

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What do you need to live? Have you ever been asked that question before? Maybe you've never had to sit down and really think about what you need to live. Do you need that jet ski? Probably not. Is it absolutely necessary for you to have a big screen TV in a gigantic house? Not likely. What we do need to live is food to eat, water to drink, air to breathe, and maybe even clothes to wear and a house to live in. Nothing that luxurious, but just the basics, that's what we really need to live.

But what do you need to live spiritually? That's a question the Colossians were facing in the apostle Paul's time, and it's the same question you and I face today. What do you need for your spiritual life? Jesus! Jesus Is All You Need! Jesus is all you need, growing you in your faith. Jesus is all you need, guarding you against false teaching.

The church at Colosse, the recipient of Paul's letter, Colossians, had a unique claim. It seems to be one of a couple churches which started during Paul's missionary journeys, but which wasn't founded by him. It even appears Paul may have never even visited the Colossian church. Instead, this church was likely started by Epaphras. Epaphras had been a student of Paul, had learned about Jesus, had been brought to faith by God. And on fire for the Word, Epaphras had carried the gospel to the Colossians.

Now, Paul may have not started the church in Colosse, but he still cared deeply about it. When Paul was in Rome, Epaphras had brought him frightening news. While the gospel had produced new Christian converts in Colosse, the young congregation was facing attacks from the outside. False teachers were threatening, trying to lead the believers away from the true gospel message. So Paul counteracted the dangerous false teachers by encouraging the Colossians with this letter and this message, "Christ is sufficient. Jesus is all you need!"

The Colossians had received Jesus. They had received the good news about Jesus when Epaphras had shared it with them. And through the gospel, they had received the gift of faith from Jesus. So now Paul encouraged them, "Continue to live in Jesus. Continue to have that intimate relationship with Jesus as you live God-pleasing lives, lives of faith." Why is that even possible, to live God-pleasing lives? Paul gives 3 reasons, really 3 words in verse 7, "Rooted, built up, strengthened."

When the Holy Spirit first led them to faith in Jesus, the Colossians were "rooted" in Christ. Now, roots are the most important part of a plant. The roots gather in nutrients from the soil surrounding them. The Colossians were firmly planted in Jesus. They needed to continue to draw spiritual nourishment and strength from Jesus in order to grow in their faith so they wouldn't wither at the attacks of false teachers. Through their God-given faith in Jesus, the Colossians were also "built up" in Christ. Jesus was their firm foundation. They were the building. Paul wanted them to remain attached to Jesus because only with him as their base would the Colossians never be shaken by unbelief.

And if the Colossians continued to be "rooted" and "built up" in Jesus, they would be "strengthened" in their faith. Now, do you notice who's the subject of these verbs, rooted, built up, strengthened? It's not the Colossians. It's Jesus. Jesus is the one who plants their roots, giving them spiritual nourishment. Jesus builds up faith so they wouldn't be shaken. Jesus gives spiritual strength. The Colossians couldn't

combat these false teachers on their own. But with Jesus as their anchor, as their strength, they would be able to resist false teachings. But how would they get that strength? By remembering the gospel they were taught by Epaphras, by continually immersing themselves in God's Word. Only then would they be equipped to fight false teachers and to live lives of faith.

Jesus would do all the work in strengthening the faith of the Colossians, so how would they respond? Paul urges them to be "overflowing with thankfulness." Being rooted, built up, and strengthened in Jesus, that wouldn't be a problem. Their thankfulness for God's abundant blessings would show in every aspect of their lives. They would continue to live in Jesus, live according to his will, as they had been taught.

The Colossians weren't the only ones needing Jesus for guidance. Paul is speaking those words to us as well. Jesus calls for us to live in him. He wants us to be rooted, built up, and strengthened in him. Jesus provides the good soil holding the rich nutrients of his Word. Jesus supplies the solid foundation of Scripture to establish and strengthen us in our faith.

But sadly, you and I often reject his efforts to build up our faith. You missed one day of Bible reading, realized it, and told yourself you would make it up tomorrow. Then the same thing happened the next day, and you said you would get to it tomorrow. And the cycle continues day after day, until soon you stop thinking about reading your Bible. Or perhaps you use a hectic schedule with no free time as an excuse for not making time for God and his Word. I know I have. Church and Bible class attendance become sporadic because you think, "I'm going to hear the same message from Pastor that I hear every week, and I know the essentials of the Bible, so what's the point?"

What happens to a plant if its roots are taken out of soil? It rots. It dies. When you avoid Jesus, reject hearing his Word, that is sin. If you aren't building on Jesus, keeping your roots in him and his Word, your faith is not growing. Your faith isn't even just flat-lining. No, it's rotting. A faith not growing is a dying faith. And that dying faith can lead to a dead faith, no faith, and with no faith, the final destination is hell.

Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches; apart from me you can do nothing." Yes, apart from Jesus, we can't grow in our faith. We can't, we couldn't do anything to win God's favor. But Jesus could, and Jesus DID! Jesus was God's remedy for our sins. And how was Jesus that remedy? He lived. He died. He rose.

