

- III -

Let Your Roots Run Deep

(Colossians 2:6, 7)

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CHRIST can do marvelous things in our lives if we will remain rooted in Him and be built up on His sure foundation.

A recent random survey of a congregation revealed the following responses when asked, "Which word best describes your life in Christ now?" Sixty-eight per cent said, "Growing"; 6 per cent said, "Victorious"; 17 per cent said, "Static"; 9 per cent said, "Ineffective"! Three in four believed they were making progress. The survey indicated a sense of growth and a longing for more growth. That is commendable.

Paul found a similar situation at Colossae. They were a people with firm faith in Jesus who needed to continue to grow in Him. They had been reconciled to God through the blood of the pre-eminent Christ (1:15-20). They had yielded themselves to God who was working to accomplish a specific purpose in their lives through Christ (1:21-29). Paul commended them for their present progress (1:4, 7, 13; 2:5, 10). But where were they to go in the future? How could they continue to grow in Christ?

THE LONGING FOR GROWTH

Paul's fervent prayer for the Colossians was that they lead a life worthy of and fully pleasing to the Lord. They were to bear fruit in every good work (1:10). They were to increase in the knowledge of God (1:10) and to be strengthened with prayer for endurance and patience with joy (1:11).

Paul was concerned that several things happen. He hoped that they would not shift in the faith, but be stable and steadfast in the faith

(1:23). He wanted them to grow to maturity in Christ (1:28), be encouraged (2:2), possess assured understanding and knowledge (2:2), and live a new life free from sin and covered with righteousness (3:1—4:6). Paul's entire life was spent in striving and toiling to see these things fulfilled in the lives of Christians (1:29—2:1). Such growth is God's purpose for our lives.

THE POWER FOR GROWTH

Jesus, the pre-eminent Christ, is the focal point of our spiritual power. We can be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might" (1:11). Jesus delivers, transforms, redeems, and forgives. He sustains, rules, reconciles, and sanctifies. He is the source of all spiritual might.

... Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27).

For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority (2:9, 10).

... from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God (2:19).

The power of faith is in its object, Christ, and not in its subject (the one believing).

THE STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

We are to "live in Him" (2:6). Paul said, "As you received. . . ." Their continuance was to be consistent with their beginning. Our lives should

be filled with Christ. He is the foundation beneath us, the protection above us, the walls surrounding us.

Paul said, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3:3). We must keep our eyes focused on Him: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (3:2). This is not an invitation to intellectually recall a message that was once communicated. We can live with Him by letting ourselves be moved, newly-oriented, and directed in our entire activity by what has been communicated—the Christ.

First, we are to be "rooted" in Him (2:6). Paul assumes they are already rooted in Jesus. He is urging them to remain "rooted" in Him. "Rooted" is the image of an Old Testament prophet. (See Jeremiah 17:5-8.) Where do your roots run? To God or man? Which are you? A shrub in the desert or a tree planted by water?

Two possible emphases are these: stability (Psalm 1) and nourishment (Galatians 5). Let your roots run deep into the heart of God. Feed and draw on His presence and nature.

Second, we are to be "built up in Him" (2:7). Jesus is not only the ground for the roots below

but also the foundation for the building above. God is building a holy temple for His glory and presence (Ephesians 2:20-24). Receiving is just the start—the foundation. Now we are to be built up in Him.

Third, we are to be "established in the faith" (2:7). Progress does not consist in abandoning precious truths and accepting speculative vagaries. Just be strengthened in your present faith. Let it become more firm and real.

CONCLUSION

To the Christians at Colossae, Paul does not say: "Repent of your sins, and do all these things." They had already repented. It was time to grow. He does not say, "Do all the right things in order to find the Lord." They had already been reconciled. It was time to grow in the realization of what that relationship entailed. Instead, Paul says, "You know the Lord. Keep your roots deep in Him, and be built up in Him."

This is my prayer for you. Spiritual power and growth come through letting your roots run deep into the person, nature, and work of Jesus Christ. He can and will bring God's work to completion in you if you will let Him.

Applying Scripture to Life

Wind and Fire

Bruce Larson in his book *Wind and Fire* tells about a National Football League championship game several years ago in which Dallas was playing Green Bay in Wisconsin in what was later dubbed "The Ice Bowl." Green Bay was behind by five points with just seconds left to play. Green Bay had the ball on the Dallas one-foot line, and it was the fourth down. Everything hinged on that last play. In the huddle the Packer's quarterback, Bart Starr, turned to Jerry Kramer, the offensive guard, and said: "Jerry, if you can move Jethro Pugh twelve inches to the left,

you'll make \$15,000!" Jerry Kramer caught a vision of what to do: Move defensive lineman Jethro Pugh twelve inches and collect \$15,000—the winner's share of the championship. Jerry responded; Jethro was moved; and Green Bay won.

Jesus implanted that kind of vision in His people on an infinitely larger scale. He wanted them to understand what would happen if they could just move. The last words He spoke to them were that kind of words (Mark 16:15-18).

Four Rules to Make Your Faith Grow

If you want your faith to

grow, there are four rules that you must adopt. First, be willing to have a great faith. Second, use the faith you have. Third, be sure to put God between yourself and circumstances. Fourth, live a life of daily obedience to God's will.

The Secrets of Youth

A dear old Quaker lady, distinguished for her youthful look, was asked what she used to preserve her appearance. She replied sweetly, "I use for the lips, truth; for the voice, prayer; for the eyes, pity; for the hand, charity; for the figure, uprightness; and for the heart, love."