

Sermon Title: Walk In Him

Scripture Text: Colossians 2:4-7 (Colossians # 9)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Date: 9-14-14

Come with me once again to the Book of Colossians, where last Lord's Day we entered Chapter 2, and we are going to make some more headway this morning.

I am going to take a step back and help you remember the big picture of the Book of Colossians before we tackle our specific text. The overview of a book is always very helpful for remembering how each passage within it that you happen to be dealing with fits into the big picture.

When this was written, the Apostle Paul was in prison in Rome. His friend Epaphras—who was from Colossae and had apparently been the one who had founded the church there, probably the pastor of the church there—Epaphras had come to Rome to visit Paul, and he gave him a very good report about the believers in the church in Colossae, and how they were doing overall, but he also told Paul about some influences from false teachers spreading false doctrine which posed a threat to this church.

The presentation of the incomparable Christ—which we have seen at the last part of Chapter 1 and the first few verses of Chapter 2—is the first stage of this letter for good reason: because Paul wanted to lay a foundation of who Christ is and what He has accomplished so that he would be ready to deal with the specifics of this perversion of the truth. In due time, we are going to see how Paul applies the things he has already taught us about Christ to the errors which threatened the Colossian Christians. Right now, we are just going to dive into the very beginning of that part of the book.

Here is the big picture:

The first 12 verses are where he makes the introduction. Remember, he had not visited Colossae; he only knew *of* them, he didn't know them personally. So he introduces himself and he gives thanks for them and praise for them in the beginning. And then from Chapter 1, Verse 13, through Chapter 2, Verse 3, we could call that section "The Glories Of Christ." I told you that the chapter break between 1 and 2 really doesn't make any sense, so just kind of disregard it, if you will.

And that is how far we have gotten. Today we dive into what is the theological heart of this letter. This is where Paul begins to confront the elements of this collection of false influences that has been labeled "The Colossian Heresy." That is so we can sound scholarly when we don't have a clue what it really was. We can ascertain elements of it, which we will as we work through Chapter 2. But it's Chapter 2, Verses 4 through 23, where, with marvelous wisdom and insight, he confronts the Colossian Heresy.

Chapters 3 and 4, then, are the very intensely practical portion of this book, in which Paul tells you how to live in light of the great truths about Christ and His sufficiency for all that we need.

There are many parallels between Colossians and Ephesians, especially the last half of both books. Chapters 3 and 4 of Colossians are very similar to Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Ephesians because both of them are the practical implications of the great doctrinal truths that are in the first halves of the books (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1).

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The purveyors of this so-called "Colossian Heresy" had turned being a Christian into a never-ending chore. It was the never-ending pursuit of step after step along a process that *never did* actually lead you to a position of spiritual safety and security (Prov. 14:12). Right away, as he confronts the error of that idea, Paul exhorts us to realize that in Christ we have all we need (Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3).

In our passage for today—and I am aiming at Verses 4, 5, 6, and 7—there is one rather profoundly simple command which is the centerpiece of this passage. Three words: "Walk in Him." To "walk in" Christ is a metaphor for how to live your life in such a way that you are not deceived by slick-sounding false teachers (Jn. 8:32; 1 Jn. 5:4).

Here is a little outline to get you going; and today, I am going to kind of beat you over the head with this outline because it is *so important* to grasp what is in this text:

Number 1: Verses 4 and 5 you might label "Cling To Christ."

Number 2: And then Verses 6 and 7 is the command to "Walk In Him," and there are four elements that contribute to obeying that command.

Let's dive in at Verse 4. This is the point where Paul turns to specifically dealing with the errors of the Colossian Heresy and how to resist them. Verse 4 says: "I say this..." What does *that* refer to? Well, what has he been saying? Since Chapter 1, Verse 13, he has been talking about who Christ is and what He has accomplished, and all the riches that are "hidden" in Him (Col. 2:3). When you come to Christ, you get *everything* you need spiritually, not "Phase 1" of "Step 1"! You get it *all* in Christ. And he says: "I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument." (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Right from the start, you can see that he is warning them against something. False teachers, such as the ones in Colossae, are well-equipped to use "persuasive arguments." It is all designed to derail you from standing on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Acts 20:29-30; Gal. 4:17).

