The Passion of a Faithful Minister

Colossians 2:1-10

I. The apostle Paul is "troubled".

A. *"Agon"* = troubled, struggle, strive, conflict (V.1).

B. Paul is troubled and concerned for the church at Colossae.

1. A pre-Gnosticism had begun to infiltrate the church.

a. Additional knowledge was required for salvation.

b. Mystical philosophies, legalistic Judaism.

2. Bottom line— If the enemy, the Devil cannot keep us from coming to Christ, he does everything and anything to pull us away from Christ.

a. Overall the church at Colossae is doing well (Ch.1) but Satan wants to derail it.

b. The message to the Colossian church is a message for us today.

II. Paul has a plan for the church to incorporate three components for the believer: *Believe, Beware, Grow.*

A. **Believe**—To enable the church to resist and reject heresies.

1. "Heart"—Who you are, your emotions, will, intellect, reason, thoughts, etc.

a. The heart is to be confident in who Jesus is in your life.

b. The hearts of the church are to be "unified" in love—"knit together".

2. What you believe about Jesus Christ is the most important thing about you!

3. There is no essential truth outside of Jesus Christ.

4. The need for Biblical exposition in the church— *detailed explanation and interpretation of Scripture, aiming to uncover a passage's original meaning, context, and application through careful analysis.*

5. The result? To gain **full assurance of understanding unto the full knowledge of God's mystery, that is Jesus Christ Himself** (V.2).

a. Christ reveals God's truth

b. Christ gives wisdom for godly living… all of life.

c. Christ is greater than every competing philosophy.

B. **Beware**—Of being deluded by persuasive arguments.

1. Seven steps in coming to believe in falsehoods (all in V.8).

a. A desire is awakened.

b. An attractive argument is presented.

c. Trust is established.

d. Truth is mixed with error.

e. The pressure to conform.

f. Repetition increases familiarity.

g. Acceptance

C. **Grow** (Vs. 5-7).

1. The first step in growth is discipline and stability (V. 5) .

a. **Good order** and **stability** are military terms.

b. DIS-order results in instability which inhibits growth.

c. Example of good order and stability—"*Marking Time*".

d. We received Jesus Christ by faith and now walk with Him in faith (V.6).

2. In order to grow up you have to first grow down.

a. The importance of roots to the growth of a tree (V.7).

3. Four guiding principles.

a. As you received Christ (in faith) So live in Christ (in faith).

b. As you were rooted… (firmly deep into the ground)…Be built up

c. As you were taught…be established in truth.

d. All the while… overflowing in thanksgiving for what Jesus Christ has done, is doing and will do through your life as you walk in Him.

The Passion of a Faithful Minister

Colossians 2:1-12

A couple weeks ago (I mentioned this last week) I found our 2005-2006 church pictorial directory… 20 years old… it was fun to see what was happening here 20 years ago… there were pictures of this building under construction…much of the work was done by volunteers… women and children were nailing down shingles on the roof!... This was finished early in 2006…

There were pictures of our youth mission trip to Mexico… and there were pictures of some of us…had a good time looking at the pictures…For those of us in age denial take a look at what twenty years does to you!... I was shocked to see that I still wear the coat I wore in my staff picture!

The next day I sat down with it in my office and started to look at each picture….by the time I was finished I was unsettled… *I was troubled*… much has changed over these last twenty years…

Very few of the people in the pictures are here today…I figure around 60 percent of those in the directory don't attend here anymore….many, quite a few, have passed away… I wondered what this place will look like twenty years from now…how many of us will not be here because we passed on to eternity…I hope none of us are here, that the rapture indeed takes place soon…I hope the premils are right.

I wondered will the church even be here?...our times are getting fragile for Christians… looking through the pictures, there are those who moved away…probably the majority who are no longer here moved away…that was always hard to say "goodbye…but that is a characteristic of Moscow…a fairly transient college town… we hopefully get four or five years with you… then you graduate and move out to some other part of the country… families moved for all sorts of practical reasons…

Some left the church to go to another church… that's ok… it's hard to see people leave to go down the street… but they are brothers and sisters…it was troubling to see how many broken families there have been…. Several divorces scattering broken families to leave the area…

But what is really troubling are those who not only left our church but they have left the faith all together…those who professed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior…. a few even taught Sunday School...but left… not just the church… but the faith altogether… Sad but there were several of those in our directory… that I know of… probably more than I know…

That's what is really troubling…I counted five who have chosen drastic alternate lifestyles that go in the face of God's design for man and woman… sad… tragic…very troubling… the question…WHY? How did that happen?...

