

Jim is on vacation this week so it is my privilege to be able to open up Gods word with you this morning. Please open your Bibles up to Colossians 2. The plan had been for me to teach as long as the baby girl didn't decide to come.

I want to remind you of some of the things we had seen last time I was able to teach in Colossians.

Paul had been preaching the gospel and the Jews wanted it to stop at any cost, so they imprisoned Paul, and he was transferred to Rome, where he spent two years under house arrest. He wrote this letter to the Colossians while He was imprisoned.

We see this in **chapter 1 verse 24** The **NLT** handles this verse best,

Colossians 1:24 NLT

(24) I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.

The Word used in this verse about Christ's afflictions (ESV) or suffering (NLT) is never used to describe Christ on the cross. Paul couldn't participate in Christ suffering on the cross.

It is not referring to His sacrifice on the cross, but to the suffering that Christ underwent on a daily basis.

This type of suffering Paul can participate in, and he is undergoing tremendous suffering for the Churches.

At the end of Chapter 1 he begins to marvel at the mystery that is Christ

Colossians 1:26-27 ESV

(26) the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

(27) To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of **the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

Christ saving gentiles and then making them apart of the body of Christ was a mystery in the Old Testament, but it has now been revealed

Paul wants us to know what our purpose is as a church. It is such a privilege for us as believers to be a part of the body of Christ we must know what our purpose is.

Colossians 1:28 ESV

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

The goal of the church is to proclaim Christ, we should be focused on Christ and teaching His word! **We do this so that all believers might mature.**

This is what Paul's ministry was focused on doing.

Colossians 1:29 ESV

(29) For this I toil, struggling with all **his** energy that he powerfully works within me.

In this verse Paul describes how we grow as believers. It sounds like it contradicts itself. He starts off by saying He toils. The Word is to agonize. He strives after maturity and helping others to be mature. But notice the key to the verse.

With all **HIS ENERGY** that **HE** powerfully works within me.

We will never grow as believers based on our own effort or strength, we don't have it in us.

It is only when we use the gifts given to us in the body of Christ, that we will grow, it is only when we let Him grow us.

That context takes us to our passage for this morning. Paul desperately wanted to see the believers grow and mature in Christ so he starts warning them about certain teachings that would hinder their growth and take their focus off of Christ.

Colossians 2:1-8 ESV

- (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.

Paul starts off in verse 1 letting the church know that he has not forgotten them.

Colossians 2:1 ESV

(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,

He wants all of the churches to understand that even though he can't stay with them and be there in person **he is struggling and laboring for them constantly.**

Listen to **2 Corinthians 11:28-29** as Paul describes this struggle.

2 Corinthians 11:28-29 ESV

(28) And, apart from other things, **there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.**

(29) Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

He is in prison for sharing the gospel to these churches and underwent beatings for the gospel but the daily pressure, the spiritual burden Paul felt for these churches was tremendous.

The word Paul uses here for pressure is that of a mob rushing towards something.

Paul was very aware that as a leader would be called to give an account for those in his care.

Jim just went over this in **Hebrews 13:17**

Hebrews 13:17

(17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, **as those who will have to give an account.** Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Paul also brought this up when he was giving final instructions to the Elders at the Church in Ephesus. In **Acts 20:28.**

Acts 20:28

(28) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, **in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,** which he obtained with his own blood.

Paul warns the elders to pay special attention to their own growth as well as the growth of the flock. He reminds them that they have been put in charge as an

overseer of something that is so precious that Christ bought it with His own blood.

Everything Paul did in his ministry was with this calling in mind. He knew he was going to give an account for the believers under his care and he desperately wanted to see them grow and reach maturity. It is what he just finished saying in **chapter 1 verses 28-29**.

Colossians 1:28 ESV

(28) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.**

This was his focus and he wanted to see the believers at Colossae grow and mature.

He brings this calling up so ...

Colossians 2:2 ESV

(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,

He wants them to be encouraged, they are not alone, they are not left to deal with these false teachers on their own, they are being supported by Paul and also by each other.

being knit together in love

There is a safety and strength in a church from false teachers.

