**CONTINUE TO LIVE IN CHRIST**

Colossians 2:6-23 (Key Verse 6)

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him”

In today’s passage, Paul continues to warn the church in Colosse against the heresy that seemingly have infiltrated them. Like wildfire, these false teachings, if not addressed, can prove detrimental to their salvation. What about us today? Have you ever wondered about the similar false teachings that have infiltrated the church? What are those false teachings? It is so sad to see that even though we proclaim Jesus with our lips, our lives do not reflect the Jesus we profess. We claim to be Christians but find ourselves secretly wasting away in our sins. We seem to be religious; going to church, studying the bible, conferences, however our lives seem stagnant and no spiritual growth. Church has become a show, and even commercialised. Prosperity gospel is on the rise, people are claiming and receiving, and speaking in togues is seen as of superior spiritual prowess. The false teachings in today’s passage can be summarised as follows; Ceremonialism (strict rules about the kinds of food and drink permissible, religious festivals and religious practices such as circumcision), Asceticism ( a practice of strict self-denial as a measure spiritual potency), Angel worship and Secret knowledge. All these heresies are centred on reliance on human wisdom, strength and tradition. They are deceptive; they have no power. They have no power to overcome sin, no matter how strict one observes all these false teachings. Even though they may appear to be spiritual, Apostle Paul calls them ‘hollow and deceptive philosophies’. To overcome these, Paul encourages the church to continue to live their lives in Christ. When we live our lives in Christ, we are able to overcome all these, and experience a life of freedom from sin; a life of power. May God bless His word, so that we can understand what it means to continue to live our lives in Jesus Christ.

Let us look at verse 6, 7. **6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness**. All praise be to our God for opening our hearts to receive Christ Jesus as Lord. This is the foundation of living our lives in Jesus, in that we have surrendered our very own lives and everything in our lives to Jesus; the Lord of our very own lives. What does this mean? This means that only King Jesus sets the standard of how we should live. You see, in the past, where we were lords of our own lives, where we were swayed by the ways of the world and ruled by human wisdom and strength. Even though many might take joy in the freedom to do and be anything, the results were nothing but bondage to sin. Yes, on the outside, one is seen as though free, as though enlightened with knowledge, but the truth is that sin has taken a strong grip, and in a dire need of a Saviour. Yes, we need to receive Jesus Christ as Lord; sacrificing our lives, our thoughts and plans, and therefore subjecting them to His Lordship. This is our spiritual act of worship, and there is nothing greater.

So then, Paul encourages us today to continue to live our lives in Him. Jesus is the guide and standard of our lives. Living our lives in Christ Jesus also means that we are firmly rooted in Jesus; He is our spiritual guide, nourishing us with all the essentials of growth and a blessed life of power. With Jesus as the anchor, we are strengthened in our faith as we have been taught in the holy bible. And the results are nothing but for the glory of God and a blessing; overflowing with thankfulness. You know, without living our lives in Jesus, there will always be reasons to be sad, fearful and as though always lacking. By living our lives outside of Jesus, we can be certain that we will face the full might of the burden of sin. We only have one life, and there is no split. It is either a life of living in Christ Jesus, or a life of living outside Christ Jesus. As though an actor (Forrest Whitacker) who can be one day a freedom fighter “Nelson Mandela” and then another day be the oppressive, wicked and abusive “Last king of Scotland”. We only have one life, not a dual life. Yes, I am Christian and live my life in Jesus not only on Sundays or during bible study days, but also when I am going to the work on the other days of the week. We are not called to put on different costumes as we have only one life, and that life must be lived in Jesus Christ. Yes, those who live their lives in Jesus are given the grace of thankfulness. Yes, they taste true joy and peace; not as how the world gives. You know, the biggest enemy, that is sin, has been defeated and nailed on the cross. Victory over sin is the main reason why our hearts are overflowing with thanks. It is for this reason that we will forever continue to give thanks to God for saving us from our shameful sins. It is for this reason that our hearts will forever overflow with joy and peace, because living our lives in Jesus has indeed brought us salvation.

Let us further see what it means to continue to live our lives in Christ Jesus, and from what are we protected from when we continue to live our lives in Christ Jesus. What are the benefits or blessings of living in Christ Jesus?