Yesterday we heard a little knock at the door. There were two representatives of a certain group that would have been happy, had we given them the opportunity, to sit down and give us "persuasive arguments" to show us how we are wrong. Such things are all over the place (2 Jn. 7a).

If you have a somewhat cynical, twisted mind like I do, from this text and just from this verse, I would suggest that you can get an idea of what it takes to be *deluded* or *derailed* in your Christian life. I would suggest this:

First of all: Be ignorant of Scripture. Make sure that you take the Bible only in *very* small doses. It may be a good idea to buy into the idea that "a verse a day keeps the Devil away." For goodness sakes, don't read whole chapters or whole books of the Bible. If you do, don't read them over and over, or they might begin to stick in your brain. And by all means, don't read *all the way through* the Bible and get the proverbial "big picture." You *cannot be deluded* when you know what Scripture says (Prov. 22:17-18).

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Another way to be deluded is to accept anything you hear that someone says is in the Bible. Look, Satan can quote the Bible better than you can! (Matt. 4:5-6) I remember, as a young Christian, a time in college. I had this literature professor. I was a brand new believer, and I was learning some Bible verses, and so I quoted one to him one day—he had proclaimed himself to be an Agnostic—and he hit me back with a barrage of about five verses that *he had committed to memory*...that I had not yet gotten around to even reading. He knew the Scripture better than I did. Just because someone *uses the Bible*, quotes a verse—don't buy it!

Refuse to believe that people can know what the Bible says and misrepresent it or twist it. Just get the idea: If they quote the Bible, they must be right—and you'll be able to be deluded. Cults and aberrant doctrines of all kinds *always* start with a little kernel of truth. So if you want to be deluded, don't think critically, don't ask hard questions, and don't go read verses in context when someone uses them to claim to prove their point.

Another way you can be deluded: Do not examine or question the logic of what people say (Prov. 14:15). If it sounds good—especially if it is catchy or clever—just believe it. You know, so many people can say things, and they can say them with confidence, and if they say them over and over and over again, you start to get the idea, "Well, it *must* be true." Just buy in; don't actually ask hard questions.

If somebody says that you can catch a cold by not drying your hair, *just believe it!* I mean, don't go ask a scientist about it. You don't catch a cold through your hair, alright? You have to get a little bestie *inside your body* in order to catch a cold. But if Grandma said it, it must be true!

Well, people do that with Scripture *all the time!* Somebody quotes something in the Bible like, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"—that's in the Bible; that's Hebrews Chapter 13, Verse 8—and they say, "Therefore, since Christ is in you, and He is 'the same yesterday and today and forever,' *you can do the same miracles that He did!*" Logical, right? It just happens to be *really bad logic*.

Do you get the point? He does not want you to be "deluded"; and he says, "They are *going* to come, and they are *going* to be slick, and they are *going* to be persuasive, and they are *going* to know the Bible—just *be careful!*"

Learn what the Scriptures say. *Believe* what the Scriptures say. Let what the Scriptures say change your life (Jos. 1:8; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:2)—*that* is how you become effective in spreading the Gospel and making disciples who are, to use what Paul had said earlier, "knit together in love."

So for today, he is going to give you the antidote for delusion, and the prophylactic against allowing delusion to affect you. And it starts in Verse 5; he says this: "For even though I am absent in body"—that tends to be true of people who are in prison: they don't hang out with your fellowship—"even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit"—and then he gives them another compliment—"rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ."

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Even though he was not with them in person, even though he didn't even *know* them in person, Paul knew *exactly* what the Colossian Christians needed, and so he was coming alongside them from afar, in words "inspired" by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16), to help them build upon the good things that they had.

