

Continuing in Christ

I want you to imagine a scale of 1- 100%. It is a scale of your personal commitment to Christ and faith in him. Think about your faith, your life and so on and think about where on the scale it would be. Are you burning on all cylinders for him? 100% or are you cooled in your faith of recent months or years? 50% say.

Draw on flip chart – down the way.

Think about it for a moment.

If we are not 100% or near it, and I guess most of us are in that category, then tonight's passage has something to say to us. I guess for all of us the passage of time can dampen our faith, the up's and downs of the week can challenge our commitment to him, the sheer volume of stuff in life can draw us away from really living for him and sometimes we can even be confused by conflicting teachings in churches or even when we ourselves pick things up wrong from the bible. There is nothing new under the sun – these issues were faced by the early Christians. Paul addresses these very things. He helps us to know how to continue in faith in Christ.

Continue in him

Vs 6 “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 you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

As we will see some of the folks in the church in Colosse have got their spiritual wires crossed. In those days it was common for preachers to be itinerant – like Paul, using their practical gifts like tent making to make money to support themselves and then the rest of the time preaching teaching and evangelising. A check was not always kept on the folks who did this and so sometimes the people travelling about or who moved to a different city would add to the gospel with thoughts of their own based on their background –most often Jewish or Greek. So the result was sometimes a church with bits of Christ's teaching and bits of teaching from here and there. So rather than looking like the bride of Christ the church ended up looking like the bride of Frankenstein – bits stitched on from all sources!

Paul pulls the folks back from that and points then again to Jesus.

Vs 6 “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 you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

It's a simple message. Just like when you became Christians, how it was in the early days of your faith. When you put your trust in him let it continue to be but in increasing measure so you mature and deepen in your faith in him. So that you find yourself going from strength to strength.

Maureen here is learning French. She has built up quite a repertoire but how has she done it? She has simply gone through the course of CD's she bought. From her first 'bon jour' to today she has let herself be taught and instructed and put it into practice on anyone and everyone. Even in her dreams now! She continued in the manner in which she was first taught and has been rooted and built up in her language skills.

It is the same in the faith. We will not grow in the faith if we do not continue in it but rather be distracted and led down other paths. It's not rocket science is it?

If I can speak honestly it is so easy to be distracted isn't it? Other things scream so loudly at us and it is as if we say to the Lord as he leads us. Hold on a minute Lord I just need to go and do this and he waits and he waits and he waits. And we before we know it he has to search for us again. Or we slow him down. Wait up Lord to fast – I've got all this other stuff. 'Well why don't you let me help you with it', he says. Och, it's okay I've got it covered and we block

out the Lordship of Christ in that area of our lives just in a single sentence.

You don't have to be a monk or nun to be fully committed to Christ. His promise is to be with us wherever we are. To help us follow his way, serve his kingdom and be his witness in our work, our home, with friends.

Part of the problem is that we get stuff the wrong way round. We sometimes live as though Christ is there to serve us where as the opposite is true. We live to serve Christ in all we do. The challenge is therefore how to so that – how to live and serve Christ as a student, as a teacher, social worker, doctor, mother, father, brother, daughter, husband, wife, in your retirement and so on.

Don't get distracted says Paul. 'just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness'

What do you need to do this week to start the process that will help you do that?

He is sufficient

When a person becomes a Christian it is common for them to take with them elements of a previous religion or tradition or superstition. And over time

Christ weeds that out. In Colosse there were those from Jewish and Greek backgrounds. The Jews obviously had a background in old testament law and the greeks in philosophy, wisdom and sometimes extreme asceticism ie if you were really holy you were really harsh on your body denying certain foods, comforts etc.

So Paul says

Vs 8 “See to it that no-one take you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition...”

Vs 16 “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or Sabbath day...”

The basic subplot Paul is countering in these verses is this - yes you put your faith in Jesus and that kind of gets you started off but in order to grow you need realise you need to do this or that as well e.g circumcised if you are a man vs 11ff, vs 16 only kosher foods, asceticism vs 23.

Paul says no. Faith in Christ and following him alone is sufficient.

Vs 9 “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have fullness in Christ, who is the head over every authority”

Here is balm to the soul isn't it. Christ is enough. His grace is sufficient for you.

I came to faith in the context of the extremely legalistic Free Presbyterian church. As a student I hung around with folks who were more Charismatic. I have met folks who are part of the old holiness movement. The issue with these is that so often it is Christ plus – legalistic obedience to a certain code, get this blessing or baptism and you will no longer be a second class Christian or receive this second blessing and you can lead a more victorious or holy Christian life – better than others.

If you are following Christ, continuing in him just as you first received him then he will lead you in such a way that you will find you live upholding the ways of the 10 commandments for example, if you continue in Christ you will not receive just one almighty baptism in or filling with the spirit but indeed many baptisms in the spirit as he anoints you for service and not just one off top up's ever now and again but daily and continual fillings. When you follow Christ he will lead you into a life that conquers sin. He is sufficient – it is not Christ plus, it is not secret knowledge it is all revealed, it is all in him.

It is not a case of if only I had this gift or this personality I could be a better Christian – Christ is sufficient for you. In him all fullness dwells and he

has given that fullness to you. Believe it and begin to live it.

We are remembering the Lord's death tonight as we gather round his table. On the cross Jesus shouted it is finished. Our sin fully atoned for, God's wrath and fury over our rebellion and disobedience spent on him, our judgement received by him.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
"Full atonement!" can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Look at the scale again. Make it into a cross. Christ 100% committed to you. He knows what you are like. Has the best in store for you. Will you let go of all the stuff that is holding you back, let go, trust in him – continue in him knowing that he is sufficient?

Look at the scale again. Where do you want your faith to be? Ask him from this day forth to day by day by his grace and in fellowship with the folks of this fellowship to be able to do that. Continue in him – he is sufficient.