

2007-07-08 Colossians ch2 v1-7 Part One (Ignite UK)

Paul has been writing to the Colossian church with the hope of seeing them continue to grow in their faith and be able to stand against the false-teachers that are threatening to infiltrate the body. He wants them to grow into Christ-likeness to the glory of God.

In chapter 1, we watched as Paul encouraged the Colossian believers to continue to rest in the sufficiency of Christ, but not to become complacent. He admonished them to continue to grow in their faith. This was his ministry to the church. To suffer for them, to show them Christ through his sufferings, and help conform them into the image of Jesus. That is exactly what he is telling them in 1:24...embrace suffering as a strategy to reach the world. As the world sees people who rejoice in suffering, they point the world to the suffering servant.

Paul moves into chapter 2 and wants to make sure the Colossian church knows that he loves them. That he will fight and struggle for them. He desires that they grow into the image of Christ, that they come to a “deeper knowledge of God.”

TRANSITION

When you think of the qualifications of a pastor, which do you think is of the up-most importance? Should the pastor have a seminary degree? Be a great speaker? Be a seasoned veteran? All these things are valuable but not the most important attribute to look for. It is great to find a pastor with attributes a, b, and c...but if the pastor does not have a love for the church as Christ did then none of those things will matter in the long run.

JESUS! He loved the church so much that He gave His own life to pay our debt. Paul calls the Ephesian elders to “*shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” Acts 20:28. Jesus suffered and died to pay our debt.

PAUL! This man gave his life in service for the church. 2 Corinthians 12:15 says, “*I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.*” Here was a pastor who loved the church.

“*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those in Laodicea...*” (vs. 1)

He struggled for them, toiled, and labored for the church. The word he uses for “struggle” is ‘agon’, which is the word we get the English word agony from. Paul is letting them know how deeply he loved them and how deeply he loved Christ whom he served. He would struggle for them.

And just as loving parents have goals for their children so Paul has goals for the church in Colossae and the churches throughout the ages. As we notice these goals that

Paul lays out for the Colossian church let us seek to embrace these goals for Ignite. Over the next two weeks we will look at five goals, tonight we will see three and the last two next week.

So Paul is struggling so that the church, in the face of false-teachers, would be:

1. **Strong** in Heart.

“that their hearts may be encouraged,” (vs. 2)

Here Paul uses the Greek word ‘parakaleo’. It can have a wide range of meanings but here it can be translated “strengthen” just as easily as encouraged. William Barclay says this of the word ‘parakaleo’:

“There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to it to such purpose that courage was reborn and a body of dispirited men became fit again for heroic action. That is what [parakaleo] means here. It is Paul’s prayer that the Church may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation.”

That is exactly what Paul wants for the Colossian church and the church today. As they are attacked by false-teachers, he wants them to not lose heart. When they are confronted on every side, do not become discouraged, and do not give up. Instead, be strong in heart, stand firm in the faith. Remember that “greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world.” So, as the leader was sent to talk to the regiment to call them to be strong, Paul sends this letter to call the Colossian church to be strong. And as the church stands strong the church is able to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” And where does this strength come from?

It does not come from some inner strength that Dr. Phil or Oprah tries to point you to. Rather it comes from the Spirit who strengthens “*with power*”. (Eph 3:16)

John MacArthur: “The Spirit strengthens the hearts of these who yield their lives to His control.”

So, if Ignite is going to be a church that has the ‘strength’ and ‘encouragement’ to stand and “fight the good fight” we must be strong in heart, and that comes as we “yield our lives to the Spirit’s control.” This means we seek the Lord’s will in every area of our lives. From where we go to school, to what we study, who we date, how we spend our money, who we marry, and to where we live. We seek to follow the lead and control of the Spirit. As we submit to the control of the Spirit, the Spirit in turn gives us “strong hearts.”

The church must be “strong in heart” and:

2. **United** in Love.

“being knit together in love,” (vs. 2)

Here Paul uses the word ‘Sumbibazo’ for “knit together”. It is a word that means to unite or bring together. And what are believers brought together in? LOVE! But what is the biblical definition of love?

The Bible uses love in such a way that means to do what is best for someone, not just a subjective emotionalism.