He praised them for two things here:

Notice, he says: "good discipline." The word here means "order" or "good arrangement." In a military context, it describes being in battle array, where the army has no gaps in the lines. In a sports setting, it would be like: "Stay in your lane. Play your position. Guard your territory." And he says they are doing that. In a setting like this, it describes the opposite of chaos. They were "standing together" (Phil. 1:27), and he commends them for that.

And then he praises them for what flows *from* that; he calls it "the stability of your faith." The word "stability" here comes from a root from which we get our word "stereo." The noun form of this word, which sounds just like our word "stereo," happens to occur only here in the New Testament, and it describes something firm or something steadfast or something strong.

I am *so old*, I remember when we did not have stereo. You would get one speaker; there would be one source of the sound. And then, in *some* of our cars we got a *rear* speaker! You could actually *hear* the radio when you were relegated to the back seat. *Two* speakers—that's cool! And *then*, somewhere in the 14th century, or some time when I was growing up, we got *stereo*—where you heard *part* of the sound from here, and *part* of the sound from over here, and it sounded *so much fuller*! That is what he is saying: You guys have the *full*, stable kind of faith—you have "stability in your faith." And then somebody wrote and recorded the songs where they actually made it sound like it moved from here over to here, sliding from one speaker to the other. It was *full*. It was *rich*. Well, that's "stereo."

We, as a church, should have "stereo" faith—that's our goal. We build carefully on the "foundation" of "Christ" and the initial response to Him (1 Cor. 3:11), so the point is that then the result turns out to be that people hear in *stereo sound*—or, now we might say "surround sound"—that Christ is who He said He was.

It seems Paul was very concerned about the Colossian Heresy; but at the *same* time, he *knew* these people could resist it. They had the ability to root it out without doing serious damage (cf. 2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17).

And when we get back to Chapter 2 next time, you are going to see a fuller development about how he confronts the first part of this heresy; but before he gets there, Paul makes a crucial point for them.

I said we could label Verses 4 and 5 "Cling To Christ": "I want you to stand there with your good discipline. Keep the ranks in place. Sing the same tune so that together you are making this stereophonic declaration of who Christ is." (see Phil. 1:27)

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And then we come to the key command for this passage: "Walk In Him."

It is Verses 6 and 7. Listen to it carefully: "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."

I want you to look at this carefully because it is the punchline of these four verses.

Notice the one simple command: "Walk in Him"—and it has a little word "so" in front of it.

"Walk" is the Bible's metaphor for living your life in a systematic sort of a way. Your "walk" is, if you will, your lifestyle (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:1;; 5:2; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Jn. 2:6). Make your lifestyle be "in Christ"; make it so that you are a representative of Him (Phil. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9).

And this passage tells you to "walk" in a certain way; that is the significance of the word "so": "As you have received Christ...so walk in Him." As this, so this.

There is a standard cliché application of this verse that goes like this: "So, how *did* you receive Christ?" "By faith." "Okay, then—*continue* to live by faith. You *received* Him by faith, so *walk* by faith." Or, "You *received* Him by grace, so *walk* by grace." Now, there is *nothing* untrue about that (see Acts 13:43; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20). I just want to suggest to you: That is pretty shallow, compared to what is *actually here* in this very sentence.

In this instruction, Paul included a command; and then, grammatically speaking—for you grammarians; that does not mean people who have grandchildren, but for you who pay attention to how the text is actually put together—there are four participles attached to this command to "walk." Greek does something far more sophisticated with participles than we do in English, but this is *very* explicit: "Walk in this way, and I am going to tell you *exactly* what I mean: Point 1, Point 2, Point 3, Point 4."

Let me suggest to you: This could be your home base for a *very* productive Bible study that you can do on your own. If you would like to do a rewarding, practical Bible study, take a "Walking Tour" of your Bible. Go look up all the places where the word "walk" occurs. When I asked the question, my computer Bible told me that there are 388 occurrences of various forms of the word "walk," and they occur in 368 verses. So if you get a verse a day for a year, you only have to double up three days a year—maybe on your birthday, the Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving—you would cover one verse a day, and you would have your "Walking Theology" of the Bible. Now, not *all* of those are going to have a metaphorical use—some of them are going to be like, "He got up and he *walked* from this place to this place"—but say half of them are. That is probably over 180 occurrences of this metaphor in your Bible. You might even want to just start with the New Testament. Look for how people walk, and what the consequences are of how they walk. Look for how the Bible says that you *should* walk, and how it says that you *should not* walk. And these two verses will be right at the core of your "Walking Theology."

