

# Alive and Waking In Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] So if you have your Bible, go ahead and turn to Colossians 2. We are continuing in our sermon series through the book of Colossians. And so what I want us to do before we begin our time together, I want you to finish this statement in your mind.

Don't say it out loud because it'll be really weird, right? If everybody says it out loud. Okay, finish this statement in your mind. I believe Jesus is... Finish that statement.

Think about that. In today's passage, Paul reveals what the answer to that question, that statement, what it should be because your belief in Jesus is going to carry forward into how you live life.

And what we're going to see from today's passage is that salvation is more than saying a prayer and then waiting for heaven. It is a life lived in reference to Christ Jesus and also in reverence to Christ Jesus.

As Paul puts it in verse 6 of chapter 2, which opens up our passage today, Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Paul is finishing that statement, who Jesus is to him.

[ 1 : 32 ] He wasn't just Jesus. He was Jesus as Christ and as Lord. And he says that's how you are to receive him. That's how you must believe in him and follow him. And we can get so familiar with these terms that they kind of get lost in us, right?

But Christ is the term Paul uses for Jesus more often than any other term. In fact, he only uses the name Jesus a handful of times without any reference to the word Christ and Lord.

And Christ alone, that title, he uses it countless times. It's the title he uses most often in reference to Jesus. And the other one he uses second most often is Lord.

Now for Paul, calling Jesus the Christ wasn't just simply like an honorary title that meant nothing. It was his profession of faith.

It was his declaration and it meant something to him. It was acknowledging and recognizing and venerating Jesus as the son of God, as the champion for God's people, as the anointed one that they had been waiting for, who is our final and ultimate prophet, priest, and king, who rules and reigns and ministers over the people of his kingdom.

[ 2 : 43 ] That is what all is wrapped up in that word Christ. So let me ask you again. How have you received Jesus? Because if it is only the Lamb of God, like we sang today, who takes away the sins of the world, that's right.

But if it ends there, it's incomplete. If it's only Jesus as your comforter or your healer, or he's Emmanuel, God with us, that's right. But if that's all you got, that is not fully developed.

And for sure, we can stay in that naive, immature understanding of Jesus, and that will be enough for salvation. But my encouragement to us today is why would we stay there?

If there is fullness that Jesus offers, if we press into receiving the fullness of who he is. So today we're going to look at what it means to be alive and walking fully in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And as verse seven says, rooted in him, built up in him, established in him. And that word in him, that little phrase, in him, in Christ, in this short passage, in these verses we're going to read, repeats seven times.

[ 3 : 56 ] It's almost as Paul is saying, you need to get this. So, without further ado, the word of God says this. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

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. For in him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

In him, also you were circumcised with circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him, in baptism in which you were also raised with him, through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And you, who were dead in your trespasses, in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross, and he disarmed the rulers and authorities, and put them to open shame by triumphing over them. Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath.

[ 5 : 37 ] These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism, that is just like religious forms of severity to the body, and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the head, speaking of Christ here, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with the growth that is from God.

Last few verses here. If, with Christ, you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations?

Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism, and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

This is the word of God. Amen. So in this passage, Paul, what he is doing here, he is drawing the conflict and the difference.

He is putting, being alive in Christ, and walking in reference and reverence to him, up and against, being alive and captive to what he calls, in verse 8 and 20, the elemental spirits of the world.

[ 7 : 10 ] Right? And you might hear that and be like, what in the world is that? Right? Okay. That term, elemental spirits of this world, what that is referring to is not only the principalities and powers that kind of rule this age, it is talking about all those underdeveloped, insufficient, shallow principles that govern this age, right?

And also with those powers of darkness that rule over this age as well. And we have to remember that Jesus, he didn't just come to save us and snatch us up to heaven. That's not what he came to do.

What did he do? Jesus came to bring his kingdom, right? He said the kingdom of heaven is near. He showed up. He brought it near. It was the walking, talking, living kingdom. And he inaugurated it. And it's spreading and increasing and growing through his people, through the church and through the saints.

So yes, do we get eternal life? Yes and amen. But there is so much more. Like we're just not waiting for that to go like the sweet. We're waiting. We're not just sitting around on our couch waiting for the sweet by and by to come.

We have a great opportunity. We have this privilege, this kingdom that Jesus calls us into to live and enjoy one now. And that fullness is gonna come one day, but we get to experience it now.

[ 8 : 22 ] We're partakers of it now. We are people that belong to a future kingdom that has broken in right now and we're living in it right now. Let me, thanks dad, amen.

That's my dad back there. Now, here's what I want you to think about. Get this picture in your head. Imagine a bunch of pods of people suddenly appearing out of nowhere in various places all over the globe.

And these people come out and they say that, hey, we're from the future and we're from a place where it's very different to this one. And we're part of a nation and we have a citizenship that isn't a part of any citizenship that is here, that is present right now.

