



Don't Be Taken Captive!

[2:6-10]

Chris Bullard

“As you therefore 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.

“See to it that no takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 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” (2:6-10).

The darkness seemed especially deep because of the fog that hovered over the North Atlantic Ocean. In contrast, the atmosphere aboard the Italian luxury liner *Andrea Doria* was light and festive. Farewell parties were in progress as the ocean liner was to dock in New York City harbor the following day. Suddenly a sharp, unexpected lurch of the ship, coupled with a grinding crash and flickering lights, sent a panic among the passengers. Then the ship stabilized, and the lights returned to a steady brightness. The passengers began to calm down, and a deceptively reassuring voice was reported to have come over the ship's intercom. Again and again the resonant voice said, “This is no emergency.” But a 30 foot gash in the ocean liner's side where the sharp bow of the Swedish liner *Stockholm* had struck the *Andrea Doria* was left gaping open to the sea. In a matter of hours the *Andrea Doria* slithered be-

neath the dark waters of the Atlantic, and fifty people died that summer night in 1956.

Paul had no doubt about the reality of the emergency in the church at Colossae. False teaching had crashed into the spiritual side of the church, and believers who thought everything was all right with their faith were about to drown in a sea of religious error. Paul had taken up his pen to warn the Colossians of the impending danger that faced them.

Beginning with Colossians 2:6, Paul used the first of twenty-two imperatives that occur in this letter. These were not suggestions; they were not helpful thoughts for the day. These were radical steps of action that *had to* be taken if the brethren in that church were to survive the crisis about to engulf them. Since our own age is not immune to religious error that deceives believers and destroys their saving faith, Paul's words are still relevant.

THE EXHORTATION (2:6)

Paul began with a word of exhortation: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (2:6). Paul was saying, “Keep on walking in Him.” “Walking” is a word of movement. It speaks of progress and direction.

You may be one of these people who walk for their health. Have you ever put on your walking shoes, started down the street, met a neighbor a few doors down from your house out working in his yard, and ended up stopping to talk with him? Before you knew it, it was late, and you decided to

go back home instead of completing your walk. What happened? You got sidetracked. Your purpose was defeated because you stopped walking.

Paul said that can happen spiritually. As a Christian, you need to keep moving. You have to keep walking, or you will get sidetracked spiritually from what is important. In everyday vernacular, Paul was saying to “practice what we preach.”

What do we preach? Jesus Christ is Lord. At your baptism you said you were receiving Jesus as your Lord. Paul now encourages you to put legs on your faith. If you received Jesus as Lord, live like it! Be faithful to that commitment. Let your daily life give evidence that Jesus directs your decisions and your conduct. Do not play church. Do not give lip service on Sunday. Day after day keep walking behind Jesus, following Him in the way He leads you.

That is the exhortation—keep on walking.

THE EXPLANATION (2:7)

Paul gave the explanation of how we keep on walking: “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” (2:7). Paul, being a Hebrew and not a Greek, thought in concrete images, not in abstract terms. Here he used four metaphors from the daily life of his readers to convey what it means to keep walking in Jesus.

Be Rooted

The first metaphor is that of a tree. We are to be “rooted” in Jesus.

Trees do not move around in your yard! When you wake up in the morning, they are exactly where you left them the night before. The idea of being “rooted” is the idea of stability. You are not hot on Jesus today and cold on Him tomorrow. Your mind is fixed. Jesus *is* your Lord. You are committed to Him, come what may.

The tense of the Greek verb Paul used means something happened in the past whose consequences continue to have effect. You made a decision that Jesus would be King of your life, and that decision is not up for grabs every day. You are settled on that matter. You are not a spiritual tumbleweed blown along by every wind of doctrine that comes along. You are rooted in the decision that Jesus is your Lord.

Be Built Up in Him

Paul’s second metaphor is that of a construction project. We are to be “built up in Him.” This metaphor, like the following two, is in the present tense. The emphasis is ongoing action. Buildings do not pop up in an instant. They go up slowly, brick by brick, stone upon stone. They do not happen by accident. There has to be a conscious plan and effort.

This metaphor speaks of continual development and progress in our walk with Jesus. Peter described it this way:

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your selfcontrol, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-8).

This construction project is never finished.

My mom and dad are do-it-yourself remodelers. I left home over twenty years ago, and not once have I been home since I left that at least one room of our house was not torn up because it was being remodeled. Their house is always “under construction.” Mom and Dad are constantly looking for a way to improve their house.

**“We are always
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That is a picture of our spiritual lives. We are continually to be being built up into the lordship of Jesus Christ. We are always to be remodeling the temple of our life so it looks more and more like our Savior. The Christian who takes this task seriously will never finish. He will die building.

Be Strengthened

The third metaphor is the metaphor of a contract. It comes from the law courts. We are to be “strengthened in the faith” (NIV). “Strengthened” was a word in the law courts of Paul’s day used to speak of contracts made legally binding. It meant an agreement was unalterable, unchangeable.

