



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Living and Believing

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Colossians 2:6-15

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⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

(Pastor prays)

I am not a golfer. I don't like to play golf. I understand the appeal of golf. You're out in a beautiful, manicured place. You might be with friends. Maybe there's some friendly competition. What would appeal to me would be driving the golf cart. I'm not a golfer, but I have played a few times. Usually, I've played in our school's fundraiser golf tournament that we have in the spring. I've played in it typically because Doctor Cheuvront has harassed me. Then, each time I play, I am reminded of how bad I am, mostly by the people standing around. Some of the guys will come up and try to give me little tidbits of lessons. Randy McEntire will come and tell me things that I ought to be doing, like how I ought to be standing. I don't know how to

stand. I don't know how to grip. I don't know how to swing. I don't know the fundamentals of golf. And to be a good golfer, you've got to know some of the fundamentals.

Now, what is true about golf, in a greater, grander, more profound way, is true about being a Christian. In order to be a solid Christian, we have to know the fundamentals. And in this passage today, Paul is writing to combat something. The letter cautions. It is written for a reason. He's writing to combat some of the heresies that are popping up in this little church in Colossae. And instead of chasing every one of them down, Paul lays down the essentials of genuine Christianity. And I really think that if you'll read this, it helps us and equips us to fight the ideas and ideologies that are stealing professing Christians away. Look, we live in a mixed-up world, and part of my job and calling and requirement is that I work to equip us to stand for truth and live with joy because...

Living Right Means Believing Right

How you live is what I'm trying to say. How you live is predicated on what you believe. And to be solid, there are a couple of things we actually need to get right. We need to get the fundamentals right. Let's jump in where Paul does in verse 6 and take off with the very first point, number one.

You need to get conversion right

It's right there in verse six. What do we mean when we say somebody is saved or somebody is a Christian or somebody is born again, or someone has joined the church? What do we mean when somebody is converted? Let's just break down the phrases you see in verse six. Paul says in verse 6, *⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord.* Let's look at the word received. What does that word mean? It means to take personal possession, to make it your own. Children and students, those of you that have come up in the church, one of the dangers of coming up in the church is that you just assume that you're part of the church. You assume that you're a Christian because your parents brought you here as part of your family and your lifestyle and everything you've known, and it is your tradition. And Paul says, look, you've got to actually receive, you must personally make that your own.

I pastored two rural churches in Mississippi and Southwest Mississippi. We had a blast doing that, but the highest-attended Sunday was always Mother's Day because even bad people love

their mothers, so they'll come to church on that day and sit with their mothers. And oftentimes, that's the only time I would see that person, on Mother's Day, because Mom would pressure him into being there. And that reminds me that their Christianity was tied more to their Mom than to Christ. And Paul has said in order for us to be converted, we receive.

So, let's look at what we receive in verse six. I want to try to use 3P's to explain how he tells us what we receive. The first one is that we received a person. You receive Christ Jesus, the person. We receive a person, a real man. God created the earth, and then He created two people and put them in the garden: Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve fell into sin. That sin has affected the rest of humanity. The first man was made to walk in perfect fellowship with God, but he sinned and ruined it for us. The second Adam, Jesus, lived a perfect life in perfect fellowship with God. He fulfilled all of God's requirements. He was the perfect man; he lived perfectly righteous, and through his righteousness is the only way you can ever be right before God. You have to have the imputed righteousness of Christ.

You receive a person, and not just his righteousness. We receive him as our substitute. There's a reason for the cross. Jesus dying on the cross is not our example. Jesus dying on the cross; he's not dying as a martyr. Jesus dying on the cross is him dying as a substitute to take the wrath of God away from us. When you receive Jesus, you receive his righteousness and him as our substitute. We receive a person.

What else do we receive? We receive Christ as a position. You receive Christ Jesus, the Lord. You see the word, Christ, that is the word Messiah, the anointed one. This reminds us that he not only was a person. He held a position as the only savior that the whole Old Testament points toward. The whole New Testament is about Jesus and how he is the only one who can save. When you become a Christian, you receive Jesus, the person dying in your place. You receive his righteousness. You receive Jesus in his position as the only one who can save you.

You receive Jesus and his power. *You received Christ Jesus the Lord.* Christ Jesus the Lord means sovereignty. It means the one in control. When you receive Christ, you not only receive him dying in your place, you not only receive his righteousness, you don't only receive him as the only way to heaven. You receive him as Lord, as the one who can do with you what he wants to do. You receive the Lordship of Jesus. You say, Lord, you have the right to do with me whatever you want to do.