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This is the final flourish on Paul's antidote to delusion. The way you received Christ—what became yours at the moment that you came to faith in Him, and what you need to build upon—that is these four truths. *This* is what it looks like to be walking in Christ.

So, "Walk in Him"—and here is the first of the four participles, or the first of the four sub-points: Having Been Rooted.

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him"—now here comes the first thing; this is *directly* connected to "walk in Him"; this is the starting point—"having been firmly rooted..." That, my friend, is the definition of true saving faith: You have been "rooted" in Christ (Eph. 3:17; cf. Prov. 12:3, 12; cf. Matt. 15:13).

Again for you grammar buffs: It is a "perfect passive participle."

The "perfect" tense means it is something that was accomplished in the past time, such that its results are in full force right now. This is describing a *done deal*.

The fact that it is "passive" means it is not something *you* do, it is something that is done *for* you. When you come to Christ—when you say "Yes" to the invitation, when you put your faith in Him—you become *firmly* and *permanently* planted in the relationship with Him (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1). God has caused you to have your roots in Christ—and *that* is a *direct* assault on the Colossian Heresy. They said that as you come to faith in Christ, that is the beginning; and then you have to gradually work your way—step by step, stage by stage, level by level—in order to get into a firm relationship with Him, and you are *never* quite sure if you have gone far enough. The *truth* is: God grants you security in Christ from the moment that you enter into your relationship with Him "by grace...through faith" (Eph. 2:8; cf. Jn. 6:39; 10:27-29; 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6).

You have to be "in Christ" before you can "walk in Him," right? And so he is saying: "having been firmly rooted..." So it is correct to say that before you start being able to "walk," you have to be "firmly rooted" in Him.

Can you say for certain, "I am rooted in Christ"? If you say, "I am struggling to become a Christian," well, you are right in one fact: You are not a Christian yet. You *give yourself* to Him (2 Cor. 8:5)—*He* grows the roots; *He* "establishes" you in Himself (2 Cor. 1:21).

The command is to "Walk in Him," Having Been Rooted.

Second sub-point: Being Built Up. Read on:

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now *being built up* in Him..."

"Being built up in Him" is a metaphor that views your spiritual life as a "building" that is continually under construction (1 Cor. 3:9-10). Even though you are "rooted in Him," your spiritual growth is an ongoing process (Jude 20).

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You are always *involved*. You always have a choice about whether you are going to "grow" or not (Eph. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). But notice now: This is again a passive participle: It is something that God supplies for you. What you need *always* comes from God. *This* one, however, is a "*present* passive participle." That means it is going on right now. The *root* has been sunk deeply in. It is firm; it cannot be "shaken" (Ps. 55:22; Prov. 10:30). "*Now*" you are in the process of "being built up in Him."

As soon as you stop growing in your understanding of Christ and your practice of what He wants for you, you have slipped out of His will (Phil. 3:12-14). He *always* wants you to be *more* mature tomorrow than you were yesterday (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:8). Can you say for certain, "I am being built up in Christ, I am cooperating with what He wants to do to make me more mature, I am growing in Him"?

And this is also a refutation of the Colossian Heresy. Their idea was that you *grow into* salvation. The truth is: You don't *grow into* salvation, you become saved and then you *grow in* salvation—you grow unceasingly, relentlessly toward maturity (2 Cor. 3:18).

The command is: "Walk in Him"—Having Been Rooted, Being Built Up.

And here comes the next one: Being Established—"being...established in your faith, just as you were instructed."

