

Mishearing things has gotten me into a lot of trouble over the years. I think I hear something and just guess or assume I know what was said.

A lot of the times we use Christian phrases so much that we are not always sure what they mean. One of those such phrases is the term "in Christ." We may say things like we need to have our identity in Christ, or that we always should remember we are in Christ. And we may have a vague sense that it is important. But if you asked us to explain it to a nonbeliever we may just look like a deer caught in the headlights.

This morning we are going to look at what it means to be in Christ. This is such a theme in the Bible, and especially in Paul's letters that we really do need to understand it.

Turn with me to Colossians 2:6-15

### **I. Being in Christ is a way of life (v. 6-7).**

It is not just a theological idea.

It is not just some vague spiritual thing.

This is how we are to live.

Every day we are to be in Christ, to walk in Christ, and to live in Christ.

Verse 6, **"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,"**

The first thing that we need to do to walk in Christ, is to receive Christ.

We have to receive Him in faith.

It means we are willing to let Him be our Savior.

If we do not believe in Christ, then we cannot walk in Christ.

It also means we receive Him as the Lord.

We acknowledge that Jesus has authority over us.

We are willing to submit to Him as our boss.

And then as we have done that, we walk in Him.

The Christian faith is a lifetime pursuit.

We do not just bow to Jesus one day as Lord.

We do not just proclaim one day in our baptism that we love Him and will follow.

We continue.

We keep walking step by step in His footsteps.

Walking is how we live.

It is why we use phrases and talk about our walk with Jesus.

What we mean when we say that is what we do every day in our ordinary life.

It means that every single step that we take every single direction that we go in each choice that we make is made walking with Jesus.

Verse 7, **“rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”**

In verse seven, we see that we are to be rooted in Jesus.

Roots are what hold plants and trees in place.

They hold them in the ground.

And there are things that have deep roots like the redwood trees of California.

And then there are some things with very weak roots like a weed that you can pull up without any effort.

We are called to put our roots down deep in Jesus.

It means the place that we get our sustenance from Christ.

Our power is in Christ.

We are able to withstand the wind and storms of life because we live as people who are rooted and planted in Jesus.

We are not just to be rooted in Jesus, but we are also built up in Jesus.

The image in the idea of a temple being constructed

Or a building being built together, brick by brick and wall by wall.

Picture a grand cathedral.

Or picture one of the great wonders of the world like the Coliseum.

This is a way of life that slowly builds our entire life in Christ.

It means that our faith is being put together one decision at a time, one moment at a time, one prayer at a time, one sermon at a time.

And it means that we are building our lives around Jesus.

It's not just built on what I want to do or what's gonna get me the most enjoyment and happiness.

Or what's gonna help my career the most will bring me the most fun it is that I am building every bit of my life around Jesus Christ

And then we are being established in the faith

Establishment is like the finishing touches.

We have the roots that are going deep.

We have the been built up.

Now we are established.

To be established in Jesus means we're going to stand strong in the faith.

These our lives are not built on the wrong foundation

Our lives are not like a tower of building blocks that can be pushed over.

It is finished in Christ.

And all of this is in the faith in faith in Jesus

We find this as we walk in him

We walk in Jesus continuing to do what we were taught.

There's an assumption here that we have been taught the faith

That we have been taught what it means to walk after Jesus.

That we have had the gospel of Jesus Christ explained to us.

But we also have been taught who Jesus is.

That we have been taught the scriptures.

That we have been taught the foundations of our faith.

That we have been taught about the Trinity in the sovereignty of God and about the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

And we haven't just been taught the easy things, but we have been taught the hard things.

We have been taught the richness of God not just the easy milk.

And if we haven't been taught those things, then we need to be taught them so that we can stand firm in Christ.

This is also Paul reminding them to stay in what they've received.

Walking after Jesus means remaining in Jesus's teaching.

It means that none of us gets to stand up and be the judge and decide whether or not we like what Jesus says.

It means that we stay firm to what has been taught in the faith, not reevaluated every generation and tweak it and change it.

