

PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE COLOSSIANS—AND HIS CONVICTION CONCERNING CHRIST!

I'm not going to have you do this, but imagine in your mind if I had you **turn your outlines over**, and write down the answer to this question: **Why did you come to church today?**

Pretty safe to say that not **every answer** would be the same, right?

For example, **none of you** would answer the question with: "I **have to be here** because I'm the pastor!"

--But some **children or teens might** answer, "I **have to be** here because my parents made me!"

--My guess is that most of you, though, would **begin** your answer with: "I **want to be** here because...and then give various reasons like: I like to **fellowship** with other believers...or I want to **worship** God...or I always **feel better** when I come to church...or I want both me and my children **to learn more about God** and the Bible.

I have a quote I'm going to read from **J. Hampton Keathley III**: "The simple truth is that every church with their leadership should be committed to **building all believers** of the flock into **mature, Christ-like Christians**. Too often churches resemble **a hospital ward** where believers are coddled and pampered rather than a **training camp** where they are being trained...The objective of the church is to see **all believers grow from one stage of maturity to another**, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18)." (Bible.org; 10. *The Supremacy of the Work of Christ Part 3, The Propagation of Christ's Work* (Col. 1:24-2:3)).

Sound familiar? It should be because that is what we talked about last week! Take your Bibles and turn to Colossians 1. Notice again what it says in vs 28: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we **may present every man perfect** in Christ Jesus:"

Why did Paul warn and teach? So that—in order that—"we may present **every man**"—no exceptions— "perfect" (meaning mature) "in Christ Jesus." That means every true, born-again child of God has the potential to **become spiritually mature!**

How can that be? How is that **possible**? Because the same Holy Spirit that **dwelled in Paul** dwells **in you**—if you are indeed a child of God! And God's Spirit **has not changed!** He has **not weakened**. He has not **become tired** due to age—and He has **not "wore out"** from overuse!

We know that because Ephesians 3:20 is still in the Book! Ephesians 3:20 "Now unto Him that is **able to do exceeding abundantly** above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that worketh in us,**"

As noted last week, Paul refers to God's Spirit working mightily in him in vs 29. And that brings us to chapter 2. Please follow along as I read verses 1-5. We are going to be focusing on verses 1-3 where we see "Paul's Concern for the Colossians—and His Conviction Regarding Christ!"

1. Paul's "conflict"

Notice again what it says in vs 1: "For I would that ye knew"—meaning, I **want you to know**—"what great **conflict** I have **for** you..." It doesn't say he had a "conflict" **with** them—it says he had a "conflict" **for them!**

What does that mean? We know from verse 29 that Paul "laboured"—meaning he exerted himself to the point of exhaustion. We also see in verse 29 that he **strived** according to God's working within him.

As mentioned last week, **striving** comes from the Greek word "ah-go-NEE-zoh-my" and is the word we get "**agonize**" from. It means to struggle and put forth **intense exertion**—like a person does in athletic competition or on the battlefield. The same word is used of Ephaphras—their pastor—in Colossians 4:12 where it says that he "laboured fervently"—he agonized—**in prayer** for them.

"Conflict" here in vs 1 has the same root as "agonize" and is the **noun** form of it. It carries the idea of a battle...a contest... a fight... a struggle. It is translated "fight" in I Timothy 6:12 "Fight the **good fight** of faith..." and II Timothy 4:7 "I have fought a good **fight**..." So Paul had agony... he had a conflict...a fight...a struggle within him—**for them!**

The Topical Lexicon in Biblehub put it like this: "Intercessory prayer and doctrinal vigilance are portrayed as exhausting combat for the sake of believers he has never met."

Second, let's consider... **2. Paul's commitment**

What was **the reason** for Paul's conflict? **Why** was he having this struggle; what was it about? In chapter 1, verses 28-29, we see that he warned and taught and labored and strived **in order for** them **to be mature**, Christ-like believers.

In vs 2, we see a **second** purpose—a second **goal**. Notice what it says in the beginning of the verse: "That their hearts might be comforted..." The Greek word that "that" comes from—*hina*—indicates **purpose**. It more literally means something along the lines of "in order that, for the purpose of, my goal is..."

So what was Paul's **goal**? What was the **purpose behind** the conflict he was in? **Why** was he fighting this battle? **In order that**—for the purpose that—"their hearts would be comforted..."

Before we look at what **comforted** means, I want to notice again what vs 2 says (read). Not sure about you, but this verse seems to fit what **Peter** called some of Paul's writings in II Peter 3:16 "in which are some things hard to be understood!" To a certain degree, the verse is made up of four phrases that seem **almost random**—and it is hard to see how they **relate to one another**.

And because it is hard to see how they **relate** to one another, commentators differ on how some of the words are **translated**—and what the **verses mean**.