That is a caution to maintain the purity of the essentials of the faith. Christianity is the *one thing on Earth* that does not need or welcome innovation (see Gal. 1:8-9). When it comes to your faith—that which you believe—innovation in doctrine is a *bad* thing. Innovations in theology are called "corruptions" (see Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Is. 8:20; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). God has revealed it, and it stands written "once for all" (Jude 3; cf. Matt. 5:18; 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:2), so He wants you to be "established in your faith, just as you were instructed." You don't need other things to add to that (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; cf. Acts 20:32).

Somebody wrote me an e-mail a couple days ago and said, "Have you ever heard of a book by so-and-so titled 'Lost Books of the Bible'?" I didn't know the exact book, but I know exactly what it is talking about: It is a *modern* version of the Colossian Heresy. "The Bible is nice, but did you know there are *lost* books, there are *other* things written?" And, "Oh, dear, you *only* have the Bible?" That is the idea behind it. There are *no* "lost books"—we could go into that in great detail; and we have, from time to time.

But the point is: You need to be "established in your faith, just as you were instructed." How were you "instructed"? You were given this book (Matt. 4:4). Get to know it—that is what you need (Rom. 12:2; Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:2).

This is another present passive participle, describing something that you receive from God as you yield to His will along the way (Matt. 13:12; cf. Prov. 2:7; Mic. 2:7).

So ask yourself: Do you know "sound doctrine" better than you did six months ago? (Col. 1:10c) That is part of "walking in Him."

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So: Cling To Christ. Walk In Him—Having Been Rooted, Being Built Up, Being Established.

And then the last one is: Overflowing.

Look at Verses 6 and 7 again: "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him"—Number 1: "having been" once for all "firmly rooted"; Number 2: "and now being built up in Him"; Number 3: "and established in your faith, just as you were instructed"; and Number 4, the fourth element here of "walking in Him" is: "overflowing with gratitude."

That means that if you are walking with Christ properly, you will be *abounding* in thanksgiving (Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18; Heb. 12:28; 13:15). If thanksgiving is not a regular and growing part of your life, then your claim to walk with Jesus Christ is really suspect (see Ps. 9:1; 30:4, 12; 52:9; 54:6; 79:13; 97:12; 106:1, 47; 118:21).

This one is a present *active* participle. You can get to Heaven not knowing the difference between "perfect passive" and "present active"—but catch the significance of it: *You* are who actively does the "overflowing with gratitude," and you do it present tense; it is an ongoing, "always" kind of a thing (Eph. 5:20).

What was the song we sang just before the sermon? "It Is Well With My Soul"—written by a man *absolutely devastated* by the most *horrible* of circumstances, and he could say, "It Is Well With My Soul" (1873, Horatio G. Spafford). Even if you are reduced to *that* level, there can be an "overflow" of "thanksgiving."

If your prayer life does not include large portions of "thanksgiving," you are *out of line*! You are not doing what God's plan for your life is (1 Thess. 5:18), and you apparently don't realize what you have in your relationship with Him.

I was talking to someone after the first service who was talking about someone going through a large medical trial of everything, and had actually gone to the Mayo Clinic and had been checked out for all these things, and wrote a poem saying: "Thank You for what I don't have." Just realizing all the things that *were not wrong*, suddenly there was thanksgiving. And this person attributes part of the person getting well to giving thanks for "all the *worse* things I *don't have*."

If your conversation, on a regular basis, does not include frequent and heartfelt expressions of thanksgiving and gratitude to God for His abundant everyday goodness (Lam. 3:22-23; cf. Ps. 34:1; 71:8, 14-15), then I don't think you are walking with Christ the way that He wants you to.

Walk In Him—Number 1: Having Been Rooted. Number 2: Being Built Up. Number 3: Being Established. Number 4: Overflowing.

You can look at your watch, and you can see that it is not the end yet, so there *must* be something more—but I said we are going to stop at Verse 7.

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Well, I do have a final exhortation for you. I have been speaking to you as if all of these things are *your personal responsibility*: Make sure *you* are Rooted In Christ, make sure *you* are Being Built Up, make sure *you* are Being Established, and make sure *you* are Overflowing with gratitude.

