Churches are moving in the direction of 'seeker sensitive' rather than displaying the supernatural power of God….If there isn't a real supernatural move of God's Spirit, there's no hope for the world.
Sid Roth

Prayer Study #474
COLOSSIANS 2
First Love Ministries, Inc. of Perry, Georgia USA

Love's Struggle

2 *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 really did love these people whom he had never seen. The word translated *conflict* in the New King James is the word *agon* from which we get the word *agony.* A better translation perhaps would be the word *struggle*. Paul's struggle for these people was a struggle in prayer. There comes a time in our spiritual journey that when there is nothing else we can do except to pray. Paul was in one of those situation for he was in prison awaiting judgment and unable to go to the Colossians to correct false teachers and to minister to these ones dear to his heart.

Added to Paul's struggle was his knowing that Nero would soon have him killed. He lived with this everyday. He knew that he had to stand strong for Jesus. If he had denied the Lord, all these young churches, which he had established or had the oversight of, would have most likely fallen. So many eyes were on him, just as eyes are on you and me to see if we will walk out what we preach and teach, for the honor of Christ, or if we will fall and deny Him.

The Marks of the Faithful Church

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.

Here we have the characteristics of a faithful church:

a. Their hearts are encouraged or perhaps better stated: *A church with courage*, which can cope with any situation. Such a church in America is the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. In spite of being the target of a heinous hate crime, they have had courage and have responded with love and forgiveness.
b. All churches should be a church where the members are united together in love. Without real love, there can be no church, for the whole of the law is based on two commandments: ***"'You shall love the LORD you God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all you mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'***

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

c. The true Church should have understanding, knowledge and wisdom. This means that the church should be able to grasp truth and persuade others to follow that truth. Part of that truth, the mystery spoken of here, is the Church. The Old Testament had revealed that Gentiles would be saved, (although the Jews did not get it.) But the mystery here is that God in the New Testament had called out a body of believers baptized by the Spirit of God into the Church or the Body of Christ. Paul says this wisdom that the body of Christ is suppose to walk in is hidden in Christ. Because of the fact that we tabernacle the Holy Spirit (1st Corinthians 3:16), and Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), we can know this wisdom, which is available to every believer.
d. The true Church will have the power to resist persuasive and deceitful teachings.
e. The true Church should have order and steadfast faith in Christ. Over and over in the New Testament the Holy Spirit emphasizes the importance of faith.
f. In the true church, life must be in Christ, and the members must walk in Christ, rooted down like a great tree and built up like a house that has been built on a strong foundation and can weather any storm.
g. The true Church should be walking in overflowing gratitude and thanksgiving for all God has done for them.

Additions to Christ

8 *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.* ***9*** *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;* ***10*** *and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

11 *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,* ***12*** *buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.* ***13*** *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,* ***14*** *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* ***15*** *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

16 *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,* ***17*** *which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.* ***18*** *Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,* ***19*** *and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.*

20 *Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic*

principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— **21** *"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"* **22** *which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?* **23** *These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

Barclay writes of this passage: "There can be no doubt that, for us, this is one of the most difficult passages Paul ever wrote. For those who heard or read it for the first time, it would be crystal clear. The trouble is that it is packed from beginning to end with allusions to the false teaching which was threatening to wreck the Colossian church. We do not know precisely what that teaching was. Therefore the allusions are obscure, and we can only guess. But every sentence and every phrase would go straight home to the minds and the hearts of the Colossians."

We do know that Paul is dealing with false teachers here. These teachers wanted the Colossians to accept "additions to Christ." In other words, they did not think that Jesus was sufficient or the unique Son of God or God the Son. They were teaching that people should also seek to know and serve other divine powers and not just Jesus. These additions to Christ including the following:

a. The addition of knowing an elaborate philosophical thought which was too difficult for the ordinary person to understand. I call

this intellectualizing the Gospel.

b. The addition of astrology and horoscopes
c. Circumcision
d. Rules and regulations about what could be eaten and drunk and what days must be observed as festivals and fasts
e. Worship of angels-They taught that Jesus was only one intermediary between God and man and that angels and other intermediaries should be worshipped as much as Jesus was worshipped.