What does the Bible say? What do we hear about being a Christian? You were bought at a price. You are not your own. We need to get conversion right, so before I move to the next point, I just would ask you, do you have conversion right? Have you received this in Christ? Have you trusted in the righteousness of Christ? Have you professed him as Lord? Are you living under his Lordship? Let's get conversion right. What else do we need to get right? Let's make this the second point, number two.

You need to get living right

I don't know how else to say it, so I'll just say it like this. We need to get living right. You'll see that right there at the end of verse 6 on down into verse 8. What does he say? ⁶ *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.* That's a New Testament way of saying have a lifestyle in Jesus. We understand that. I mean, when we say somebody doesn't talk to talk or walk the walk, what are we saying? We are saying he doesn't live up to what he says. And thankfully, in this passage, the apostle Paul gives us a list of how to walk in Christ. I love when he gives a list. He gives us a list of how to walk in Christ and how to live the Christian life. Let's start in verse seven; there are five metaphors. Here's the first. How do you live in Christ? Like a tree, you live like a tree. What does he say then, be rooted. That is the only one of these metaphors that is in the past tense. Everything else is present tense. Here's something that has happened, rooted. It's to have a tap root that goes deep into the soil of who Jesus is: rooted. What does it mean to be rooted? When you ride through southwest Alabama and Mississippi, tornadoes come through there, and you can see trees that are twisted and snapped off about halfway up. Many of them, however, were not knocked down. They are rooted so deep that those trees will come back and continue to live rooted. In the back of my backyard, there's a chain link fence, and through that fence grows up a hedge. I'll cut it down and burn it out. But if I don't get to the root, that hedge is going to live. What does it mean to be rooted, to be planted in Jesus? It means that any storm that comes across and looks like it's destroyed you, if you are rooted, you are going to grow out of that. Rooted. It's a one-time event, giving your life to Christ. It's past tense.

What else does it mean to walk in Christ? I'll give you a second metaphor. We are like a construction site. You see it there in verse 7, ⁷ *rooted and built up in him.* That is present tense. There's some ongoing action; there's something happening. It wasn't just that you gave your life to Christ; to receive Christ, you are growing. It is ongoing. This construction site is present tense. It is pouring the foundation, building up the frame brick by brick; it's things that are not seen. You are growing and being strengthened into a structure, something that is honoring to God. It happens day by day, week by week,

and month by month. You show up and worship, and you walk through adversity. This is when you repent of your sin, when you build some accountability into your life when you are consuming God's word and when you are claiming the gospel for your life.

So, we're like a tree. We are like a construction site. What else are we like in verse 7? We are like a schoolroom. Do you see that? *⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught.* We are to be rooted, built up in him, and established in the faith just as you were taught. That is the word didactic, just as you were taught. That's where I get the schoolroom. How are you established, you learn. Be careful when we talk about discipleship. Sometimes, when we talk about discipleship, we say, well, you need to have people in your life that are helping you with accountability, or there's somebody you can look up to or a mentor, someone that is older than you that you can pattern your life after. That is a really good thing to do, but that is not the only thing to do. When it comes to living for Christ, there is an actual transfer of information. You are actually going to learn something. If you have given your life to Christ and you have not been growing, you are missing here. You're missing part of what it means to walk in him like a schoolroom so that we learn. So, I would just suggest a couple of things. Maybe this year, you memorize the 23rd Psalm, you memorize Romans Chapter 8, or you learn the 10 Commandments. You could go and get the Lord's prayer down pat, or you study the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe go outside the Bible and learn the Apostles Creed. Make sure there is information coming in so that you are established.

OK, so far, we are rooted like a tree, built up like a construction site, and established like a school room. What else? Here's the fourth one. You are walking in him like a celebration. Let's read verse 7 again. *⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* Abound. That is being in gratitude, like somebody that has more thanksgiving than they can handle. It's like a river that's coming out of its banks, but instead of destruction, it is a blessing. It's like if you pour Coke on baking soda in science lab, and it just pours out everywhere. It's more than you can handle. Thanksgiving is when a Christian understands what it means to have a heart of gratitude. When you start thinking about why this is happening to me, why don't I have what they have? Why aren't I that far along? What about me? Paul says what's going to help you grow and protect your heart is when you learn to abound in thanksgiving. It is to think of the hundreds of things you are grateful for. If you get bored of my sermon today, just in the margin of your Bible, write down 40 things that you are thankful to God for.

