

Greetings from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and from the Holy Spirit Amen.

Rooted in Jesus

Colossians 2:11–13

In Colossians: ***Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.***

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. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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. 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,

You are rooted in Christ since the time you were brought to the baptismal font. You have continued to be rooted in Jesus and His Word and Lord's Supper after confirmation. And since you are a child of God, the devil and the world has continued to try to tempt your sinful flesh to capture you with philosophy and empty deceit to let go of Christ Jesus, for you to remove yourself from Jesus' hand. The one who is behind all these false deceitful religions, and philosophies for the purpose to draw you away from Christ is the devil.

We know the devil is roaring around the earth like a lion to devour someone. A sample of these acts of the devil is found today for *It's so bizarre you wouldn't think even Tom Cruise could fall for it, but he and Katie Holmes and John Travolta and Kirstie Alley aren't the only ones. Do you know anything about the Church of Scientology? It was founded in the 1950s by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, who was once quoted as saying that the best way to make a million dollars would be to start one's own religion. Scientology teaches that a human is actually an alien being called a thetan, which has lived numerous past lives as an extraterrestrial*

but is now trapped on earth and in a body. Scientology will help one become clear of disruptive engrams and thus again an “Operating Thetan”—all for a substantial fee and after signing a legal waiver.

Scientologists claim that at least six million people worldwide, three million in the U.S., have bought in.

What’s really frightening is that Scientology is just an extreme case of what entraps many times more people, precisely as St. Paul warned the Colossians: “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” (Col 2:8). Any teaching that distracts us from Christ Jesus, no matter how much more gentle and reasonable than Scientology, can destroy the soul. The fullness of God, and our full salvation, is Christ. Christ alone.

You may say that you will never be tempted or fall away from Christ Jesus. May you be reminded of Peter and his denial of Christ, of David who fell from God’s Grace when he sinned with Bathsheba, and of Israel in the Old Testament who had all the blessings from God, were God’s people, and yet they fell away from God to go to a false god Baal. There is a saying in Proverbs (16:18): ***Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit***

before a fall. We often hear this in a shortened version: *Pride goes before a fall.*

God has given you His blessings, even today. His blessings today are: Forgiveness of sins, His presence and God's Word. He tells you that you are His. He has told you that He [Jesus] has redeemed you by the shedding of His blood on the cross. One of the blessings from God that you have always is the blessing of prayer. Luther states in his Large Catechism concerning the Lord's Prayer: *He [the devil] is well aware what damage and harm he suffers when prayer is in proper use.* Yes, the devil does will that you neglect praying to God the Father. One of many weapons the devil uses and you may buy into it is your unworthiness. So you do not pray because you think you are not good enough. The devil wants you to stop praying to God. In our Gospel lesson today we read the perfect prayer. You have the privilege to pray The Lord's Prayer because you are rooted in Christ. Christ invites you to pray with confidence and to approach God as your Father, to ask as a child asks her or his daddy. Jesus promises God the Father will answer your prayers. He will answer you and give you the "best."

Jesus tells you to continue to pray, to continue to ask. In our parable the man asks his neighbor at a unreasonable time, he was persistent. Jesus wants you to do so. It is alright to pray the Lord's Prayer or any other request more than once day. God loves to hear from you. The Lord knows that your flesh is weak and falls easily into temptation. Any temptation can lead you into removing yourself from Jesus' hand. The Lord is so aware of temptation for you, He has you pray in the Lord's Prayer, "*And lead us not into temptation.*"

Luther defines this petition in this way: *Moreover, although we have acquired forgiveness and a good conscience, and have been wholly absolved, yet such is life that one stands today and falls tomorrow. Therefore, even though at present we are upright and stand before God with a good conscience, we must pray again that He will not allow us to fall and yield to trials and temptations. We live in the flesh and we have the old Adam hanging around our necks; he goes to work and lures us daily into unchastity, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness, greed and deceit, into acts of fraud and deception against our neighbor—in short, into all kinds of evil lusts which by nature cling to us and to which we are incited by the*

association and example of other people and by things we hear and see.

All this often wounds and inflames even an innocent heart.

Next comes the world, which assails us by word and deed and drives us to anger and impatience. In short, there is in it nothing but hatred and envy, enmity, violence and injustice, deceit, vengeance, cursing, reviling, slander, arrogance, and pride, along with fondness for luxury, honor, fame, and power. No one is willing to be the least, but everyone wants to sit in the chief seat and be seen by all.

Then comes the devil, who baits and badgers us on all sides, but especially exerts himself where the conscience and spiritual matters are at stake. His purpose is to make us scorn and despise both the Word and the works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love, to draw us into unbelief, false security, and stubbornness, or, on the contrary, to drive us into despair, skepticism, blasphemy, and countless other abominable sins (sin for not doing anything when you have the means). These are snares and nets; indeed, they are the real “flaming darts” which are venomously shot into our hearts, not by flesh and blood but by the devil.

These are the great, grievous perils and temptations which every Christian must bear, even if they come one by one. As long as we remain in this vile

life in which we are attacked, hunted, and stressed on all sides, we are constrained to cry out and pray every hour that God may not allow us to become faint and weary and to fall back into sin, shame, and unbelief. Otherwise it is impossible to overcome even the least temptation.

This, then, is “leading us not into temptation” when God gives us power and strength to resist, even though the tribulation is not removed or ended.

Being tempted is not a sin but doing the temptation is the sin.

Therefore, you are not to try on your own for when you do you leave a better opening for the devil to cause you to fall into doing the temptation.

When you do sin, you have forgiveness in Christ.

You are rooted in Christ such that you are in Christ and He is in you. Christ Jesus died on the cross, was raised from the dead on the third day and has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand side of God where He continues to intercede (pray) for you. Being at the right hand of God, He has all power and all authority. He never stops holding you in His hand and grants you protection and answers your prayer and always grants you “the best.” He gives you strength for your daily living and He gives you strength to resist and a way out when you are tempted (1Cor 10:13). He watches over you and keeps you safe. He gives you His Word and His Sacraments

for your good and strength. Using His Word and Sacraments, He guards your hearts and minds in the faith that He has given you so you are not taken captive with the world's deceitful philosophies and false religions. He will keep you in His hand and will lead you safely to Himself in Heaven.

And may the peace of God, which is beyond all human comprehension, keep your hearts and minds through your faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.