

Colossians 2:1-7
Love of the Church – Part 1

1

Introduction

Just as loving parents have goals for their children, so Paul had goals for the church. He lists five of them for which he had struggled.

He desired the Colossians to be strong in heart, united in love, settled in understanding, walking in Christ, and overflowing with gratitude.

2

Colossians 2:1-7

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. ⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

3

Paul's Motivation

Colossians 2:1

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh

No one can truly serve God in the church without love.

Jesus loved the church so much that He gave His life for it. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul said that husbands should love their wives "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Paul, too, had a deep love for the church and gave his life in service to it. Paul loved the church because he loved Christ. Because of that love he could endure defections, false teachers, and personal abuse so that others could salvation (2 Tim. 2:10).

4

Paul's Motivation

Colossians 2:1

For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh

Paul's love for the church caused him to write this letter to the churches of the Lycus Valley (cf. 4:15–16). He wanted them to know of the great struggle he had on their behalf and their sister church in Laodicea, even though they had not all personally seen his face. **Paul's love was not selective**; he loved the whole church, not just those personally known by or close to him. That kind of unselfish love should characterize every believer. **Conflict** translates *agōn*, from which we get our English word *agony*. It is a different form of the same word he used in 1:29 to speak of his striving in the ministry. Paul's deep love even for those he had never met reflects his love for Christ, the Head of the church.

5

Strong in Heart

Colossians 2:2a

that their hearts may be encouraged

The basic meaning of the word translated **encouraged** means “to call alongside.” Because a person can be called alongside for many purposes, the word has a wide range of meanings. They include to entreat, appeal to, summon, comfort, exhort, or encourage. In the present context, however, it could be translated “strengthen” because the Colossians were beset by false teachers and needed strengthening rather than comfort.

When used figuratively in the Bible, the word **heart** is usually more general and refers broadly to the inner person, the center of life. It often equates specifically to the mind. The heart here is a synonym for the mind as well as the emotions.

6

Strong in Heart

Colossians 2:2a

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The emotions respond to what goes on in the heart. The way to control the emotions is through the mind. When the mind is filled with biblical truth, the emotions respond properly. For that reason the Bible counsels to **“Keep your heart** with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Scripture also says to **“guide your heart** in the way” (Prov. 23:19). Believers are to guide their hearts, that they may follow the path of pleasing God. **What fills the heart will inevitably issue in behavior.** “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” (Matt. 12:34–35).

7

Strong in Heart

Colossians 2:2a

that their hearts may be encouraged

How does one strengthen their heart? Ephesians 3:16 says, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might **through His Spirit in the inner man.**” The Spirit strengthens the hearts of those who yield their lives to His control. One of His the Holy Spirit’s names is **Helper** (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). *Helper* in the Greek is the noun form of the Greek word translated “encouraged”. The Holy Spirit is the “Strengthener” and **true inner strength comes only from being filled with the Spirit.**

Strong hearts result in a powerful Christian life. When believers are strengthened by the Spirit, Christ will dwell in their hearts, they will be rooted and grounded in love, they will know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:16–19). Then Christ, through them, will do “exceeding abundantly beyond all [they can] ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

8

United in Love

Colossians 2:2b

being knit together in love

Fervent love is the necessary balance to a strong mind. Christianity is not mindless enthusiasm, but neither is it lifeless intellectual orthodoxy.

The Greek term translated “**knit together**” means to unite or bring together. This ties back to the “**heart being encouraged or strengthened**” by defining that heart as one filled with love. Believers share a common life with love as its basis. All believers possess the same eternal life, all come to Christ in the same way, and all were placed into the Body of Christ by the same Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11–13). **The church’s unity is not organizational, but organic. Believers are “all one in Christ Jesus”** (Gal. 3:28; cf. Rom. 10:12).

9

United in Love

Colossians 2:2b

being knit together in love

The key to unity is found in Ephesians 4:3: “Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” **Preserving the unity** the Spirit has created is accomplished by being **peacemakers**. Peacemakers love each other. Such love is evident when believers put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Col. 3:12–13).

That kind of humble, practical love “is the perfect bond of unity” (Col. 3:14). Love is always linked with humility, because only humble people can love.

10

United in Love

Colossians 2:2b

being knit together in love

The apostle John also saw **Christ's offering of Himself as the supreme example of love**: "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). But since most Christians will not have the opportunity to die for others, John gives a more practical test of love: "Whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:17–18).

Loving someone is not defined by having warm feelings toward them, but by meeting their needs. The last time you made a sacrifice for someone was the last time you loved him or her. **Love is first action, then the emotions follow**. So the strengthened heart is a heart that has learned to love.

11

So What ...

Next week we will look at the Biblical Foundations we need to have strong hearts and minds.

Lets put into practice the things that we learned this week.

- Pay attention to the things you think about. Do they honor God?
- Pay attention to your actions and attitudes. They come out of your heart!
- Pay attention to the things that are going on around you. You are the hands, feet, and voice of Christ.
- Pay attention to your brothers and sisters in Christ who are tired, discouraged, and hurting. How can you show Christ's love to them?

12