I'm gonna give you one last way that we walk in Christ. It's in verse 8. And that's like a guard or like a soldier. Maybe you want to say a police officer or a security guard. Paul says there in verse 8, *⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according*

to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

That phrase takes you captive, is like being kidnapped. It sneaks up behind you. You didn't see it coming, and it puts a cover over your head and pulls you. See to it that no one takes you captive. How would they take us captive? Look at the list of things, by philosophy or empty deceit, or human tradition, or the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. How many students do we lose to the things of the world, to the LGBTQ revolution, or to the transsexual revolution? How many do we lose that come out of our churches? Someone comes up and snatches them, and carries them away. And Paul says, look around you; be careful, young brother and sister. Be careful when you are looking at TikTok and something that seems innocent, and it just sneaks in. Or even through the gaming, it just sneaks in. Be careful that it doesn't sneak in and steal you. How do you walk in him? Living right means believing right. We need to get conversion right. We need to get living right. Let me give you a third thing I think we need to get right, number three.

You need to get contentment right

If you can just learn contentment in Christ, it's going to save you a lifetime of hurt. Look at contentment in verses 9 and 10. ⁹*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.* Verse 9 is like a beautiful doctrinal statement. You can sort of circle verse 9. There is Christmas in verse 9. Verse 9 is the incarnation. Let me read it again. For in him, in Jesus, doesn't that sound like John? In him, the whole fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. So, there is the incarnation in verse 9 that is telling us that Jesus is the personal revelation of the Father. Jesus, he is the mediator between God and man.

Jesus is the one who makes us content. That's down in verse 10. Look at what verse 10 says. ¹⁰*and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.* You have been filled. That's the Greek word *pleroma*. You have been filled in him, who is the head of all authority and rule. You have all the fullness of God. Verse 9 is in Jesus, and verse 10 is in you. You have that fullness. You have the ability to be so satisfied in Christ that you are not tempted by the trash of this world. Look, the devil is baffled by a contented man because he can trot out everything, pornography and adultery and money or whatever else makes you tempted, but the contented man sees that and is unaffected because he is filled with the fullness of God.

Let me see if I can illustrate this another way. I like to go to Ruth Chris Steakhouse, but I won't go if I don't have gift cards. It's really expensive. And it's a long, drawn-out affair. So, you have to stack up the gift cards, and then me and Connie will go. Man, I'll eat that steak. I like to eat french fries and the bread they bring. And the dessert they bring gets me so filled up that when I'm riding home after being at Ruth Chris, I am not tempted to stop at a Bojangles. I love Bojangles. I'll have a blueberry biscuit any time of the day. I love Bojangles, but I am not tempted to eat Bojangles when I am filled up with Ruth Chris. When you are filled up with the Bible and Christ has filled your heart, and you've been spending your life in confession and repentance and growing in grace, consuming the Bible, worshipping and involved in a ministry, believing in a mission, when you consume all those good things, you won't crave trash in your life. And the reason we fall off in craving trash is that we have not been filled up with the fullness of God in Christ. These are things you have to get right for your contentment in Christ. You are not tempted by the things in front of you.

So we have to get some things right. We need to get conversion right; we receive Christ Jesus the Lord. And then once you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, we need to get living right. We walk in him with all those metaphors in verses 7 and 8. And then, once you have that, we need to get contentment right so we are content in Christ. Let me give you a fourth thing you need to get right, number four.

You need to get grace right

Let me show where I get that in verses 11 and 12. Verses 11 and 12 are kind of a knot. It's all tied up. When we read it, we need to ask, what does Paul say in there? Maybe there is some backstory to verses 11 and 12. Paul is writing to a church that would be familiar with Judaism. And in Judaism, for a family to be in covenant with God, they would have had to have all the males circumcised. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant that you were part of God's family. Paul's point in verses 11 and 12 is that Christ has done a spiritual circumcision of the heart. That's what he talks about over in Romans. That's what he's saying here in verse 11 to us. Let me let me read it to you. ¹¹*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.* This is the Christian sign of the covenant. ¹²*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* So, you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God. So let me

briefly explain what he is saying here. Jesus Christ suffered and died and was buried in your place and for your benefit. He bore the guilt and the punishment of the law for you. He took it upon himself. He took the curse that was due us upon himself. Verse 11 tells us what Christ has done. Verse 12 tells us that it becomes yours through faith. It's all by grace. God has done every bit of it, and it is extended to you and appropriated when you trust that Jesus did that for you.

