

HOLDING ON TO JESUS

Colossians 2: 6-23

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 2: 6-23. The phrase “holding on” is a common expression. We often say of our favorite football team in a close game in the fourth quarter, “I sure do hope they can hold on to their lead”. Dads say to their teenage sons, “Son, you better hold on to that job”. A young woman may have started dating someone who has a good job and treats her like a lady, and her friends in the office will say, “Girl, you better hold on to that man”. When I’m walking across the parking lot of the church to my house with Andrew or Isaac, you can be sure that Grams will be standing on the front porch saying, “Mike, hold on to his hand!” We are always trying to hold on to something.

Well, today we are going to talk about holding on to Jesus. Now, we have already said in a message earlier in this series that holding on to Jesus, or continuing in the faith, is not a requirement for salvation, it is an evidence of salvation. True, saving faith holds on to the end. In the New Covenant that God made with Israel, He promised that He will put His fear in the hearts of His people and they would **not** depart from Him (Jer. 32:40). God tells us in 1 John 2:19 that those who depart from the faith simply give evidence that they never were in the faith to begin with. And He goes on to say that those who are born of God will not habitually commit sin; they won’t fall away (1 John 3:9).

So when I speak of holding on to Jesus, I’m not talking about fearfully clinging to Him lest you lose your grip and plunge into Hell. That will never happen because, praise God, Jesus is holding on to you! Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and

they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

So if holding on to Jesus doesn't mean holding on for salvation, just what does it mean? It means continuing to walk day by day with the same faith in Christ that you exercised the day you were saved. Look again at verse 6. If you are saved, how did you receive Christ? You received Him by faith alone. You believed what God said about you and your sin, that you were without hope, a lost sinner without divine intervention in your life. And you believed that God did intervene in your life by sending Jesus Christ His Son to die on the cross, paying the penalty for your sin. As I heard Adrian Rogers say recently, Jesus not only died for you, He died instead of you. And you believed that. And believing that Jesus died for you and instead of you, you turned from your sin, you repented, and you placed your faith in Christ alone to save you for all eternity. And Paul is saying to the Colossians in v. 6, “In the very same manner that you were saved, by faith in Christ alone, live your life day by day”. And the force of the verb is a command. Paul says, “I command you, let your life be a daily walk of faith”.

Now, this command to walk by faith begs another question. Just what are the goals, what blessings are there to be gained by walking by faith every day? Well, there are two. First of all there is peace in dying, the full assurance of understanding that we talked about last week. Paul writes in Gal. 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me”. Paul said, “I presently live by faith”. And he was talking about the day by day trust that the God Who saved him would also keep him until the end.

But the walk of faith not only gives us peace in dying, but it also gives us power for living. The writer of Hebrews said that it was through faith the saints of old subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, and escaped the edge of the sword (Heb. 11:33-34a). Through faith they had power to overcome all adversity, all temptation. And as we walk by faith we have the very same power available to us. So those are the blessings that God says will be ours if we daily walk by faith, peace in dying and power for living.

Are you walking in such faith today? Are you holding on to Jesus? Well, beginning in verse 7 we see some great truths which, if you will but understand them and claim them as your own, will enable you to hold on to Him and glorify Him every day. And I want us to see what they are.

The first thing truth that we see that encourages us to walk the walk of faith is that God has **secured our eternity**. Look at verse 7 again. Paul says that the Colossian believers had been rooted in Christ. The word “rooted” in the original language means “once and for all” rooted, and it also means that it was God that did the rooting, not the Colossians themselves. When the Colossian believers trusted Christ, God permanently rooted them in Him, never to be dug up, never to be blown away, but there forever. And once rooted, Paul says that they were to be built up and established in the faith. They did not have to be tossed about two and fro by every wind of false teaching of the Gnostics. They could stand firm in their faith in Christ alone. And the Greek words for “built up” and “established” means that God would enable them to grow, and not themselves, just like He did the rooting, or the planting. Beloved, we can't save ourselves, and neither can we mature ourselves. From start to finish, salvation is all of the Lord, and it is all by faith. But here's the mystery. We cannot do the

planting in Christ, and we cannot do the growing in Christ, but like v. 6 says, we **must do the walking**.

Well, how do I begin to walk in Christ, preacher? I'm so glad you asked! You begin to **walk** when you begin to **wait**. "Those that **wait upon the Lord** shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, **they shall walk and not faint**" (Is. 40:31). Beloved, there are no shortcuts to walking with Jesus. You must get alone with God, hear from God as He speaks to you through His Word, then get up and walk in faith and obedience. And let me tell you, sometimes what God says may make little sense to you. Sometimes it will seem impractical to you. Sometimes it will even scare you. But when God speaks, if you are to be built up and established in your faith, you must swallow hard and say, "OK, Lord, I'll trust you and obey".