And we have this one guy who's in charge, this one king that who rules over us. And they go around trying to convince everyone that the king and that future reality and the principles that govern that place are so much superior in every way to how people are currently living now.

And that's when you start to get a grasp of what it means like to be a Christian living in the kingdom of God. That is what Paul is trying to get us to understand. For you and me, what it means to be alive and walking in Christ right now.

[ 9 : 35 ] Jesus offers to you and me a superior way to live that brings true freedom. See, these elemental spirits that Paul's talking about that govern the world and hold us captive through various

ways, like some of them he names in verse eight, their philosophy and human tradition.

Like the great ideas that man come up with, the humanistic ideas, right? The enlightenment, things like that. And then the other one is false religions.

So there's the false wisdom that has no reference to God, totally absent of God, that's totally man-focused. And then there's false religions that depend on false gods and idols.

And they bring about these worthless regulations and precepts that say like, hey, if you want to get to heaven, if you want to experience the good life, then follow our ways. And that's found in verse 16 to 23.

There's all kinds of these things that they say you gotta do this and you gotta do that. And if you don't... And what Paul's saying is, man, those things hold you captive. And how do they hold us captive?

[10:41] Well, they pass judgment on us. And they pass judgment on others. They offer us a false pathway to righteousness. And it ends up being no righteousness at all.

And all of these are just, what he's talking about here, the traditions and the philosophies and the precepts, they're all these like ingredients that are thrown into this soup pot of futility. And we imbibe it from the time we're born.

We don't even know we're drinking of it. And that's why we go about and we think like, man, our lives need to be about something. And we aim for peace and we aim for unity and we aim for righteousness and we never reach it.

The enlightenment philosophers, right? They developed that humanistic philosophy that said truth is no longer God's domain, it's ours. We get to call the shots.

We get to declare what is true. They developed that and they thought they cracked the code 300 years ago. And for since then, it's been one philosopher after another philosopher of the enlightenment building upon one another until we get to today.

[11:51] What has it produced? Look around. Our nation. We're more fragmented, more depressed, more isolated, more fearful as a society that is amusing itself to death with empty entertainment as we fight for everyone's attention on social media and living to our own truth.

Wars haven't ceased. Civil politics is in rapid decline. Authoritarianism seems to be on the rise again.

People are more mad for power than ever and trying to take it because they're convinced like, if I get it, I'll know what to do with it. Me and my righteous cause. And we've jettisoned Christ's righteousness.

But the thing is, if you're gonna jettison Christ's righteousness, we have an innate need for righteousness still. And so what do we do? We go about hunting for the latest righteous cause to fill. But only Christ can do it. It's enough to make you want to stop and wonder, maybe there's a better way. Colossians 2.17 says, you know what, all those things, those are but a shadow of the things to come.

[13:01] But the substance belongs to Christ. See, all the world can give you a shadow principles. They're a mist. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, they're a vapor.

They're empty. Have you ever tried to drink mist? It's very unsatisfying. Right? Have you ever tried to sit in the shadow of a couch?

It's not very comfortable. See, so shadows aren't the substance. Christ is the substance. Christ is the real thing. And so we go about and we're looking around and we want the authorities everywhere to start making things right.

And we're like, how come they can't get their act together? I'm gonna tell you what, every generation repeats the same thing. But Christ is the only authority who can and will do that. We want righteousness. Christ alone is the righteousness we need. We want to know how to walk in wisdom. We want to know like, how can I live my life in such a way that is gonna be a good life and I'm not gonna blow off my leg in the process of doing it?

[14:13] Figuratively blowing off your leg. But in Christ alone, there is the perfect wisdom to walk in. Colossians 2, 9 to 10, it says, in him, in Christ, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

The fullness of God dwells bodily. And you, Colossian believer, you, city grace believer, have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority.

Here's what Paul's saying. Jesus must be your highest authority to live fully in his freedom. He's gotta be. There's only one throne in your heart.

And it's gonna be Jesus or it's gonna be something else. It can't be the sitting president. It can't be the latest philosophy that man invents. It can't be the gurus of TikTok, whatever Taylor Swift is up to.

Have you received Jesus Christ? Have you received him as Christ? Have you received him as Lord? Is he the highest authority in your life?

[15:30] A British pastor commenting on this passage put it this way and I love it. He says, just imagine me speaking in a British accent. It'll sound even way cooler, all right? True conversion must imply a recognition of Christ's right to be my savior.

After all, most of us do not very much want to be saved from all our sins, only from their penalty. True conversion implies the right of Christ to rule and therefore to determine the shape and character of what in his eyes is worthy and consistent living.

The challenge for us is to make Christ Lord in all our human affairs. And here is what is difficult. Here's what we got to fight.