It's grace. Christianity is grace. You hear the word grace a lot around here. You should hear it more and more. It should be the defining thing of us that we are received by God through his grace, given to us in Jesus, and we extend that grace to other people. It's one of those things we have to get right. Let me give you one last one last thing: number five.

You need to get forgiveness right

We need to learn what it means to be forgiven by God in Jesus and then extend that forgiveness to brothers and sisters to other people in our lives. Some of us are holding on to junk. People have offended us so much, so they've never asked for forgiveness. So how could I extend it? I'm saying to you, when the grace of God has been given to you in Jesus and you are forgiven, you are able to let that go. We need to get forgiveness right. So, in order to help us, what Paul does here in verses 13 to 15, he gives us three ways to understand it. It's like he's telling us one way and thinks we don't get it, so he tells us another way. Then he thinks you still don't get it, so he tells us another way.

So, let's see if we can go through it so we can understand forgiveness. We remember a few things; here's the first one. Remember that we were dead. Spiritually speaking, we were dead. We were not wandering off. We were not far from God. We were not in the churchyard, wandering around. We were in the cemetery, dead. Let's see what the text says in verse 13.

*¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. You are utterly defeated by sin. You are powerless to break the chains of sin. You were too weak to face the condemnation that your sin brought. What did he do? Verse 13 says, *God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.* You were dead in sin, but in Christ, you have been made alive. That should cause you to rejoice. Remember forgiveness. We need to get forgiveness right. He made us alive. That's forgiveness.*

So, Paul thinks, I'm not sure they understand, so let me explain to you another way. Verse 1 says, Not only were you dead, you were bankrupt. You're completely run out. You are fully in debt, and it was over your head. Look what it says. ¹⁴ *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* You see that little phrase cancelling the record of debt? That's an unusual statement, the record of debt. It would be a list of the debts, all the debts listed out, like all of our sins listed out. And at the very bottom of that document, the debtor would sign his name saying, yes, I legally am indebted to this person for all of these things. And what Paul has given us is a picture of that record of debt, the list of all that we've done, all that we owe. It is signed by us acknowledging our debt. Now, look what God does with it. He is so good that he didn't just write paid in full across the top. That would be a good thing to do, but you can still see what you owe underneath the paid in full. He didn't just do that. He didn't just cast it aside. That's not the only thing he did. Look, at what verse 14 says, he nailed it to the cross.

Think of it now. Think of it with me. There are a lot of you here that know the Bible. Do you remember in the gospel story when Jesus stood before Pilate, and he is accused? The thing that hung him was that they were calling him the king of the Jews. So, when Pilate had him crucified above Jesus' head was the record of what he is accused of, INRI Jesus of Nazareth, king of Jews. And Paul takes that imagery, he pulls that down, and he says over the head of Jesus is the list of the things that we are accused of. All of those things that we are rightly accused of, every one of them is true about us, and he nails it to the cross of Jesus. And when Jesus dies on the cross, he dies for that whole list. That debt has been absolutely paid. You were dead. You were bankrupt.

But it's almost like he's thinks we're still not getting it. So, in verse 15, he gives us one more thing. We were defeated. The apostle Paul would be very familiar with how Rome worked. And when an emperor went off to war with the legions, he would conquer most of Gaul and take some of those from France and Germany, bringing them back to Rome. Scattering out behind in chains, he marched them through the boulevards of Rome in a victory parade. That victory Parade would be the humiliation of all these defeated people behind him. Paul takes that imagery and brings it to us and says, look, this is what this is. This is what Jesus has done for you. ¹⁵ *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* Here comes the tribe that conquers, and Jesus comes to our defense. We are surrounded by the enemy; all of their weapons are against us. And one by one he goes through and takes the sword out of their hand, and knocks the shield away from them, and pulls their armor off. It's an absolute defeat of every evil force against us. He puts the chain around their neck, and he marches in with his chariot. There is Christ in the lead with all of those evil forces that hate us behind him and a giant cross in front. There is the victory for every Christian in this room to get a hold

of. Paul says you were dead. You were bankrupt. You were beaten. But Jesus comes to your rescue. That's what it means to be forgiven. It reminds us of the total absolute adequacy of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, contentment is real. Grace is extended. Sin is forgiven. Evil is conquered. And Jesus Christ is Lord. Living right starts with believing right, and I pray that you will take great comfort and joy in Christ as a Christian.

(Pastor prays)