The church is called to unity through Love.

Colossians 2:2 ESV

(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,**

He wants them to reach the full assurance of knowing Christ

The false teaching at that time said that you needed something else you needed special knowledge, special actions something extra in order to be

saved. They claimed it was a deeper mystery that was only revealed to a select group of people.

Paul wants these believers to be fully assured that God's mystery is Christ. He was partially hidden in the Old Testament but has now been revealed. Paul chose his words extremely carefully the only mystery or special knowledge is that of Jesus Christ nothing else is needed to be saved.

Acts 4:12 ESV

(12) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Salvation is only found in the name of Jesus Christ. These false teachings were trying to get the Colossians to doubt this simple truth. The same happens today. As humans we are always trying to add something to Christ or make it more difficult.

Scripture is clear salvation is found in believing in Christ, and we should have full confidence in this

This has been a common theme throughout Hebrews

Hebrews 6:11-12 ESV

(11) And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have **the full assurance** of hope until the end,

This hope is based on Jesus Christ we should be assured of this, and then he gives the purpose why it matters if we are assured or not.

(12) so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

If we are not confident that salvation rests on Christ alone we will not have the freedom and riches that the Christian life offers. You will attempt to do things out of your own strength and this will actually make you sluggish in the faith.

Hebrews 10:19-23 ESV

(19) Therefore, brothers, **since we have confidence** to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

Notice what our confidence is in, the blood of Christ not our own strength, works, abilities or knowledge.

Depending on how you finish this sentence will determine how much you can grow as a believer. If your confidence to approach God is based on anything other than the blood of Christ you will not mature because everything you will attempt will be on your own ability and not on the finished work of Christ and based on his magnificent power.

The author of Hebrews continues to describe how incredible this access is based on Christ.

- (20) by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,
 (21) and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
 (22) let us draw near with a true heart **in full assurance** of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Here it is again the same wording as back in Colossians full assurance, of faith that is based on Christ

- (23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for he who promised is faithful.**

I love this verse, we are called to hold fast to this confession, hold fast to Christ, not because we are strong enough to do so, but because **He who promised is faithful.**

Again it is not based on our strength it is based on who He is.

Story of High Ropes swing at Logan valley, we were anchored by the harness but it was so easy to focus on holding onto a little piece of rope that didn't matter. There is so much freedom when we realize it is based on He who is faithful. I can be fully assured and hold fast not due to my strength but based on His.

Paul wants to make sure the Colossians understand that Christ is all they need so he drives the point home in verse 3.

Colossians 2:2 ESV

- (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.

In Christ is all wisdom and knowledge, listen to how Paul put it in Romans chapter 11 verse 33.

Romans 11:33-36 ESV

- (33) **Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**
 (34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"
 (35) "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"
 (36) For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God's knowledge and wisdom is incredible, we cannot begin to understand it, listen to Psalm 119 marvel at the wisdom offered through Christ in His word.

Psalm 119:97-100 ESV

- (97) Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
(98) Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.
 (99) I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.
(100) I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

We don't need to turn to something else, true Wisdom is found in Christ. Yet so often we look to the World or something else for answers when they are truly found in Him.

Paul is pointing this so that they would not turn to anything else.

Colossians 2:4 ESV

- (4) I say this in order that no one may delude you with **plausible arguments**.

We should rely on Christ and not turn to Plausible arguments, the word here for plausible really is persuasive speech. It is not neutral it is enticing and on the surface it sounds right and is persuasive. Listen to the verse in the NLT

Colossians 2:4 NLT

I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with **well-crafted arguments**.

These are the beliefs that aren't Biblical, they aren't true but when you first here them they sound right.

An example from my own life of a plausible argument that I believed for too long was in the story of Cain and Abel. Listen to Genesis 4 to refresh the story in our minds.

Genesis 4:3-8ESV

- (3) In the course of **time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,**
- (4) and **Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.** And the **LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,**
- (5) but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.
- (6) The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"
- (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."
- (8) Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

The most important part of the story is why was Abel accepted and Cain not? What made Abel's sacrifice better?