But I want you to go one step further: Don't take this passage on *only* a personal level. The command to "walk in Him" is *plural*: "I want *all of you, collectively, together* to walk in Him." Remember, I said that word describes being in proper order—like an army in battle array. This is a collective thing as well. The four participles are also collective in nature. If we don't think of this as a *collective* responsibility to the whole church, we are going to miss out on a *big* part of its significance.

I have a way for you to picture this: Long ago—as a matter of fact, it was 1980—I visited India as a guest of a wonderful organization called "Bibles For India"; they have now been merged into the World Bible League. They took a group of American pastors over there to learn about indigenous evangelism—Indians evangelizing Indians, which is a lot easier because they speak their own languages—and how Americans could help. And it was an interesting and moving experience, to say the least.

Talk to anybody who has spent much time traveling around in India and they will tell you that one of the *very best parts* of that trip is getting on the plane to *go home*. It is a *beautiful* place, it is *brehtaking*—and it is a place you really don't mind getting out of to get back to America pretty quickly.

Well, when we left, our flight was *packed*. It was an Air India 747—that was the biggest airplane that flew across the world in those days. It had *every* seat full, and it had a full load of luggage and a full load of cargo. I had already learned that Air India is a synonym for adventure.

We *had* an adventure on the way home. We left from whatever city it was, we crossed the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, flew only about 45 minutes, and we had a stop in Bahrain to refuel at the lowest price for fuel. I did not know that there was a country called "Bahrain" then; I had to look it up in the map. "We're going to *where*?"—because the way they pronounced it, I could not even tell where we were going. I think "Bahrain" in Arabic means "Air Maverick"—cheapest price for gas in the region.

So they intentionally took off with very little fuel—enough to get to Bahrain and fill up the tanks for the cheapest possible price. It took inordinately long to refuel; we weren't first in line, so we had to wait. It was in the middle of the day, it was well over a hundred degrees, there was no breeze blowing at all, and we were privileged to sit out on the tarmac with no air conditioning and the doors open for about an hour and a half. Opening the doors on a tin can sitting in the sun full of 300+ people *doesn't make it very cool*.

I was having a little problem with the "overflowing with gratitude" at the moment, I will admit. Finally they closed the doors, and finally the air started to flow. The temperature immediately dropped from 120 down to probably 117 or so, so we were starting to get comfortable. And we started taxiing for takeoff.

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Now the plane is not only loaded to its limit—besides a full complement of people and cargo and baggage, it *also* has fuel tanks completely full. I don't know *how many* hundreds and hundreds of gallons a 747 holds. I am glad there was enough to get across the ocean.

As you know, the hotter the air, the less lift it provides and the more thrust is required to produce enough airspeed to create enough lift to actually take off. Well, we reached the end of the runway and we turned around. I happened to be sitting in the row right behind where the engines were, so I could hear the noise; and the engines roared louder than I personally had ever heard—maybe it was just that I was a *little bit grumpy* with it being 117 degrees—and the giant plane began to roll...a little faster, a little faster. You know that feeling that you feel when the airplane is accelerating and you kind of get pressed back into your seat because of the acceleration? I didn't feel that, and I found that a little bit disappointing. It's just sort of like sitting there on a chair and watching stuff slowly move by the windows. On and on we rolled. I started thinking: "I wonder how long this runway is?" The buildings of the terminal passed by, and then there was nothing. And then I wondered if we were just going to *drive* home. We were roaring and we were rolling and we were rolling and we were roaring, and it went on for what seemed like *way too long*. I was sitting in my seat, and I was actually thinking, "I wish I could pull back on the stick!"

At last, the pilot pulled up the nose a little bit. We got off the ground—and *just* as we got off the ground, I saw the end of the runway go by. We got airborne and we got into a climb—about seven feet a minute, I think. Fortunately there are no mountains at the end of the runway in Bahrain. And obviously we got airborne; we got home. I remember that takeoff. *It is not my favorite!* I hope I *never* live through one like that again.

