

Intro

Who rules over us has major life implications. Think a boss at work. Our quality of life will be helped or hindered depending on the nature of our boss. I think of times when the boss was changing. How is this going to affect me?

Bosses affect us in a number of ways.

How they talk to us. Abrasive, condescending, or kind and encouraging?

What they expect of us. Perfection, unreasonable output or satisfied with quality work, satisfied with quality effort, reasonable expectation for output?

How they help us succeed. No support, figure it out on your own or training, guidance, given the proper tools?

It's the same with our spiritual masters. Who or what we're placing ourselves under will affect the quality of our existence in this life and the life to come.

Let's look to Colossians. Where Paul encourages us to place ourselves under Jesus rather than rival worldviews.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

The theme is "continue".

Point 1: Continue how you began (2:6-7)

Explanation

Therefore = picking up on what's just been said. Instead of being deluded with plausible arguments, continue to walk in the way you began.

Walk in Jesus today in the same way that you received him then.

Received a person

"as you received Christ Jesus the Lord"

They received a person named Jesus. Who happened to be the Son of God. The Jewish Messiah. The Savior of sinners. The Lord of the universe.

When they heard the gospel. When they heard about the God who created the universe. When they heard about the fall. When they heard about Jesus' death on the cross. When they understood their sin and separation from God. When they heard these things, they believed them and embraced Jesus.

Everything he taught. Everything he commanded. Jesus was God in human flesh.

When a person comes to faith, they embrace Jesus. They find him worthy of our trust. Worthy of following.

Received a body of truths

"just as you were taught"

They also received a body of truths. Acts 2:42 calls it “*the apostles’ teaching.*” 1 Timothy 6:20 calls it “*the deposit entrusted to you.*” When a person embraces Jesus, they also embrace a set of truths.

- 1) Jesus is the Son of God
- 2) The God who created the world rules over his world
- 3) God doesn’t tolerate rebellion
- 4) God punishes rebellion. Our sin. Our rebellion.
- 5) Jesus came to die in our place. To take the punishment our sins deserve.
- 6) God raised Jesus from the dead. Vindicating his death. And everything he claimed.

When a person embraces Jesus, they see their need for divine mercy. When a person embraces Jesus, they turn to Jesus on Jesus’ terms.

How did we receive Jesus?

We received Jesus through faith and repentance. We acknowledged our sin. We acknowledged our need for forgiveness. We trusted in Jesus alone, not ourselves, to receive God’s forgiveness. We trusted Jesus is merciful.

We also saw sin as it truly is. Rebellion. Demands punishment. Foolish. Destructive. So we turned from rebellion to trust. We began to follow Jesus.

What attitude was necessary? There’s more than one. But I’m thinking humility. We had to acknowledge our need for a Savior. Our need for mercy. Our need for forgiveness. Our need for a new heart.

Today

Faith. Repentance. Humility. This is how we received Jesus. This is how we continue to follow Jesus.

What does this look like?

- 1) Trusting in God’s goodness when life is hard today. Because I see the cross.
- 2) Trusting that God’s way is always right today. Especially when there’s peer or cultural pressure to reject God’s way.
- 3) Trusting that I need God’s Word to bring life to my soul today.
- 4) Confessing sin today.
- 5) When confronted in the Bible with present failure (omission or commission), resolving to follow Jesus in the strength he supplies today. Asking for help to obey today.
- 6) Continuing to remember our need for God’s mercy, empowering strength, wisdom, etc. today.

Non-Christian

What is Christianity? Receiving a person: Jesus. Receiving a set of truths. Turning from rebellion to trust. Turning from pride to humility.

Continue how you began. We never outgrow faith, repentance, and humility. The way we begin is the way we continue.

Point 2: Continue by building on foundational truths (2:7)

“rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

This is how we continue today.

Rooted

Horticultural imagery. The underground part of a plant. Some weeds come out easily. Some take work. The roots can go deeper than its height. The roots cover a much broader area/circumference than the thin weed we see.

Whether it's a tree or rosebush or weeds, roots can go down deep and cover a great radius.

Tiny little stump looks like nothing. But it's a pain to get out.

Roots provide an underground support structure = stability. Roots also take in water to bring nourishment to the rest of the plant = the more roots, the stronger the plant.

Spiritually, we want deep and wide roots. We want a stabilizing doctrinal system. We want a broad grasp of the Christian faith which nourishes our soul.

Built up

Construction imagery. Used of building on a foundation in 1 Corinthians 3:10, 12, 14; Ephesians 2:20.

Improving on the existing structure. Adding to what's already there.

Palermo Christian Church has been built upon. You know better than me. From what I've heard it started with this sanctuary. Later came to gym, the kitchen, the offices. And the sanctuary has been enlarged.

Spiritually, we start with core truths centered around the person of Jesus and the gospel. As we move forward in the Christian life, we're supposed to add to this foundation. Think adding knowledge, wisdom, and character that once wasn't there.

Established

Literally the word means verified, confirmed, established. The doctors confirmed no structural damage in the knee. The lawyers confirmed the defendant's alibi = a strong alibi.

Spiritually the word takes on a meaning like firm or strong or established in the faith. Meaning something like stable in the faith. Not up and down. Not easily influenced by erroneous teachings.

Here it's *“established in the faith”* = strong in the gospel and the apostles' doctrine.

Thanksgiving

The normal consequence of a rooted, built up, established faith is thankfulness. Thankfulness results from deep roots and building beyond the basics. **The more we know, the more we're thankful.**

Truths in tension: do we move on from elementary teachings?

Colossians 2:6 says, *“as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him”* = keep doing the basics.

