

It is great this morning to be part of this Baptism service as we hear the testimony of our five friends and we will in a moment Baptise each of them.

When we come to the baptism I will give to each a verse from the Bible especially for them on this day. But now for just a few moments I want to direct all of us to a couple of verses in the Bible, from Col 2:6&7 “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him.”

1. you have received Christ Jesus

I have a friend, that may surprise some people. Back in 1998 I did not know this friend but then I was introduced to him and got to know him and now while we rarely see each other we are often in touch by phone.

I like many people here have another friend Jesus at one point in my life while I had heard of him and knew a little about him I didn't really know him but then I got to know him through some friends, through reading the gospel accounts of his life and through going to church. I received Christ as my friend as these five people have done and as the readers of this letter to the church in Colossae had done.

These people in Colossae had heard a chap named Epaphras explain about Jesus to them and they had accepted Jesus as their Saviour, they had received Jesus and come to faith. The good news of the death of Jesus and forgiveness of sin had been preached and they had found in Jesus a saviour. Can I pause before I go on and ask is that true of you?

The cross is there on the wall behind me. Have you understood its purpose and meaning? It is not there as decoration but as a constant reminder that without the death of Jesus none of us would be acceptable to a holy God.

I know that there is a huge gap of time, culture and geography between us and these Christians in Colossae but there are so many similarities in terms of our humanity and the way we deal with God. We all reject the right of God to rule in our lives. We put ourselves on the throne of our lives and do what we want not what God wants. As such we deserve God's punishment of death. The cross behind me reminds us that God the Father in his love sent Jesus his only son into the world to take the punishment we deserve. This offered those people in Colossae and us here today two options for our lives. We can reject what God has done and so ultimately face God's rejection or we can accept what God has done and receive Christ as our saviour and friend.

This is what those Christians in Colossae had done and these five and many here this morning have done, received Jesus as Lord allowing him to be Lord in our lives. If that is not true of you then why not at the end of the service ask someone about it.

2. Continue to live in him

So what are you into at the moment? I wonder what you have tried for a while and then given up? Learning an instrument, dieting, learning a foreign language, collecting something, going to church?

I'm sure that when I became a Christian when I was 21 my parents thought it was just a passing phase but here I am 20 years later still as Paul put it “continuing to live in him”. That was Paul's aim for these Christians to “present everyone perfect (or mature) in Christ” (Col 1:28).

This is a reminder to you five friends today that you have not as it were come to the end of the course. This is not a passing out parade. It is the next step of a lifelong walk with your friend Jesus. You have made a decisive choice by saying yes I have accepted Jesus as my Saviour and Lord but that is just the start. Now the command is “continue to live in him.” Day by day place your life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ allowing him to be God in your life and seeking to live for him?

How do you do that practically? Well Paul makes a couple of suggestions.

3. rooted and built up

These are two images we can all understand, one from agriculture of a plant being rooted and drawing nourishment through its roots so that it may flourish and be fruitful. The other from building and a building being put together brick by brick.

If any of us is going to continue in the life of faith we need to be rooted and built up.

We need to be drawing the life of God into our lives and a key way we do that is through prayer.

I like the story of the small boy at church with his sister and he is praying “And dear God help me to be a good boy. But preferably a good boy who’s got a box of soldiers and a helicopter and a pedal car would be nice...” at which point his sister intervenes, “Baby Grumplin you little wretch I told you not to pray for selfish things like toys and stuff” The boy replies ““You didn’t say I couldn’t drop a hint”. (PRAYER 5)

Well perhaps such selfish things should not be part of our prayers but God is concerned about the very practical things of our lives and he wants the best for us. Through prayer we can offer up to God each day and allow Jesus to be Lord in the things we do. Through prayer we can ask God’s help in the difficult things we face or praise him for the good things we enjoy. Through prayer we draw close to God and his life and power invades our life. Through prayer we are rooted in Christ.

Then we are built up through the Bible the word of God.

In Matt 7.24 Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

It is as we hear God’s word and do it that we grow as Christians. So I would seriously encourage you friends to be daily reading the Bible hearing what God has to say to you and then as best you can doing what he says.

If we are to continue in Christ if we are to grow in him then it will be as we are rooted in him – spending time with God in prayer and as we are built up in him as we hear his word and do it.

Here is God’s word to you five friends today but also to all of us “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him.”

The challenge will come to us in different ways depending on where we are with God. If we are yet to begin as a follower of Christ then the challenge is to receive him as your Saviour. If we have done that then the challenge is to continue in Jesus as we are rooted in him through prayer and as we are built up in him through his word.