

# Dug Down, Built Up, and Growing in Christ

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Oh good evening it's good to see you all and let me add my welcome to Jack's especially if you're a student who's managed to dodge the ever-growing isolation in Murano and a special welcome to those online as well hello and let me pray as we dig into God's Word together father as we come to hear from your word this evening speak to us by your spirit build us up in heart and mind to know your son Jesus better this we ask and pray in Jesus name Amen this may seem like an odd place to start but let me tell you about my most recent Christmas tree and we got a tree from Ikea for a flat in December we decorated it we brought it into our flat and it had a fantastic pine smell until January and then it had a dead pine smell and it wasn't so pleasant obviously without roots that plant was never going to last but we enjoyed having that tree so much that we ended up just replacing it we've now got a silver birch tree in our living room but I was getting mocked by my flatmate when I got it because it came wrapped in plastic and it really did just look dead already it was very sad it didn't come in any soil so I planted it and for a whole two months it just sat there with nothing happening and looked ridiculous but then all of a sudden around about February time just at the just at the start of the lockdown and some green buds started to appear because although that plant had roots hadn't yet rooted into good soil until it was pulling up from that good soil it couldn't grow and it's important to remember that whatever a plant is rooted into will determine that plant growth and what we're going to find this evening is that whatever we are rooted into ourselves is directly going to impact how we grow as Christians now to bring us up to speed for the

Colossian church from the last few weeks Paul is writing a book to encourage these believers and other believers that they know he hasn't met them but he's heard of their faith and he's encouraged by them and he's been writing to show them more of who Jesus is telling them to live lives in Christ and as Jack showed us last week this message that Paul is giving them he's saying is the very message of Jesus himself in fact Paul's absolutely contending for this message he says in chapter 1 verse 29 he's strenuously contending for these people he's never met that might initially seem a little bit odd possibly why would you work so hard for people you just don't know but just think for a second how encouraging that would be for these Colossians Paul the famous apostle who spread the gospel to half the Roman world is in knowledge of them and he wants to encourage them and not only that he thinks they're actually doing an all right job which actually must be a huge encouragement imagine if here at St Silas we got a message saying that Tim

Keller was going to just zoom call St Silas Church next week just to tell us that we're doing a really good job and he's going to work really hard on his sermon just to make sure that we are encouraged like think how bizarre that would actually be then think that actually that is something like what they're receiving in Colossae that amount of encouragement the other thing we need to remember is this is a personal letter from Paul but it's sent to a whole church and a load of other people too so whatever we make of this letter we've got to think not just about what does it mean for me as an individual Christian but what is it going to mean for all of us here as a church family with that in mind then we have three very simple points tonight Paul is calling his readers to dig down into Christ to stand firm in Christ and to grow up in Christ that's dig down stand firm and grow up in Christ so first then have a little look at verses one to three there we've already mentioned that Paul's working hard for them and for their encouragement the question is kind of well why why is Paul doing that what is his goal for the people he hasn't met now verses two and three are a little tricky to understand Paul just loves a subclause in a sentence ancient Greek doesn't have any punctuation so it's a bit tricky but follow along so first Paul wants them to be verse two encouraged in heart and united in love so first this is about learning together and exercise that can't be achieved alone that unity comes so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding i.e. not a kind of poor or incomplete understanding but a full one at the expense of all other things and that goal eventually is so that they would know Christ that's where this verse goes to they're encouraged and united filled with complete knowledge so that they might know Christ that's Paul's goal it's all a process to get to that point to come together to know Christ better now you might be sitting there thinking well yeah of course welcome to the new testament knowing Jesus better is kind of the point of that actually so far so generic but look down at verse three and just see how Paul qualifies this and why this is actually really exciting for us he says this is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge not Christ in whom there are some generic truths and life lessons or Christ in whom the secret of perfect happiness is found but no far more than that Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge all of it

Christ is the mind from which all the jewels of wisdom can be found he is the well from which all the treasures of knowledge can be drawn up so let me ask you if that's the case why look anywhere else if you have a perfect source why would you go anywhere else a good question for us as we're reading Colossians is well if they know this then why is Paul telling them what's going on in Colossae and then we say if that point before about focusing on being in Christ sounds a bit generic then we might have the same problem as they do Colossae had a serious wisdom market they lived in a kind of Greco-Roman pagan time so there's an entire pantheon of gods offering wisdom there's the entire Greek philosophical scene offering wisdom and there's opinions and politics and everything is trying to say we can offer you wisdom we have knowledge come to us and you'll get what you're looking for

