

Paul's Struggle and the Marks of the Faithful Church

Colossians 2

May 16, 2018—Pastor Larry Powell

LOVE'S STRUGGLE

2:1 I want you to know how great a struggle I am going through for you, and for the people of Laodicea, and for all those who have never seen me face to face.

1. Here is a brief lifting of the curtain and a powerful glimpse into Paul's heart. He is going through a **struggle** for these Christians whom he had never seen but whom he loved.
2. Paul associates the Laodiceans with the Colossians, and speaks of all those who had never seen his face. He is thinking of the Christians in that group of three towns in the Lycus valley, Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colosse and **picturing** them in his mind's eye.
3. The word he uses for struggle is a vivid word; it is agon from which comes our own word **agony**. Paul is fighting a hard battle for his friends.

What then was his struggle?

4. It was a struggle in **prayer**. He must have longed to go to Colosse himself.
5. So Paul wrestled in prayer for those whom he could not see. When **time** and **distance** and **circumstance** separate us from those whom we long to help, there is always one way left to help them and that is the way of prayer.
6. For Paul, it would have been easy to play the coward and abandon the truth for the sake of **safety**.
7. If the young Churches knew that Paul had **denied** Christ, the heart would be taken from them and it would be the end of Christianity for many.
8. We do well to remember that in any situation there are those who are **watching** us; and that our action will either confirm or destroy their faith.

THE MARKS OF THE FAITHFUL CHURCH (Colossians 2:2-7)

2:2-7 My struggle is that their hearts may be encouraged, that they may be united together in love, that they may come to all the wealth of the assured ability to take the right decision in any situation, to the knowledge of that truth which only God's own may know, I mean of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

I say this so that no one may lead you into error by false reasoning with persuasive arguments. For, even if I am absent from you in the body, I am with you in spirit, happy when I see you maintaining your ranks and the solid bulwark of your faith in Christ.

So, then, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, live your life in him. Continue to remain firmly rooted, and go on being built up in him. Continue to be established more and more firmly in the faith, as you were taught it, and to overflow with thanksgiving.

9. It should be a Church of **courageous** hearts.
10. It should be a Church in which the members are knit together in **love**.
11. It should be a church equipped with every kind of **wisdom**.
12. The three words for wisdom are: **sunesis, gnosis, and sophia**.
13. So, then, the real Church will have the clear-sighted wisdom which can act for the best in any given **situation**; the wisdom which can instinctively recognize and grasp the **truth** when it sees it; and the wisdom which can make the truth intelligible to the thinking mind, and persuasively **commend** it to others.
14. The truth of Christianity is not a secret which is hidden but a secret which is **revealed**.
15. The true Church must have the power to resist **seductive** teaching.
16. The true Church should have in it a soldier's **discipline**.
17. In the true Church life must be in **Christ**.
18. The true Church holds fast to the **faith** which it has received.
19. The distinguishing mark of the true Church is an abounding and **overflowing gratitude**. Thanksgiving is the constant and characteristic note of the Christian life.
20. The Christian will always **praise** God from whom all blessings flow.

Colossians 2: 13-15 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.