Death is a certainty… moving away for opportunities… leaving for another church… all that is not so troubling… but why did apparently faithful church going "Christians"… leave the faith all together?... WHY?

This is nothing new… Trinity Baptist church is not unique in this… two thousand years ago the apostle Paul was troubled… Something was bothering the apostle… Colossians 2:1

(1) For I want you to understand how great a *struggle* I have…

A great struggle… conflict… the word in Greek is agon[e] we get the word "agony" from… Paul is bothered by something…he's troubled by something…remember that long list of struggles Paul endured and lists in 2 Corinthians 11:

Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one

I've been in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from gentiles, dangers in the city…

I've been in labor and hardship… on and on… but he ends with

(28) **Apart from such external things there is the daily pressure on me of concern for ALL the churches…*I am troubled for all the churches*!**

Paul has that concern for this church at Colossae… Remember that Paul did not start this church… it appears that Epaphras started the church…Paul is in prison in Rome…he hears what's going in in the churches…ones that he personally started and this one that he didn't but is one of THE churches.

In prison he writes letters to address several problems and give encouragement along with correction…

He writes a personal letter to Philemon…then to the churches at Ephesus and Philippi and this one to the church at Colossae…and he begins by telling them he's struggling with something… he's agonizing over something in that church….something that is going on that is wrong.

I think this passage sheds light on today's church… so let's read this passage together:

Read verses 1-10

There are some new ideas infiltrating the church in Colossae and also… he says in verse 1 at Laodicea…which is only 11 miles from Colossae… you should remember the church at Laodicea from the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation…

These new ideas were a precursor of what later was to become known as Gnosticism…

Gnosticism—additional Knowledge other than the gospel of Jesus Christ was necessary for salvation: There were problems among the Christians in Colossae by accepting heretical philosophies into the church—elements of mystical and legalistic Judaism combined with this early Gnosticism…special knowledge.

2000 years later not much has changed… it may not be specifically Gnosticism as was in Colossae… but it has its similarities…. But here's the bottom line… *if the enemy… the Devil… cannot keep us from coming to Christ… he does everything and anything to pull us away from Christ.*

So many of our churches today are being derailed through "new knowledge" being added to the gospel of Jesus Christ…a "rethinking" of the Bible….redesigning God and Jesus to the culture...

Amazing when an **unbeliever** like Joe Rogan…speaking on the "wokeness" in Churches: He comment that left-leaning pastors are injecting wokeness into Christianity, promoting ideas like non-binary God or liberal interpretations of scripture….that's an observation from a non-believer!....so….

Paul would say something like this to us… **don't be ignorant of Satan's devices…**the tactics of the devil… the strategies of the devil… King James says **the wiles of the devil…** Satan is strategizing to derail you in your walk with Jesus Christ…

That's why Ephesians 6 exists… **be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength… put on the full armor of God so that you will stand firm against the SCHEMES of the devil…**

So here is this church in Colossae… basically it's doing very well… God is blessing this church…we saw that in chapter 1… God is growing this church… and Paul knows and we need to know as well… that when good things are happening in a church…Satan is going to do everything he can to derail it… he wants to destroy EVERYTHING THAT GOD IS DOING…

Before you come to Christ, Satan does everything he can to keep you from Christ… when you come to Christ he does everything he can to pull you away from the Lord… in John 10 Jesus says the **thief**… Satan, comes to do three things… to **steal, kill and destroy**… that's his strategy…

Our church has been blessed… not a week goes by that I don't think about that… but I also know that Satan HATES this church… He hates all of you who are followers of Jesus Christ… HE HATES you… and he would like nothing more than to tear this place down…

To sew discord… dissatisfaction… distraction from the gospel… to cause dissention… I know because all those things have crept in at various times…

This is for me a very convicting passage… all week I've wrestled with it… specifically verse 1… contemplating on Paul's struggle for the church… his agony over the church…a church he

has never met…yet he struggles for it… he has a huge heart for this church he's never even been with…he loves this church.