Now for a disclaimer. Please know that I do not **bring up the Greek** to impress anyone. In reality, I know **just enough Greek** to make myself dangerous! And **the last thing** I want any of you **to say**—or **think**—is "**I'm not going to read** or study the Bible anymore because I don't understand it because **I don't know Greek!**"

Please **don't think** that way!

The flip side, though, is that there are times when we come across verses like these that are **confusing**—and part of the confusion is because of the **translation**. Remember, the **original writings** were inspired—but **man's translations** of the original writings are not. So when we come across verses like this while going through a book like Colossians, I as a pastor have **one of three options**.

- 1) Don't comment on what is confusing and just "skip it"—kind of like commentaries often times do!
- 2) Or, stick with the King James Version and explain what the **words say**—even when I'm convinced that the words **could have been** translated better...
- 3) Or, do my best to understand what **the words** in the verses mean—in the original and based on context—then **explain that meaning** to you. And this **third** option is really the **only option** for me!

Speaking of context, notice what it says in verse 3. Paul is emphasizing that **Christ is all you need**; in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That is important to keep in mind as we look at vs 2.

Now vs 4. Here Paul reminds them that there are men who want to **deceive them** with persuasive words. And we know from vs 8, that they use philosophy and the traditions of men to **pull them away from Christ**. In a nutshell, the deceivers suggest that **Christ is not enough**. And because He is not enough, they say, you have **to do certain things** to get **special insight** in order to understand the deep things—the mysteries of God. So we need to keep these things in mind in order to best understand vs 2.

And that brings us to... A. The meaning of "comforted"

Paul's conflict—his struggle—for the Colossian and Laodicean believers—was for the purpose that their heart **be comforted**. But what does that **mean**? And **why** did their hearts need to be comforted?

"Comforted" comes from the Greek word "pah-rah-kah-LEH-oh" which has four different meanings:

- 1) Admonish, exhort; 2) beg, entreat; 3) to console, comfort; 4) encourage, strengthen.

When we hear the word "comfort," we usually think of one person **trying to cheer someone up** who is going through a difficult time. It is often used in the Bible in connection **with persecution**. But the Colossian believers **weren't under persecution** and didn't need to be comforted in that sense! What did they need?

They needed **encouragement**—they needed to **be strengthened**—to **fight against the teaching** that Christ is not enough! So "strengthened" fits the context better than "comfort" or "console."

The goal, then, was for them to have **strengthened hearts**—and the way for that to happen was “being knit together in love...”

B. The meaning of being “knit together”

So once again, we have to look at what “knit together” means and see if that is the best translation based on the context. The Greek word that “knit together” comes from is “soom-bee-BAH-zo.” And just like “comforted,” it has more than one meaning. It can mean: 1) to put together, unite together; 2) to conclude; 3) to demonstrate, prove; 4) to teach, to instruct.

Is **knit together**—united together in love—the best translation? Probably not! **Why?** Because up to this point, Paul has not mentioned **divisions or factions or fighting!** Later—in Colossians 3:8—he instructs them to put off anger and malice, but in the **immediate context** he is warning them against **false teachers** and their **need to be strengthened in their hearts** against them. So “having been **instructed** in love” makes the most sense—especially when the context has words like “understanding,” “wisdom,” and “knowledge.”

So here’s what we have so far: Paul had a conflict—he was in a battle for them—with the goal that their hearts would be strengthened—having been instructed in love.

C. The meaning of “instructed in love”

Did Paul instruct them—did he **teach** them—because **he loved them**? Of course—even though he didn’t know them! That’s why he **warned** them, too! But...it is also could mean that **love is what** he taught them **about!** **Ephesians 3:17-19** “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being **rooted and grounded in love**,¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And **to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Lastly, let’s consider... **3. Paul’s conviction**

Verse 2 again: Paul’s goal was that their hearts would be strengthened, having been instructed in love, “and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding...”

Is Paul saying that they were **instructed in two** things—love and the riches of full assurance—or that they were instructed in **one thing**—love—which **resulted in** them having a full assurance of understanding? Although **I’m not 100%** sure, I believe he instructed them in **two things**—love and the riches of full assurance.

But here’s what we **do know for sure**: Paul was convinced that **there were riches** of the full assurance of understanding! Great...but what does **that** mean?

A. Riches of the full assurance of understanding

Notice what Paul is doing here. **Is it good** to have an understanding of what we have in Christ? Of course!

But **merely understanding** is nothing compared to having **a full assurance** of understanding—a **conviction** of what we have in Christ. Maybe **this illustration** will help. If you are indeed born-again, think back on what your **understanding** was when you first trusted Christ.

You understood and agreed with God that you **were a sinner**—and you understood and agreed with God that **your sin disqualified you** from heaven. You also understood and agreed with God that you **could not save yourself**. But then—praise God—you heard the **gospel message!** You heard that God—in the person of Jesus—left heaven and came to earth and lived a perfect life. And then you learned that **Jesus died**—for you!

