

## PREFACE

Let's begin our study of this passage by returning, for just a moment, to the first chapter. In the first portion of his letter, Paul eloquently expresses key descriptions of the "beloved Son."

1:15	image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation
1:18	head of the body, the church
2:2	the mystery of God
2:3	repository of all wisdom and knowledge

In a rare moment of brevity, the apostle opens the transitional passage of vv6-7 with a succinct summing up of all these qualifications in a name/title used nowhere else in Scripture: *ton Christon Iesoun ton kyrion*—literally, "the Christ Jesus the Lord" (Moo). This is the only place in the NT where these individual terms are so arranged, and it seems to express, in one expansive title, the full supernatural weight of just who and what the "beloved Son" is.

## Read Colossians 2:6-7.

## v6

*Therefore...*

Up till now, the content of the letter to the Colossians has been generally *indicative*—that is, Paul has been making factual statements about the way things are. Our passage today is transitional in that it introduces the *imperative* portion of the letter [through v4:6], in which Paul lays out a series of commands (the first: "walk in Him").

[Between these two sections there is some spillage of course, but this delineation is generally true.]

*as you have received (the: definite article) Christ Jesus the Lord,*

Also unique is how Paul uses *paralambano* here—the only instance where the verb has a *personal* object.

**received** = *paralambano* = from <G3844> (*para*) and <G2983> (*lambano*); **to receive near, i.e. associate with oneself** (in any familiar or intimate act or relation); by analogy to assume an office; figurative to learn : - receive, take (unto, with).

That is, he is not referring to the Colossians receiving and accepting cold doctrine, teaching, traditions; he says "you received *Christ*..."—a person. It would be so natural for Paul to write, for example, "As you received your instruction in The Way from Epaphras, continue walking by those precepts." But just as he has been doing all along in this letter, Paul makes it personal. **Everything is centered and grounded in the person, Christ Jesus.** [as opposed to the philosophies or traditions of the false teachers]

And note in the definition: "associate with oneself." When, for example, we marry someone (especially in Christian marriage), we are declaring far more than, *I like this person*, or *I think she's hot!* or *He will be a good provider*. In Christian marriage we are publicly declaring that we are *joining* with this person; we are to be—and to

*be recognized as*—mystically “one.” Just so those who are “in Christ.” We are associating ourselves, identifying ourselves with Him.

The believers in Colossae received:

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|-------------------|---|
| <b>the Christ</b> | Anointed One, Messiah, the one fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies; divine Prophet, Priest, King.   |
| <b>Jesus</b>      | the historical person, human flesh, God incarnate; “Jesus” is Greek for “Joshua,” which means, “the Lord is salvation,” so they received Him as the sole source of salvation. |
| <b>the Lord</b>   | sovereign, Master; the only One to whom we submit our allegiance and very lives.  |

*Billy Graham:* 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.

*so walk in Him (NIV: continue to live in Him)*

**walk, continue to live**<sup>niv</sup> = *peripateo* = from <G4012> (peri) and <G3961> (pateo); **to tread all around, i.e. walk at large** (especially as proof of ability); figurative **to live, deport oneself**, follow (as a companion or votary) :- go, **be occupied with**, walk (about).

The NIV does a good job of capturing the present tense of this word. We “receive” once, but we “walk” or “live” as a commitment to a long-term way of doing something. This is “a command to *keep* on doing [this] as [a] general habit or *life-style*” (Hill/Archer). One commentator puts it, “conduct your lives as incorporated in Him.”

*as you received... live*

- you did not earn or deserve His salvation—every day give thanks for that
- you received Him by His *grace*—live by His grace
- you received Him with confession—continue to confess Him
- you received Him because He loved you—every day love Him back
- you received His forgiveness—live every day in His forgiveness
- you received His sanctification—every day grow in the sanctified life
- His sacrifice turned away God’s wrath—live every day under a loving Father who knows you as His child

Finally, what does this “walk” look like?

**Read from Colossians 1:9-12.**

...filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ...walk[ing] in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

We can do all this because of what it says in v7.

### Read v7.

*...having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him*

Just as the NIV was helpful in v6, adding a word to express the tense of the verb, so here in v7 the NASB adds words to help us with the tense of the verbs.

Believers "have been" (one time in the past, once-for-all) "rooted" [perfect tense]. The word is

**rhizoo** (rhid-zah'-oh) = to root (figurative *become stable*).

What a wonderful word-picture this is; in the original secular Greek the noun form (*rhiza*) was used for the foundation of the earth, and for the foot of a mountain. It was also used for that from which other things spring (e.g., the root of evil or the root of good). The way a mountain is rooted into the earth's mantle—that's how deeply and permanently we have been, once-for-all, rooted into Christ Jesus!

We are "rooted" once, but we are "being" (continual, ongoing process) "built up" [present tense] over time—both are accomplished "in Him."

**built up** = *epoikodomeo* = from <G1909> (epi) and <G3618> (oikodomeo); **to build upon, i.e. (figurative) to rear up** :- build thereon (thereupon, on, upon).

