

NOTES FROM Dr CHRIS SINKINSON's SERMON June 4th am
Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ"
Pt 5 "Who to listen to" Text: Colossians 2 verses 6-7
Scripture references from the ESV

Please note that there were slides shown during this sermon. To get the full value, please watch the video via the website if you are able to!

Colossians 2:1-15 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. ⁶ **Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.** ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities^[b] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.^[c]

The leaning tower of Pisa leans because its foundations are all wrong. It was built on marshland so the builders could have foreseen that there would be a problem. The battle to keep it standing continues!

We need to ask ourselves:

What foundations are we building on?

We have got to be careful about who we are listening to and where we get our information from. You might be able to get away with dodgy foundations for a brief

period, but what is built on them will not last. The foundations in our life must be carefully built, because they will have an impact on our lives on a daily basis.

Where you started in the Christian life is where you continue. You never graduate from the cross. We get better and deeper foundations but we never leave behind the place where we began. We grow in our understanding, but we must never be so arrogant as to think that we can move away from where we began – the cross. We begin with the gospel of Jesus Christ who gave himself for us, and we never graduate from it.

So we continue from where we began. We realise where we made mistakes. We go deeper but we don't go further away. When we first heard the simple Gospel message that Jesus Christ gave his life for us that we might live, we discovered that we were in a worse condition than we thought we were. We were sinners in need of forgiveness, and Jesus Christ came to bear the punishment that we deserve, so that we might be restored into our relationship with God. We are sinners and are worse than we thought we were but we can be made better, in Christ, than we ever imagined was possible. That simple Gospel message is where we always take our stand. We go deeper but we do not go further away. We build on those foundations.

What we discover is that, if you love Jesus and you love the word of God, you do go deeper, because day after day, you can be reading scripture. It doesn't matter how old you are because every day you can be learning new things from God's word. It is not a short book! There is so much depth and detail and we can grow and learn more throughout our lifetime.

In Prince Caspian (part of the Narnia series by C S Lewis) there is this exchange between Lucy and Aslan (who represents God), when she meets him again after a gap:

"Aslan" said Lucy "you're bigger". "That is because you are older, little one" answered he.

"Not because you are?" "I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."

Every year we grow in our faith, Jesus becomes more extraordinary, more glorious, more mind-stretching in terms of our imagination. Every year we grow, the Bible becomes more mysterious. There are more and more questions you want answered as time goes by!

That is because, as your faith grows, you discover that God is even bigger than you thought.

Jesus is even bigger than you thought

The Bible is more awesome, and more all-encompassing than you realised

- We are to be rooted in him. He is the bedrock of our foundations and we are immovable.

However, we do not stay the same – we are being **built up**. We do not stand still. When you became a Christian, you did not become fixed or narrow minded, and that is because God’s word is broad and expansive and helps you to grow so that you become the person God wants you to be.

Foundations shape the structure of our lives. Foundations tell archaeologists a great deal about what the buildings etc would have looked like and equally the foundations of our lives reveal a lot about the kind of lives we are building.

Our foundation is fundamentally Jesus Christ.

It all starts with him. The Bible is a vital part of that, but love for Jesus comes first.

Who is Jesus?

Paul reminds us in **Colossians 1:15-20** that Jesus was not just a remarkable man of history.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Who is Jesus? He is fully God and fully man, the image of the invisible God. You cannot see God directly but you can see Jesus. If you see Jesus, you see God. If you know Jesus, you know God. If you are listening to the voice of Jesus, you are listening to the voice of God.

The 27 books of the New Testament were written at sometime within the first 40 or 50 years after Jesus died, but which came first? In the verses quoted just above, it is believed that Paul was quoting from something that the early church already knew. In other places, he talks about passing on what had been received. These passages are almost like a creed that is being passed on, referring to Jesus’ death and resurrection, and his coming as a servant. (Read **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** and **Philippians 2:6-8** in your Bible.) These epistles are probably the earliest part of the New Testament, and are likely to have been written within 10 or 15 years of the death of Jesus. When you put the three passages just mentioned together, you’ll see that they speak in awesome, majestic tones about the greatness and glory of Jesus.

