

Rooted - Part 5

“Inside Out”

Colossians 1:23-29 ESV

The Book of Colossians was written from a Roman prison cell, not on a mountaintop - not while Paul was sitting beside the still waters down in En Gedi. Paul the apostle was in a prison cell and he had heard that there were issues happening in the church in Colassae. Paul had never even visited the church, but when he received word of some of the things that were happening, it all made sense because they were in a pagan culture. There were some heresies and other things that had arisen because the new baby Christians who had come out of pagan culture were bringing those beliefs into the church, and they were trying to marry some of their old beliefs and systems with a completely new operating system in the Spirit - and that was the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

That was their new operating system, but they were trying to take the template of the old and put it over the new. Don't we do that sometimes? Don't we sometimes mix things we've believed in the past and then try to make it work and fit and yet it's not *made* to work and fit? It's been said by one theologian that there's a God-shaped vacuum in every human being, and the only thing that can fill it is God. Nothing else can ever fill that that vacuum. So, as we continue through this study, here's the big idea: the Christian life is *not* about gritting our teeth and trying *harder* for Jesus.

When we step up and shift the atmosphere through prayer and worship, it can sound like just another “to-do” for us as believers and followers of Jesus. But, more than the *to-do* part of it, it's about the “*to be*” part of it - the part about *being* who we are *called* to be. This really comes back to our identity in Christ - who we *are*. The Christian life is not about gritting our teeth and trying harder for Jesus. It's about *Jesus* living *his* life *in* us and *through* us, from the “*inside out*.”

Many of us are good at covering our sin really well. Everybody's a “good-old boy”, or a “good-old girl. That's the culture - it's almost like we had grown up in a bubble. Then we get out in the world and realize there's a lot of dark and demonic forces at work. There are things and people, much like the people of Colassae, who have come out of pagan and occult religions like the New Age movement. Many in Colassae had been involved in luciferianism, witchcraft, and Satanism. It was alive and well and still happening all around them, and the marks and the earmarks of that spiritual hotbed and that atmosphere were still very much alive and well.

It was a dark place, but the people were earnest and loved Jesus and they wanted more of him. The church was vibrant and alive and growing and began to explode as the gospel spread to more and more people. But all of a sudden, they needed help - they were in over their heads - that's when God shows up. Paul was writing to help them deal with some of the spiritual phenomenon and the spiritual activity that was going on, the dark spiritual stuff, which, actually was the issue of their identity in Christ. Because when we understand who we are in Christ, we'll understand and know what to do with Christ.

It's amazing how life becomes clear then. There is a clarity that comes when we understand who we are, who's we are - when we understand how God sees us and how much he loves us. And, when we begin to define ourself in accordance with, and in alignment with, his Word and *not* with culture - not in accordance with what people say we are, or with what mainstream media tries to tell us that we are - *"Oh, you're just a Christian nationalist."* *"No, I'm not. I'm a son of the Most High God. I'm a king's kid, and that makes me royalty."* That's who we are if we're in Christ. That's not arrogance. It's not bragging. It's Bible. We want to be found standing on God's Word and standing on who God says we are, not on how the culture will try to define us.

They can try to put us in a box or a category, but at the end of the day, we *are* who God says we are - but we need to *understand* that so we'll know what to do. A lot of people want to know what God's will is for their life. That's a legitimate question. Usually what they really mean by that is, *"What does God want me to do right now? What does God want me to do next?"* We all know God's bigger plan and God's bigger will and that is to *know* him and make him *known*. It's not complicated. The *gospel* is not complicated. But, a lot of times "life happens" and some of the things around us get more complicated, and we want to know the next step. That's okay. That's good. That's legitimate. But, when we have clarity on who we are in Christ, we'll *know* the next step to take. We'll know in our *knower*. It will *be* there. And that's what trust is all about.

So we're stepping through this idea of living from the inside out - Christ in us - the hope of glory. We're moving from the place of distance and being far away, to becoming *deeply rooted*. We read that in Colossians 1:21, *"And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind and evil deeds..."* It's not who we are now, but it's who we used to be. *"...He has now reconciled..."* That means he's brought us back in his body of flesh by his death in order to present us holy, blameless, and above reproach before him. This is how God sees us. He sees us as his son or as his daughter - holy, blameless, and above reproach in his sight. That's who we are. We are holy. We are blameless. We are above reproach in his sight.