I had to search and evaluate my own heart for this church… do I have the same kind of love that Paul had for people in that church?...do I labor and agonize over this church like Paul did for all those churches he ministered to?

I love you… I pray for you… but this all convicts me…and maybe it should you as well… now, I'm not all that worried about Gnosticism in this church… but I am opening my eyes to the ways Satan tries to detract…I know I get distracted through busyness… NOT IDLENESS… but business… I get so busy doing the things of God that I don't often have time to just be WITH Him…

Where are you at?...I heard in a sermon once *if the Apostle Paul wrote you a personal letter… what is it in your life that he would be pulling out and putting in front of you*?...what is Satan's strategy in your life to pull you away from Jesus Christ?

What was starting to happen in Colossae are the beginnings of what happened in the life of those at Trinity Baptist church that left the faith over the last 20 years… not much has changed….so let's go through this so that the 2046 pictorial directory is full of pictures of people who have eternal life in heaven… dead or alive…

There is so much practical wisdom in this passage, I charted it out and came up with sixteen main points… I know that I'm pushing when I have three main points!... So I boiled it all down to three headings…three basic concerns of Paul:

Believe, Beware, Grow

Know—*I want you to KNOW something*… you need to understand it… you need to believe it…
Beware! Know that Satan is out to destroy everything you're doing for Jesus Christ…. Have your eyes open…this incorporates being able to discern false claims and doctrines that persuasive people are trying to push into your life.
Grow—Not just know something, but put it into your life and live on it and by it,…grow in it… living things grow….BUT:

Paul struggles…what's beautiful about this passage is that he doesn't dwell on the negatives…it is actually a very positive message…. he has a plan for them as well… to Believe, Beware and Grow…

1. Believe

To resist heresies in the church…you have to be able to identify what they are… and you do that by knowing what truth is…He wants the church to…Colossae and you and me and all Christians to **fully understand the gospel by having full knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ**…

Read verse 2

Make a note about the word "heart"… when we hear the word "heart"…in our western modern culture (not being used as the physical organ)… we usually understand it as being the part of us that feels things… the heart is the seat of our emotions… *Don't loose heart… you're breaking my heart…*

We make a distinction between the heart and the mind… the mind is the thinking place, the heart is the feeling place…

Back in the first century near middle east the heart was the core of one's being…when the Bible mentions the "heart" and it does over 945 times…it is referring to not only the emotions, but the very soul… a healthy heart has wisdom, emotions, good desires, reason and intelligence… the seat of your will… the place that processes your thoughts…it's who you are… "**Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life**" (Proverbs 4:23).

So Paul is saying here to the Colossians… *I'm concerned that you might have doubts in your heart as to who Jesus Christ really is…and those doubts about Jesus are going to disrupt your* ***unity****…* the way he puts it here is **being held together in love**…. *Held together* is a picture of unity…the NASB says *Knit together…* intricately woven together in a unified body…

We are as believers to be woven together in one unified body in love…. Love is what holds us together in unity…

What's going to get in our way?... what is it that will pull us apart?... jump to verse 8…

Read verse 8 (more later)

A.W. Tozer famously stated, "*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us"* (The Knowledge of the Holy)

This emphasizes that our mental image and understanding of God—whether high or low, accurate or distorted—directly influences our character, worship, ethics, and even the culture around us, Tozer argued that individuals and communities tend to move toward the God they conceive in their hearts, meaning that our beliefs about God are not abstract but actively shape our lives]

What you believe about Jesus Christ is the most important thing about you!.

So much here in just verse 2… we must take care of our hearts… we are to be in unity with one another…held together in love… Love strengthens the church body… being knit together in unity protects each part of the body against division…

And Paul mentions here "encouragement"… a body whose hearts are held together in love have great encouragement which helps each part of the body…you and me to endure the tough times…. The difficult seasons.

It begins with believing… coming to the **full knowledge of God's mystery**… remember Colossians 1?... Colossians 1:26–27 – **"The mystery that has been hidden for ages and generations but is now revealed to His saints… which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**"

Do you BELIEVE the revealed mystery of Jesus Christ? For it is Christ…verse 3

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge…. All that you need for all of life.