When God called Abraham to go and sacrifice Isaac, I'd say there was some fear there, wouldn't you? When God called Gideon to take three hundred men out to battle against 120,000, I'd say his palms probably began to sweat a little. And what God calls you to do in your walk of faith may not be nearly as dramatic as that, but from time to time He will call, and it will stretch your faith.

We have seen a marvelous example of this in our own church just in the past year. Most of you met Debora Brown when she was our secretary. Debora and David have been committed Christians for years, serving Christ faithfully in the Carrollton Church of God. Debora did just about everything in that church but preach. But about a year and a half ago Debora told me that she felt that eventually she and David would be on the mission field, that God was speaking to her, especially, about full-time missions. She went on to say that David was not at that point yet, but she felt that eventually it would happen. And, oh me of little

faith, I figured maybe way off down the road, but certainly not anytime soon. But about a year later Debora came in my office, sat down, and dropped the bombshell. She and David were quitting their jobs, selling their house, and moving to Texas to become full-time missionaries with Bread of Life Orphanage.

Now, beloved, if you are really walking the walk of faith with Jesus every day, He is probably not going to call you to quit your job and move to Texas. But I'll tell you what He will do. He will call you to do something that will stretch you. That will cause just a bit of trepidation in your heart, maybe a lot of trepidation. Hey, that's what faith is all about! I've tried to walk the walk of faith for a long time now, sometimes more successfully than others. And some of you may remember me telling of an experience years ago when God unexpectedly called me to step and trust Him for something that I would have never done on my own. Janice and I had not been married very long, maybe a year or so, and we had somehow gotten tickets to the Ala.-Tenn. game in Knoxville. I found out not too long ago that Bro. Don was at the same game. But we went to the game, sat through a monsoon and left the stadium soaked to the bone. But we were happy because Alabama won.

Well, when we got on the bus that was taking us back to our motel, the fans were all whopping it up. Everybody was celebrating. Some guy about four rows behind Janice and me was laughing about how much money he had won betting on the outcome. And then it happened. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "Speak up, son. Tell him that you had just as much fun without having to gamble". And then I immediately started to rationalize. "Surely not now, Lord". Or maybe I was thinking, "Mike, that's not the voice of God. You've just conjured up that thought in your own poor mind". But the conviction would not go away, and I knew that I had to say something. So right amidst all

the laughing and frivolity I turned around and said, “Sir, I just wanted you to know that I had a great time at the game, too, but I’m a Christian and I didn’t have to win any money to do it”. And then the bus got mighty quiet.

Well, that gentleman was none too happy. He retorted back that he wanted to see me right after the bus stopped and we all got out. Then I said to him, “Sir, how fast can you run?” Then a woman in front of me turned around and said, “That was a good word, man. I’ll pray for you”. But when the bus stopped, I actually waited for him. While I was waiting I said to Janice, “Baby, we’ve got stick together on this one”, and I pulled her up close right in front of me. Well, when my antagonist got out he proceeded to scold me and tell me what a good person that he was, and even gave me the name of an alcoholic rehab center where he volunteered. So we parted ways with my nose still intact and still having all my teeth. And when we got back home, within a week or so I wrote this man, trying to witness to him of my faith in Christ, and mailed the letter to the rehab center. And I never heard back from him.

But I’d say about two years later or so, one morning when I got to the church I was serving I had received a letter from guess who. The guy that had chewed me out that day in Knoxville. And in that letter he told me that he had gotten right with God and wanted me to know about it. I don’t remember much else that he said, but we did remain in contact for a while, and even met at an Alabama game in Birmingham. And it was a much more pleasant meeting that time, I assure you!

Now, beloved, I must admit that I put a little spin on that true story for sermonic purposes, but I learned that day in Knoxville, Tennessee that the walk of faith is sometimes a little scary. But when you obey the Holy Spirit’s voice, God is honored and your faith grows stronger. So be listening, beloved! For if you belong

to God the Holy Spirit is always speaking to you, calling you to repent of sin or calling you to step out into your discomfort zone, that you may do a work for Him that will honor His great name.

We are discussing the matter of holding on to Jesus, walking by faith every day, just as we were saved by faith. We've seen that this walk by faith assures us peace in dying and power for living. And we've seen that the first truth that makes this possible is that God has **secured our eternity**. We've been rooted in Christ. And it was a rooting that God did, not us, and that it had permanent results. God has placed us in Christ and we will forever be in Christ.

