Colossians

Lesson #3

That We Would Have Encouraged Hearts, Loving Hearts, Settled Assurance,

Faithful Walk, and Overflowing Gratitude

(Col 1:23 – 2:7)

**Vs 21 - 23 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.***

John MacArthur: *“One of the most sobering truths in the Bible is that not all who profess to be Christians are in fact saved.”*

This is true, our Lord said:

*“22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Mt 7:22-23 ESV)*

**Continuing in the faith** is normative for the believer. This is not a **special condition**, but the normal condition. Falling away, going back into the world, turning away from God and the sacrifice of Christ is a **warning and an evidence that a person is not saved**.

We have talked about the two marks or signs of a believer; **faith** and **love.** Here Paul, grabs the first, if you indeed ***“Continue in the faith.”*** The evidence that you and I are saved is our Continuing is the faith.

Notice how Paul describes this continuance via an **architectural image**:

1. **Grounded** – to lay a foundation, to be stable
2. **Steadfast** – to be firm, to be immovable

Then Paul makes sure there is no confusion on what he is talking about:

**Vs 23b -** To ***“shift”*** from the hope of the gospel, is to move away from the hope of the gospel and is a warning sign that a person never possessed the hope of the gospel!

***Gospel -* εὐαγγέλιον** (*yoo-ang-ghel’-ee-on) -* The good news, the glad tidings, the message of Jesus the Messiah, his death, burial, and resurrection.

***Proclaimed*** *-* **κηρύσσω** (*kay-roos’-so) –* herald, preach, or publish.

***Minister -*** **διάκονος** (*dee-ak’-on-os)* -servant, one who executes the commands of another, an attendant.

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**Vs 24 – 29 *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”***

**Vs 24 –** Paul is rejoicing in his sufferings (under house arrest, suffering the loss of all things, going without basic necessities, ***for your*** (their) ***sake*!**

Paul is telling these believers, who he has never met, that his suffering was for their sake.

You can imagine, they might have wondered why Epaphras has such a high regard for this political prisoner. How and why does this convict have authority about the gospel?

But Paul has been reminding them of why he has that authority:

1. He is an apostle of Christ (1:1)
2. That, by the will of God (1:1)
3. He is a minister of the gospel according to the stewardship of God (1:23, 25)
4. His suffering is actually for them (1:24)

Keep in mind, none of the false teachers, could truly claim any of these things!

**V 24b** – Then Paul says something that **captures our attention,** something that at first glance is **provocative** - ***I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church***

**A few important points to keep in view at the outset of this discussion:**

1. **The sufferings of Christ are not lacking in any salvific way.** In other words, Christ suffering was totally sufficient to secure our salvation, that is Paul’s point throughout chapter 1.

The sufferings that Christ endured at Calvary are completely sufficient for our salvation. At Calvary, Jesus bore the wrath of God due for our sins.

*“"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Joh 3:16 ESV)*

*“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (Joh 3:36 ESV)*

1. The word translated ***afflictions***is the Greek word **θλῖψις** (*thlip’-sis) –* It means trouble, tribulation, pressures, afflictions, or distress. It brings with it the idea of a “pressing.”

**\*\*\* It is never used in the New Testament to describe the sacrificial suffering of Jesus. \*\*\***

It is found 45 times in the NT and is never used to describe the sacrificial sufferings of Jesus!

Four examples to make the point:

*“21 When they had preached the gospel to that city* (Derbe) *and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations <2347> we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Ac 14:21-22 ESV)*

*“1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings <2347>, knowing that suffering produces endurance,” (Ro 5:1-3 ESV)*

*“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction <2347>, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction<2347>, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2Co 1:3-4 ESV)*

*1Th 1:6 And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction <2347>, with joy of the Holy Spirit,*

1. Notice that Paul is saying that this is done for the sake of the church. He did a lot for the sake of the church, not by way of salvation, but rather to build them up. That is Paul’s point here.

**So, what is Paul saying, what is lacking? What is he talking about?**

What is lacking, is the sufferings that Paul and other believers will experience for the sake of the gospel. Jesus tells us:

*“18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” (Joh 15:18-20 ESV)*

Paul is saying, when you or I are persecuted, what is really going on is we are receiving persecution that was and is intended for Christ.

1. In this world, the church will suffer **θλῖψις** (*thlip’-sis)*

**Vs - 25** Paul reminds the believers in Colossae that he became a minister of the gospel, according to the **“stewardship of God”**

***Minister -*** **διάκονος** (*dee-ak’-on-os)* -servant, one who executes the commands of another, an attendant.

***Stewardship -*** **οἰκονομία** (*oy-kon-om-ee’-ah*) – the management, the stewardship of property and affairs.

***For you –*** Do you see the repetition?

***To make the word of God fully known****.* Paul’s goal in ministry, was to make the word of God fully known!

**My goal –** Is that I might fully know and make fully known the Word of God, so that, we might fully know Him, what He has done for us, and how we should respond. – That’s it.