Admittedly Paul is mixing his metaphors, since the first ("rooted") is typically agricultural—or at least natural—and the second ("built up") is usually associated with construction. Here's the idea; think about the construction of the new One World Trade Center, or "Freedom Tower" in New York City. Just imagine how deeply, how solidly the foundation of that huge building is anchored—"rooted"—into the bedrock of Manhattan. But then, with that root in place (once; one root, one foundation), the skyscraper is successively "built up," floor upon floor. The root is never seen, but its necessary strength is repeatedly demonstrated in the witness of each new floor.

Just so our lives. Rooted into the immovable bedrock of Christ Jesus, the conduct and progression of our "building up" stands as a witness for the strength of our Foundation. And from beginning to end, it is all "in Him."

*...and established in your faith, just as you were instructed.*

Like "built up," the word translated "established" (NIV: strengthened) is in the present tense. [continual, ongoing process].

**established** = *bebaioo* (beb-ah-yah'-oh) = from <G949> (bebaio); **to stabilize** (figurative) :- **confirm**, (e-) stabilish.

The word has a legal background, where it means to validate or guarantee, but here it has the basic sense of "firm" or "solidly grounded"—*Webster's*: "not easily moved or thrown off-balance".

There is a passage in 2 Peter that speaks to this.

**Read 2 Peter 3:17-18 (*not* NIV; ESV preferred).**

[steadfastness = stability]

*established in your faith*

"Faith" is what keeps us stable when "unprincipled men" seek to lead us astray. But the different translations leave us wondering just what aspects of faith are being addressed in Colossians 2:7.

KJVs, NIV, ESV = in the faith

NASB = in (or by) your faith

I'm a little uncomfortable with the NASB "in your faith"—and *really* uncomfortable with "by your faith." Not that it can't be true, but all three of these words—rooted, built up, established—are in the passive mood, which de-emphasizes our part in the process and implies that it is God doing the work.

"In the faith" is a better translation, since the consensus seems to be that what Paul refers to here is the "sphere" of faith. As Curtis Vaughan puts it,

"In the faith" conceives of faith as the body of truth (the faith system) and looks on this as the sphere within which the being "strengthened" takes place.

*just as you were instructed*

This passage opened with "as you have received Christ," and we rightly emphasized the work of God in that process of receiving. But this passage comes full-circle by bringing out the second aspect of how these Colossians received Christ: They were "instructed."

**instructed**<sup>nasb</sup>, **taught** = *didasko* = a prolonged (causative) form of a primary verb *dao* (to learn); **to teach** (in the same broad application) :- teach.

**Read Romans 10:11-15.**

Nothing is impossible with God, and the Holy Spirit can certainly grab hold of the isolated person born on a desert island who has never heard anything about Christ. But in God's economy, He normally works through the very human process of one person teaching another. The Colossians heard of Christ, came to faith, and were "rooted," "built up," and "established in [their] faith" because of the faithful teaching—and example—of Epaphras, and others.

But teaching takes many forms. While the formal teacher—i.e., pastor, Sunday School teacher—may plant the *seeds* of knowledge and understanding, it is the example, the witness of those *lives* and others that truly establishes faith. I will say again something I have said before: I have sat under many pastors, and I cannot recite even one sentence of any sermon any of them ever preached in my hearing. But I *can* tell you about their character, their varying levels of servanthood, the ways they modeled Christ to me.

For myself, perhaps the most eloquent instruction I received for a life of faith came from the simple, daily lives of two homely, unsophisticated parents who loved the Lord.

*overflowing with gratitude*

Finally, our walk is to be distinguished by thanksgiving, gratitude—in abundance.

**gratitude**<sup>nasb</sup>, **thanksgiving** = *eucharistia* = from <G2170> (eucharistos);  
**gratitude; active grateful language (to God, as an act of worship)** :-  
thankfulness, (giving of) thanks (-giving).

**overflowing**<sup>nasb, niv</sup>, **abounding**<sup>kjvs, esv</sup> = from <G4053> (perissos); **to superabound**  
(in quantity or quality), **be in excess**, be superfluous; also (transposed) to  
cause to superabound or excel :- (make, more) abound, (have, have more)  
abundance, (be more) abundant, be the better, **enough and to spare**,  
exceed, excel, increase, be left, rebound, remain (over and above).

We may be in the habit of seeing gratitude as simply good manners—which it certainly is. But this context brings out how critically important thanksgiving to God is to keep us rooted and established in our relationship to God.

Gratitude in its fullest expression ensures balance and stability. Think about it: It is simply good manners to say, “thank you” when someone does something for us. But in our walk of faith in Christ, it also keeps us properly aligned, keeps our ego in check.

It is more than just bad manners. When we fail to express thanksgiving to God for what He has done for us, we begin to forget that He has; we are on-track to imagining we have done it for ourselves.

Our gratitude to God is to be overflowing, spilling out all over the place. It should be a ready, well-used response to His grace, His mercy, His kindness and generosity, His *forgiveness*, every day of our lives—not just as one component of a morning prayer; our lives, our thoughts our conversation, should vibrate to the pitch of thanksgiving, of appreciation for everything God has done for us.