

Growing Up: Assurance in Christ

Goldstone Church – 07-Feb-16 10:30am

Colossians 2:4-15

Introduction

We are continuing our series in the book of Colossians. The Apostle Paul wrote this letter because there were enemies attacking the church in Colossae. He was writing to encourage his fellow Christians who were going through a dark valley of uncertainty and opposition.

Paul had already encouraged them by saying that he thanked God for them. He further encouraged them by saying that he was praying for them – praying that they would grow and mature in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had also encouraged them by directing their thoughts to the unsurpassing superiority of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:15-20 is a profound and breathtaking description of who Jesus is; everything must be about Jesus. You can't add and you can't improve upon Jesus.

Paul keeps on encouraging the Colossians by telling them how God sees them (Colossians 1:22); they are: "holy in God's sight", "without blemish" and "free from accusation". Whoever you are, whatever your background, as Christians, we are reconciled to God.

Paul offers yet further encouragement.

1. [KEEP MAKING] SPIRITUAL PROGRESS (Colossians 2:4-7)

In the Christian life, we never stand still; we either progress and move forward, or we regress and gradually slip backward. This is true of any relationship.

The Apostle Paul is very aware of this situation and instructs the Colossians (v.6b) to "*continue to live in him*", i.e. keep the relationship going.

In the original Greek text, the word here means, to continually 'progress', 'to pass one's life' living for God, 'to be occupied' and to walk with God.

The Christian that is not making spiritual progress is a juicy target for the enemy to attack and destroy. As Christians, as followers and disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to continue to grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus.

To emphasis and develop this point, the Apostle Paul uses several images to illustrate what he means by 'spiritual progress'.

a) Christians need to be **Grounded**.

The words "orderly", "disciplined" and "firm" (v.5) are all military terms. It's a description of an army that is solid, steadfast and united against the enemy. Just like soldiers on the battle field, Christians make spiritual progress through honourable discipline and loving obedience.

b) Christians need to be **Growing**.

There are 4 pictures in v.7 all linked with growth:

i. **The Tree.**

The word “rooted” is an *agricultural* term. Christians make spiritual progress when they are rooted by faith in Jesus Christ. The roots go down deep and give strength and stability.

ii. **The Building.**

The phrase “built up” is an *architectural* term. Christians make spiritual progress when they build upon the foundations they have by faith in Jesus Christ.

iii. **The School.**

The phrase “as you were taught” refers to teaching and understanding; an *educational* term. Christians make spiritual progress when they study the Bible and learn more about Jesus Christ.

The Devil *always* has a tough time trying to deceive a Christian who knows their Bible.

iv. **The River.**

The word “overflowing” suggests a picture of a river bursting its banks; a *geographical* term. Christians make spiritual progress when their relationship with Jesus Christ deepens in the overflowing river of His living water.

c) Christians need to be **Grateful**.

Paul mentions being thankful again (v.7). A thankful heart is a good indication of a Christian that is progressing spiritually; they are thankful for all that Jesus has done for them.

Together, these pictures show what it means to Keep Making Spiritual Progress. A Grounded, Growing and Grateful Christian is an Assured Christian.

2. [WATCH OUT FOR] SPIRITUAL PERILS (Colossians 2:8-10)

The Apostle Paul instructs the Colossians that spiritual growth will be maximised by avoiding the things that prevent or stunt growth. In addition to focusing on those issues that help and nurture spiritual growth, Christians also need to avoid the things that do the opposite.

Paul warns (v.8) of the 3 dangers of being captured or kidnapped by false teaching. Watch out for...

a) **Unfulfilling Philosophy.**

Paul warns against religious teachings that, when studied closely, are found to be empty, hollow and vain. It's like a beautifully wrapped birthday present, but

the box is empty; there is no gift. Watch out for these smoke-and-mirrors teaching.

b) **Untrue Philosophy.**

Paul warns against religious teachings that are deceptive, dishonest and unreliable. It's like being misled by a clever magic trick; there is no authenticity, no reality. Watch out for the lies.

c) **Unfounded Philosophy.**

Paul cautions against religious teachings that rely upon following *human* rituals and procedures. When Paul was writing, the religious leaders had their traditions, and were very zealous to obey and protect them. However, these man-made traditions were more important to them, than God-given instructions. Watch out for man-made rituals.

Paul outlines (Colossians 2:9-10) the ultimate antidote to all false teaching.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:9-10)

All the fullness is in Christ; as a Christian, you have been made full in him. So, why follow empty philosophies, when we have all the fullness in Christ? Why look for anything else?

Spiritual growth is enhanced by avoiding the things that can drag us down. An Assured Christian is someone that is focusing on the fullness that they have in Jesus Christ.