I have always heard this passage taught that Cain wasn't accepted because he brought his leftovers to God. Abel on the other hand brought the best He had. The application then is bring your best to God, your left over mushy fruit is not acceptable to God He wants and deserves our best.

I could even back this up by trying to make the case that Cain and Abel had never been told they needed to offer sacrifices. Based on Genesis 1-4 God hadn't given instructions yet (that we have recorded) of how they were to worship Him.

All of that can sound plausible, it can sound right, but what is so dangerous, and again this is one example, is that that teaching is heresy.

This clicked for me in a new way when Scott Vachon taught through this passage at High School camp. God never accepts our best.

Sin is only forgiven when blood is shed.

Hebrews 9:22 ESV

(22) Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**

To teach that Cain would have been accepted if he brought his best means that we can work our way to God, that we have the power and effort to be accept based on who we are.

This is completely wrong Abel was accepted because of the blood of his sacrifice pointed forward to the blood of Jesus Christ.

We must be careful when we let plausible argument seep into our thinking. These arguments take our focus and trust off of Christ and instead make us trust in ourselves or human effort.

This was Paul's biggest worry for the churches that he left, that they would fall into, and be deluded by plausible arguments that seem right but are actually lies. Listen to his warning to the Ephesian Elders as he is about to leave them.

Act 20:29-32

(29) I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

(30) and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Notice the attack can come from either side, from without, and from within

(31) Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years **I did not cease night or day to admonish** every one with tears.

The response is not to be worried, He doesn't say sit there in fear and cringe that there is false teaching, he say the opposite, He reminds them that he never stopped teaching the Word and they are called to the same thing.

(32) And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able **to build you up** and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. He finally trust them into the hands of God, and into the word of His grace. Notice that it is able to build you up, strengthen the church so that it would not crumble under the false teachings.

They needed to remain focused on God and teaching His Word so that these false teachers wouldn't unsettle them.

Paul gives the Colossians a similar encouragement in verse 5 of Colossians 2

Colossians 2:5 ESV

- (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.**

He encourages the believers that so far they hadn't given into any of these false teachings, they hadn't let them slip in unnoticed, and he rejoices in their firmness in Christ.

He then gives a command it is the response, the call to action

Colossians 2:6-7 ESV

- (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.

Following this command will keep you from falling into false teaching and keep you from focusing on human effort.

Colossians 2:6 ESV

- (6) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

The application is actually very straightforward. If you started the Christian walk by resting fully on His grace, and being saved by believing in Him and trusting in His power, then continue in that.

We are called to live out the Christian life in the same manner that it started based on Grace, based on His Spirit working in us.

Listen to how Paul puts it to the Galatian believers

Galatians 3:1-3 ESV NP

Galatians 3:1-3 ESV

- (1) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.
- (2) Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
- (3) Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

This question is cutting. Paul asks them having started the Christian life based on God's grace and letting His spirit work in you, then what made you think that you would grow on your own strength?

If you didn't have the **power to save yourself** the how would you have **the power to grow yourself?**

It makes no sense but so often this is how we approach the Christian walk. We don't rely on the Spirit and His power and let grace work through us, instead we bring everything back to our strength and ability and **what we can do. Instead of what God can do in us!**

Colossians 2:6-7 ESV

- (6) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

(when we do this we are)

- (7) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Notice the mix of metaphors that he uses.

A tree being rooted, established, sending roots in deep so that it will not be toppled over, and as the roots go deep they nourish the tree more and more.

And a building being built up on a firm foundation that will not move.

When we continue to walk in His power relying on His Spirit it will keep us from relaying on ourselves. The two are at odds with each other.

Ephesians 4:11-15 ESV

- (11) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
 (12) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **for building up the body of Christ,**
 (13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to **mature manhood,** to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
 (14) so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
 (15) Rather, **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Colossians 2:6-7 ESV

- (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.

Galatians 5:16-23

- (16) But I say, **walk by the Spirit,** and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
 (17) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.
 (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
 (19) **Now the works of the flesh are evident:** sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,
 (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,
 (21) envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 (22) **But the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
 (23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 2:20 ESV

- (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.