

Continue as you Began by Gene McCoy

Paul was concerned about church growth, but not necessarily in the sense in which that terminology is used today. Contemporary church practitioners focus a lot of energy upon techniques and programs that effect numerical growth in churches. The marketplace is saturated with books, videos, seminars and periodicals that tell you “how to” market the church. Churches invest enormous amounts of money and time in the study of demographics as they plot a strategy by which they may reach their communities for Christ.

I certainly do not want to appear unduly critical of such procedures, for I think a reasonable case can be made that Paul employed a carefully designed strategy in his ministry. My concern is that we have succeeded in marketing the church to the exclusion of discipleship. While I am in favor of keeping the gospel message simple, I am concerned that we have made being a Christian too easy. While I believe that God’s grace is free, I am wondering if our church growth techniques have led people to believe His grace is cheap. The point I am making is that Paul’s writings about growth pertained to the individual’s development and strength of faith and not so much about “growing a large church.”

The context in which Colossians 2:6-7 is couched is that of a warning against false teaching. There is little chance of survival against the threats posed by the philosophies and “high-sounding nonsense” [J.B. Phillips] of the world unless one is “rooted and built up in Christ and established in faith.”

A tree will not survive the elements which challenge it unless

it is deeply rooted. A skyscraper will not stand unless its piles are driven deeply into the ground and its footings and foundations are strong. These are the very illustrations Paul uses in reference to our spiritual maturity.

“Rooted” is an action Paul depicts as having taken place in the past, the effects of which continue, i.e., you were rooted an continue to be rooted. Just as our life of faith began upon the unchanging principles of God’s Word, it

should continue without any wavering, characterized by stability and steadfastness. It is indeed frustrating and sad to witness a seedling

Christian with so much potential continually uproot himself time and again, repeatedly transplanting himself, giving no opportunity for a root system to grow.

The other two participles (“build up” and “established”) depict continuing activities. Our skyscraper of faith must be fortified every day as we grow up into Christ. What we see many times in church pews, however, are old, abandoned footers and foundations — monuments to the gods of complacency and mediocrity. These are Christians who started well, but who, for various reasons, have never progressed toward maturity. Jesus pictures them like a fig tree that leafs out but bears no fruit.

I don’t presume to know nor to say what the final outcome will be for one who becomes a Christian

(or at least makes a pretense of it) but who rarely, if ever, frequents the weekly family reunions around the Lord’s Table. I read with great concern on their behalf the parables of our Lord concerning stewards who bury their talent. The outcome of the life characterized by rocky soil (Matt. 13) is not very favorable. And the validity of Paul’s warning in Colossians 2:8 has been demonstrated time and again in lives that have been shipwrecked because they knew not the chart and compass that would direct them in the channel toward home.

Consider some suggestions as to how one may continue living the Christian life in the same enthusiasm as it was begun.

PRAY. Do you, like Paul (Eph. 3:14-19), pray that

your eyes would be opened and that you will grow in Christ?

READ. How much time do you invest in a systematic Bible reading program? Study faith-building topic and read challenging books.

ATTEND SUNDAY SCHOOL. Sink your spiritual roots deeper into the soil of a disciplined Bible study. Merely attending church will not suffice!

Col 2:6-7

Therefore as you 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.

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