Look at verse 8 – 10. **8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces[a] of this world rather than on Christ. 9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority**. As previously mentioned, the ways of life that are not rooted in Christ, but based on human tradition and elemental spiritual forces, have no power but a just hollow and deceptive. No human being has ever overcome sin and death. But, our Lord Christ Jesus did. He is the head over every power. He is the head over every authority. He did so because in Him lives all the fullness of the Deity. Only God has overcome sin and death. And as a consequence, those who continually live their lives in Him will have this blessing and victory as well. The world is infiltrated by many philosophies and motivational speakers. They all promise to grant you a better life should you follow those philosophies. This is a lie. We, however, have been given the word of God and the Holy Spirit. We need no complex philosophies, we just need the word of God preaching nothing but Christ crucified on the cross for our sins, yet raised in power by God from the dead; defeating sin. With this knowledge, and living in the boundaries of His word, we are promised to receive power, and to live meaningful lives even in this world.

One thing I always commend UBF is how they come with only the word of God under the authority and faith in Jesus Christ, teaching it to a people filled with so much potential yet misguided, so that when the time has come to work and to marry, they are fully equipped to live meaningful and powerful lives not only in their work places, but also in their families. This is how God has been using even our Wits UBF. I thank God saving me from my dirty sins, and meeting me in my early days here in varsity. I was a young man filled with big dreams and wanting to conquer the world. However, I was wasting away in sin, and not knowing what the truth is. However, when Jesus came to me through His word taught to me through my shepherds and shepherdesses, I was able to not only receive grace of repentance and salvation, but my philosophy on life changed completely. Yes, there might be challenges, but the blessing of living in Jesus Christ by far outweighs them. Yes, I might lack something or failed in many things, however, I got to know that failure is not fatal.

Let us therefore challenge ourselves and identify those hollow deceptive philosophies received from the world. In what way are they useless, and how can we have power when we repent from them by living our lives in Christ Jesus?

Apostle Paul continues to expose the heresies in the Colossians church, and thus encouraging them to rather bury those weak philosophies, and continue to live in Christ. One of those false teachings were about circumcision. It was believed that people should keep up with the religious practice of circumcision in other to live a meaningful spiritual life. But Paul strongly refuted that. Look at verses 13, 14. **13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.** Apostle Paul teaches about how Jesus’ death on the cross gave us victory of sin, and thus not needing circumcision to give us power. You see, circumcision, like all the other religious practices, are just illustrative. Circumcision is of the flesh, but true circumcision is one of the heart. Our hearts are circumcised and marked for God when we continue to live our lives in Christ Jesus where the cross of Jesus is our only hope and victory. Yes, this is how our hearts are circumcised : We were dead in our sins, but made alive with Jesus who rose from the dead. Our sins were forgiven when Jesus died on the cross. Our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us, was taken away and nailed on the cross of Jesus. So then, do we need the circumcision of the flesh? Absolutely no need! We only need to continue to live our lives in Christ Jesus.

Apostle Paul likens Jesus’ victory over sin on the cross to a triumphal parade of soldiers who have come from war. Look at verse 15. **15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross**. You see, the Romans soldiers would take a march around the streets in town, with the enemies of the state. These subjects would usually be stripped off their gear or weapons or even clothes. This was meant to show that indeed they have been defeated, and to show who really is in power. In this same manner, Jesus on the cross made a public spectacle of sin; disarmed of all power and authority, and showing that indeed He had triumphed over the cross. Yes, as we continue to live in Christ Jesus, this is what we need hold on to. The cross of Jesus triumphant over sin, is our root and anchor. There is absolutely no need for even the religious practice of circumcision. The only ‘religion’ is Christ Jesus crucified and raised from the dead; our victory over sin.

Look at verse 16. **16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day**. This was so problematic because it was taught that for one to receive come certain spiritual blessing, or to be blessed in general, they were supposed to eat certain foods and drinks and avoid others. For someone to be saved or be spiritual enlightened and elevated, they had also observe certain religious festivals and holidays. So, if you did not follow such regulations, one will be judged as though they are not saved at all. This would bring further disturbance in the believer’s heart, filled with fear, doubt, no confidence and above all, with sin still ruling powerfully so in one’s life. This is not living in Christ Jesus! Rather, this is living in our own human wisdom. Living our lives in Christ means that only Christ is the source of our spiritual victory, and not anything else.

