

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/5/94  
Colossians 2:6-7 "The Marks of a Strong Church"

**Intro (of service):** Where are we going tonight? This is a special service. First, our young people will be participating with a variety of musical presentations. A brief devotional from the Word of God will focus our attention on Christ. We will enjoy a meaningful time of worship through singing. Then we will celebrate Christ through the ordinance of Communion. Finally, we will be recognizing God's leading in the lives of Dave, Pam, and Derek Purrington, and commissioning them to His service as support missionaries with ABWE.

**Intro:**

We are living in dangerous times. You say, "You don't need to tell me that. That's obvious." In some ways, the most severe danger is subtle, unseen by the naked eye. The church is under attack, yet all the while, oblivious Christians are laying down their armor, and welcoming the enemy right into the church.

How can we live in dangerous times, and stand firm? What are the marks of a strong church? Tonight, for a brief devotional, let's turn to Colossians 2.

Paul wrote Colossians, while a prisoner in Rome. When he wrote this letter, he was writing to a city and a church he had never visited. The city of Colossians was evangelized by a man named Epaphras, who apparently was used of God to start the church there.

The church at Colossae was under attack. Not by the Romans. Not by overt pagans, but by those who named the name of Christ. Pseudo-Christians. There was a dangerous, slippery movement known as gnosticism that was infiltrating the assembly.

How do you help Christians who are in danger? Do you know how Paul helped the Colossians? We'll see in Colossians 2:6-7.

The scenery of Colossians 2 is marked by danger. There are four warnings in the text all having to do with the real threat of false, gnostic teachers (vv 4, 8, 16, 18). It takes only one drop of poison to contaminate a whole glass of pure water. It takes only one false teacher to cause havoc in the church.

So, how do you help Christians in danger? You point them to Christ! Listen to Paul's instruction, "As you have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving."

Do you know what the key to the successful Christian life is? Keep going back to the basics. How did you become a Christian? By receiving Christ Jesus the Lord. Well, how do you live a successful Christian life? The same way. "As you have therefore." You looked to Christ the Lord to be saved. Now, look to Him everyday to be strong.

What are the marks of a strong church?

**Proposition: There are two key marks which must be present if a church is to be a strong church, according to Colossians 2:6-7.**

I. Strong churches are committed to the Lordship of Christ (6).

II. Strong churches are committed to the Life of Christ (7).

### **I. Strong churches are committed to the Lordship of Christ (6).**

"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord." How does a person become a Christian? Paul reminds the Colossians how it happened. You "received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the children of God, to as many as believed on His Name." I Thes 1:13 "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it, not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe."

The Christian life begins when we receive Jesus Christ, when we receive the truth about Jesus Christ. What is the truth about Him? Who is He?

He is Lord. He is THE Lord. Paul reminds us that He is "Christ Jesus the Lord." (the only place in the Bible this phrase appears)

Strong churches are committed to the Lordship of Christ. The same goes for strong Christians. Jesus Christ is #1. He is our Master, our Leader, our Deliverer, our King, our Guide, our Creator, our Head, our Captain. He is our Lord.

We are saved the moment we acknowledge and submit to the truth about Jesus Christ. But it doesn't stop there. Getting saved is only the beginning!

"SO walk ye in Him." That's a command. It's a present tense command, indicating that the Lordship of Christ must be a constant reality in our lives. There must be no area of our lives untouched by His influence. Our talents, our possessions, our money, our families, our jobs, everything. It's all on the table before Him. Strong churches are committed to the Lordship of Christ.

Are you? Jesus Christ IS Lord. But have you acknowledged Him as such? Have you received Him as Lord? Are you walking in submission to His Lordship?

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Camp on that phrase again. "So walk ye in Him." That sounds strange to us, doesn't it? How do you "walk in" a person? Verse 7 tells us. There are four participles in v 7 which modify the verb "walk" in v 6.

Now watch this connection. Strong churches are committed to the Lordship of Christ, and...

### **II. Strong churches are committed to the Life of Christ (7).**

What do we mean by that? This. To the strong Christian, Jesus is more than a person who saved me in the past (though He is that!). And to the strong Christian, Jesus is more than a person who will save me in the future (though He will do that, when He comes again!). To the strong Christian, Jesus Christ is real in the here and now.

If you want to be a strong Christian, you must be committed to the Life of Christ. You must walk in Christ. How do we do that? We have four responsibilities.

First, we must be "rooted" in Him. That's an agricultural metaphor. He is the Vine, we are the branches. Without Him we can do nothing. At conversion, we put our roots down deep into Him. Every day, we must allow the nourishment of His life to flow through us.

Second, we must be "built up" in Him. That's a construction metaphor. Paul elaborated in the sister epistle of Ephesians, in 2:20-22 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you are also built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We are built on Christ, and must be built up in Christ.

Third, if we are committed to the Life of Christ, we must be "established in the faith." The word "establish" means to confirm, to secure. It's the idea of strength.

How does a person become strong? Think of an wrestler. How does a wrestler increase his strength? Sitting in the stands? No! In the training room! And training involves pain.

Notice the next phrase, "as you have been taught." Specifically, this modifies the preceding participle. "Be established, as you have been taught." Yet by extension, it applies to all three preceding participles. "Be rooted in Christ, as you have been taught." "Be built up in Christ, as you have been taught." "Be established, as you have been taught."

Think of the implications. God intends for His Church to be a Greenhouse, a place where people can get rooted in Christ. God intends for His Church to be a Construction area, where disciples can be built up in Christ. And God intends for His Church to be like a Gymnasium, a Training center that established Christians in the faith.

Observation: A strong church is not a status quo church. Something very dynamic is happening all the time. What is it? Its members are growing and building and training. What's the goal? Christlikeness. God's goal is to see the Life of Christ reproduced in us.

When that happens, guess what the by-product is. Notice the fourth participle, "abounding with thanksgiving." The Christian life is not a grind. Though it's hard, when properly lived, the Christian life results in thankfulness. As the NIV puts it, we ought to be "overflowing" with thanksgiving.

Is it a priority for you to see the Life of Christ reproduced in you? If it is, you will be taking steps to be rooted in Christ, built up in Christ, and established in Christ. If it is, your life will be marked by thankfulness to Christ. Is it?

Do we want to be a strong church? Do we want to be a strong Christians? If so, we must get a handle on these two marks. We must be committed to the Lordship of Christ. And to the Life of Christ.

Let's reaffirm that commitment now. Through a time of prayer. Through a time of singing. And through the observance of Communion.