Some of us get the wrong impression as if all of us are an equal footing as God, and think we get to come to the Bible and decide what we think of that it means.

Ultimately, we've got to receive what Jesus and the apostles taught.

And if we're walking in Jesus, we should also be abounding in thanksgiving

This is one that's personally challenging for me.

But if we are rooted in Jesus and established in Jesus and be built up in Jesus in holding to Jesus is teaching, it should lead to an abundance of Thanksgiving.

We should not be known as people who complain a lot.

We should not be people who are always cynical and negative and seeing the bad in the world.

We shouldn't be the person always telling others the worst news of the day  
We should be abounding in thankfulness.

Because of our walk with Jesus is so strong and so rooted and establishing him that there's nothing in the world or in our circumstances that could keep us off of him.

It means that we can be thankful even in the midst of prison by Paul.

Are we walking with Jesus?

Are we rooted in Jesus?

We've been built up in Jesus?

Are we established by Jesus?

Are we abounding in Thanksgiving?

Because if we are walking in Jesus as what it looks like

And if we are going to be in Christ, then we need to be walking in Christ.

Walking in his power and in his footsteps.

To be in Jesus means our whole life is built around Jesus.

And we walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Doing what He did.

## **II. Being in Christ is under constant threat (v. 8).**

There is an enemy of your soul.

We have an enemy who does not want us to walk in Jesus.

He does not want us to live this way of life.

And the enemy will constantly try to pull us off the path.

Or if he can, he will take out away from the faith.

Verse 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."**

This is the warning.

We can be taken captive by other things.

It is the picture of us walking along the path, walking in Jesus footsteps and then we are ambushed by bandits and stolen and kidnapped.

This would not be something hypothetical to them.

This would not be a strange danger like it is for us.

This is something they constantly had to be concerned about.

If you traveled from one city to another, there were always bandits on the road.

You had to worry about wild animals.

You had to worry about armies deciding to requisition your goods.

This is why people always traveled in groups.

Because they did not want to be taken captive.

God's Word tells them they need to be just as worried as those who would take them captive away from Christ.

And the good news in the scriptures it seems like we can keep this from happening.

That this captivity is not just something that is forced upon us, but there's something that we can submit to.

It appears as if we are able to keep our taken captive

Just as they would have traveled together, not traveled at night, or made precautions to avoid being taken captive on the road, we should do so in our spiritual life.

And the way we do that is by remaining in Christ.

He mentions what he is worried about taking them captive.

The first worry is philosophy.

Now this is not Paul saying philosophy as a discipline or study is a waste of time.

I took philosophy in my undergrad, and it was one of the hardest classes I've ever taken.

We were asking questions I had never thought of.

Like "How do you know you exist?"

"How do we know anything?"

So I would've been tempted to just read this and say yes!

Jesus says not to care about any of this.

But I don't think that's what this is.

It's not Paul saying don't study philosophy or don't read Plato or Aristotle or Kierkegaard.

What he is saying is don't let philosophy take you from Jesus.

Philosophy is a good thing.

Philosophy is created by God,

Logical arguments are good thing.

But there are things in philosophy that will try to take you away from Jesus.

That will try to cause you to doubt what you have been taught.

That will cause you to doubt the message that we have in the scriptures.

And that we can't allow this good gift that God has given us to take us away from Jesus.

We also should not be taken captive by deceit.

And I love how he describes it as an empty deceit.  
There are so many things that people are deceived by and most of them  
are empty and vapid.  
People make so many claims against the Bible.  
So many claims against historical Christianity or our faith.  
And they have the appearance of wisdom.  
And they'll feel so smart and smug.  
They will say things like "well that word for homosexuality actually means  
something else."  
Or that no one really believed Jesus was God until generations later.  
Or that the Bible was the product of a church council and an Emperor.  
And it might sound good, but these deceits are so empty it is almost  
laughable.  
They are as empty as the serpent saying "Did God really say?"  
And we have to be wary of these deceits.