I wonder what the big players in our wisdom market are I wonder what it'd be for you maybe a lifestyle podcast, a BuzzFeed article BBC News, political magazines, YouTube commentators the list is kind of endless you could find 101 people saying I will offer you wisdom and knowledge and none of those sources is inherently a bad thing really but if they become our primary source of wisdom and knowledge then it means that actually I've decided that Christ isn't enough I've decided in my heart that actually the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie outside of him and that's a real problem for me as a Christian you see if we're seeking encouraged hearts and a unified church and complete knowledge but we're looking outside of Jesus for that we simply won't get there we maybe wouldn't articulate it that way in our heads but I wonder when was the last time you had a problem and then googled it and never prayed we find it much easier to go to any other source of wisdom before we go to the Lord before we read our Bibles before we pray if they ever get a look in at all have we lost confidence that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are actually in Christ where do I go to find wisdom when my marriage is breaking down when my kids are struggling at school when I'm being asked to lie on official forms at work when I have to isolate because my housemate has coronavirus when my relative gets ill and I can't help where do you go if you're looking for wisdom as you ask yourself that question it could just be a bit of a sobering thought but the good news is that Paul says these treasures are hidden in Christ and that means first they're not accessible outside of him so you do have to go to him simply if you're here and you're not a Christian then you don't have access to this wisdom but if you are a Christian then you have to learn to dig into him so remember though and again look down at verses 1 and 2 this is written as a plural not a singular the goal of this ministry is that a whole church would do a kind of collective digging exercise into Christ that means for us it's a church family project how do we do that?

[ 9 : 25 ] well two instructions here first sharpen your spade the tool that you dig with is going to make that job far easier or harder digging into Christ means digging into his word so I wonder how sharp you feel when you come to a bible passage in the morning have you ever tried to develop just your own ability to handle the bible?

now we've got tons of resources that we would love to give you and equip you to do that and hopefully help you to feel confident that you in the morning with your cup of coffee and a bible open really can get treasure out of the word of God it is there for you to find if this is something that you want or want to develop in just come talk to myself or any of the staff team we'd absolutely love to help you with that and we've got some good resources for you but secondly what was the last treasure that you found in Christ that you shared with someone else?

Paul thinks that for a community to be encouraged to be united and growing in knowledge they all need to know Christ better together so how better to do this than to share the treasure that you find so what are you sharing?

when was the last time that you felt encouraged by a sermon or a podcast or just a bible passage that you'd read and passed it on? because that could be a massive encouragement to someone else and please don't think that's a small thing it can seem so small to us to just pass that on but it could be such a huge encouragement to someone else if you say I found this treasure in God's word it's making me delighted to be a Christian today I just think it'd be a real encouragement to you we don't do that out of a sense of pride we do that out of a sense of joy being able to share what we have in Christ together you might just stop someone else feeling like they have to look somewhere else for that wisdom and knowledge and this is what Paul is contending for the Colossians might put the full weight of their confidence on Christ needing him and no other source of wisdom and learning to dig down into him now the keen-eared among you might have picked up in this letter that there's something going on in the background the whole time every passage that we've read through so far in the last few weeks seems to imply there's some sort of background enemy in Colossae

Paul wouldn't need to give all the instructions of this letter if there wasn't someone or something actually drawing these people away from Christ so as you move on to verses 4 and 5 then we get a bit of a hint a bit of a reference to it the problem in Colossae is that they're being deceived by something that seems only too believable now I want you to imagine with me just picture it in your minds you get a place at university and you graduate with a first class honors degree it's excellent you get a good graduate job and by your late 20s you found a perfect partner got married in your 30s you have two miraculously well-behaved children you've got multiple promotions and pay rises you move to a just a bit more respectable postcode you can afford to get your kids into an excellent school take holidays abroad every year maybe even get a summer home the kids grow up and go to university and get good degrees and partners and jobs and you make enough money to retire at 55 and spend the rest of your life with the grandkids going on holiday and gardening it sounds quite good doesn't it it's so plausible so so plausible that that is the good life that you want that that is the path to satisfaction but notice the problem with all of that you don't need

[ 13 : 12 ] Jesus for any of it all of that can be achieved without him the middle-class western dream is believable as a path towards fulfillment and happiness and glory but you end your life under judgment without Christ you miss out on far greater glories of eternal life with him but the problem is it's so easy for us to look at that and say that is what I want and have our sights lowered so our second point then is that those who've dug down into Christ must stand firm in him in the world that wants them to go the other way Paul's Colossian friends are dealing with something deceptive and plausible they don't live in a theological vacuum now we haven't come across this in Colossians yet but as we go into the later weeks and the later chapters going to get some ideas of what that might be just to point one out if you are at home you can look this up if you've got a Bible on your phone here you can look this up as well