What then can we say is the purpose of these religious practices, circumcision, religious festivals & holidays, what to eat and drink? Look at verse 17. **17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ**. Indeed, they are but shadows. Indeed, they are but shadows of things to come, yet Jesus is the reality. Who are the wise and blessed? Those who will not settle for the shadows, but who are living rooted in the ‘reality’; Christ Jesus. How foolish are we if we hold and live in our religious practices founded on human wisdom? Jesus Christ has come, and reigns forever and ever more. Not that act of the circumcision of the flesh saves, but rather, the reality is that Jesus circumcises our hearts so that indeed we are His and live for His kingdom. Not that a New moon festival will give us a new birth and prosperity. Rather, the reality is that when we are born again by the Spirit of Christ, we are given a new identity, no longer enemies of God because of sin, but sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Not that when we observe Sabbath day we will have rest. Rather, the reality is that true rest is found in Christ Jesus alone when we continue to live in Him.

The heresies in the church of Colosse didn’t end there. Now, there we issues of these characters called the ‘spiritually enlightened’, aka major ones. They are nothing but False Teachers. Look at verse 18. **18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind**. These people always pose as though they have some special knowledge or superior insight, but in actual fact, they have none. Usually by the flattery of their tongues, and the illusion of a grand holy display, would paint a picture as though they are humble, wise and hold the keys to truth. They would even teach that God is very far and no one can have access to worship or even have a relationship with Him except through worshipping certain angels for that access. Yes, they might teach and speak, but they speak not the truth from God but just idle notions. They might pose as though they are enlightened, but the truth is that their minds are unspiritual. Yes they might appear holy in their appearance and how they keep up with religion, but find that sin flogs them; secretly wasting away, not being in control of their sensual desires. They teach with not the wisdom of the Spirit of Christ, but with human wisdom, and many other elementary spiritual forces of this world. Their teaching, preaching and wisdom is nothing but; **21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch! 22 These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body.**

What is the cause of their downfall; this spiritual depravity? It is because they have not accepted Jesus as Lord, and have they are not living in Christ Jesus, but have went on their own way, and established their own ways. Look at verse 19, and read it together please. **19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.** The have lost connection with Jesus; the head. Because they are not living in Jesus; not guided and relying on Him, they have lost the spiritual control and protection and thus exposed to the other evil principalities whose intentions are to add nothing beneficial for our spiritual growth. Because Jesus is not Lord, and not leading them, they have went astray and were led into the grasp of the evil one. This is why they are wasting away in things that are not helpful, teaching strange notions, ruled by their own pride disguised as humility, holy yet are wasting away in sin. So then, what can we say? Only Jesus is the way, the truth and the life! Apart from Him there is absolutely no good at all. We are therefore encouraged by Apostle Paul that we continue to fight against anything that exalts not Jesus; fighting and repenting from anything that makes Jesus not the only way. We are commanded to accept Jesus and let His Lordship show in our lives when we know His word and obey it. We are encouraged to accept Jesus as Lord, and continue to live in Him because apart from Him, who are we? Where can we go?

**In conclusion**, I am personally encouraged to let go of everything, and live my life in Jesus who is Lord of my very life. It is so easy to be swayed away and deceived when I live my life outside Him. I am praying for marriage, and indeed, things are taking effect so that by mid April next year I can be married and begin a new chapter post marriage. However, there are so many challenges regarding resources, and many fears. I also heard some discouraging news regarding by brothers’ prospect of having his contract extended with UNISA. I felt so defeated asking myself many questions how he’s to marry without a job? I too have to raise finances for the wedding and also to ensure that we have a well functioning house for my family. I am praying for a promotion or a new better paying job. I have car issues at the wrong time of my life where I need to be saving for money. Also I need to lead my sheep well which has been quite a challenge this year, and they too are going through changes of their own, and wonder if there is something that I need to do and pray for so that at the very least, “The Lord is still God, and Lord” in their lives. But I am encouraged. I need to bring all these challenges, and any other weaknesses and lacks thereof to Christ Jesus. This is what it means to me practically about continuing to live in Christ Jesus. He is God Almighty, loving and with all the might to lead me to greener pastures like the shepherd He is. This is the power of the Gospel: Not only that we are saved and granted true life that is indeed a blessing, but that even if we might have challenges, we fight and overcome as we remain and continue to live in Jesus, even in the midst of those challenges.

To you, what does it mean to accept Jesus as Lord and continue to live your life in Him? I pray that God gives you a clear word to this important question. Amen.