This is such a vital truth we must grasp… **THERE IS NO ESSENTIAL TRUTH OUTSIDE OF JESUS CHRIST!**... understanding that will protect you from falling victim to any false doctrine… any false claim… and additional insight into life outside of Christ…

There is no new truth …no new insight…no "new" teaching that supplants **the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ**….

If you are wondering why we do Bible exposition here… expository preaching… opening the Bible… going verse by verse through the easy and difficult passages… this is why!... **so that all of our hearts may be encouraged…. United together… *knit together in love*… even unto the wealth of the FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING…**you don't get full assurance of understanding with little homilies… and you certainly fall short **UNTO THE FULL KNOWLEDGE… OF GOD'S MYSTERY…THAT IS… CHRIST HIMSELF.**

Paul says in 2st Timothy 4 **[2]preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and teaching.[3]For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, REMEMBER THAT[4]and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. WHY?**

Variations of selfism… they want to have their egos fed and their sins approved, not to have their hearts cleansed and their souls saved…they only want to feel good not to be made good.

I was reading one of the plethora of articles I get via email from one of the *how to do ministry …How to grow your church*…specialists… the article said *you will have more people attend your church if you have less preaching and more music… but the music must be really good.*

If churches would remove exposition with exhortation more people would likely attend services… in other words… get rid of *detailed explanation and interpretation of Scripture, aiming to uncover a passage's original meaning, context, and application through careful analysis…***full assurance of understanding unto the full knowledge of God's mystery, that is Jesus Christ Himself.**

and bring in *paraklēsis* exhortation — "*to call alongside," meaning to encourage, urge, comfort, or plead. loving encouragement or appeal…*that's good! We all need paraklesis…it's very comforting overall… but not at the expense of solid biblical exposition… which is where we gain understanding or the full knowledge of God's mystery.

- Christ reveals God's truth
- Christ gives wisdom for godly living… all of life.
- Christ is greater than every competing philosophy.

2. Beware

Read verse 4

This goes right along with verse 8…how is a person deluded…convinced of something that is not true?...I made a study of this, this week…I spent too much time really on it… reread much of Daniel Kehman's book *Thinking fast and slow…*and a 1977 behavioral study on the Illusory truth effect… there are so many reasons, so many ways Satan gets people to believe falsehoods….

But there seems to be a common **process** as to why people **are deluded with persuasive arguments….** There is typically seven steps in coming to believe falsehoods…(all are seen in this passage!)

1. A desire is awakened—people become more receptive to an argument when it promises something they deeply want: security, acceptance, success, power, relief from guilt, spiritual fulfillment.

In Genesis 3 the serpent appeals to Eve's desire for wisdom and prospect of becoming like God.

We tend to ask *what can I gain* BEFORE asking *Is it true?*

2. An attractive argument is presented—false claims wrapped in appealing words…impressive terminology…half-truths…*promises…*verse 4 says **enticing words.**

3. Trust is established—people are more likely to believe a claim when it comes from a respected person… in 2nd Corinthians 11 Paul warns that deceptive workers can disguise themselves as servants of righteousness…

Matthew 7:15 "**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves**"

Instead of examining the evidence… you think…*I trust this person, so what they say must be true…*

4. Truth is mixed with error—this is usually the case… it might be better to say… there usually is a little truth in big errors…remember Satan with Jesus in the wilderness?... he uses scripture to tempt Jesus…

[5]Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,[6]and *said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,'He will command His angels concerning You'; and 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone…

Oh, it's in Scripture I think I'll jump!

The most dangerous lie is not always the one that sounds false, sometimes it is the one that sounds true enough to keep us from examining it.

5. The pressure to conform—you accept something as true because everyone around you believes it…or you deny the truth because everyone around you denies it… **Peter denied Jesus three times.** *Hey, I don't know this man, I'm with you people…*

Being accepted and belonging to a group is more important than carefully evaluating the truth.