This false teaching was a combination of Gnosticism and Judaism. The Gnostics believed that all kinds of special knowledge, beyond the Gospel, was needed for salvation.

They emphasized the intellectual knowledge and the astrology. The Jews added self-denial and rules and regulations. These two groups joined together to teach that Jesus Christ and His teaching and work were not enough for salvation.

To Paul it was unbelievable that a people who had been liberated through Christ would submit themselves to the bondage of these false teachers. This philosophy had been handed down by word of mouth and tradition, and thus was a human creation that had no basis in scripture. This philosophy was deeply rooted in astrology, and the great secular leaders of that day would not do anything without consulting the stars and planets. The Gnostics taught that they had secret knowledge to escape from the power of the stars. Paul taught that Jesus Christ was the fullness of God and was the only one who could overcome any power in the universe.

Again Paul confronts the issue of circumcision. There were two Jewish views of circumcision. One held that circumcision in itself was enough to put one right with God no matter if the person was good or bad. All that mattered was circumcision and Jewishness. The other view was that circumcision in itself was only the outward sign of an inward dedication to God. It was expected of every Jewish male, but it was not a sign of righteous living. The dedication to God did not lay in cutting the flesh, but the cutting of the flesh symbolized the cutting out of everything which was against the will of God.

Paul believed that circumcision was not necessary. It had been replaced by baptism and was offered only to adults. When the individual went down in the water, it symbolized death and a watery grave. The individual rose up out of the water as a new person living a new live, i.e. Christianity.

Paul taught that all of us dead in our sins. Because of sin, we owed a debt that we could not pay. Jesus cancelled the debt and paid the charges by dying on the cross. In His amazing mercy and grace, He cleared out sin so completely that it is as if we have never sinned. God nailed the written accusations against us to the cross. Furthermore, He stripped powers and authorities of evil of their weapons and armor, put them to an open shame, and led them captive. Sin is forgiven and evil is conquered. What more is necessary? Jesus is alone adequate.

The Gnostics believed that all matter was evil. Thus the human body was evil. Thus, Gnosticism could result either in complete immorality or in rigid self-denial. Paul deals with the latter in these last verses of this chapter. Jesus Himself had already

told us that it made no difference what people ate or drank (Matthew 15:10-20 and Mark 7:14-23). Paul is saying that foods and drink are eaten, digested, excreted from the body, and flushed down the drain.

He also tells us that all the festivals and new moon and weekly Sabbath observances are shadows of things. In other words, they are like mere pictures or photographs of the real thing. Observing these things is not wrong unless they become ritualistic. J. Vernon McGee writes: "Many of us need to get off the merry-go-round of attending seminars, adapting gimmicks, jumping through everybody's little hoop, and taking a shortcut to the abundant life. Have we really arrived? Some think they have. Let's stop carrying around a faded photograph when we have the reality-'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'"

Verses 18 and 19 again deal with the warning not to worship angels and special visions. Verses 20-23 warn us not to return to pre-cross living, which was a life filled with regulations, and not to walk in pride. McGee, commenting on this, says: It is the pride that says, "I deny myself, and I don't do these things. Just look at me. I'm really sprouting wings, and I shine my halo every morning."

Paul concludes that this false humility and ritualistically following regulations is of no value.

HE PAID A DEBT HE DID NOT OWE

He paid a debt He did not owe;
I owed a debt I could not pay;
I needed someone to wash my sins away.
And, now, I sing a brand new song,
"Amazing Grace."

Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

He paid that debt at Calvary.
He cleansed my soul and set me free.
I'm glad that Jesus did all my sins erase.
I, now, can sing a brand new song,
“Amazing Grace.”
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

One day He's coming back for me
To live with Him eternally.
Won't it be glory to see Him on that day!
I, then, will sing a brand new song,
“Amazing Grace.”
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.
Yes, Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.

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