Jesus remained faithful to God his entire life, obeying all of God's commands. As God, Jesus never faltered, never slipped up, never sinned. Not even so much as a white lie. And because Jesus was perfectly faithful, the crown of eternal life was his. But Jesus wasn't satisfied with having that crown only for himself. He wanted us to share it with him. So Jesus gave up his crown, his perfect life in exchange for all our lives, our sinful lives. And taking our sins, he died on the cross. But Jesus' death won forgiveness for every sin! And Jesus' resurrection? The exclamation point, the final triumph over sin, Satan, and our final enemy, death.

That's what Jesus did FOR us. He lived, he died, and he rose. But he doesn't stop there. In his great love, Jesus has given us faith. Through the waters of baptism, Jesus washed us clean of our sins and gave us the gift of saving faith in him.

But he's gone even further than that. He hasn't just given us faith. He alone strengthens that faith. Every time you hear or study God's Word, Jesus waters your faith. He blesses your study as you mine new treasures from his Word every time you sink your roots into it. Every time you worship in God's house and celebrate the Lord's Supper, Jesus reinforces your faith, making you, the building, stand even firmer on him, the solid foundation. And best of all, Jesus works joy and thanksgiving in our hearts for all the blessings he has poured out on us. And he works in us the desire, the craving to be in his Word as often as we can, growing stronger in our faith.

Jesus is all we need! Not only does he strengthen our faith. As Jesus makes our faith grow stronger, he guides us in our Christian living, as we continue to live in him and for him. Jesus is all we need for growing in our faith, and he's all we need in our fight against unbelief. Jesus is all you need, guarding you against false teaching.

Immediately after Paul encourages the Colossians to continue living lives of faith in Jesus, he warns them: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophies." Now, you're probably wondering what these false teachings were which were threatening to take the Colossians captive and to destroy their faith.

Well, the Colossians were being told Jesus wasn't enough. Outsiders were claiming Jesus' sacrifice on the cross wasn't sufficient for salvation. No, these false teachers were saying Jesus needed to be coupled with worship of angels, going above and beyond in following the Old Testament laws, even to the point of mistreating their bodies. To summarize, false teachers were teaching what they called a "more complete, more sophisticated" Christianity, a teaching based on salvation by merit. It was the idea man can contribute to his own salvation, gaining God's favor and a place in heaven by doing good works.

But Paul calls these teachings hollow and deceptive philosophies. They were hollow, empty, meaningless. They weren't true. These teachings didn't come from God's mouth, but from human minds, from sinful human minds. And these teachings weren't only hollow. They were deceptive. They were trying to lead the Colossians away from the truth of God's Word. They were dangerous, teachings which could destroy the faith of the Colossians.

These teachings were empty and dangerous, but they were also enticing. Now, have you heard of the company Enron? When Enron was prospering, the company looked like a great investment. Many people rushed to purchase Enron stock. But hidden underneath the shell of the successful company was an interior of lies, corruption, and billions of dollars in debt. When Enron finally collapsed in 2001, investors finally realized their mistake. But it was too late. They had already surrendered valuable assets in exchange for something completely worthless, Enron stock. The false teachings attacking the Colossians also sounded tempting. But Paul saw them for what they really were. They were hollow and worthless lies. They were lies capable of destroying faith in Jesus.

These teachings, these worldly philosophies were dangerous because they were tempting the Colossians to look to themselves for their salvation instead of Jesus. You and I face those same temptations to look inward, to add to Jesus' work of redemption, making it more complete through our own actions. Maybe it's the thought, "I give this amount of money to the church and volunteer this many hours to helping out the congregation. God has to be happy with me." Or maybe it's the attitude, "I know I sin every once in a while, but not as much as that person over there. God has to love me more than that person."

Please don't misunderstand. God does want us to give our gifts, our time, talents, and treasures back to him and to his church. God does want us to lead God-pleasing lives. But the thought that God owes us, or that we have done enough to deserve God's favor, that thought is wrong. It's sinful.

In our gospel for today, what did Jesus say to Martha about Mary sitting at his feet and listening to him preach? "One thing is needed." And that one thing? Jesus. If you were to ask me what my answer would be if I died tonight and God asked me why he should let me into heaven, I wouldn't sit there and list off all my great accomplishments. No, I would say I'm going to heaven because of Jesus. Without Jesus, I wouldn't be able to do any good.

Only because of his grace, his undeserved love, are we saved from our sins. Jesus' perfect life, his innocent death on the cross, and his glorious resurrection from the dead has won complete forgiveness for all our offenses. The Bible says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Jesus is all we need for salvation.

But what about when we confront those false teachings, the empty and deceitful philosophies of the world, telling us WE need to do something for eternal life? Turn to Jesus. He alone can guard you against those worldly lies. He alone can make you able to withstand and reject those false teachings. He alone can strengthen your faith so you can trust in him as the only source of salvation and eternal life.

You and I don't need a lot in order to physically live. Just some food, water, air. But all of those are important because they keep us without them we would die. Without Jesus, we would all be headed toward spiritual death. Jesus is all we need to grow in faith and for protection against false teachings. And best of all, Jesus is all we for salvation and for eternal life in heaven. Amen.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Amen.