

## Colossians 2:6-15

*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 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 canceling 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 and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

“It must be all right, because someone has done it before.” Someone has jumped off a bridge before, though? Should I? “It must be all right because lots of people have done it before.” Lots of people have died of cancer. Does that make cancer attractive to me? “But there’s a whole system of thought to back it up.” There’s a system of thought that backs up people strapping bombs to themselves and blowing up airplanes and buses. Does that make blowing up airplanes and buses good and right? As Christians we are to be guided, not by human traditions—notice that Paul says *human* traditions are not to be our guide, not *divine* traditions, such as the Sacraments and the public preaching of the Word—nor by philosophy (though theology can often make use of philosophy when it fits with God’s Word, nor by empty deceit. No, we are to walk according to Christ. We are to live as those who, once dead in trespasses and sins, have now been made alive.

Have you ever seen a dead person? Imagine you are at a funeral home for a visitation and the funeral home catches on fire. You want to save yourself, and so you are ready to run out of the burning building, but you’re also concerned for the dead person. “Get up and follow me,” you tell the corpse. What’s going to happen? The only way the dead person has a chance is if he or she comes back to life, and you don’t have that power, do you? In the same way, you had no power to save yourself, to follow Christ, to walk the narrow path to eternal safety. People could have called you until they were out of breath. You had to be made alive. And Christ has done that, so why would we ever hasten back to death?

But isn’t that what we do more often than we’d like to admit? The wages of sin is what? And yet how frequently don’t we see sin, not as poison, not as a death sentence, but as good and right, and precisely because others have done it, or because there is a whole rationale laid out behind it? Christ has made us alive. He has with His Spirit put breath in our lungs. Sin suffocates. Sin serves an eviction notice to the Spirit. Sin, in any form, arms again those rulers and authorities—death and the devil—that Christ has disarmed.

*“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, 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.”* You are dead and buried. And that’s the good news. When death confronts you, you can mock it in Christ, assuring it, “I’ve already died.” You’re dead and raised, awaiting the final resurrection at Christ’s return. Live as such. Receive the tradition worth keeping: the

Word of our Lord and His visible Word, the Sacraments. Hold to the pattern of thought that is far from empty, but rather packed with substance, reliable, and unfailing. Put your instruction to good use in daily practice. Walk in Him whom you have never deserved but have indeed received, and have received as precisely what you needed: as Savior. Having been rooted in Him, now build upon that which has been sown through the edification of the preached Word and careful instruction in God's revelation. And give thanks that you are no longer a slave to hollow promises and powerless traditions. We are not lemmings, hurrying toward the cliff. No, we are Christ's sheep, following Him, by His cross, over the bridge He has built for us to heaven. Amen.