While the NASB has “your faith,” I believe the NIV is more fitting: “the faith.” “The faith” refers to the truths that we were taught about Jesus. Daily we are to be making firmer our covenant with the truth about Jesus so that we more fully understand what we believe and why we believe it. That way no one can make shipwreck of our faith. If you are not continually, deliberately being strengthened in the faith, you are atrophying. You are getting weaker, not stronger.

Be Overflowing With Gratitude

A final metaphor explains how we go on in our walk with Jesus. It is a picture of a river: “overflowing with gratitude.” This picture is of a river out of control, flooding its banks. Water is gushing everywhere and cannot be stopped!

How can we recognize a Christian who is continually going on in his walk with Jesus as Lord? His life overflows with thanksgiving! He grumbles less and expresses gratitude often.

This was no little thing with Paul. To be bursting with thankfulness is the mark of a man who is drawing closer to the heart of Jesus, who is drinking more deeply of His Spirit. This is critical to the apostle. Notice how often he mentioned this attitude of thanksgiving in Colossians alone:

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you (1:3).

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (1:12).

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful (3:15).

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father (3:17).

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving (4:2).

A believer who is continually thankful to Jesus Christ and expresses that thanksgiving, whether

in song, prayer, or verbal praise as you tell others what Jesus has done for you, is not likely to depart from faith in Him when that faith is put to the test.

THE EMERGENCY (2:8-10)

Paul described the emergency that was about to capsize the faith of the Colossian Christians:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 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 (2:8-10).

What was the emergency at Colossae? Someone was about to kidnap these believers! They were about to be spiritually abducted. That is the force of the words “take you captive” (2:8).

Paul was waving a red flag, saying, “Watch out!” Our translation is too weak when it says, “See to it. . . .” The New English Bible says, “Be on your guard!” This was a dangerous moment. These Colossians were about to be carried away into heresy, and if they were not on their guard, they would not even realize what had happened to them.

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How can this happen? Paul says it comes through “philosophy and empty deception.” Earlier he described it as “persuasive argument” (2:4). Spiritual abduction takes place when believers begin to accept religious ideas and viewpoints that distort the truth about Jesus.

Some at Colossae were teaching these Christians that they did not have all the truth they needed to be properly related to God. These false teachers believed that other spiritual beings in the universe—frequently associated with the planets and the stars—controlled the destiny of mankind. They believed that with the right kind of secret knowledge you could control these spiritual beings. “Know what we know, and believe what we believe,” they said, “and you can have a special relationship with God. Your life will be better than ever because you will know how to control the powers of the universe.” The Colossians were buying into it!

Therefore, Paul had to warn them: “Watch out! Be on your guard against these philosophies! They promise you more of God. They promise you more of the good life. But their words are hollow. They do not know what they are talking about. In Christ you have all the fullness of deity. If you try to have more than Christ, you end up with less than Christ.”

The emergency has not passed! Christians are still in danger of being kidnapped by ideas and false philosophies that sound so good but that are empty and hollow.

Do you know what “sign” you were born under? Many people do, and they faithfully read their horoscopes in the newspaper so that they will know how to plan their day. They are looking to the stars for daily guidance. Tragically, that number includes some Christians. To trust the horoscope for help in ordering your life is to demote Jesus, to not believe that He alone is sufficient to control your life.

Astrology and horoscopes are not the only false ideas floating around that take Christians captive and distort our thinking about Jesus. Here are a few others that sound so good but are so false:

“We need the good points of all world religions to live as we ought.”

“Anything God made that feels so good can’t be so bad.”

“One way to heaven is as good as another.”

“Live however you want; grace will cover your sin.”

“God helps those who help themselves.”

How can you keep from being kidnapped by false philosophies and ideas? Only one way is available. Be rooted in Jesus, continually being

built up and strengthened in Him, overflowing with praise and thanksgiving to Him. To do that you must return to the Bible again and again to hear His voice, to let Him speak to you, to saturate your mind with His principles so you can recognize the false ones.

You will not do that unless you believe the emergency is real. You will not be driven to the Bible daily to fill your mind with the truth of God about Jesus until you accept that you are in danger of drowning in a sea of religious and cultural error.

CONCLUSION

That summer night in 1956 fifty people died in the North Atlantic Ocean because they thought that the danger was not real. What happened to them can happen to us spiritually unless we stay on our guard. We must test everything against the standard of our Lord Jesus.

If an idea, an activity, or a certain point of view about how you live your life does not keep Jesus at the center of your life, you need to reject it. If someone tries to convince you that Jesus must be present in your life but He does not have to be preeminent, run from that person! You received Jesus as Lord; now continue to live in Him. Do that and you will not be taken captive by any heresy!

By the Grace of God

“Never did a sinner sink so low but what he may by the grace of God rise again to walk the path of life without being tormented by feelings of guilt.”

Go to God

“Men go to the fire for warmth. Men go to the water for swimming. Men go to the fields for plowing. Men go to the orchards for fruit. Men go to the seas for fish. Men go to the forests for lumber. Men need to be as wise and go to God for forgiveness—in the name of Christ, pleading Christ’s life and death—because Christ is the mercy of God incarnated. In Christ, God’s forgiving Spirit walked among men.”

Robert G. Lee,
Salvation in Christ