ Jesus the Lord (v. 6a)**

Paul says you started out by receiving something. He talks about this as a certain fact for every genuine believer. To be a Christian is to first of all receive something.

The act of receiving is not a reward, it's not something we earn, it's a gift. It's something we can only accept with gratitude. As the earth drinks the rain, as the sea takes in water from the streams, as a child opens a gift from under the tree, so we receive something into our lives.

Not only that, but when I receive something it becomes my own. I grasp it, I take hold of it, I possess it.

In the language of Paul's day, the word "receive" meant even more than that. It was a formal word describing how someone would accept or receive a certain tradition that was handed down to them. We don't always like traditions, but we all have them.

We have family traditions at Christmas time. We would like it if our kids someday passed those same traditions down to their kids.

Perhaps we went to a certain university and joined a certain fraternity or sorority. In doing that, we accepted certain traditions that went along with being a part of that group.

The Jews had a rich history of passing down oral traditions; stories about their forefathers and how God had worked among them.

Paul is saying that when you started out, you started out by receiving a certain tradition. What is it that tradition we received? He says we have received "Christ Jesus the Lord." We talk today about "accepting Christ into our hearts." We pray a prayer and ask him into our lives and we say we've received Christ, but Paul had something more in mind here than that. To receive Christ Jesus the Lord is to accept and take hold of the tradition (teaching) that was handed down to us through the Scriptures about the person of Christ. That's why he says, "Christ Jesus the Lord." There are three titles he gives here that are part of this tradition.

First of all, he is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Son of God. The Christ is the One who fulfilled all the prophecy of the OT. There were 332 predictions made about the Christ in the OT and Jesus fulfilled every one of them. On one occasion, he said to the religious leaders of his day, "You search the

Scriptures but you fail to see that all Scripture points to me." At his trial, the High Priest commanded him, "**Tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, 'You have said it yourself.'**" (Matthew 26:63-64).

Secondly, we accept him as Jesus. He was a historic person born of a real woman in a real town called Bethlehem. He was raised in a real place called Nazareth. He wasn't some kind of divine emanation; he wasn't a ghost, he was a real man. When he scraped his knee, he bled. He had to be a real man to be our Savior. "Jesus" is the Greek for the Hebrew word, "Joshua," which means "the Lord is our salvation." To receive Jesus is to accept that he is our one and only Savior, rescuing us from sin, death and the devil. Remember what the angel told Joseph, "**You shall call him Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins**" (Matthew 1:21).

Finally, we receive him as "the Lord." To call Jesus the Lord is to call him the sovereign king of the universe. Perhaps more importantly for us, he is to be Lord and Master of our lives. We say to someone, "You accepted Jesus as your Savior, but now you need to make him Lord of your life." I have a problem with that. First of all, he is Lord of your life whether you choose to submit to him or not. That's why Philippians says one day "**every knee will bow...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...**" (Phil. 2:10-11). We don't make him Lord; he IS Lord. The question is, will we submit to him as Lord now or later? And the Bible never says you can accept Jesus as Savior without making him Lord. A five-year-old doesn't say to his father, "I'm glad you're my daddy. I'm glad you're around when I need you. But don't try to tell me how to live my life!"

Billy Graham writes, "No man can be said to be truly converted to Christ who has not bent his will to Christ. He may give intellectual assent to the claims of Christ and may have had emotional religious experiences; however, he is not truly converted until he has surrendered his will to Christ as Lord, Savior, and Master."

That's what Paul means when he says, "having received Christ Jesus the Lord." That's how we started out.

## **II. We continue on in the same way we started (v. 6b)**

But we don't stop there. He says just as you have received this tradition about Christ, so you are to walk in him. Notice the life we live is described as a

"walk." Our "walk" is our conduct, lifestyle, behavior. The way we live is important.

Walking implies action. We don't just lay around; we're not just passive spectators, couch potato Christians. The Christian life does not consist of reaching some kind of altered state of consciousness where we're basically "checked out" of every day life. We're to carry out in practical effect what we believe. If what you believe doesn't impact how you walk then I have to question if you really believe it.

But how do we walk? He says, "just as...so walk in him." Walk in the same tradition you started out with. This is a command. Our walk is to be consistent with how we started. We don't walk away from the tradition we received.