We just need to understand that we are who God says we are - not who *we think* we are. We're not who we *used* to be. We're not even who we're *going* to be at this point in time. We are who he says we are. That should blow up on the inside of us - that we have been made *holy* by him. We've been made blameless by him - and we are *above reproach*. That literally means "*flawless*." That just goes against the religious spirit. Some of the "residue of religion" still gets on us and we can struggle and wrestle with this, because we may not feel holy, feel blameless, flawless, or above reproach.

The Bible not only tells us who we *are*, it tells us how to walk. It says that we walk *by faith* and not by sight. So, if we're simply going by what we *feel* - what we perceive and receive by *sight* - then our idea of who we are is always going to be informed by those things. But we want to be informed by the truth of God's Word as to who we are. And when that drops for us, we become impermeable - nothing can get inside of us except that which we let in. We were spiritually cut off, but now we are reconciled through the physical death of Jesus Christ. We've been reconciled and brought back to him through his death and through his subsequent resurrection.

Ephesians chapter 2 tells us that we've been raised up together with Christ and seated with him in heavenly places. That's where we are now. It's not where we're *going* to be someday. We are now *positionally* seated with Christ in heavenly places. Where is *Jesus* seated? Ephesians 1 says, "*at the right hand of the father*." To be seated at the right hand of the King is to be in the seat of authority and favor. This is hard for some of us. Does that mean we have to live up to something? No. What it means is that, in the incarnation in Christ, he comes to us and says, "*Let Me help you. Let Me walk with you. In fact, if you'll surrender to Me, I'll actually live My life through you. It's not going to be by you gritting your teeth. It's going to be by you surrendering to Me!*"

This is so critical and it could literally change our life today. The rest of our life could be shaped by what we learn here today. And if we will begin to appropriate what God's Word is saying - "*we used to be and we were internally hostile toward God, but now we've been brought close, not by effort, but by the cross of Jesus Christ.*" Sometimes we think we need to crawl on broken glass to show God how sorry we are for our mess-ups - we think we need to flog ourselves and punish ourselves.

But here's the deal - the Cross took care of that! Every day for the rest of our life, we need to realize and remember that we live out of the finished work of Jesus Christ - not the work that's *coming*, that might happen *someday* - but out of the finished work of what Jesus did on the cross. On the cross, he said, "*It is finished!*" Done deal - not "*checks in the mail*" The check's already arrived. It's already paid in full. We used to be living disconnected from our true source of God, but now, we've been given new standing because we're holy and we're blameless.

Now, we're secure in him, but we don't feel that way. Feelings have never been dependable - *never*. It's one of the greatest lies the enemy has perpetuated on humankind - that "we are what we feel or we are what we think." No, we're not. We are what God thinks about us. We are who God says we are. We don't grow by proving ourself to God. We grow by trusting what *Christ* has already done on the cross for us. Imagine the transformation that would happen if we all looked at each other that way? It's one thing to settle it in our own heart, but imagine settling it on behalf of the person that's next to us or the person that's across from us - that they are a son or daughter of the Most High God. They are redeemed. They're holy. They're blameless. They're above reproach. They just don't know it yet.

Imagine if we would walk out of here knowing that we are who God says we are. We are who the Word of God says we are - not who we *think* we are. We're not who the *world* says we are, and we're certainly not who the *devil* says we are. We are who God says we are - and we're going to align our thoughts about who we are with God's Word. The mystery has been solved. It was solved when Paul took this mystery and wrote it in a letter to a bunch of brand new baby Christians who had come out of pagan life.

Colossians 1:21-23

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."

Paul said we must continue to believe it and stand firmly in it, and not drift away from the assurance we received when we heard the good news. There's a potential for us to drift. Things happen. Life happens. We get busy. We get distracted. The biggest enemy of our faith isn't some epic event happening in our life - it's distraction - it's the drift. It's a *slow fade* that happens.

Colossians 1:24-27

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The Jewish people were convinced that they were the only ones that would be with God forever in eternity - they were the *only ones*. God gave the law to his people, and he brought them out of bondage and slavery, but it looked bleak for the *rest* of us. We're called *Gentiles* - non-Jews. But look what he says, and this is the secret, "*Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.*" This is so subtle that it's easily missed, and it *has* been missed by many Christians, including pastors and people who've been walking with Jesus for decades, but still don't understand what this verse actually means. The mystery is "Christ in us the hope of glory."