You and me in our Southern American context, this is our fight. Because here to be a Christian is very watered down to simply knowing about Jesus, right? Our grandparents went to church. Our parents went to church. We say grace before dinner. We got a big Bible on the coffee table. We got good manners. We vote Republican. For so many locked in this cultural Christianity, Jesus is just a good old boy who's there in a pinch when you need him.

[16:42] And here's why that doesn't work. Before we are alive in Christ, we have to die with Christ. That's what Paul's saying here.

Before you're alive to him, you enter into his death with him. If we understand what Christ came to do, that makes perfect sense. Paul puts it this way in 11. In him, you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Now, a part of that is dying to oneself, but living into this new life, being born again. And actually, that's what Kirk's gonna talk about next week so come back for the sequel here, okay?

Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. Now, imagine this.

Imagine your life is represented by a house, right? You got this big old house. And before Jesus, that house was built without reference to him. It was filled with furniture without reference to him.

[17:49] And Jesus, his salvation isn't coming to move your furniture around, fix your HVAC, and add an espresso machine so your life can be better. He came to tear down that old house because it has asbestos and it has mold and it was built so poorly that it is going to fall down and destroy you.

So in order to be alive in Christ, we first have to die with him. We do. And if that is so, then we have to consider what we are dying to, which are all the ways we once lived without reference to Christ and without reverence to Christ.

And these are the things that we talked about already, those things that govern the world and call us to order our lives around them. It's the deceptions and lies and deceits of man's traditions and truths.

It's the severe religious rules and regulations that often just amount to nothing. It's the personal passions and lusts that we have, right? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, those things that pluck us and pull at us to not walk according to the pattern of Jesus.

We have to die to all of that, which means they no longer have ultimate authority over you. Now, they may still be present in your life from time to time.

[19:01] They may creep up again, but they're not the ultimate authority anymore in your life. Alive in Christ means that he is our highest authority, which means we have died to our old ways.

The house is burned down. As you can see, there's a lot of letting go in Christ. There's a lot of letting go as we move from death with Jesus to being alive in him.

And we can feel the cost and we will feel the cost of losing some of those things. But you know what? In Christ, there are things that we are more than happy to lose. Verse 13, you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.

How? By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This Jesus Christ set aside, nailing it to the cross.

What this means for you and me, that being alive in Christ means that you have died to sin's penalty. Sin's penalty is eternal death, right?

[ 20 : 10 ] The eternal death, death, life without God forever. And I wanna say, life without God forever isn't like, sweet, I get to do what I want. Life without God forever is the absence of anything good.

No peace, no justice, no righteousness, no wisdom, no joy, no mercy, no kindness, no love, no compassion, no justice. That's what life without Christ is. That's what life without God looks like. In the most ultimate sense, in eternal death, in the absence of all of those things, it is a wonder that Jesus describes hell as a place of outer darkness where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. If that's all you got, that is not a great place to be.

The Bible says, the wages of sin is death. But then it goes on to say, the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

There's that name again. There's those titles again. Think about that, friends. In Christ, the record of debt, it says in these verses we read, the record of debt has been canceled.

[ 21 : 10 ] What does that mean? God sees everything that everyone does and he doesn't forget it. Every sin is recorded, both the sins of doing the things that we shouldn't and also the sins of not doing the things that we should.

So if you think like, man, Jess, up to this point, I'm a pretty good guy. I haven't murdered anybody. I haven't lied. I'm like, I'm solid. Okay, but Jesus summed up all the law of God saying you have to love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Well, that's unfortunate. How often do we feel about doing those things that we should be doing? And God, what he does is he creates in his righteousness, he creates these boundaries of his righteousness and he says, if you live in these, you're good.

Right? But every time we fail to live up to those things, what we do is we cross that boundary line. We trespass. That's why it's called a trespass. So we are filled, we're people full of sins and trespasses.

But you know what? We may do those things, but God nailed them all to Jesus's cross. Here's the thing, friends. In a Roman crucifixion, what does that mean? In a Roman crucifixion, the indictment against the person that was being crucified was nailed to the top of the cross they were on.

[ 22 : 24 ] Remember, Jesus's condemnation nailed above him. Said king of the Jews. That was the best they can come up with. He claimed to be the king of the Jews. But what God nailed to the cross, the thing that nobody could see but he could see, was our record of sin and trespass.

And I think of mine, record of sin and trespass, and I'm just like, hmm, if it's like double-sided pages, it's not this high, it's going, I'm looking up at it like this. There's a lot of stuff if God's recording it all. But you know what? I don't have to live under the weight of that because I know this, in Christ's death, the debt has been paid in full. That has been nailed to the cross. In Christ's death, the penalty has been paid in full.

