

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS 2:1-7, *PERSEVERE IN THE FAITH*

- A. Paul encouraged the Colossians to persevere in their faith in Christ (1-5)
1. He was concerned for those he had not met (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,*
 - a. The false teachers were pushing their views throughout the Lycus Valley, which included Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis.
 - b. He struggled spiritually on behalf of those he had never met.
 - 1) It surely included intense prayer on their behalf, Colossians 4:12, *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.*
 - 2) It included doctrinal instruction as he continually warned Christians to beware of false teaching.
 - a) Romans 16:17-18, *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*
 - b) 2 Timothy 4:3-4, *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
 - c) 1 John 4:1, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*
 - c. Comments concerning heresy
 - 1) J. McGee, *Paul saw that there was a grave danger in Colosse and in Laodicea, and it caused great conflict in the heart of the apostle. They were in danger of going off in one of two directions. There is still such danger, and we need a lot of agonizing prayer for the church today.*
 - 2) Max Anders, *How can we learn to recognize deception when it is intentionally cloaked in the appearance of truth? Here is how that problem is handled in the banking industry. Bank tellers attend a training class to learn how to identify counterfeit money. During the entire course of training they never study a counterfeit bill. Instead, they spend all their time studying the genuine article. They learn to recognize the texture of the paper, the colors of the ink, the clarity of the images, and the design of the bill. When they finish their training, the tellers have such an intimate knowledge of authentic currency that counterfeits are obvious by comparison.*

We can learn to recognize false teaching in much the same way. If we devote ourselves to studying the genuine article, the truth of Scripture, then we don't need to know the particulars of every heresy we encounter. An intimate knowledge of the Word of God is the only defense we need against all the different deceptions in our world.
 2. Paul's purpose in writing was to encourage them to fully know Christ (2-3),
 - a. Paul wrote how believers can avoid being deceived by false teachers (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,*
 - 1) They needed to be encouraged in their faith, Colossians 4:8.
 - a) *heart* means *their entire being*, Colossians 4:8, *I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts,*
 - b) *encouraged* has the meaning of *strengthened* so they could stand strong against false teaching.
 - c) T. Constable, *The Christian's wealth is his or her thorough understanding of God's truth.*
 - 2) Spiritual encouragement grows as Christians are united in love and settled in their understanding of the truth.
 - a) *knit together in love*
 - 1] Colossians 3:14, *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*
 - 2] M. Anders, *Unity and solidarity create strength. False teaching is naturally divisive. A person left alone, with no support, is much more vulnerable than a cohesive unit.*
 - 3] J. McGee, *The bond that unites believers is love. It is the cement that holds us together—it is the Elmer's glue of the church.*

