

What Are You Living For?

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What Are You Living For? *Colossians 2:6-15*

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on October 4th, 2009

*“Why am I fighting to live, if I’m just living to fight
Why am I trying to see, when there ain’t nothing in sight
Why am I trying to give, when no one gives me a try
Why am I dying to live, if I’m just living to die”*

Tupac, Runnin (Dying To Live)

Intro

Do you ever stop and consider what you are living for? What’s the point? What is that one thing that gets you up in the morning excited about the day’s prospects? I’ve often heard a certain phrase iterated differently, but basically has the idea that “We only have one life, we need to live it to it’s fullest!” Man that sounds so right on, but what does it mean? Is it a hollow exhortation uttered by slick motivational speakers, or is there a way to really “Live” our lives? We just completed three weeks on biblical stewardship, and discussing giving as an act of grace in response to the grace we are lavished with in Christ, but what is that grace??

In our passage today, Paul exhorts the Colossians to “Continue to live in Him (Jesus)” in the same way we have “Received” Him. I want to ask three questions I think the text answers as it relates to living in Christ.

From the Head...

How Are We To Receive Jesus? (Colossians 2:6-7)

It is easy to think that “Receiving” Jesus in this text means “Inviting Him into our heart,” but this would prove to be an anachronistic way to read this text. The word “Received” in this text (Paralambano) is a technical term that has the idea of the “Transmission of teaching from one generation to another” (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This exhortation almost explodes in the face of an American church that desires

experience over facts, but what Paul exhorts the Colossian believers to do is contemplate the truth of Christ, not just the “Experience” or feeling of Christ. This idea is supported in the context (See v. 7). Thus receiving Jesus in this text doesn’t mean coming to salvation, but it means for us to dwell on the things we have been taught that are true about Jesus. Paul lists four characteristics of what it means to “Live in the Lord:”

“Rooted ”

“Built up”

“Strengthened in the Faith”

Overflowing with Thankfulness”

The first three verbs are in the Passive Voice, which carries with it the idea that the objects are being acted upon by the subject. In this case we (The objects) are being acted upon by God (The subject); but the fourth verb is in the Active Voice, which means that the object is active in the action of the verb. This may seem like a grammar lesson until we understand the significance of it in Paul’s theology. He doesn’t begin with prayer that we all become more thankful and contented; this “Overflow” of thanksgiving is the result or reaction to the truthful reality of what God has given (Or done) for us. If we are looking for an experience without understanding the truth of what God has done, we will always miss the blessing we have in Jesus, because we make the experience, not Him preeminent. Thankfulness is a completion of the giving circle, where the one gifted gives back to the giver. This is the only way we can give; cheerfully, resulting from what we have been given. Thanksgiving is a prerequisite to living “In Christ,” because it is a sign of a healthy spiritual condition, knowing the truth of God’s word and the depth of His love for His people (See Ephesians 3:17)

This idea of being rooted in Christ is found in Jeremiah 17:7-8, where Jeremiah says that a person of faith is like a “Tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” This kind of life is a result of being “Rooted” in Christ and His love for us, and being thankful for it. This is the result of a content life, which allows us to handle stress in a different kind of way.

What Is The Killer Of This Life? (Colossians 2:8)

Simply looking to other worldviews (“Hollow, deceptive philosophy) for our happiness. These are the lies we believe. The world’s marketing pleas that promise much and provide little. This warning is centered around empty religious panderings. Religion promises too much, with little return, and it is a frustrating lie that many are truly sick of. Religion doesn’t provide what it says it provides, and so many are thankfully leaving religion, but unfortunately they are leaving religion for another set of religious lies; the lie that we do not need God to be happy. Paul is exhorting them to leave religion and its powerless promise to feast on Jesus, who is not a promise, but a reality.

What Ignites This Kind of Life? (Colossians 2:9-15)

What is it that causes one to have an abundance of thanksgiving? While the pagan religions that Paul was combating in this letter rooted their salvation stories in ahistorical myths, Paul and the early Christians rooted their stories in stated historical truth (The Teachings). In this passage Paul connect everything to an event in Jesus’ life; His death, burial and resurrection (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-6; 14). Some commentators try to mitigate Paul’s message by pointing out that Paul doesn’t talk about other aspects of Christ’s life, but Paul knows that it is His cross and His resurrection that matter. These are true, historical realities or “Our faith is in vain!!” It is on the cross of Christ only that you are Spiritually circumcised; it is in faith in the “Power of God” (v. 12) to raise Jesus from the dead that we will be raised with Him in eternity also. It is on the cross that our sinful nature has been “Put off” not with a religious ceremony, or moral grandstanding, but through the glorious cross of Christ. It is at the cross that we (Who were DEAD) are made alive since all of our sins were forgiven, and all our debts were canceled; ON THE CROSS!; and then last, but not least, He destroyed evil powers ON THE CROSS. These are the realities of what we have “Received” and Paul says LIVE IN THEM!! Yes I have used CAPS and exclamation points, because this is what “Roots you in Him, and establishes you and brings forth real thanksgiving, because we are grateful for His act of grace in our own lives, so we can live contently knowing that a loving God is present, when all hell breaks loose. He is our joy and our strength and our rock, when the world is collapsing underneath us. Knowing that Christ is supreme and His love for us is unending is what IGNITES us to a thankful joy in the midst of our pain, because we know that HE has felt that pain on

the cross, and that all the crap that life can throw us is part of a glorious purpose that we aren't privy to, but gives us hope and joy in a crazy world.

...to the Heart

What broken and empty philosophy are you living? What marketing scam are you believing that forces you to be cynical about the truth of the glory of the cross in your life? What idol has you convinced that you need something other than the love of Jesus and His glorious cross to make you happy. Please place it on the cross today, and allow it to be "Nailed" to Jesus' cross as you repent of this idol, and place your faith in Christ for the "Fullness of the deity lives in bodily form."