

Colossians ALC Winter 2018-2019

Class Four: December 23, 2019 // In Whom All Wisdom Is Hidden // Colossians 2:1-7

- I. **I want your hearts encouraged** (2:1-3)
- A. I want you to know the struggle I have undergone for you (v. 1)
Paul may have two things in mind.
One is his overall suffering for the gospel (Eph. 3:13). *“When you realize the imprisonment, agony, torture, rejection, and insults I have undergone for you to hear the Gospel, hopefully you realize that you matter a great deal to God.”* (For example, leading up to his present imprisonment: Acts 21:30 – dragged out of the temple, 21:32 - beating him, 21:33 – bound in chains, 22:24-25 – prepared to be scourged with whips, Acts 23 – examined before the Council, 23:10 – in danger of being torn to pieces, 23:12-13 – 40 men swore an oath to not eat or drink until killing him, 23:22-23 – “escorted” by 470 soldiers to Caesarea, and of course, see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28).
But the other, and perhaps his main meaning, is the agony of prayer he has undergone for them, mentioned in 1:3, along with Epaphras’ prayer in 4:12. He prays because he knows they’re in danger of losing a Christ-first focus. (See also 2 Cor. 11:28.)
- B. That your hearts will be encouraged and knit together in love (v. 2a)
Knowing you are worth this struggle, I hope your hearts will be edified and you will grow in interdependent love for each other, resulting in the kind of unity that makes you able to persevere. We are reminded that when we wrestle in prayer for those for whom we care, it encourages them and it increases our love for/connection to them. Sometimes we can lose heart when we pray, because we don’t see the changes we have prayed for. Paul’s example here, and Epaphras’, encourage us not to make light of our prayer.
- C. That you may have the full assurance of understanding (v. 2b)
When we pray for each other, it ought not only be for circumstances (e.g., *test with doctor comes out well, job they wanted happens, child prospers in her efforts*, all of which are fine to pray for), but more importantly, for one another’s grasp and understanding of the life we have been appointed to in Christ. When fully assured of the truths you have come to understand (like being in Christ, being forgiven, having enormous hope in heaven, being filled with Him who fills all in all), your faith becomes unstoppable. Full assurance empowers you – literally, puts you under *“full sail.”*
- D. **PREPARATION QUESTION: Why is it a big deal that we grow to know Christ better?**
- E. Resulting in the greater knowledge of Christ, God’s mystery (v. 2c)
The more confident you are in what you know, the more you know the sacrifices made for you so that you can know, the more you are knit together to really know and love each other, the more you also will come to really know Christ, whom to know really is life eternal (John 17:3), and whom to know leads to increasing grace, peace, life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2-3). In other words, the increased knowledge of truth, the increased care for each other mix together to result in an increased knowledge of and experience with God. And by the way, knowing God must be a big deal if Satan’s main effort in spiritual warfare in your life and mine is to keep us from it (2 Cor. 10:5).

- F. In whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (v. 3)
 The false teachers in Colossae were offering “deeper insight” which puffed people up because they thought they understood such deep things or had such confirming visions. These “God told me or showed me” messages made them influential. Paul argues against that to say, “in the knowledge of Jesus Christ such as he was presented to you in the gospel,” you will find all the wisdom and knowledge you ever need. He embodies wisdom and knowledge, since He was before all things, is over all things and created all things. When we search for clarity of mind or contentment, it is found in Christ.

II. Remain Firm in Christ (2:4-7)

- A. I wish to inoculate you against persuasive deception (v. 4)
 I emphasize Christ’s sufficiency and superiority and wisdom in Him because you are being persuasively deceived. You have people who may not mind that you’ve come to know Christ, but they want to train you in what they think is more important than that. They say their visions and knowledge give you more than the crucified, risen Christ.
- B. I rejoice in the strength of your **good discipline** and **stability of faith** in Christ (v. 5)
 The thing you have going for you more than anything is your faithful stability in Christ. Do not go past Christ. He is your stability, and those who pull off Him as the focus will actually weaken your direction, your faith and your life direction (see 2 Cor. 11:1-3).
- C. **PREPARATION QUESTION: Open Discussion**
What happened when you became a Christian? What did you become convinced of?
- D. In the same way you received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him (v. 6)
 How did you receive Jesus the Lord? What happened when you became a Christian?
- *I was convicted of my sin and God’s necessary and faithful judgment.*
 - *I was taught that the Lord Jesus took my sin and judgment on the cross and that He offered eternal life to all who would believe.*
 - *I believed that message by faith.*
 - *That was how I received the Lord Jesus.*
- E. Well, in that same way, walk. In other words, as you were saved by placing your faith – not your promises – in the Lord Jesus, walk the same way. Walk by faith in Him in the same way you were saved by believing on Him in faith. It’s not by giving something to Him but receiving something from Him.
- F. **Firmly rooted, being built up and being established** in your faith
 Paul reminds us that something has already happened to us: we were *firmly rooted* in the truth of the gospel by faith. That means we were planted in Christ all the way when we believed the gospel. He also says two other things are now happening in an ongoing way: We are being built up and we are being established in our faith. “Being built up” means we are being strengthened in Christ by exercising faith.

The “present progressive” nature of this participle emphasizes the ongoing nature of it and that all of us need that to keep happening. *Are you being built up in your faith?* Being established refers to the idea that you are becoming more and more mature.

G. Overflowing with gratitude

Paul points out that if people are being built up in their faith, and being fully established in the truth, one of the marks will be overflowing gratitude. Mark Carey showed a bunch of us in a leaders’ Bible study 15-18 years ago, how constant was the role of “giving of thanks” in all of Paul’s letters. Convicted me that I had not learned that art. I was thankful for obvious things, but had not learned yet how to give thanks for small and constant things. It is one of the *sine qua nons* (without which you can’t have it) of maturity.

III. Discussion

- A. How does seeing someone else’s hardship (and yet watching them maintain their faith) encourage your faith? How does knowing that others pray for you encourage your faith?
- B. How have you experienced your heart being encouraged and being united in love with other believers go together?
- C. Think of any area of struggle that you have right now, where you would like God to explain something or solve something or answer a certain prayer. Now, while we join with you in hoping for that, think and discuss how knowing Christ and resting in what has already been made evident to you through the gospel might give you the wisdom and understanding needed to make it through that, regardless of how Christ answers.
- D. How has your pursuit of growth in Christ at times been different than your grasp of the gospel? In what ways have you experienced “believing with faith” for justification, but striving and struggling and being frustrated for sanctification? Does this make sense?
- E. Do a little gratitude evaluation. How do you see yourself experiencing and expression gratitude? Is it usually tied to special answers to prayer or encouragements? Or do you see reasons to thank God for who He is, for what He’s already done, for His demonstrated faithfulness, for the encouragement in His word, for His forgiveness, for the food you eat and the covering you have, etc.

IV. Homework

- A. Read Chapter 1 once, Chapter 2 twice
- B. Memorize Colossians 2:6
- C. Discuss at dinner any of the questions above you can

Colossians Class Four Discussion Notes

From Item II. D. How did you receive Jesus the Lord? What happened when you became a Christian?

1. Separated from God because of my sin
2. In Christ I could be united with Him
3. God loves me so much
4. Apart from Him I can do nothing
5. Depend on Christ rather than myself
6. Became part of His Family
7. I had head knowledge only—not personal knowledge
8. Clean
9. Jesus is truly God
10. Jesus is not a concept but a real Person
11. Didn't want to die
12. God's grace
13. All my sins are forgiven
14. Jesus is stronger than my fear—He's the only way to be set free