- b) *the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery*
 - 1] *full assurance is certainty, confidence based on understanding the truth.*
 - 2] *understanding is quick comprehension, Luke 2:47, And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.*
 - 3] *knowledge of God's mystery, J. Robinson, ...knowledge directed toward a particular object, perceiving, discerning whereas knowledge (in verse 3) is in the abstract (in general).*
- b. Paul stated that the mystery is Christ and that in Him are all wisdom and knowledge (3), ***which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***
- 1) The ultimate mystery which was being revealed is Christ Himself,
 - a) T. Constable, *The better a Christian understands God's true revelation concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ the better he or she will be able to recognize and refute false doctrine.*
 - b) Other explanations for the mystery are subordinate to Christ.
 - 1] The mystery is the Church, Colossians 1:26.
 - 2] The mystery is Christ indwelling believers.
 - 2) Here, wisdom and knowledge concern facts, doctrine because all truth is sourced in Christ.
 - a) *hidden* but now being revealed through the Gospel, Mark 4:22, *For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.*
 - b) *treasures* mean a *place of safekeeping*. Here the repository of wisdom and knowledge is Christ.
 - c) G. Osborne, *Christ is God's storehouse, the repository of the heavenly treasures about to be dispersed or revealed to his people.*
3. Paul taught them on the supremacy of Christ so they would not be deceived by false teachers (4), ***I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.***
- a. Only full knowledge and wisdom found only in Christ can keep a believer from being deceived.
 - 1) Ephesians 5:6, *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*
 - 2) Romans 16:18, *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*
 - b. He told them that the purpose of false teachers is to *delude* them.
 - 1) *Delude* means to *deceive by false reasoning*.
 - 2) *Delude* is used here and in James 1:22, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*
 - c. He warned them that the method used to deceive Christians were *plausible arguments*.
 - 1) Only time it is used in New Testament, *persuasiveness of speech*, well-constructed but false arguments.
 - 2) M. Anders, *We need to be careful of lies that come all dressed up in persuasive speech when all they do is hide naked error.*
4. His absence did not keep him from knowing of their maturing spiritual condition (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.***
- a. Christians are not separated by distance but bound together by their faith in Christ.
 - 1) Paul was in prison in Rome but that did not keep him from praying for them, instructing them by letter, giving oversight through his apostolic authority.
 - 2) G. Osborne, *The phrase "present in spirit" could mean that he is with them via the Holy Spirit or that he is with them spiritually through prayer and Christian concern; likely his meaning contains nuances of both.*
 - b. Paul was thrilled to know that they were standing firm in their Christian faith.
 - 1) *good order*
 - a) The word pictures troops prepared to serve.
 - b) T. Constable, *Paul's description of the Colossian church pictures a company of well-disciplined soldiers standing at attention in straight lines.*
 - 2) *firmness*
 - a) It is only here in the NT and carries the meaning of *inner strength, stability, solid foundation*.
 - b) A military metaphor continues with their faith represented as a solid front.
 - 3) Paul described their faith as soldiers who had not broken rank and defected to false teaching.

- B. Paul urged the Colossians to live what they believed (6-7), *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.*
1. *Therefore*
 - a. Paul looked back to Colossians 1:15-2:5 which focused on doctrinal instruction.
 - b. He reminded the Colossians that they had not defected from Christ Who is supreme.
 2. Paul encouraged them to live what they believed about *Christ Jesus the Lord*.
 - a. He is Christ, fully God.
 - b. He is Jesus, fully man.
 - c. He is Lord, sovereign over all.
 3. Paul gave characteristics of Christians who live what they believe.
 - a. *rooted*
 - 1) It means to have a firm foundation and looks back to when we were joined to Christ, receiving life in Him.
 - 2) M. Anders, *Christians are not to be tumbleweeds with no roots, blown about by every wind of doctrine. We avoid this when we are firmly rooted in Jesus Christ.*
 - b. *built up*
 - 1) It pictures the Christian life like a structure being built on a solid foundation, Christ.
 - 2) Jude 20, *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,*
 - 3) M. Anders, *We have no need to seek secret or "higher" knowledge. We are to grow in knowledge of the truth already revealed in Christ.*
 - c. *established*
 - 1) It means to make firm, strengthen.
 - 2) Our faith in Christ strengthens as walk in Him.
 - 3) F. Meyer, *Christ is the ground for the roots below, and the foundation for the building above.*
 - d. *just as you were taught*
 - 1) The supremacy of Christ was emphasized by those who proclaimed the Gospel to them.
 - a) Colossians 1:7, *just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf*
 - b) 1 Thessalonians 4:1, *Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.*
 - 2) M. Anders, *We have no need to seek secret or "higher" knowledge. We are to grow in knowledge of the truth already revealed in Christ.*
 - e. *abounding in thanksgiving*
 - 1) 1Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
 - 2) M. Anders, *A thankful believer is not easily led away from Christ. A discontented, grumbling, whiny believer, however, will be easy prey for false teachers who are more than willing to offer "just what you've been missing."*
 - 3) W. Wiersbe, *A thankful spirit is a mark of Christian maturity. When a believer is abounding in thanksgiving, he is really making progress!*
 4. J. McGee, *A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience and you take off like a rocket going out into space. That's not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it is in your home, in your office, in the schoolroom, on the street. The way you get around in this life is to walk. You are to walk in Christ. God grant that you and I might be joined to Him in our daily walk.*

CONCLUSION

- A. False teachers declare that there is more but Paul proclaimed that Jesus is enough.
- B. All wisdom and knowledge are stored in Christ.
- C. Christians are called to live what they believe.