Colossians chapter 2 verse 20 says this since you died with Christ and to the elemental spiritual forces of the world why as though you still belong to the world do you submit to its rules do not handle do not taste do not touch these rules which have to do with things that are destined to perish with use are based merely on human commands and teachings one of the dangers that Colossians are facing is a philosophy that essentially says physical stuff is bad spiritual stuff is better so get rid of the physical stuff and you'll have a much fuller expression of spirituality and of God now that might seem maybe a little foreign to us in the kind of rich modern west but back then that was incredibly popular and it carried some real serious weight along among the Colossians now these philosophies and ideas don't advertise themselves as a kind of alternative necessarily but they say well just come here we're a good source of wisdom but actually as Christians you've got to say there's really no value in that and that's the kind of thing that Paul's competing with and actually that's why Paul's so encouraged in verse 5 though he is absent from them physically he is with them spiritually and again a nod to people at home there on that verse he is hugely encouraged that Colossians are standing their ground he may not have met these people but he delights that they are Christians living in disciplined faith to the Lord Jesus they have dug down into Christ they are standing firm where they are and they're not moving on to some other philosophy or sliding back into their previous way of life so think about that you don't have to stand firm in calm weather it's not hard you have to fight against a gale to stand firm a soldier doesn't stand their ground against a pedestrian but against attacking forces standing firm here is actually quite an active battle something that we need encouragement to keep doing do you know how encouraged the staff team are here when we see someone standing firm for Christ now until I joined the staff team recently

I actually didn't know this but the staff team every Friday have a prayer meeting where we pray for you as a congregation we just work our way through the list of the congregation and we pray for you all and it's such an encouraging time to think of other people standing firm in Christ setting an example to us of just living for Jesus where they are and it's such a huge encouragement because standing firm isn't easy and we need examples to encourage one another and we say your faithfulness is not just for you your faith and discipline matter to the whole church in Christ we are united so actively that whatever we do encourages or discourages everyone else in the church that we're in I think we see this really clearly in lockdown it's been a hard time for us all I know how encouraging it's been for me to see those who have stood firm and just encouraged me when I've been struggling but also how hard it's been to see people just slowly fall away from church and have no desire to come back now that we can it's heartbreaking but then it should be because we're a church family he wants to see someone from their family just kind of disappear your faith really does encourage the other people in your church so stand firm it really is achieving something valuable so last point then if we're digging down into Christ and standing firm in him well what's left?

well from that point we get the exciting news that if you're doing those things then you can grow if you're dug deep into Christ and secure in him then you can continue to grow in Christ and that is our final point now our silver birch tree and our flat kind of needs repotting at this point the leaves are getting a little bit brown around the outside I bought some soil from Poundland which is a terrible idea it's really not helping and its pot is just quite small which means that it can't grow if we don't repot that plant it will never grow any bigger or get any more leafy that plant is entirely determined in its growth by what it is planted into and again as I said at the start our growth in Christ is determined by our roots into him because growing is something that God does for us and to us not something that we do actively to ourselves now we know the Colossians have had a good start if you were to read through the first chapter you would find that Paul commends them for hearing the gospel and responding to it verse 5 it's the true gospel verse 23 they're holding on to it verse 27 it's the right message from Paul that they've got so far so good the Colossians are in the right place to grow and so Paul encourages them that growing up doesn't mean moving on to something better and bigger but growing down deeper roots into Christ and building on that solid foundation look again at verse 7 as you read through all the instructions there are passive being rooted and built up and strengthened all come from already being in Christ so their job is to dig down but it's God himself who will bring the growth it's an exercise in trust that we are willing to keep digging into him trusting that God will grow us up the Christian life isn't one of moving on to the new thing every five minutes for your growth and your progress it doesn't mean looking to the next key spiritual growth point or to the next stage of holiness but to stand firm in Christ and be grown by him and as Paul points out as you see yourself growing in response to what you've been given you just become more and more thankful these Colossians are aiming to overflow with thankfulness here and that is the right response to growing in Christ but it's an important thing for us we must understand you can't plant a healthy plant on bad soil you can't build a stable house on sand and you can't grow a Christian faith on a false gospel for rooting into any other source of wisdom other than Christ then we cannot expect to grow if you do find yourself doing that that I'm sorry you aren't going to get very far or build anything stable if you're digging your roots into something else but then be encouraged if you are digging into the true gospel the one that Paul has been describing and will continue to describe in this letter if you're rooted in Christ then the growth will come if that's where you're at then you can expect that seeking the treasures of wisdom in Christ when you look for them you will find them when you're wondering how to live wisely in the ever-changing world of COVID restrictions when you're looking to keep yourself mentally afloat even with all the isolation when you're worried about your kids and where they're at with Jesus when you're worried that your marriage is falling apart and is a real struggle when you're worried that Christian living the daily ins and outs of it is just absolutely exhausting dig down into Christ stand firm in him and you will grow be encouraged that's exactly what Paul is telling us to do be confident in that don't be deceived by anything that tells you anything else he is all you need and let's share

that confidence with one another let's pray Father God we thank you so much for your kindness towards us in Christ Jesus Father thank you that as we dig down into him we find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge as we stand firm in him we can be assured that you will grow so thank you for those promises may you help us to encourage one another to unite and grow as a church family together and as we ask and pray in Jesus name Amen well I'm now going to hand over to Biko who's going to come and play for us to Him to be her to Joseph who to eve to be to her to Center