Now, the reason that doesn't go off like a bomb is because we don't understand the terminology. We don't understand the "gold" that's in these hills. "*Christ in you.*" That's what he's saying. "*Christ in you.*" That sounds interesting because for us as Christians, we go, "*Well, of course Christ is in me.*" But that's not *just* what it says. There's more depth. If we take a fine diamond, and put it under a bright halogen beam, and then rotate that diamond up against a black velvet background, we'll begin to see all these amazing facets come out. The diamond's not just one-dimensional, and when we see it in 3-D, we begin to realize it has multiple facets. And each of those facets represents different elements of it and colors and it refracts light differently so that it's *stunning*.

We would say that jewel is *brilliant* - and we need to know that what we're about to uncover is brilliant for us. The primary preposition epsilon numa is the word translated in this particular context as "*in*." We'd say Christ "*in*" you. But, that same word is also translated "*through*," so it's not just Christ *in* you. It is Christ *through* you. This is the secret that Paul wanted to help them understand because they were trying to grit their teeth and work harder to be good Christians. And guess what? We're *still* doing it today - "*If I just read my Bible more - if I just study more - if I just read more devotionals every morning, and I check all the boxes, then God's going to say, 'Atta boy. Atta a girl. I'm so proud of you!'*"

Paul is saying that's not how this works. And for those of us that have been trying it, how's that working out? Because it usually just gets us is tired and discouraged, and then we feel like failures because we can't keep up with fifteen devotionals every morning, and finally we just get lost. We end up with "TMI" disease - Too Much Information. So Christ in us is here to live his life not just *in* us but *through* us. Some of us are trying too hard and need to give up. Some of us need to wave the white flag and say, "*Lord, I give up.*" Then he's going to say to you, "*Finally. I've been waiting for you to do this!*"

It's amazing when we surrender and say, *"Lord, I realize I cannot in my own flesh live the Christian life."* Has anyone read the Sermon on the Mount lately and tried to do it? We can't! We cannot "do" the Sermon on the Mount. We might get a few things right, but we're going to miss a bunch. But, Jesus knew that when he set it up. He was showing that we need a Savior. We need someone who can live their life not only *in* us but through us, so that we can rest in *him*. Irwin "Gunn" Gunnels said, *"I always want to work out of a posture of rest. I always want to labor out of the place of rest - resting in the finished work of Christ, resting in the fact that he did what he said he would do, and he will do what he says he will do, and he will do it in you."*

But better yet, he'll do it *through* us. We can never talk anyone into becoming a Christian, but if we will rest in him and say, *"Lord, if it's to be, I'm going to need you to do this through me,"* evangelism becomes easy after that. It's not us gritting our teeth trying to "do" something. It's actually us resting in him and then leaking out naturally the life that's inside of us. Then people will begin to ask questions. And what does a witness do? They simply answer the questions. Jesus said, *"You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth."* What does that mean? It means we're going to answer questions.

The second part is *Christ in us the hope of glory*. The word "hope" literally means "confident and joyful expectation of a desired good." When we have *Bible* hope, it's not wishful thinking. It's actually the understanding of being absolutely sure. That means we're confident that what God says is true. And if Christ is in us and he says he's going to live his life through us, then we have the hope and the full joyful expectation of his glory - his manifested presence - the tangible presence of God - *knowing God is here*. When we experience his presence, it's tangible. This is the mystery which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory," living his life in us, and through us ...*in, on, and through our life*.

Prayer - *Father, let this revelation land in hearts and minds and spirits so that we would no longer look in the mirror and identify ourselves with our shape, our look, our hair, or the zit on our nose. But God, that we would see a child of God, a son of God, a daughter of God who's beloved of God, one whom Christ not only lives in but lives through - one who is confident and joyful because we understand and fully expect Your presence, Your glory to manifest, to show up in our life and through our life - that literally as we walk into a room or a space anywhere, Your presence goes before us and the atmosphere of that room is literally changed because we stepped into it. Because You, Christ, are living Your life in us and through us, and that we are a son or daughter of the Most High God revealing God's presence. That we're holy, blameless, and above reproach. We honor You with this word. We receive this word by faith. Holy Spirit, drive this truth down into the soil of our spirit and birth life out of it. We love You. In Jesus' name. Amen*