6. Repetition increases familiarity—this is known as *the illusory truth effect…* when you repeatedly hear a statement, the more believable it becomes… even when evidence says otherwise…

Repetition makes a claim easier to recognize and process in the brain… —after people commit themselves publicly or emotionally to a belief…to admit they are wrong can feel humiliating and threatening… too much has been invested in the belief to go back now…

7. Acceptance.

All of these steps are implied in verse 8… False teachers come along to the church at Colossae and *appeal to their desires* to have complete knowledge… they have Christ… but there's more…*there's more knowledge to gain that will give you a satisfying life*.

So they deliver *attractive arguments* for this additional available knowledge… with the goal of taking them *captive* in this new thought…so they *attempted to gain their trust* in making false promises…. through **philosophy and empty deception**… lies… false promises… all this is *truth,* Jesus Christ, *mixed with error*…

According **to the tradition of men** *social pressure reinforces the claim…***according to the elementary principles of the world…** the stuff the world, everybody believes!... the message is repeated, and repeated, and it is having a devastating effect on the church.

3. Grow

Going back to verse 5… the first step in growth… spiritual growth to combat the schemes of the devil… is stability… you can't grow in Christ unless you are stable… firm in your faith.

Read verse 5

Yes, false teaching has been influencing the church at Colossae… but they are stable, firm in their faith…"**Good order**" and "**stability" of your faith**…. Both are military terms… DIS-order results in instability which inhibits growth… the picture of all standing together for the truth…this knitted group of believers… the church.

All in step together…literally a picture of soldiers standing in formation making a solid united front…you can picture a marching band… all in step… marching together at the same drum beat…. Someone marching to their own beat is devastating to a marching band…even when the band isn't going anywhere… they still are all together.

I was confirming with one of our College students this idea I heard called "**Marking Time**" in a Band

In marching band, "marking time" is the controlled in-place marching step used to keep tempo, maintain formation, and prepare for movement when the band starts advancing

Marking time allows the ensemble to stay musically and visually synchronized without moving forward.

Preserve Formation – It ensures spacing, alignment, and visual uniformity remain consistent while the corps is stationary

Support Musicality – Players can continue playing while marking time, keeping sound and phrasing intact

Why It Matters

Without marking time, the band would lose cohesion when stopping or changing direction. It's a small motion with big impact—keeping the ensemble tight musically and visually when movement pauses .

In short, marking time is the marching band's "pause" step: it keeps the music, formation, and drill in perfect sync when the band is not moving forward.

Knowing the truth…Believing in the truth… the full mystery of God which is Christ Himself… standing strong together in good order and stability in faith…knitted together in love…. But growth is more than stability…

Read verses 6

How did we all receive Christ?...through faith…we received Him as Savior…We acknowledge Him as Lord… we then submit our lives to His authority… ***we received Jesus Christ by faith and now walk with Him in faith***…

Read verse 7

I love this… **in order to grow up you have to first grow down…**

Paul takes us to the garden for an illustration… For a tree to be grow and be established into a tall healthy tree… it must have deep roots into the ground…

We have this very precarious tree next to our driveway… 25 years ago when we moved into the house it was precarious… it's a large fir tree about 6 feet in diameter at the base… it comes out of the ground then makes a sharp left turn above the drive way…

Basically it is a massive leaning tree… maybe 65 degree angle… it looks as though it could fall over at any time… it has grown about 25 feet higher since we moved there… We never parked our cars under this tree!...I am constantly amazed it hasn't fallen down…

The only reason it hasn't is because it must have amazing deep roots….**STRONG ROOTS STABALIZE GROWTH**… This tree is frightening… but it is **firmly rooted…** If we are going to grow in our Christian life… we must be firmly rooted in God's Word… If we are going to grow in Christ…. We must be firmly rooted in Jesus Christl….

DEEP ROOTS IN CHRIST STRENGHTN AND SUPPORT US AGAINST THE PREVAILING WINDS OF PERSUASION… -- Chuck Swindoll.

So… four very important guiding principles for us..

1. As you received Christ (in faith) So live in Christ (in faith).

2. As you were rooted… (firmly deep into the ground)…Be built up

3. As you were taught…be established in truth.

4. All the while… overflowing in thanksgiving for what Jesus Christ has done, is doing and will do through your life as you walk in Him.