

Greet everyone / my name / onliner's

Colossians 2:1-7

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. 5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

What we see here is a continuation of what we see is Paul's ministry to the church.

We touched on that last Sunday. But in this passage he goes on to explain it a little more.

He talks again about his great struggle for the church.

In this particular passage he is referring to his struggle / toil in prayer for the church.

He knows the reality that following Jesus will not be easy.

And though he would love to be with them face to face to help them. In his absence he is fighting for them. (through prayer)

What Paul is showing us is one of the transformations that happens to a person when they are captivated by Jesus.

We love what He loves. & Jesus loves his people, the church.

You can't love Jesus and hate the church.

Regardless of her condition.

Jesus loved us and prayed for us. John 17 is a whole prayer over the church. The book of Hebrews tells us he is still interceding for us / praying over us.

Likewise, disciples captivated by Jesus tend toward this same practice of laboring in prayer for God's people.

Like Jesus' prayers, Paul's prayers for the Colossians has a specific focus.

What we don't see in any of Paul's prayers for the church is for them to be healed of sickness, to get better jobs, to make more money.

Our best prayers are for Jesus to be formed in us.

Maybe that sounds like an odd idea to you.

Honestly it is, especially if you are not a Christian.

Jesus formed in you? What is he taking over you personhood, personality ...

Sounds controlling and oppressive.

But actually it isn't that odd an idea.

See, we all have people we look up to. (heroes)

Those people that are the model of what we want to become.

So, what do we do? We buy their books, or follow their twitter, or copy their workouts.

We want to learn how “they do life” so we can hopefully recreate their success for ourselves.

If you think about it honestly that “person” is being formed in you.

You are becoming more like them. // at the very least in your habits

And for Christians that is supposed to be Jesus.

That is what Paul is praying in this passage ...

Colossians 2:1-3

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It's interesting that Paul doesn't start out with "this is how Jesus is formed in you."

He starts with what WILL happen when Jesus is formed in us.

Colossians 2:2

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love,

You will lose a lot as Jesus is formed in you.

That is a provocative statement, because that scripture is about what is ADDED to us: → **Encouraged hearts, being knit together in love.**

This sounds great!

- We all want to be more secure and confident and have BFFs

But actually, there is a lot more implied here.

There is a cause and effect.

It isn't we get encouraged hearts AND BFFs

It is "Having been knit together in love" ... your hearts will be encouraged.

So it is THROUGH loving community that our hearts are encouraged, strengthened, secure.

That flies in the face of today's orthodoxy.

Community is great, but we don't need it for that.

We are told that we simply have to speak truth to ourselves, accept ourselves, and learn to love ourselves to become strong, secure ...

And it's partly right ... words/truth do have to fill our hearts in order for this to happen.

[PAUSE]

The word “encouraged” used here in the verse means to speak to / to call with instruction, comfort, admonition.

Today we are told, “You can do this for yourself.”

But the Bible says, “No! It has to come from outside of you.”

The best, most secure version of you can’t happen apart from community.

Now, we may be thinking that doesn’t sound so bad.

“I can come to church a little bit here and there and use community to get what I need.”

But it doesn’t work that way and this is where we find the costliness of it all.

This is where we start to see that to get something great like this, first you have to lose a lot.

See, the idea of community at the Christian faith is this deep commitment of unity and oneness.

Which is why Paul uses this language of hearts being knit together in love. → same picture as what God says he does in marriage. (Two entities become One).

But for the church this isn’t talking about romantic love.

This is talking about committed, covenantal, “I’m with you through thick and thin” type of love.

This type of love is less valued today.

We like romantic love, but not costly, commitment love.

And our culture is proving this passage true.

We are more individualistic than ever. We live more isolated lives.

And depression (insecurity, chaos, no comfort) is going up.

Even the non-Christian experts are pointing out that this is a result of the breakdown of community.

So why don’t we just get ourselves out of this / start pushing into community more?

[SLOW] B/C it’s easier to be individualistic.

That statement knit together in love. **(hearts knit together).**

That sounds cool / sounds poetic, but it’s a human impossibility.

Let me explain:

Our heart is the seedbed of our desires. It is the place of our will.

Consider how often people's will/desires are in sync?

A group of friends can rarely agree on where to eat at.

My wife and I like different movies, sports, hobbies.

The point is we all have competing desires / will. AND we want ours to win.

Underlying this is the belief that your desires are good, and to be happy you must fulfill them.

And that is why communal oneness (the knitting of hearts) like Paul is talking about is actually impossible to attain.

That is ... unless we are submitted and surrendered to One will.

Now, our sensibilities tell us that isn't good.

"I'm going to **lose** myself, my freedom."

But you can't have it both ways.

You can't live knit together in community AND hold on to your will.

People come to church and wonder, "1. Will I be loved; 2. Can I have it my way." / "Always 'Yes' / Always 'No'".

Jesus echoes this ...

“Whoever would hold on to their life will lose it...

BUT, whoever loses their life FOR MY SAKE ... will find it.”

See, this knitting of hearts is costly ... it’s likened to losing your life.