In Colossians 1:9-10, Paul prayed, *“that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* = Paul wants Christians to increase in knowledge.

Hebrews 5:12-6:2 says this:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. ¹ Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Fascinating. Paul says **continue how you began**. Paul says grow in knowledge. Don't be partially pleasing to God! And the Hebrews author says leave repentance and faith and move on to solid food.

What's going on here?

- 1) Continue in the basics (faith and repentance), but also move beyond the basics (faith and repentance).
- 2) We can't be mature, complete Christians if we stay in the basics.

There's more to the Christian life than faith and repentance. See chapter three. We build on the foundation. We don't stop at the foundation.

- 3) We can't withstand deceptive philosophies if we don't continue in faith and repentance.

Faith and repentance protect us from going off track on our path to completeness.

Paul and the author of Hebrews speak from different angles and highlight different truths while agreeing on what's necessary: advancing in wisdom and knowledge and discernment so as to become complete.

Point 3: Continue by rejecting empty deceit (2:8)

See 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.

Be on the lookout. For what?

Philosophy

Worldviews, ways of understanding life that come from sources other than God.

Empty deceit

Empty = literally nothing there; figuratively useless like an empty can of soda. Worldviews that are useless because they are devoid of truth.

Deceptions that promise what they can't deliver.

Origins

Paul clarifies the origin of these useless lies:

- 1) Human tradition = manmade
- 2) Elemental spirits = the ESV insinuates demonic origins.
- 3) "*not according to Christ*" = not from God. That's the basic point. Empty, destructive wisdom that comes from sources other than God.

Metaphor/illustration

Such manmade or even demonic wisdom, is said to take people captive. In what sense?

Well, what happens to a captive? Think a POW. They lose freedom, rights. They possess no property. They're restricted. They come under the control and rule of another. Someone else is dictating what they can and cannot do. Falling under the influence of false teachers and false worldviews is like being captured, imprisoned.

How does this work?

Falling under their influence they control you. How you think. Who's right. Who's wrong. What's acceptable. What isn't. What goals are important. What goals aren't important. How to perceive and respond to life's challenges. How you act. What behavior is commendable. What behavior is despicable. How do respond to internal desires. Go with them? Resist them?

False worldviews influence us and we're blind. Freedom is lost and we don't even know it.

What views are out there?

Note: deceit comes in many forms and in many places.

- 1) All roads lead to God. God welcomes people from every religion = faith in Jesus isn't necessary. The cross isn't necessary.
- 2) God loves everyone. He'd never send someone to hell = God isn't holy and doesn't care about sin.
- 3) The self-help life coach that says "awaken the power within" and "you're the master of your own destiny" = I don't need God and I don't need the new birth.
- 4) The cult that says they're the only ones who've ever understood the Bible correctly. You need to join with them to be right with God.
- 5) Come to Jesus and he'll make you wealthy and healthy. If you have enough faith, you'll be rich and free of health problems.
- 6) You can be a faithful and strong Christian without a church.
- 7) You do you = everyone can do whatever feels right for them = there's no truth, no moral standard = there's no God whose image we're supposed to reflect.
- 8) Love is love = Paul is wrong when he writes "*it [love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*" (1 Cor 13:6)

I could go on and on. My point? Lies come from many sources. Lies come in many forms. We're under the influence of Jesus or something else.

Freedom

Following false worldviews = loss of freedom. Is following Jesus loss of freedom? It depends how you look at it. We'll get there in our final point.

Point 4: Continue by remembering Jesus' authority (2:9-10)

Explanation

"For" explains what was just said about being under captivity to sources other than Jesus.

Other sources are deceit because:

"in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"

Only Jesus possesses the fullness of deity. Interestingly this is speaking after Jesus rose from the dead. The fullness of deity still dwells in Jesus bodily. He still lives in bodily form. The point is Jesus possess fullness of deity. Not 90 or 95%. Full deity because he's fully God. False worldviews (false gospels) don't come from God because they don't come from Jesus. Because they don't point to Jesus. Because they don't glorify Jesus. Because they don't end in Jesus.

Paul reminds the Colossians:

“and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

Through union with the one who possesses full deity (Jesus), we who believe are filled. Filled in what sense? Filled in terms of receiving all the benefits that come with salvation. The indwelling Holy Spirit comes to mind. Peter puts it this way in 2 Peter 1:3:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

This only happens if we are in Christ. Union with Jesus comes through faith and repentance. Union brings richness of spiritual life.

Rule and authority

“all rule and authority” highlights the fact that Jesus rules (acts) from the authority (to judge, to give eternal life, etc.) he possesses.

Is coming under the influence of Jesus loss of freedom?

What’s freedom? Depends on your perspective. To some freedom means “you do you.” Autonomy. Self-government. No restrictions.

To those who’ve received Christ Jesus as Lord, freedom means no longer a captive, or slave, to sin. No longer ruled by sinful desires. Christ in you. A new heart with new desires. We call this being born again.

Some find rules inhibiting. Christians find Jesus’ commands liberating. No longer left to our own foolishness we learn how to live according to our design. Learning and keeping God’s rules protects us from self-inflicted consequences. For example, we learn how to use our mouth. How to do marriage. How to parent. That humility is better than pride.

“you do you” = living against the natural order of things.

When we receive Jesus as Lord, we give up autonomy. But we escape captivity to sin and enslaving worldviews. We learn how to do life right. Because we’re learning from the one who gave us life.

Non-Christian

Following Jesus means the end of “you do you.” It also means the end of slavery to sin. The end of empty lies that can’t deliver.

Conclusion

Continue in Christ.

Continue how you began.

Build on foundational truths.

Reject empty deceit.

Rejoice in Jesus’ authority.