A few years back a movie came out called *Dead Poet's Society*. It was a powerful movie about a caring, freethinking teacher who is hired by a stuffy, traditional boarding school for boys. Most of the boys were struggling with their own identities, especially in light of the fact that their wealthy parents had very narrow and established expectations of how they should live. In one very poignant scene the teacher, played by Robin Williams, takes the boys outside and encourages them to practice walking. He want them to find their own way of walking. They all had been trying to be someone they weren't. They had lost their own walk.

The Colossians were about to lose their own walk with Christ. They were conforming to the narrow expectations of the false teachers in their midst. Paul says you need to go back to how you started. You need to remember the commitment you had to Jesus as Savior and Lord and Christ.

Let me ask you, have you lost your walk? Have you lost your humble dependence on Christ, your simple faith in him, your basic commitment to his Lordship? Has life's busyness and expectations gotten you off track? Remember how you started out?

I can't help but think of this as it relates to Christmas. I remember my first Christmas as a baby Christian. I was so excited because this was the first Christmas I really knew what it was all about. On Christmas Eve I sat my family down in the living room where we always opened our gifts. I waited until a quiet moment came and I passed out Bibles and I read the Christmas story and I told them all about how Jesus had come into my life and now I knew what Christmas was all about. It wasn't about piles of presents, it was about him. It was his birthday! They all

looked at me in stunned silence. And then my great grandmother started crying! I never quite figured out if she was happy or sad, but it was a different Christmas that year in our home.

That's the kind of stuff you do when you're just starting out. That's the kind of simple, bold faith we have. That's part of the tradition we received which we celebrate at Christmas. He is the Christ; he is my Savior; he is my Lord. This is not about eggnog and lights and sales and Santa; it's about Jesus. We have to protect that tradition. It's not that all that other stuff is bad, but it can become bad if we allow it to distract us from our focus on the person of Jesus.

Don't expect your kids to be able to sort it all out by themselves. If you overwhelm a child with expensive gifts and then say, "Don't forget it's Jesus' birthday," what do you think they're going to focus on? If you choose to miss worshipping with God's people during Christmas because you're too busy celebrating Christmas, but while you're frantically driving to the next activity you remind your kids all this is for Jesus, what are they going to really think Christmas is all about? Or even worse, what are they going to think of Jesus? Stop! Protect the tradition you started out with - that the Lord of the universe, the Alpha and the Omega, came into the world as a tiny baby born in a feed trough to a teenage girl who said the Holy Spirit did it!

Walk in the same tradition you started out with. But, this raises a question: Doesn't walking imply progress? Don't we grow and change? How do we get back to the basics we started out with yet still mature in our walk with him? In v. 7 Paul gives us four images to help us understand how that happens.

### **III. As we continue on in the way we started, we grow and change (v. 7)**

First, he says we're like a tree that has been firmly rooted in him. This is what happened when we received him, we were rooted, but our roots continue to grow deeper into him.

I have a magnificent magnolia tree in my front yard. The thing never stops shedding its leaves all year long. Its trunk is like an oak and the strongest winds hardly bend its branches. It's been there almost 45 years. I know that because I have a picture of my house in the 50's when it was just a sapling not much more than about 10 feet tall. Of course, the key to that tree's vitality and growth is its roots. I'm told its roots spread as deep and wide as its branches.

It's true in our walk with Christ. Strong roots stabilize growth. They strengthen and support us against the prevailing winds of our persuasion. When mind-bending gusts of wind attack without warning, it's the network of solid roots that holds us firm and straight. The interesting thing about roots is that they grow slowly. There is no instant route to roots. And they grow imperceptibly. No one sees the roots. People won't dig around the edges of your life and say, "My what beautiful roots you have!" As a matter of fact, the stronger and deeper the roots, the less visible they are. So you have to be patient. God is committed to you staying rooted. And you have to allow God to do the quiet, hidden work of rooting you deeper and deeper in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Second, he says we're like a building that is being built up in him. With roots, we grow deeper and the work is hidden. With a house we grow taller and the work is visible. This is an ongoing process. We never stop being built up. We're like the Winchester Mystery House - new rooms are being added all the time. But unlike the Winchester Mystery House, these rooms are necessary. The key words here are "in him." Christ is the foundation of this building. Everything is built on him.