God took the **penalty for your sin** on Himself when Jesus died in your place. In other words, God paid **your penalty for you**—not because you deserved it, but because **He loved you!** What a gift!

And then you learned that that gift **could become yours** when you received it in simple faith—and that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!” So you did just that—you **called on the name** of the Lord and were **saved, forever**, from the penalty of your sins!

But many of you—like a **fawn or calf standing up** for the first time—had “wobbly legs” of faith. Maybe it was because that **feeling of joy** that you first had started to fade away. Or maybe it was because you sinned and Satan whispered in your ear, “How can you **possibly be saved**—God’s children don’t do that!” Or maybe you began to have doubts like, “What if I **did it** wrong?”

But God's Word is true, isn't it? And **Romans 10:17** says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And as you **read the Bible**—and came to church and **heard messages** from God's Word—your faith grew. Your "wobbly legs of faith" grew stronger and many doubts began to disappear.

Why? Because **your understanding** of who Christ is—and what He did—grew! The **truth didn't change**—you just grew in understanding the truth—and the conviction of the **truthfulness of the truth!** So understanding is good—but **the full assurance of understanding** is better. Why? Because of the **riches—spiritual**, not physical—that full assurance brings!

So Paul had a conviction that there were riches in the full assurance of understanding—and that is why he battled—he intensely struggled—to instruct them! That **wasn't the only** conviction Paul had, though.

Paul's **second conviction** was this: if you were instructed in love and the riches of full assurance of understanding, a particular result would follow. **B. The result: true knowledge of God's mystery—Christ!**

Notice what it says in the middle of vs 2: "to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God..." The word that "acknowledgement" is translated from is the same word translated **knowledge** in vss 9 and 10. It can mean "discernment" and "recognition;" it can also mean "precise and correct knowledge." That is what I believe it means here.

What is the **correct knowledge** about the mystery of God? We saw the word "mystery" back in vs 27 and we know from the context that "mystery" means something that was previously hidden that God has now revealed.

The "mystery" in vs 27 was that Christ—through the Holy Spirit—**indwelt them** as believers. The mystery here in vs 2 **is different**. It is called the **mystery of God**. **What** is the mystery of God? **Christ**—and that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!"

Please know that "hid" does not mean "unfindable"—it means they are stored up in one place: Christ!

Think of the wisdom of God that is in Christ in regard to **salvation**.

--Man is sinful; God is holy and cannot **look** on sin

--God is also just—He is righteous and cannot **ignore** sin. It must be paid for—and the penalty is eternal separation

--But God loves mankind and created them to have fellowship with Him—not be eternally separated from Him

--So the plan of salvation requires that sin be paid for

--But... if **man** could pay for their sin, pride would creep in—and heaven would cease to be heaven

--So the plan of salvation requires that sin be paid for—by death—by Someone who had never sinned.

Why? Because if they had sinned, they would be dying for **their** sins and could not be a substitute!

--Enter Emmanuel—God with us! **As God**, He lived a perfect life! **As man**, He could die as our Substitute!

I Peter 3:18 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

--But not only is our sin laid on Jesus—Jesus' perfectness is credited to us!

You're in Colossians 2, notice what it says in Colossians 3:3. As far as God is concerned, **He sees Christ** when He looks at you—you are hid in Christ!

But the treasure of the wisdom of God in Christ doesn't end with **salvation**, does it? It also extends to **sanctification**—growing in Christ-likeness. And just like we cannot **save ourselves** by our own efforts, we cannot **sanctify ourselves** by our own efforts.

Paul makes that clear in **Galatians 3:2-3** "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Rhetorical question, right? They received the Holy Spirit when they trusted Christ as their Savior—and that was **by faith!**

And then Paul asks in verse 3: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" In other words, 'You were **saved** by faith, and the only way you are going to be made perfect—meaning mature—is to live by faith!'

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Much more could be said, but try to wrap your mind around this:

1) God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor 5:19)

2) Christ is in us, Colossians 1:27

3) And we are in Christ, Colossians 3:3

--Is it any wonder Paul said in Colossians 2:3 "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?"

--And is it any wonder Paul said in **Romans 11:33** "O the **depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

I want to close with another quote from J. Hampton Keathley III: *"The greatest wealth a person can possess is the knowledge of Christ and the assurance it gives regarding eternal life and how to live in the power of His exchanged life. People look in all sorts of places for meaning, significance, and happiness, but they are looking in all the wrong places unless it is sought in Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...."*

Christ is **all we need**—and He is **more than** we need! Do you have Him? Is He yours?

Are you looking to Him not only for eternal life, but also for happiness, meaning, and significance?

What is it that God would have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, do you have Christ? **Knowing about** Him is not enough—you need to **possess** Him. I John 5:12 "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

2. Second—if you are a child of God—are you looking to Christ as your source of joy...and meaning...and strength...and wisdom! Imagine being given a treasure box—with all the riches of knowledge and wisdom—and you never bothering to open it!

Christ is God's treasure box to us!