The New Testament begins with Jesus. It is all about him.

When Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote their gospels, they were **already** worshipping Jesus.

The full New Testament was yet to be written, but already those followers were captivated by who Jesus is.

Jesus is no mere man. He is God almighty in human form.

- When we come to know Jesus, we profess him as Lord and Saviour.
- We recognise what he did on the cross for us (Saviour) and say that we are going to live to obey him (Lord).

That is where it all begins and out of that will flow a life of wanting to be obedient to Jesus.

Our life is built on those foundations.

Now we need to strengthen our faith. Colossians tells us that there were many false ideas circulating then, and the same is true today. There are false Gospels, false scriptures, false views of Jesus and false claims regarding the Bible. Paul warned the early church, and warns us, to be careful how we listen and what we listen to. Not everything that sounds Christian is Christian!

The Colossians did not even have the New Testament to go on. They were meeting as a house church, and had some stories about Jesus, and some authoritative teaching. Then this letter from Paul arrived. That was possibly their first scripture! No doubt they sent copies to friends in other churches. Then other pieces of scripture started to arrive and they were gradually able to build up material for teaching that would eventually become the New Testament. The Colossians had been taught (v7), and we see that this teaching must be passed on.

It is important to understand that the New Testament is the reliable word of God. It was put together over a number of years, probably with some of the epistles coming first. The gospels have in them a lot of eyewitness accounts, so were also written fairly close to the time of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The date given for the completion of the New Testament is 70 AD. This is when the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem occurred. All the books in the New Testament were written with the Temple still in existence – the culture, how things are described and the assumption that the readers would be very familiar with the temple as part of their

lives. Everything changed in 70 AD, as the Romans tried to erase Jewish history.

- **When did the New Testament appear as we have it today?** Probably around 300 years later, with the canon being affirmed at various councils during the 4th Century AD. There is an abundance of evidence of the scriptures, in various fragments, because Christians were so obsessed with the love of God's word that they went to great lengths to preserve it. No other books in the ancient world were preserved in such great numbers as the scriptures.
- **How can we be sure that what is in the New Testament is canon?** Canon means measuring stick, so what was affirmed by the councils had been judged to ensure that it met certain requirements. It had to come via the Apostles because they were

eyewitnesses to the resurrection. It needed apostolic authority. Other books were circulating at the time, but they were not written by the apostles or their close associates. Mark was not an apostle but he was a friend of Peter. Luke was not an apostle but he was a companion of Paul.

What does Jesus say about the Bible?

- He affirms the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18) **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**
- He speaks with the same authority (Matthew 24:35) **Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away**
- He appoints the Apostles (Matthew 28:18-20) **And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in ^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** This is the Great Commission, but in its immediate context, it is Jesus appointing the Apostles to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. He told them to teach disciples to obey **everything** that he, Jesus has commanded.

In the Great Commission, Jesus is not only appointing the Apostles, he is also commissioning the New Testament.

How will the teaching get to the ends of the earth if it is not written down? Within a generation, the New Testament was circulating within the early church. There was a process taking place as the whole Bible was put together, but it is a process that goes back to the very authority of Jesus himself.

We should be overflowing with thankfulness (v7 above)!

- If you love Jesus, you will love his word.
- If you say Jesus is Lord, you will obey his word.

This is not an onerous task. It is a delight.

- We have the infallible word of God
- We are not going out into the world with our own opinions or good ideas.

If the latter was all we had, then it might all change in 10 years because the world is in flux. New ideas come and go, but the Word of God stands eternal. It is a bedrock and a foundation. It does not change.

If we love Jesus, we love his word. We recognise the voice of our shepherd when we open God’s word.

- Do you love God’s word? Do you put gathering together to hear God’s word before other pleasures?

- Then when you are out enjoying God's creation, as we can so easily where we live, you can enjoy God's word there too. If you memorise scripture, you don't even need to take a Bible with you!

You can build on the foundation of God's word, knowing that this foundation does not change.

**God's word is a foundation for your life.
God's word is a foundation for the church.**