Third, we are like a contract that is being confirmed and settled. That's what he means when he says, "established in the faith, just as you were instructed." The word "established" was used in the marketplace to describe the legal confirmation of a contract. The thing that confirms us is "the faith." This should not read "your faith," as if it were our own experience of faith that confirms us, but it's "the faith" which is the sound teaching about Christ and his word that we've received. So the Christian life is a constant process of being confirmed in faith.

In some churches young people are "confirmed" when they are about 13. I was confirmed myself and for me that meant I could stop going to church. I had arrived. I had jumped through all the religious "hoops" and now I could coast. But Paul says our confirmation is ongoing and it happens as we are continuously instructed in God's word.

One more image of how to walk. He says we are like a jug of wine, constantly overflowing with gratitude. What a wonderful picture. The Christian life is not all hard work; it's not all putting your head down and gutting it out. It's a joyful life, it's a life that spills over with thanksgiving.

He's not just talking about lip service ("Oh God thank you for this pain in my life.") Like two men were walking through a field when suddenly an angry bull

started to chase them. They headed for the fence as fast as they could move. One of them cried out to the other, "Say a prayer." The other cried, "I don't know any." "You've got to," said the first guy, "that bull is getting closer." "Okay," shouted his friend, "I'll pray the only one I know." As the horns of the bull came within striking range, the man prayed, "For what we are about to receive, Lord, make us truly grateful."

That's lip service. Paul says we are to overflow with genuine thanksgiving. The only way to overflow is to believe and to abide in all that he has done for us. If our focus is on our performance, our thanksgiving will just be forced lip service. If our focus is on his performance on our behalf, our thanksgiving will spill out naturally. It's interesting in v. 7 that God is the one who rooted us, and God is the one who is building us, and God is the one who is confirming us. As we walk in him, he works in us. That's what Jesus said to us in John 15: **"You abide in me, and I will bear fruit in you."**

When we abide in him, we overflow with gratitude even when trouble comes. Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, was once robbed along the highway. Afterwards he told his friends there were four things he was grateful for. First, he was thankful he had never been robbed before. Second, he said, "Though they took all my money, they didn't get very much." Third, he said, "Though they took all my money, they didn't take my life." Finally, he said, "I am thankful that it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed."

Just because you started the journey doesn't mean you're finished. We have to continue on in the way we started. Our roots growing downward in him, our house growing upward in him, our minds growing more confirmed in his truth, our hearts spilling over with thankfulness for what he has done.

Twenty-three and a half years ago I received something into my life. I received Lynn Zwahlen as my lawfully wedded wife. That was a momentous occasion for both of us, as any wedding is. Since that time our commitment to each other has remained. The vows we made continue to hold us faithful to our marriage. We've not moved away from that. We've not grown beyond that or out of that. It's still pretty simple: "I take you as my wife...to love, honor and cherish...until death do us part." That doesn't change.

BUT, we have grown and we have changed. Those roots that first sunk into the ground twenty-three years ago have endured a few droughts. Our building has survived a few earthquakes. Through it all we have come to understand a lot more of what saying "I do" really meant and so we have become more established and confirmed in our commitment. And best of all, we are more thankful than ever for his faithfulness that has kept us together.

Just because you started the journey doesn't mean you're finished. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." We have to continue on in the way we started - make whatever adjustments you need to make to do that. Don't ever grow beyond or out of him. Keep it simple. BUT, let your roots sink deeper into him, let your house grow taller in him, let your mind be more confirmed in his truth, and let your heart spill over with gratitude for all he has done.

Some of you have never even started. You can't really think back and say, "I have received Christ Jesus the Lord. I have come to that place where I believe that he is the promised Messiah, that he is my Savior because he died on the cross for my sins and so purchased my forgiveness, that he is the Lord and Master of my life." That's a major adjustment. I won't try to fool you. Make that decision and your life is no longer your own. But if you're tired of doing it your way and you're ready to do it his way, then you should pray with me right now. If you would like to receive Christ Jesus the Lord into your life pray this prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I admit that I have sinned against God and others and have gone my own way. I turn away from my insistence on running my own life. I thank you for your great love in dying for me and taking my place on the cross. Now I open my life to you. I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God. I put my trust in you as my Savior. I submit to you as my Lord and Master. Come into my heart and change me. Amen.*

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