

Faith remains rooted by continual watering with the Word.

Text: Colossians 2:6-7 for 1/13/2019 by Pastor Bolwerk

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

In these two verses from God's word, the Apostle Paul creates for us an outline. Paul very concisely outlines what is necessary for Christian faith to survive and grow. And if we were to summarize this outline we could be say: Faith remains rooted by continual watering with the Word. With this summary giving us some direction we are going to walk through Paul's outline and look at what he has to say about faith.

To help us understand what Paul is communicating to us I would like you to keep in mind the picture of a seed. That seed is going to represent your faith. While it is not a perfect picture of faith it is something visible which can help us understand our faith which is not visible. A seed by itself is really something dead. It's not alive. If I were to place a seed on my kitchen table and just leave it there for several weeks or even months that seed will not do anything. It has no life. It has the potential for life, but the seed itself is not alive. The seed needs something to bring it to life. What that seed needs is water. But the seed cannot go out and get that water on its own because the seed is lifeless. That seed needs someone to give water to it.

The same is true of us and our faith. On our own we were something dead when we came into this world; spiritually dead. We had the potential for spiritual life, but by nature we came into this world spiritually lifeless. Scripture tells us we were sinful from birth, sinful from the moment we were conceived. That sin left us spiritually dead. As something dead we had no power to reach out and bring in what we needed to make us alive. We needed God to have true life; spiritual life. But in the lifelessness of our sin we had no power to reach out to God and were separated from him and his love.

But that's not what God wants for the people of this world. God wants to have a loving, eternal relationship with all people. So God reaches out to the people of this world to give them what they need to remove their spiritual deadness; to make them alive. God reached out and gave the world a Savior from sin. He gave us his Son, Jesus. Christ came into the world to remove the sin that separates us from God. Jesus is the Savior God had promised, the one who came to live and die to take away the sins of all people. Everyone who trust in God's Son for the forgiveness of their sins has what God promises: forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation.

But this new life is not something we take on ourselves. Just like a seed, we need someone to pour out that life on us. Something outside of ourselves starts that life of faith. This is what Paul is speaking of when he says, "**Just as *you received* Christ Jesus as Lord**" (v. 6).

We received Christ as a gift in connection with God's word. Some of us received that new life of faith in connection with hearing the word of God. God worked through his gospel promises to create a new life in us. When that Word of God caused faith to spring to life in us, that faith desired a connection to Jesus through baptism. For many of us, baptism is how we first received Christ. We were connected to Jesus through water and God's word.

Our baptism connects us to Jesus' baptism. Now, Jesus was not baptized for the forgiveness of sins. At his baptism Jesus was anointed by his Father into the public office of Savior. Having been installed into that special office by God himself, from that point on Jesus was publicly living a perfect life in our place. He was publicly keeping everyone of God's commands for us. Jesus lived

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for us so that he could die for us. The life he lived as our anointed Savior is the life he sacrificed for us. On a cross of wood Christ suffered the hell that we deserved. He suffered separation from God's perfect love. In his death all our sins were completely paid. And in his resurrection, we are assured of both our forgiveness and our own resurrection from the dead. Scripture tells us that in our baptism we were not only connected to Christ's baptism, but also his death and resurrection. Just as Jesus was raised and lives a new life, we too are raised from spiritual death to a new life of faith.

By the powerful word of God you received Christ Jesus as your Lord. When that happened God not only planted a seed in you, but he watered that seed with his word, causing that seed to grow. And that seed of your faith is rooted in Christ. That seed lives in him.

This is why Paul encourages us to, "**continue to live in him**" (v. 6). Just like a plant needs soil for nutrients and stability, so our faith needs Jesus to continually give it the nutrients and stability it needs to live and grow. Without Jesus we don't have the stability or strength for our faith to stand on its own. Jesus said to his disciples, "**The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing**" (John 15:5 EHV). Imagine you were in an accident that caused you to be paralyzed from the waist down. On your own you would not be able to stand up and walk around. Now imagine that someone gave you an exoskeleton, a framework that went around your legs that gave you the ability to walk. As long as you are in that exoskeleton you can walk around, but when you are not in that exoskeleton you don't have the power on your own to do anything. This is the picture Paul gives us as he tells us to continue to live in Jesus. Christ is the very support and structure that our faith needs to function. We need to be *in* Christ to be able to produce fruits of faith in our lives.