**Vs 26 – 27 -** Then Paul expounds on at least one area he is thinking about when he says making the Word of God fully known, it involves making known ***the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.***

***Mystery*** **μυστήριον** (*moos-tay’-ree-on) –* something **secret**, previously **unknown**, something that was **obscure**, a **mystery**.

The ***mystery,*** that is now ***revealed*** to the ***saints* ἅγιος** (set apart, holy ones).

Now Paul is not talking about something spooky or eerie. The false teachers used this word to describe the inner secrets and secret rituals of their religion.

Paul is using this word to describe something that was veiled in the Old Testament (prior ages and generations), tucked away, not crystal clear, that is now revealed.

The New Testament mentions a few of these mysteries (veiled in Old, revealed in New):

1. The resurrection of all believers, according to (I Cor 15:51-54) was a ***mystery*** that was not fully revealed in the Old Testament.
2. That the Gentiles becoming fellow heirs and partakers of the promise of Christ through the gospel, according to (Eph 3:3-9) was a ***mystery*** and not fully explained in the Old Testament.
3. The mystery of the incarnation of God. That God would be born in human flesh, according to (ITim 3:16), was a ***mystery*** that was not fully explained in the Old Testament.

These are examples, of some of the things that were veiled in the Old Testament, they were ***mysteries***, that are now fully revealed in the New Testament, to the saints.

But Paul has a different **mystery** in mind!

**Vs 27 -** Now we see the mystery God that Paul has in mind, ***Christ in you, the hope of glory***.

The Old Testament predicted the coming of Messiah, but the idea that He would live in us, was veiled. It indeed was a ***mystery***.

The New Testament is clear, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer.

*“****9*** *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” (Ro 8:9 ESV)*

The believers are now the ***“temple of living God:”***

*“…For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2Co 6:16b ESV)*

That Jesus dwells within his people, in the person of the Hold Spirit, is the **“hope of glory.”**

Jesus, living in His people, is the **anchor of all the promises of heaven.** It is the guarantee of future, eternal bliss:

*“****13*** *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* ***14*** *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:13-14 ESV)*

**Vs 28 – 29 -** The antecedent pronoun goes back to **Jesus, the Messiah**, the one who will live in the believer (an amazing mystery) is the one that Paul, and the apostles and the early church proclaimed.

Jesus is the central point of all that Paul had to say:

* Notice Paul said we ***proclaim*** (preach, teach) Jesus.
* We ***warn*** everyone (admonish, exhort, warn).
* We **teach** everyone (to instruct). We do so, Paul said, in **wisdom**.

Here is the goal according to Paul: ***that we may present everyone mature in Christ.***

The goal of Christian ministry is **salvation and maturity**. Paul expressed this clearly in Ephesians:

*“11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” (Eph 4:11-13 ESV)*

The goal of Bible study and the goal of Bible teaching is **salvation and maturity.**

**Vs 29 -** It is for this very purpose, this very goal that Paul toils and struggles with every ounce of his energy, which is really the energy of God.

***Toil -*** **κοπιάω** (*kop-ee-ah’-o)* – to work to the point of exhaustion.

***Struggling -*** **ἀγωνίζομαι** (*ag-o-nid’-zom-ahee) –* it is to enter an athletic contest, to compete and contend with maximum effort.

But lest we get the wrong point, Paul was toiling and struggling in ministry, in proclaiming the gospel, with the **power and the energy of Jesus Christ.**

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***“1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 ¶ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. 5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.” (Col 2:1-5 ESV)***

**Vs 1** – I want you to know the ***“great struggle”*** I have for you, those in Laodicea, and all who I have not yet seen face to face!

The Greek word for struggle is **ἀγών** (*ag-one’) –* it means **conflict**, **fight**, or **contention.** It was used to describe a real struggle. It is where we get our English word **agony**.

**Vs 1 –** So what is Paul talking about that he was struggling in? This struggling, appears to be in prayer:

*“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.” (Col 4:12 ESV)*

What an amazing prayer life! Again, Paul had never met any of these believers.

Vs 2 – Here, in the context of agonizing in prayer, Paul outlines **five desires** for those two churches:

**Desire #1 -** That their ***hearts may be encouraged.***

In the Bible the heart generally refers to the inner person, who you really are, the center of life. It is sometimes the mind, but normally much more than just the mind. Most often, it is the whole person.