But we aren’t being called to a literal death ...

What we are called to die to ... what we are called to lose is our will ... not a little of it, all of it.

We are called to lay our desires down / our will down and surrender to Jesus’ will.

And that is why salvation through Jesus begins with a recognized surrender to him as Savior AND LORD.

He is both Savior that forgives my sin; AND LORD whose will I surrender to.

And when we believe and receive Jesus as Savior and LORD we are immediately knitted to Jesus’ heart.

Which means His heart becomes our heart.

God forecasted this particular part of salvation before Jesus came.

Ezekiel 11:19

And I will give them one heart, [one desire/one will]

and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

What God is promising is that through salvation in Jesus, he would transform us at the very core of who we are.

He would go after our iron will and replace it.

Christians everywhere are connected to the same heart ... Jesus' heart.

And so we are knit together in love: One desire / One will ... Jesus'.

But here is the wrestle we all have, (Christian or not).

Our hearts question, "Is it worth it?"

"Is what I gain in Jesus worth what I'm losing?"

Which is really to question, "What makes his will, better than mine?" (restate with "desires")

Now that is a good thing to consider.

What makes one person's will/desires better than another's?

We are all born with them. But they get shaped and informed along the way.

**Toddler's have a desire/will to stick forks in light sockets.
NOT GOOD!**

Parent's don't submit to their will. It's bad, uninformed ... lacks knowledge.

And as we grow, we gain more knowledge ... and our wills/desires get shaped.

Until we reach our teens and realize that we know everything.

Seriously, all of our life we learn more through experience and pursuit of knowledge.

And as we get older our will/desires are shaped as we get wiser.

Which is why wisdom is connected with age.

We think about those guys earlier in the Bible that lived more than 900 years. They were probably some wise dudes.

But they can't compare with Jesus... he is ageless.

So he isn't just kind of wise ... he doesn't just know a lot.

He IS wisdom / he IS knowledge!

Colossians 2:3

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

See what happens?

In Jesus you may feel the agony of surrender to your will.

But you realize you've gained a perfect, higher, completely informed will that is shaped by unmatched wisdom.

So in light of what you lost, you've realized you've lost nothing and gained everything.

You gain everything as Jesus is formed in you.

But these rewards aren't material.

It's not money, mansions, and Mercedes.

It is the riches of Jesus.

They are superior in every way b/c they aren't just things ...

They are a person.

Jesus gives us all of himself.

He doesn't hold back.

Which is why Paul is praying they reach all the riches that are to be found in Christ.

And here's the thing, // the longer you remain in Jesus the more you realize there is no end to how wonderful He is.

It's like experiencing perfect love, then in the next moment finding out that it was more perfect than you realized.

And that keeps repeating as Christ is formed in us.

It isn't boring ... it isn't hopeless.

It is what makes our hearts sing.

It is what we were created for.

We are called to build our lives on and around Jesus.

Colossians 2:6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

This isn't a call to earn salvation.

It is a call to remain/abide in Jesus.

Jesus can't be formed in us if we don't follow him.

These verses say there is a journey of discipleship whose end destination is the fullness of Christ.

Paul struggles in prayer that Jesus' disciples will reach that ...
"all the riches of understanding and knowing Jesus."

He wants us to "get there."

And so he tells them.

"As you received Christ Jesus the Lord ... so walk in him".

This isn't a suggestion ... this is a command.

But what does it mean to walk in Jesus?

This little idiom is a way to understand being a disciple.

In Jesus' day it was common to have Teachers/Disciples.

But the relationship wasn't like students in a classroom.

It was like an apprentice learning a trade.

Disciples not only learned from what their Teacher said ...

They learned from what their Teacher did, until their work was indistinguishable from their Teacher.

Then anyone could go to the apprentices work and see the Teacher in it.

But this could only happen as walked in the way of their Teacher.

So to walk in Christ is to learn and obey what He taught.

But it is ALSO to imitate his life. How he lived / what he did.

**And so when people look at our life, what should they see?
Jesus.**

How do we live the imitation of Christ in our lives?

It takes intentionality ...

It takes practicing the ways of Christ.

- He filled himself with Scripture.
- He prayed.
- He faithfully surrendered to the Father's will.
- He was committed to his discipling community.
- He was always present with people.

These aren't ways we earn God's favor.

These are ways we are built up in Jesus.

We get more rooted and established in our faith.

We become more confident in God's love.

We become more discerning of what is true and what is not.

So what is Jesus calling you to do today?

Consider your life ...

1. Some of us here need to surrender our will. Make Jesus Lord and Savior.

2. Some of us here need to surrender more of our will. What do people see when they look at your life? Do they see your Savior? Or something else?
3. What is the adjustment Jesus is calling you to make today?

PRAY

COMMUNION

- Come with Gratitude
- Slides on Screen
- Jesus invites us to come. We are united to him by his sacrifice (body/blood).
- We take as a public display we are remaining in him.
- We take reminding that He went to the cross in obedience to the Father's will.
- We take recommitting ourselves to surrender our will for to Jesus' will.