Paul describes that support Jesus gives us in three ways. Paul tells us that as we continue to live in Christ we will be rooted, built up, and strengthened. A tree needs a solid foundation for its roots if it wants to continue to be built up and strengthened. A tree with a weak or sandy foundation can be easily blown over by the winds and storms of life. But a tree with a solid foundation can not only withstand those storms, it can endure them and grow stronger.

What foundation is your faith rooted in? Is it rooted in the sandy soil of human knowledge and technology which is constantly shifting and changing? Is it rooted in the eroding soil of human philosophy which looks good on the surface but collapses in times of trouble? Or is your faith rooted in the false foundation of, "If I just do the right things God will be pleased with me"? All of this shifting sand will not support the roots of your faith. Only Christ is the solid rock who can support us through any of the storms that life can throw at us. Only Jesus can forgive your sins, free you from your guilt, and build you up with his peace and love.

So what is needed for us to continue to live in Jesus, rooted, built up, and strengthened in him? How do we continue to do this? The Apostle Paul reminds us to do this, "**as you were taught**" (v. 7). To remain rooted in Christ we need to keep learning about Christ. We need Christian education. Typically when we hear the words "Christian education" we may think of our Christian day schools, or Michigan Lutheran High School. These schools are certainly awesome opportunities to help our children and our grandchildren to be rooted in their faith. We will want to support and promote our Christian Schools so that future generations can continue to live in Christ and be rooted and strengthened in him.

Yet continuing Christian education is not just for children and teenagers. It's for all of us. That weekly Christian education we receive in worship, as we hear God's word read and explained to us,

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so we can grow in our faith. There is the Christian education we receive in Bible study, where we can dive deep into the waters of God's word, so the roots of our faith can drink deeply of that Water of Life. Christian Education is also the daily opportunities we have to read God's word, study God's word, and meditate on God's word. It is taking time to think about and memorize sections of God's scripture. We will want to learn as much scripture as possible, because the more Bible passages we have in our heads the more the Holy Spirit can use those passages to daily guide and direct us with that Word. The more we study the powerful word of God the deeper our roots will be able to sink into the Rock of Christ Our Savior. The more we are in contact with the Gospel of Jesus the more we will be built up in him, and the greater our faith will be strengthened.

The stronger we grow in Christ the more our faith will be able to do. It is like our bodies, the stronger our bodies the more we can do physically. Paul tells us that as we continue to live in Christ our faith will be **“overflowing with thankfulness”** (v. 7). I don't know about you, but when I look at my life of faith it does not seem so “overflowing with thankfulness.” And my lack of thankfulness is usually because I am not living “in Christ.” I have stepped out of Christ and I am trying to live and do things on my own. Yet the stronger we are rooted in Christ the more we will start to recognize all God does for us every single day. We will recognize the little things as well as the big things he does. As we recognize God working in our lives, we will thank him for his goodness to us. We will thank him for our daily breath, as well as our daily bread. We will thank him for his protecting power over us and our loved ones. We will thank him for the illness or injury that forces us to rely on him alone for our strength and help. And we will thank him for his healing hand as he gives us relief from our illnesses and injuries. We will thank him for working out everything in this life for our eternal good. A faith that is firmly rooted in Christ will overflow with thankfulness for all of God's goodness to us.

But our faith only remains rooted in Christ by continual watering with the Word. May the Word of God that you have read and learned today daily remind you of how you came to faith: by God's grace, through his word. It is the Word that speaks of God's loving promises, forgiveness and salvation. It is the Word which fills you with the joy and peace of your Lord, Jesus Christ. 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. Amen.