

Text: Colossians 2:6-7  
Theme: To Be Continued...

July 24, 2016

How many things are designed to be started but never finished? How many things do you start without ever intending to finish? When you start mowing your lawn, do you intend to finish? When you start making dinner, do you plan to finish? Do you start a puzzle, but never intend to finish it? Some are great at starting, but seldom finish anything. Yet, for most of us, we generally have good intentions to finish what we start. In our text, Paul speaks about our precious gift of faith, a gift given to be continued.

I. As faith was worked in our hearts, God clearly intended it to be continued. A. How do we continue what God created? 1. We continue by acknowledging the value of what we received. Paul writes, "As you received Christ Jesus as Lord." How valuable is faith to you? If you could place a monetary value on it, what monetary value would you give to your faith? To continue in our faith, we acknowledge its value, realize that it's priceless, that everything in eternity depends on and is available only by faith. Things here may seem important, yet the gift of faith has more value than everything else combined. Because of faith, we have a priceless, joy-filled eternity.

B. We continue by walking in Christ. 1. Walking implies motion. How many of you go for a walk and never go anywhere? Unless you are walking in place, walking takes you somewhere. Walking in Christ is growing in Christ. As Paul instructs us to walk in Him, he says, "Don't sit at the starting line of life's race and go nowhere. Get up and move. Go where He leads you. Endure the obstacles on the track. Do whatever it takes. Just make sure that you keep moving, that you're never satisfied to sit and watch life pass you by." Our faith-motion may vary. Sometimes we move ahead in tiny steps; other times in giant leaps, but, above all, Paul says, "Keep moving."

2. Walking in Christ also implies that we keep in step with our Lord. How many of you were in marching band and remember learning how to march in step and in a straight line at the same time? Whether you could keep in step and in a straight line in marching band isn't all that important. But keeping in step with our Lord is of utmost importance. As we all know, life out there is a jungle and blazing our own trail doesn't work. Keeping in step with our Lord assures us that there will be a path tomorrow and the day after that because our Lord is always blazing the trail for us, enabling us to keep walking down His path to our ultimate goal of eternal life in heaven.

C. While we are focusing on walking, Paul also instructs us to remain rooted in Christ. 1. Rooted prompts us to keep expanding our roots. Which tree withstands the storms, the shallow-rooted or the deeply-rooted? Why do weeds pull harder than the plants in your garden? It's all about sinking roots. As we face life's storms, and they will continue, survival depends on continually expanding our roots, our faith-foundation so that we can endure life's storms before they destroy our faith. The more we grow our faith, the more secure our faith. To continue, our God says, "Keep expanding your faith. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose!"

2. Rooted in Christ also encourages ongoing nourishment. If you dig up a tomato plant from your garden and set it on your patio for two weeks, what will happen? Plants need nourishment from the soil or they die. Like those plants, we need ongoing nourishment. What we learned in Sunday School or what we were taught in Catechism Class won't get us through life and enable us to maintain our faith. God could have designed faith as a pill we took at the beginning of life and we were good to go to the end of life. But that's not how it works. Faith needs nourishment. We need monthly, weekly, daily nourishment to keep our faith-tree alive and well.

D. As Paul speaks of continuing, he switches images as he instructs us to continue our building project. 1. We continue our building project by building His dream house. How many of you have a picture of your dream house carefully crafted in your mind? How many of you have already built your dream house? To continue in the faith, Paul encourages us to build God's faith-house because God says, "My faith-house will carry you through life. It will withstand life's storms. It will be there in the best of times and the worst of times. It may not impress the neighbors, but it will protect you until I arrive to take you to your new home in heaven."

2. We continue building by constantly remodeling. How many of you like to remodel your house every year? Most of us aren't big fans of long-term remodeling projects, yet, in the faith realm, our God wants us in the midst of remodeling. Why? Because remodeling is a form of growth just like expanding our roots or keeping in step with our Lord. The imagery may be different, but they all point us in the same direction. They encourage us to continue growing, walking, building. Stretching our faith may not top our list of most enjoyable tasks, but when we realize the need, we take our stand as we say, "Lord, mold me into the person I need to be today!"

E. We continue by abounding with thanksgiving. 1. We abound with thanksgiving by staying awake for life. I don't recall where I read it, but I believe it was on a styrofoam coffee cup where it said, "Life is short. Stay awake for it." The implication was to drink more coffee, but in our faith-life, we need more than coffee to stay awake for life. Staying awake is looking for reasons to be thankful, to be grateful, to give God praise. Life is short compared to eternity and because it's short, we continue our life of thankfulness on our great days and on our challenging days. The more thankful we are, the more effort we put forth to stay awake for life.

2. We continue by expressing thankfulness every day. In any given day, how many minutes do you spend complaining compared to giving thanks? Unfortunately, complaining about what's wrong occurs far easier than being grateful for what's right. To continue expressing thankfulness, we focus our efforts on tipping the scales toward more time spent in thanksgiving. God loves to hear us offer our thankfulness and, as we offer our thanks, we change within, and as we change, life is better simply because we made the choice to continue abounding with thanksgiving, to continue being grateful every day and in every situation.

3. If we made a list of things that we need to continue, we'd be amazed at how long our list would be. Yet, before we're overwhelmed by our lists, God says, "There's only one thing that ultimately needs to be continued and that's your faith-life!" Amen.