“For at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.” (Rom 5:6)

Implicit in that verse is the fact that a penalty was due us. That atonement had to be made for the wrong we have done. And the best thing that could be done for us is for someone to pay our debt, one we could not pay. (illustration) So God did what was best for us in Jesus...He paid the debt we could not pay.

Here Paul says one of his goals is that the church be united in the type of love that puts others before themselves. That as we stand strong we must stand together. If we are divided, we will be so busy fighting one another that we will miss our purpose and allow Satan to infiltrate our ranks.

So, how can we be united? By seeking to do what is best for each other. We humble ourselves and count others as more important than me! Then love becomes more than emotionalism!

“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”
(1 John 3:17-18)

In other words, let us be united as we seek to love through action, as Christ loved through the actions of His life, death, and resurrection. And as we serve each other, we stand strong, we stand together against the false-teachers, and false-ideologies that seek to destroy the church. And as we are united, we glorify God with one loud voice!!

Paul has called churches to be communities of believers that stand strong and stand together. As they do these two things, he encourages them to be:

3. Settled in **Understanding**.

“to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding...” (vs. 2)

As believers, there are countless blessings that are our in Christ. Paul wants the church to be able to enjoy these blessings.

- No hell
- Knowledge of God
- Freed from bondage to sin

- Heaven
- Eternal life with Jesus

All these are things that should give us cause to rejoice. When we reflect on the blessings that we possess as children of God, namely that we are adopted sons and daughters, then it should give us power to keep going, to keep living lives that are wholly devoted to kingdom work. And Paul is a spiritual father who wants his spiritual children to enjoy those blessings.

The problem is that if you are not sure that these blessings belong to you then you cannot enjoy them. If there is a briefcase full of money in my office, I may hope that someone has given it to me. However, I cannot go spend the money and enjoy it unless I am sure the money belongs to me. Paul says that he is going to “struggle for them” to help them reach the “riches” that come with this “full assurance” that they possess Christ as Lord and Savior.

How is that “assurance” attained? By being “settled in understanding.” Here Paul uses the word “sunesis” for the word understanding. This word refers to applying everyday biblical principles to life. As you learn truth, you begin to apply truth. *(We do not try to earn favor before God by doing what is right, but when we catch ourselves doing something that is wrong, we turn from it because that is what the Bible calls us to do.)*

The Bible is very clear that true followers of Jesus Christ will display “fruit” in their lives. A believer’s life will be marked by the character of Christ and not a character of disobedience.

“You will recognize them by their fruit.” That is the words of Christ Himself in Matthew 7:20.

In other words, you will recognize followers of Christ by the things they do and do not do. And as you begin to apply the principles of Scripture to your everyday life (not just in public) then Paul says you can begin to take hold of the blessings that come with knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord.

NOTE: Many people say that they have friends who grew up in church, were baptized...etc. But their lives do not reflect that of a person who knows Christ. Can we say they are Christians or not? NO! But what we can say is they have no grounds for assurance of salvation. And because of that, we need to make every effort to either rebuke a fellow believer or share the gospel with them as if they needed to give their lives to Jesus for the first time.

So Paul has given us three goals to reach for as a church body:

- (1) Be Strong in Heart.

Lets be a church that yields our lives to the Spirit in all we do. We must seek the strength that comes from the Spirit of God if we are to be successful in reaching this campus for Christ.

(2) Be United in Love.

As a church, we must be united, standing strong together. If we fight all the time, are mad at each other over little things, we will be useless in the fight against Satan. Let us be united as we love each other by putting others first, doing what is best for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

(3) Be Settled in Understanding.

As we stand strong together, let us take hold of the blessings we have in Christ, as we seek the riches of full assurance that comes as we apply the principles of Scripture to our everyday lives.

I am excited about this year that is quickly approaching. I have said it numerous times; we have an amazing opportunity to reach the campus. To do so we have to be a church that is ready to fight for the faith. We are a body of believes that will stand for truth as revealed in God's Word and we will do so together. And as this campus looks to Ignite, they see a group of men and women of live life to the fullest because of the hope they enjoy in Jesus. Lets be that type of church.