We also can be taken captive by human traditions.  
This is very easy to fall into even for followers of Jesus.  
We can begin to follow the traditions of what Christians do instead of  
Jesus himself.  
There are plenty of people in our community who believe they are  
Christians.  
And they know the Christian lingo,  
They have grown up in church and been to Sunday School.  
They know the songs, the way to dress, the way to talk, what movies to  
watch, who to vote for, the right music to listen to.  
They can do all of these human traditions and not actually be in Christ.  
And they may have no idea what it actually means to follow Jesus.

There are also the elemental spirits.  
I think this means demonic spirits.  
That so many of the things that try to take us captive.  
That try to pull us away from Christ,  
They are ultimately the work of the demonic realm.

Elemental spirits who do not want us to live in Christ.

But all of these things are against what is according to Christ.

We cannot be taken captive by anything that is not Jesus.

We have to stay in Jesus.

And so when we study, we evaluate philosophy

We evaluate things that we are being taught by other people.

When we hear something that we're not sure if it's empty deceit or maybe if it's from God.

Or when we are evaluating human traditions.

All of it, we need to compare and see what is this mean according to Jesus

We cannot let anything take us captive.

We cannot let it take us away from the faith.

And we need to recognize that the world is not out to encourage your walk with Christ.

It is not neutral.

We are under constant pressure to abandon Jesus whether we realize it or not.

### **III. Being in Christ is our spiritual status (v. 9-15).**

This is our spiritual reality.

It is our spiritual status.

When we put our faith in Christ.

When we trust in Jesus alone for our salvation.

We are now spiritually in Christ.

And that means everything Christ has done was done on our behalf.

We will see seven different descriptions of what it means to be in Christ.

Just in this passage alone.

Verse 9, **"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,"**

First, we need to just remember who Jesus is.

We are In Jesus, and the fullness of God is in Christ.

Jesus is truly God.

Verse 10, **"and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."**

Being in Christ means being filled with Christ.

Just as Christ is filled with the fullness of God, we are filled with the fullness of Christ.

Now, Christ is filled because He is God.

But we are filled because we are like Christ.

It means He is our authority.

He is the rule.

He is our head.

It means that we are submitting to Him and Him alone.

We are not trying to be in charge ourselves.

Verse 11, **"In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,"**

This is really the meat.

Being in Christ means that we are circumcised by Christ.

But it is not a physical circumcision.

Circumcision was an Old Testament and Old Covenant sign.

It was something Abraham and the children of Abraham did as a sign that they were the people of God.

You might say it was a sign they were in God.

But now, we do not need to bear this physical sign.

And it is not a sign that only men bear on their bodies.

This is a sign men and women bear.

And it is not something physical.

It is something that Christ does spiritually to us.

He puts off the body of flesh.

This is a strange phrase.

Really the entire verse is strange to us.

But the circumcision of Christ is Him giving us a new nature.

It is Christ making us a new creation.  
It is Christ removing our heart of stone and giving us a heart of flesh.  
It is not Christ getting rid of all our sin.  
But it is Christ making us able to follow Him.  
It is Him giving us new life.

This circumcision is also Christ making us His.  
This is the seal of the lamb.  
It is the seal of being God's people.  
This is the stamp that we belong to God.  
To be in Christ means to be circumcised by Christ.  
He cuts away part of our sin nature.  
If you are in Christ, you have been circumcised by Christ.  
It is your spiritual state.

Verse 12, **"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."**

To be in Christ also means we are buried with Christ.  
Our salvation came because Christ died in our place and was buried in the ground.  
Being in Christ does not just mean Jesus did that for us.  
It means that in the eyes of God, we were buried in the ground with Christ.

This is part of what happens at baptism.  
This is why I believe immersion and going under the water is best.  
At least when it is possible and feasible.  
Because it reminds us that our baptism shows we are buried with Christ.  
Our old selves and our sins have died and are buried.

But we did not just die with Christ.  
We also have been raised with Christ.  
Christ was crucified, dead, and buried, but on the third day was raised from the dead.

He came back out of the grave.  
He was raised from the dead.  
And if we are in Christ, then we too have been raised from the dead.  
We have been brought out of our sin and brought to life.  
We are born again.  
We are a new creation.  
We have new life.

