

Lesson 18

Knit Together

For I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery—Christ. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2.1-3.

Introduction

At the time of writing Colossians, Paul had yet to visit the churches of the Lycus river valley. Yet, it is a very personal letter, tender and loving in its approach, and comprehensive in expressing his desire for what the church should be. The passage referenced above is inside a section of writing that began in the previous chapter. Paul is a servant of Jesus Christ who has been given the mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. In 1.27 he summarizes the wonder and wealth of this message, *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*. Christ lives in his redeemed church. Paul made it his central concern to make sure everyone he reached believed on Christ and then moved on to maturity, 1.28. The power of Christ sustained him in this mission, 1.29.

What was Paul's mission for the church? Verse 2 of chapter 2 explains three things. The church needs people with:

- Strong hearts.
- Hearts joined together in love.
- Settled or *complete* understanding.

Leading the Christians they work with to these points should be the goal of the shepherds, evangelists, and teachers who lead our congregations today. Our leaders have been charged to equip the saints for the work of ministry, Ephesians 4.12. Colossians 2.2 is the vision behind it. In fact, the three principles in that verse demonstrate the maturity Paul is aiming for in Ephesians 4.13. As members of the church grow in these things the more and more, they look like Christ.

Let's briefly look at the first and last parts of Colossians 2.2. Then we'll look closely at the middle part where Paul speaks of being knit together.

Strong Hearts and Settled Understanding

When Paul says *I want their hearts to be encouraged*, in 2.2, he is describing a growing strength of heart. *Encouraged* means "to call to one's side,"⁶⁵ for the purpose of strengthening, cheering up, or helping to instill someone with courage. Sometimes the struggles we face can cause us to lose heart. The *encouragement* here is not so much about our emotions as it is the development of a strong heart. Paul

⁶⁵ Bullinger, Ethelbert W. *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1908, p. 97.

wants his readers to be filled with strength so that they will be able to withstand temptation, false teachers, and the subtle influence of the world. We garner spiritual strength when we help each other fill our minds with Biblical truth. What fills the heart will manifest itself in one's behavior. Our mind must be engaged. Strong hearts equal a powerful Christian life.

Now, let's look at the end of 2.2 and see where Paul speaks of *the riches of complete understanding*. This is how we experience the truth. We do it by living it. This is how it becomes understood and settled. It is your obedience to the truth that leads to confidence and assurance. One of the most common sources of doubting salvation comes from failure to apply the truth we know. Continually applying the truth to our life hardens us against the attack of human philosophy and worldliness that can derail our spiritual journey. It is important to note that settled understanding does not equate to or condone arrogance. Nothing in our spiritual pursuit is about personal glory or achievement. Our confidence is always in Christ who has provided the knowledge and instruction, His Spirit who prepares our heart, and the strength God supplies, 1.29.

When our focus is centered on Christ: we experience *the knowledge of God's mystery – Christ. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, 2.2c-3*. The more we grow and mature in Christ, the more our understanding will become settled – allowing us to really enjoy the riches we have in Christ.

Joined Together

Now let's go back to the middle part of Colossians 2.2 and the main point of today's lesson.

Paul's desire for the church focused on how brethren are *joined together in love*. It is something passive . . . brethren are joined or knit together or framed by God. But there is more. In secular references, the wording also carries the sense of reconciliation. Not only have we been reconciled to God, but we have also been reconciled with each other.⁶⁶ It was Paul's goal that everyone in the body value every other believer, seeing them in light of their new identity in Christ. Where they came from or what they had been was now not as important as who they are in Christ.

A Common Start

Presently, all Christians share a common life with love as its basis. You share eternal life with every other believer. We all share the same start:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink, 1 Corinthians 12.13.

A Common Position

Also, we share the same position. We all have been transferred into the kingdom by the same spirit:

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, Colossians 1.13.

⁶⁶ **συμβιβάζω**. See LSJ. Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 1675.

Our unity is not based upon an organization, it is based on Christ.

A Common Experience

When Paul speaks of our having been knit together, he is also speaking of *practical experience*. It is something we must practice. God has made us one, now we must reflect that by the way we live inside our day-to-day relationships with each other. Paul instructed the Corinthians to *be mature, be encouraged, be of the same mind, be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you*, 2 Corinthians 13.11. Think of how these four things go together. Maturity. Encouragement. Unity. Peace. How do we maintain this?

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity, Colossians 3.12-14.

Did you catch verse 14? Peace with one another comes about as we love each other. Love is the basis of everything. It is sacrificial. It is meeting needs. It is humility, kindness, gentleness, and all the things listed in verse 13 in action. The story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10 is a great illustration. So is Jesus' washing the feet of the 12 in John 13. A need was observed. A need was met. Love was experienced by both the receiver and the giver.

Working Together as One

"Joined together" or "knit together in love" as used in Colossians 2.2, 19, describes how we have been united in Christ. It has been estimated that your body contains around 37 trillion individual cells. They are all knit together in one. A quick look at your arm, hand, and fingers shows how these cells are indistinguishable. They are all lost in the mass of muscle, bone, ligaments, and tissue that make up these parts of your body. All of these have been joined in such a way that the personal identity of each cell is almost lost. This does not diminish their importance, but the greater emphasis is on what they all accomplish *together*.

Now, let's make the application to the local church. We have all been brought together by God, having been reconciled to Him and to one another, and it is all held together *in love*. Love is what ties God's people together. To be knit together is every believer in the local church possessing a spirit of one mindedness.

Conclusion

When a Christian knows and applies Biblical truth it will lead to a strong heart that expresses itself in deeds of love and thus provides him with a healthy amount of confidence and assurance. Christianity is so much more than an intellectual pursuit. It is allowing its principles to guide and operate one's life. The longer we continue to do that the more we move in trust in the power of God. When we live each day inside the love of God and the love of others it fuels our conviction that we know what we are doing is right.

The beauty of Christianity is how it provides us with stability in an unstable world. You can rest in the love of Christ and His people.

For Thought and Reflection

1. What was Paul's mission for the church?
2. What role do our brothers and sisters play in our being strengthened and encouraged? How good of a job are you doing in allowing others in your life?
3. How do we get to the point where we have a settled understanding of the practice of Christianity? What leads many Christians to have a lack of assurance? How can this be fixed?
4. With what type of attitude should we view our fellow believers? What is special about the usage of the verb *joined together* in Colossians 2.2?
5. How is your body a great example of what it means to be *joined* or *knit together*?
6. How has your spiritual life provided you with stability as you have experienced the instability of our world?