But there is another truth that comes with being rooted in Christ that encourages us to hold on to Jesus, to walk the walk of faith. Because God has **rooted us in His Son**, He has also **forgiven our sins** (verse 11-14). Look again at verse 11. Paul says that those rooted in Christ were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands that puts off the body of the sins of the flesh, and the literal meaning is a "complete putting off and laying aside" of sin (Rienecker). Every sin has been put off. Every sin has been laid aside. They are dead, buried, and gone forever. And this circumcision, this complete putting off and laying aside of our sins is done by Christ, and He does it in our hearts. God talks about this circumcision in Deut. 30:6 when He said to the children of Israel through Moses, "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live".

But beloved, here is the joy of being circumcised in the heart, of being forgiven. When Jesus forgives all of your sin, you are not only delivered from sin's punishment, but you are also delivered from sin's guilt. It's not like Jesus paid the penalty for your sins and delivered you from hell, but that He still holds animosity

toward you because of those sins, that He still holds you at arm's length, that He still will not embrace you as His friend. That your eternity will be spent in the hinterland of heaven, that you will forever be excluded from coming into Jesus' presence. NO! When Jesus delivered you from sin's punishment He also delivered you from sin's guilt, and you are clean and righteous and totally accepted in by Him.

I want us to see the beautiful picture of how this happens that Paul paints for us in verse 14. Paul says that God has wiped out the record of our sins and they are no more. And he describes this process by using two analogies very familiar to his readers. The first had to do with a common writing practice of the day. In 1st century Palestine much writing was done on sheets of paper made from bulrush plants called papyri, or pieces of velum, which was made from animal skin. But the ink used for writing had no acid in it and therefore never did really "set up" in the papyri or velum. And often documents no longer needed were erased and the papyri or velum was used again. The second analogy Paul uses was the practice of writing down on a placard the crime that a man sentenced to crucifixion had committed, and nailing it to the cross above his head, so all could know the reason for his death. And you remember that this is what Pilate ordered the Romans do with Jesus, and so they wrote, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews", and nailed it to His cross.

So Paul says that the record of your sins and my sins was written down as the reason that Jesus was crucified and nailed to His cross. There is was, in full view above His head as He was crucified. "But look!" Paul says to the Colossians and to all of us. "Look at that placard now. There's nothing on it! There's no record of your sins. It's gone forever. It's been washed away by Jesus' blood".

Friend, you may be here today and heavy laden with guilt in your soul. It is like an anvil on your chest, and you carry it around every day. And you think, God could never forgive me for what I've done. I tell you that He **will** forgive you, no matter what you've done! Not because of your goodness, for you have none. But He will forgive you because of what Jesus did for you on Calvary's cross. He paid the penalty for every one of your sins. And if you will come to Him and simply turn from those sins and trust Him to forgive you, then verse 14 was written for you! Your sins will be wiped clean from the slate, because they were nailed to Jesus' cross. And if you belong to Jesus today, if you are saved, the fact that you are forgiven and have full access to His presence and power every moment should give you great encouragement to come into His presence by faith and walk in faith with Him every day.

So we've seen that as children of God He has **secured our eternity**. And we've seen that Jesus has **forgiven our sins**. But there is one more truth that gives us great encouragement to hold on to Jesus, to walk the walk of faith. And that is, Jesus has **defeated our enemies**. Look at verse 15 again. Beloved, I tell you this is shouting ground for the believer in Jesus. We have an enemy that the Bible calls the accuser of the brethren. His name is Satan, and he hates you and me. And just like Satan stood in God's presence to accuse Job and Joshua, the high priest, he stands in God's presence to accuse you and me. And Satan and all the demons of hell are at war with us every day to cause us to deny our Christ and quit walking the walk of faith.

But Paul tells us the devil and all of his minions are a defeated foe. For at the cross Jesus stripped the devil of all of his power to defeat us and to condemn us. The picture that he paints here is of a Roman general who has won a great victory in battle, and then leads the conquered army behind him through the city of

Rome with great celebration. And he makes a great spectacle of those defeated warriors. They are humiliated and mocked by the crowds that line the streets. And so was the devil and all of his demons humiliated and mocked when Jesus conquered them at the cross. And for this reason he has absolutely no authority to stop you from walking the walk of faith every day.

So in light of the security and forgiveness and victory over the devil that Jesus has given us, look what Paul cautions the Colossians about in verse 18 & 19. Paul says, let no man cheat you of your rewards in Heaven. Don't be persuaded by the Gnostics that tell you Christ is not enough, enough for your salvation and enough for your Christian life. Don't follow them off into asceticism and angel worship. Don't lose your hold on the Head of the body, the Lord Jesus. For it is in Him that you are nourished and grow stronger day by day.