And we have this through faith.  
Our faith in Jesus.  
And the same power that raised Christ will raise us.

If you are in Christ, you have been circumcised by Christ,  
You have been buried with Christ.  
You have been raised with Christ.  
Your spiritual status is the old self was buried in Christ.  
Your spiritual status is the new self has been raised in Christ.

Verse 13, **"And 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,"**

He keeps this idea going forward.  
He clarifies how we were dead.  
We were, outside of Christ,  
Dead in our sin.  
We were stuck in our sin and brokenness.  
We were alienated from God.  
We were far from God.  
We were without any hope.  
We would never be able to escape.

And we were also stuck in the uncircumcision of our flesh.  
We could not even recognize we had a problem.  
We thought we were doing fine.

We were like Pigpen in Peanuts who doesn't realize how gross he is.

But in Christ, we have been made alive.  
He brought us back not from the brink.  
He did not just bring us back to the light.  
He took what was dead and made us alive.

And now being alive in Christ, we have been forgiven in Christ.  
To be in Christ means being forgiven of your sin.  
It means that all our offenses against God are forgiven.  
All of the wrongs we have committed.  
All of the things we have done.  
All of the mistakes we have made.  
All of the things we have hidden.  
In Christ, they are forgiven.  
All of our trespasses, all of our sins, all of our stuff.  
In Christ, we are forgiven.  
This is our status.  
We are no longer dead, but forgiven in Christ.

Verse 14, **"by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."**

We are forgiven in Christ, because he cancelled our debt.  
He did not just remove the debt.  
He has removed the records of our debt.  
He has removed all the legal demands that can be made against us.  
He stands on our side to argue on our behalf.

All of these things he nailed to the cross.  
He nailed our sins to the cross.  
He nailed the record of our sins to the cross.  
He nailed the legal and just demands that could be made against us to the cross.  
He nailed it all to the cross.

If you are in Christ, all your sins are nailed to the cross.  
It is your spiritual status.

Verse 15, **"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."**

This is what Christ did.

The rulers and authorities tried to defeat Christ.

The Pharisees and religious leaders hated him and opposed Him.

The Romans killed him as the solution to a political problem.

And Satan and the demons did all they could to fight Christ.

On the cross they celebrated and partied thinking they had beaten God.

They thought they had stopped God's plan for the world.

But Jesus disarmed them.

He put them to shame and trumped over them in the resurrection.

They thought to shame Christ by nailing Him naked to a piece of wood.

But He shamed them.

He was victorious.

And in Christ, we can and will be victorious.

All of these things are our spiritual status if you have put your faith in Christ.

It means that everything Christ accomplished, it was for you.

And in the eyes of God, it applies to you.

Christ's death and resurrection.

So, in Christ you are a new creation.

In Christ, you have been redeemed.

In Christ you are holy.

Unbelievers,

Those of you who do not know Christ.

If you have not put your faith in Christ.

If you are not in Christ.

None of this is true for you yet.

But it can be.

In Christ you can be forgiven, resurrected, given new life, remade, and triumph.

But you can only find this in Jesus.

It is freely offered to you by the body and blood of Christ.

It is what Christ accomplished for you.

He loves you and He wants you to be in His family.

What you need to do is come to Jesus.

Put your faith in Jesus.

If you have questions about that, or maybe there is something about Jesus you do not understand, or you need help unpacking what this could mean.

I, or Sheldon, or any of the elders would gladly move everything in our schedules around to meet with you.

But I invite you to come and be In Christ.

Believers, you are in Christ.

This is your status.

This is who you are because you are a Christian.

To be a Christian is to be In Christ.

Recognize this is true.

None of this depends on your obedience or work.

This is all that Christ has done for us.

And every time you hear the phrase "In Christ" in the Scriptures, just remember all that it means.

In Christ we live,

In Christ we stay,

In Christ we have been circumcised,

In Christ, we have been buried

In Christ, we have been raised,

In Christ, we have been baptized,

We have been forgiven, sanctified, resurrected, glorified, and justified.

Let us live as those who are in Christ.

And who never forget what it means.