*“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,” (1Pe 3:15 ESV)*

*“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (Jas 4:8 ESV)*

Now, let’s look at the word encouraged. The Greek word is **παρακαλέω** (*par-ak-al-eh’-o) –* It means to call to one’s side, it includes ideas like **entreat**, **appeal**, **comfort**, **exhort**, or **encourage**.

Paul is saying, my desire for you, what I am agonizing over, is that your **hearts may be encouraged**.

**An encouraged heart. How does God do this? Of cours, with his word, but he also does it through people. Can I show you?**

*“****7*** *¶ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.* ***8*** *I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may* ***encourage your hearts****,” (Col 4:7-8 ESV)*

* Paul wrote this epistle that through his words, he might encourage their hearts.

**Desire #1** for that we might have **“encouraged hearts.”**

**Desire #2 –** That we would be ***knit together in love.***

The words ***“being knit together”*** is one Greek word **συμβιβάζω** (*soom-bib-ad’-zo) –* To put together, joined together, woven together, or united together.

In Ephesians, Paul talked about this under the metaphor of a body:

*“15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:15-16 ESV)*

**Church unity is not organizational, but rather it is organic.** We are one in Christ, that oneness is shown in our love for one another. Woven together in love.

**Desire #2 –** That our hearts would be knit together in love, shorthand a **loving heart**!

**Desire #3 – VS 2 –** That they would (reach) attain: ***all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

Paul wants the believers in Colossae to reach, attain, apprehend, the riches that come from a full assurance of who Christ is (chapter 1 vs 15-19) and what Christ has done for us (chapter 1 vs 12-14 and 20-23).

**True freedom and joy are only possible when we attain a full understanding of the full assurance that we have in Christ!**

The riches of this full assurance are based on our understanding and knowledge.

So, we can attain and acquire, the riches of full assurance in our understanding of the knowledge of God’s mystery (which is Christ).

There is the Greek word (***mystery***) again, except here Paul says. The real mystery that was veiled in the Old Testament, **is Christ**.

**Vs 3 -** Notice, in passing what Paul says about Christ, ***in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

 Jesus is the source of all true spiritual knowledge; we can be sure that many of the false prophets taught some other source of wisdom and knowledge.

**Desire #3 -** That we would have a **settled assurance.**

**Vs 4 - 5** Brings us (almost in passing) to the first real hint of issues in Colossae. Paul writes, I am saying all this, to prevent you from being

**παραλογίζομαι** (*par-al-og-id’-zom-ahee) –* **cheated**, **deceived**, **circumvented**, **wronged**, with a Plausible argument – speech that is **persuasive**, speech that seems **reasonable**, speech none the less that leads you away from truth and turns you to error!

**Here is what Paul is saying, you and I need to have a settled understanding and indeed even conviction of who Christ is and what He has done for us.**

False religions and cults all have two things they are often peddling:

1. Denial of who Jesus is (God incarnate)
2. Denial of the efficacy of what Jesus did for us at Calvary

**Vs 5** Having warned the Colossians to stand fast, stand firm in their understanding of the mystery of Christ. Paul then rejoice that they are.

I am rejoicing to see your **“good order”** and your **“firmness”** in your faith in the Messiah.

***Good order -*** **τάξις** (*tax’-is) –* good discipline, proper arrangement, proper posting by rank.

***Firmness -*** **στερέωμα** (*ster-eh’-o-mah) –* foundation, something solid, something that supports. It is the solid portion of a military line that can withstand an attack.

Paul pictures the believers in Colossae, as a group of soldiers, mustered against any errors that would attempt to undermine the person or work of Jesus Christ!

***“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.”***

**Desire #4 –** That as we **received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him!**

As you originally received him (by faith), continue to walk in him (by faith).

**Live in union with him and maintain a unity in sprit with other believers.**

***Rooted –*** the idea is to be thoroughly grounded

***Built up –*** To finish a structure by attaching it to the foundation.

**Established –** made firm

Being firmly rooted in Christ, growing in Jesus, results in us being established in our faith.

**In Him!** Thoroughly grounded, on the foundation, in Christ!

**Desire #4 –** That we would have a **faithful walk**.

**Desire #5 – 7b -**  That we would be ***abounding in thanksgiving.***

The last participle is **“overflowing”** with thanksgiving.

Believers are firmly rooted in Christ, they are being build-up in Him, this results in them being established in their faith, which results in an **overflow of Thanksgiving**.

***Abound*** – The idea of the Greek word is something that is exceeding its boundaries, it is something that is overflowing, the Greek word is also used to describe how a flower goes from bud to blossom.

Paul is agonizing in prayer that they would be overflowing in thanksgiving.

**Desire #5 – is that we would have an overflowing thanksgiving.**

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