



## Growth Sheet

### Rooted and Built Up in Christ

Colossians 2:6-7

#### Your Christian Life Succeeds the Same Way It Started.

With Colossians 2:6-7, we have reached the very heart of Paul's letter to the Colossians, for up to this point Paul has been preparing to give this exhortation, and the rest of the letter may be seen as the implications of this exhortation. In other words, everything before has been Paul's winding up the spring, and everything after is letting the spring go.

"Therefore," he urges his readers, "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" (Colossians 2:6). The way Paul puts this exhortation reminds us of the problem prowling in Colossae—the false idea that we need something other than Christ to achieve spiritual maturity. Paul wants the Colossians to know that the path they started on is the same path that will lead them to true maturity. Faith in Christ is not an "onramp" to something bigger and better. Believers do not move *past* Christ; they walk *in* Christ. In a nutshell, *the Christian life succeeds the same way it started*. With this central idea in mind, this passage reveals three aspects of the successful Christian life: its action, ability, and overflow.

**1. Action: What We Must Do** ("As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him," 2:6)

With the phrase "as you received Christ Jesus the Lord," Paul reminds his readers of how they first entered into a relationship with Christ. They accepted Jesus, the Anointed One, to be their Lord, and they publicly displayed that decision by being baptized. If there was any lingering doubt that Christ was a worthy Lord, this doubt should have been demolished by Paul's teaching in Chapter 1 that Christ is so *powerful* that he created the universe and so *loving* that he, by his sacrificial death, reconciled them to God.

Since our spiritual life began by acknowledging Jesus as Lord, it should continue that same way, step after step. This, then, is the *action* of the Christian life—making decision after decision in light of the magnificent lordship of Jesus Christ.

**2. Ability: How It's Possible** ("rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught," 2:7a)

But how is this possible? The answer to this question is found in three participles *rooted*, *built up*, and *established*. The verb tense of *rooted* indicates that the Colossian believers' relationship with Christ was initiated in the past with ongoing results in the present. They had been placed firmly into the life-giving "soil" of Christ. In other words, the *ability* for a successful Christian is not ultimately in themselves, but in Christ.

The other two participles are in the present tense, indicating ongoing activities. The Colossian believers were to be *built up* in Christ and established in the faith. The phrase, “established in the faith, just as you were taught” means that believers should have an increasingly firm grasp of the truths about who Jesus is and what he did—and that this growth is an essential part of “walking in Christ.”

### **3. Overflow: How It Shows** (“abounding in thanksgiving,” 2:7b)

Paul concludes this central exhortation by pointing to a piece of key evidence that a person is walking in Christ—an abundance of thanksgiving. Paul himself demonstrated thanksgiving in his prayer (1:3), mentioned it as a distinctive feature of Christian growth (1:12), and later on will urge it upon the Colossians (3:15-17). The reason thanksgiving occupies such an important role in the life of a growing believer is that it is a believer’s fitting response to what God has done through Christ.

God did something for us that we desperately needed, did not deserve, and could never earn (see Colossians 1:12-14). That is why those who accept this feel such gratitude—that delightful mix of joy and humility in response to what God has done for us. Although guilt or pride may motivate a person to do the right things for the wrong reasons, gratitude motivates a person to do the right things for the right reasons: not because they are trying to earn God’s favor, but because they have received it (see Hebrews 12:28). Gratitude is that inward feeling of which thanksgiving is the outward expression.

## **Discussion and Application**

1. Paul urges his readers to “walk in” Christ. With its roots in a Hebrew idiom (see Psalm 1:1), *walking* is a common metaphor for living one’s life. (See, for example, John 8:12; 12:35; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 7:17 [the word for “walk” is translated “lead the life”]; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 5:16; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Ephesians 4:1). Identify and discuss the various components of walking. Why is this such a fitting metaphor for the way one lives his or her life?
2. The central statement of this sermon is: *The Christian life succeeds the same way it started*. Consider having several people share the story of how they first trusted in Christ. What aspects of that initial experience can be repeated again and again throughout a believer’s life?
3. Recall that Paul is pushing back against the idea that people need something other than Christ to reach full maturity. What are some things that we might tend to turn to for fulfillment instead of Christ?
4. The word translated *abound* carries the idea of something overflowing its container. Picture a cup placed under running water, full and spilling over. What are some things that hinder us from overflowing with thanksgiving?
5. What are some specific, tangible ways we can show this abundance of thanksgiving?