He took it for me. And that is the greatest news. It's one of the most beautiful things of the cross you can ever, and you think about what Jesus has done. And you can stop there. But Paul says, don't. There's even more. Look at verse 15. It says this about Jesus. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him, in Christ, in what he did on the cross.

[ 23 : 36 ] And so what that means is alive in Christ, you and me, alive and walking in Christ, we are doing that in Jesus' triumph over everything that once held us captive. Wow, you guys should be way more excited.

Paul is using, it's like the Holy Spirit came on Paul and he just started like popping out all these metaphors trying to reach for, man, circumcision, burial, death, alive, raised, triumph.

He's trying to explain this, this, the salvation of Jesus that if we were to fully grasp it, which he says in Ephesians, like our minds it's so beyond our comprehension, we need God's help to fully grasp it, it would blow our minds and he's saying here, guys, consider this metaphor.

Triumph. Now, what he's doing is he is, okay, history alert. Okay, we're about to get into a bit of history lesson, I'm sorry. What he's doing, he's referencing the Roman triumph.

Well, what's that? Well, the Roman triumph was the ultimate civil and military honor awarded to a victorious general on the field of battle and that general was called the triumphator and it was granted by the Senate for monumental foreign conquests that extended the Roman Empire and so

they would do this triumph parade for that particular general if he qualified for it and this spectacular day-long parade, it would wind through the streets of Rome and it would end with the ascension of the hill of the temple of Jupiter and Jupiter was Rome's supreme deity.

[ 25 : 21 ] So, just imagine, all right, it's kind of like if you've seen the movie Gladiator when they come in and everybody's there and they're worshipping this big parade, that's what's happening, they're mimicking the Roman triumph there.

So, imagine these streets lined with people, Roman citizens, cheering and praising the triumphator but also what they're doing is they're mocking the conquered, the general, he got to ride in a four-horse chariot and he was dressed in purple, purple and gold like a king or a god and he had a laurel crown upon his head and behind him, behind this triumphator marched his cheering soldiers, the senators, musicians playing music and alongside that were wagons that showcased all the looted treasures and exotic animals of the conquered nation along with what was being paraded behind that was all the ruling authorities of that conquered nation and at the very end they would ascend the hill of Jupiter's temple and they made a sacrifice of all the people they had conquered that were in that parade.

Now, take that picture and consider that in light of Jesus' death. What an irony that the Roman Praetorium imposed a mockery of this triumph on Jesus.

Remember, they beat him, they tore his beard and what did they do? They put a crown of thorns on his head, not a laurel crown, not a laurel wreath, a crown of thorns on his head and they dressed him in a purple robe and they paraded him around hailing him, behold, the king of the Jews and then Jesus, he went and he shoulders his cross and was paraded out of the city, not into the city and he was paraded out under scorn and shame as he ascended a hill where he would be the sacrifice and he wasn't lauded and praised at that moment, he was mocked and scorned and spit upon and although this was an attempt to make a mockery of Jesus in this reverse triumph, it is actually the cross that had the last word and in the end won the ultimate victory and made a mockery of the elemental spirits of this age of sin and death and everything else that ruled over this earth that is passing away.

Jesus, he having defeated death has become the ultimate triumphator. He is our victor. Death is defeated.

[ 27 : 58 ] Sin's power is powerless. The principalities and powers of this age have been declawed and defanged and they walk in open shame in Jesus' triumph. And you know what?

Here's the thing. What you and me need to know, if you are in Christ, if you are in him, you get to walk with him in his triumph.

No one in Rome was allowed to wear a purple tunic except royalty. And if you were found doing that, you were put to death. It was like a serious thing. The only exception was for that one time in that triumph parade for the general.

But you know what? It was also for the general's sons. You got to ride alongside him in their own chariots. Yet those sons conquered nothing. But they rode in their father's victory.

It wasn't their glory. It was their father's glory. And when you wonder what it means to be alive and walking in Christ, I want you to think about that.

[ 29 : 04 ] I want you to think that as an indelible picture for you. You are in his triumphal parade, walking with him, living in his victory. Those things that had power over you no longer have power over you.

Sin no longer has power over you. Do we have to fight sin and temptation still? Absolutely. But it is no longer the highest authority over us.

Jesus has conquered it and we can walk in his victory. Paul says in verse 16 and 18, therefore let no one pass judgment. Let no one disqualify you.

How do we live in that? How do we do that? Because we look at what Christ has done and we keep looking at what Christ has done and we keep seeing that yes, he indeed is our Savior and Lord.

He is Christ Jesus our Lord. Live in reference to him and in reverence of him. Friends, are you and I alive and walking in Christ?

[ 30 : 14 ] That is the question. As the band comes up and we look to respond and in a moment we're gonna be taking communion but I wanna say to you if you're here and you are not yet a follower of Jesus, before you come to the communion table you have to come to Jesus and I want to ask you again, what is your answer to this statement?