3. [DRAW UPON YOUR] SPIRITUAL PROVISIONS (Colossians 2:11-15)

The church in Colossae was facing a Crisis: false teachers were trying to introduce heresies into the church. In Colossians 2:11-15, the Apostle Paul is addressing one of those heresies: *Jewish Legalism*. He confronts the false teachers who were saying that to be a *proper* Christian, converts had to be circumcised and had obey Old Testament laws.

Paul addresses this heresy outlining four ways that Christians are identified with Jesus Christ. This identity makes it unnecessary (even sinful) to engage in any sort of Jewish Legalism.

a) We are **Circumcised in Him** (Colossians 2:11)

For Jews, although circumcision was a physical operation, it also had a *spiritual* significance. Sadly, Jewish people depended more on the physical act, and not on the spiritual aspect. (This is the equivalent of depending on some religious ritual to save you; it just doesn't work!)

Christians don't need to be circumcised, because they are identified *spiritually* with Jesus Christ. When we become disciples and followers of Jesus Christ,

Christians are spiritually separated from the world, and spiritually identified with Jesus. The physical act of circumcision is therefore redundant, because the real purpose (spiritual identity) has already been achieved.

We have been spiritually identified with Jesus – so why bother with anything else?

b) We are **Alive in Him** (Colossians 2:12-13)

Paul refers to Baptism: both literal baptism (getting physically wet) and figurative baptism (when someone is spiritually identified with Jesus).

Being a Christian means that we are identified with Jesus. This identification is not a casual similarity; it is an integral part of being a Christian.

Being identified with Jesus means that *whatever happened to Jesus, also happened to us*. When He died, we died with him. When He was buried, we were buried with him. When He arose from the grave, we arose from the grave with him. All this is achieved (v.12) “*through your faith in the working of God*”.

Because we are identified with Jesus Christ (who is the fullness of God) we are alive in Christ. What more do we need?

c) We are **Free from the Law in Him** (Colossians 2:14)

Jesus not only took our sins to the cross at Calvary, but he also took the Old Testament Law of Moses and nailed it there - out of the way, forever.

Jesus said (Matthew 5:17) that he came not to abolish the Law, but to *fulfil* the Law. As Christians, the standard set by God’s Law is fulfilled and satisfied by God’s own Son on the Cross. Being identified with Jesus Christ means that the Old Testament Law (that would have condemned us) is set aside. This does not mean that we are lawless. Instead, we obey what God wants of us - not out of fear, but out of love for Jesus.

d) We are **Victorious in Him** (Colossians 2:15)

Jesus secured three great victories on the cross:

- i. “Disarmed the powers and authorities” (v.15a)
Jesus stripped away all the weapons that the Devil and his army held. They have been disarmed.
- ii. “Made a public spectacle” (v.15b)
Jesus highlighted and exposed all the Devil’s deceit and vileness. There are no more secrets, no more fear. Jesus brought it all out of the darkness and into His Light.
- iii. “Triumphing over them” (v.15c)
In the Roman world, after a battle had been won, there was an official parade honouring the victor. Jesus’ complete victory on the cross was celebrated when He returned to heaven in a great triumphant procession.

Being identified with Jesus Christ means that his victory over sin on the cross is our victory.

Circumcised in Him, Alive in Him, Free from the Law in Him, Victorious in Him. These four factors show that being identified with Jesus Christ is not a place of weakness. In Him we are more than conquerors – what more do we need?

A Christian drawing upon their Spiritual Provisions in Jesus Christ is an Assured Christian.

CONCLUSION

These verses provide us our Assurance in Christ.

1. We have Assurance in Christ as we Keep Making **Spiritual Progress**.
As we *Ground* ourselves in Christ, as we *Grow* in Christ, and as we express *Gratefulness* in Christ, we make Spiritual Progress – and, in doing so, we have Assurance in Christ.
2. We have Assurance in Christ as we Watch Out for **Spiritual Perils**.
Our spiritual progress is enhanced by avoiding the things that can drag us down, and keep our focus on all the fullness that we have in Jesus. As we do so, we have Assurance in Christ.
3. We have Assurance in Christ as we Draw Upon our **Spiritual Provisions**.
Because of what Jesus did on the cross at Calvary, we are *Circumcised in Him, Alive in Him, Free from the Law in Him*, and we are *Victorious in Him*. Being identified with Jesus – that is our Assurance in Christ.

Our assurance is based on the reality of the work and person of Jesus Christ. As Christians, as disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, we are identified with Him. Let us be people that openly live in the confidence of our Assurance in Christ.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.” (Colossians 2:9-10a)

Thanks be to God.

Amen