Now here is the analogy for that long story: A church can be like that 747. In my analogy, our collective airplane is specially equipped so that each person onboard—every single person who calls this or any other church their spiritual family—we *each* have a stick, and *each one* has a little bit of a share of the control of the plane. *You* need to pull back on the stick if we are going to get airborne and get where we should be!

Incredible things have happened on *this* flight—almost 11 years now, since Heritage Bible Church was born. We never dreamed the places that we would go when this little flight got started. But in a sense, every day, every week, we are *still* like that loaded 747. There are *so many more people* onboard than 11 years ago. There are *so many more places* for us to fly, *so many more ministries* going on than 11 years ago, and *so many more opportunities* that God has in mind for us. The power is available because it is God's power. We *have* at our disposal all the thrust that we need (Is. 40:31; Phil. 4:13).

But the question is the same every day: Are we *collectively* willing to "pull back on the stick"—to control what we can to lift off from the runway and take off? Or are we just on a long taxi ride on a runway out in the desert? Are we willing to do what was described earlier in this book—to *agonize* for things that matter to the Lord?

We have a *collective* responsibility to obey this passage to "walk in Him"!

Sermon Title: Walk In Him

Scripture Text: Colossians 2:4-7 (Colossians # 9)

Speaker: Jim Harris

Date: 9-14-14

You know, God grants opportunities, not only to individuals but to *churches* together. It's a matter of His grace. It's a matter of His will.

Remember what Jesus wrote to the church in Philadelphia? It's in Revelation Chapter 3. He says this: "He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.' " (vss. 7-8) He is basically saying to that church: "Look, I have given you the flight plan. I have provided all the power. Will you pull back on the stick?" He went on to say: "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (vs. 11). Don't let somebody sneak in and "delude" you with clever "arguments." (see 2 Jn. 8)

God gives us opportunities; and He will reward, based on how diligent we are in pursuing them (Matt. 25:14-23; Lk. 19:12-19).

The plane *is* rolling. The power *is* on. Are you just going to let go, go along for the ride, or are you going to pull back on your stick and help us get airborne to evermore lofty heights?

How do you do that?

Make sure that you are "rooted" in Christ by "faith." If you are not rooted in Him, you are in danger of eternity in "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14-15; cf. Matt. 25:46; Jn. 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Let us show you how the roots can be grown by the grace of God (see Jer. 17:7-8; cf. Ps. 1:3; 92:12-15; Jn. 15:5).

Make sure you are "growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (2 Pet. 3:18) so that you are "being built up in Him"; because if you are not growing in your faith, your faith is highly suspect (Job 17:9; Ps. 84:7; Prov. 4:18; Jn. 15:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Make sure you are "established" in the essential doctrines of the faith. If you are not sure about what God's Word says, then you are susceptible to needless damaging, sidetracking confusion by slick-sounding false teachers whispering things to you (Is. 8:20).

Make sure you are "overflowing with gratitude" because you *revel every day* in God's grace and His "goodness" (Ex. 33:19; Ps. 31:19; 65:4; 145:7; Jer. 31:14).

And then, when God gives you an opportunity—think of it as, "We are all in this together"—an opportunity to serve, an opportunity to meet a need, you say, "Yes." And what you will do is, you will pull back on that stick, and you will find out: "Oh! The power *is* on! This thing *really* does fly!"

That is "walking in Him." It's not *magic*. Sometimes it is hard work. Sometimes it is *agonizing* and working *copiously*, like we saw earlier in this chapter. But that is what it means to "walk in Him." (see Ps. 16:8; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 9:23; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 2:20)

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Heavenly Father, as we pick up our feet one at a time and take step after step to walk with You, remind us that we are, indeed, in Your Son, Jesus Christ, where all the power that we need resides; where, by Your grace, by Your power, You can get glory, even through us. So do Your will, I pray, through my life. Do Your will, I pray, through Heritage Bible Church, that we might be faithful stewards of what You have granted and put before us that we might, by Your grace, fulfill Your desire. Thank You. Do whatever needs to be done in our hearts to make it so, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.