

Message #8

Colossians 2:1-7

I have told my secretary, Lynn, on many occasions (which she can verify for you) that one reason she is my secretary is so that I can blame everything that goes wrong on her. For 12-13 years she has learned to live with that hanging over her head.

That reminds me of a story I read one time of a secretary who was totally stressed out because of the pressure and stress at work. So she said to her boss—"When this rush and pressure is all over, I am going to have a nervous breakdown. I have earned it. I deserve it and nobody is going to stop me from having it or take it from me."

If you want to see someone who was truly under constant pressure and stress, track the life of the Apostle Paul. He went from one nightmarish situation to another. He went from one struggle and conflict to another struggle and conflict. It was relentless.

The reason that he went through this was because he was an Apostle of God who was devoted to Jesus Christ and devoted to communicating the Truth of God to the churches. He was not in conflict due to him, but due to his ministry to churches like the church in Colossae.

In fact, what we see here is this:

THE REASON WHY PAUL KEPT STRUGGLING TO MINISTER TO CHURCHES HE HAD NEVER EVEN BEEN WAS BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT ASSURANCE AND KNOWLEDGE AND TRUE SPIRITUALITY COMES FROM KNOWING TRUTH.

I don't know when Paul reached his lowest point in ministry, but I do know mine. The lowest point I have ever had in ministry was in 1991. I have never been as low as I was then. I want to read you something I wrote on April 26, 1991.

"Today is Friday, April 26, 1991. I have just driven 25 miles to a Baker's Square Restaurant to have lunch by myself. I am tired of people, problems and pressures. I have come to the point where ministry seems to no longer be a blessing but a burden to me. On my way here, I passed one of my sheep and I didn't even want to wave. I am totally fatigued and depressed. God is not the problem, I am the problem. I have given of myself, my goals, my ambitions and I am tired. I have tried to stay faithful to God and am not in any known sin. I read my Bible and pray every morning. I spend hours a week in study. I try to visit the sick in the hospital, share Jesus Christ with the lost, attend meetings at the church. I give Biblical counsel to the distressed. But at this point, I feel as if I am going through motions. My heart is not in it, so here I sit, in this restaurant writing these thoughts on a Kleenex. Frankly, I don't know how much longer I can go on."

That was my lowest point in 45 years of ministry. I am not proud of that, but that is where I was and that is what I wrote.

Now the thing that snapped me out of that were two men, John Miles and Harold Kregel. I had actually driven to Grand Rapids to see about the possibility of going back into sales. Harold Kregel took me in his office and said you have been given a gift and have a higher calling than this, so you keep at studying and preaching God's word. Feed the people of God, His word. They need the teaching you can give them.

I have never experienced anything like the Apostle Paul experienced. I am certain I could not have coped with what he did. I am not sure any other person could cope with what Paul did. Paul was locked up in jail at the time he wrote this letter and he is writing this letter to a church of people he has never met.

What kept Paul going? How in the world did he keep so positive when he himself was experiencing one negative thing after another? **He had a passion to teach people the truth.**

Now look at **verse 1**, Paul says I want you to know how great a struggle I have had. That word "struggle" is the Greek word from which we get our English word "agonize" or "agony." It refers to something that is a great struggle and causes anguish (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 8). Paul's ministry was emotionally and mentally and physically draining!

The word was used in the Bible in reference to an intense contest such as running a foot race (Heb. 12:1) and being in a boxing match (II Tim. 4:7). The ministry for Paul was grueling and he wanted the Colossians to know that. But he kept going for the people of God.

Understand this point. At the time Paul writes this book of Colossians, he is the only Apostle on earth who has been called by God and gifted by God to unlock the dispensational truth about the Grace of God. If he quits, the grace gospel is in jeopardy of being lost in a world of religion.

Now two churches that were in close proximity to each other were the Colossian church and the Laodicea church. In fact, from Laodicea you can look across the valley and see where Colossae was located. Paul had never been to these places, but he wanted the people to know that he put up with the hassles and struggles and kept going and writing and teaching through agonizing times. There are four reasons why:

REASON #1 – Because teaching God's people the truth is what encourages and it is what strengthens them. **2:2-3**

Paul says I keep going and I keep teaching and preaching because that is what God uses to encourage people's hearts. That word "encourage" is one that means this is what cheers, comforts and challenges people's hearts (*Ibid.*, p. 340). This is such an important point to see. **Theological error will depress and destroy your heart. Theological truth will encourage and comfort your heart.**

Now Paul qualifies what happens to a heart that is being strengthened with three prepositional phrases:

Phrase #1 - A heart that is encouraged and strengthened will be knit together in love. **2:2a**

The love is the agape love, which means it is God's kind of love. This is not love based on emotion or enthusiasm. This is the love that loves God and loves others with God's kind of love. As we pointed out in our study of the Doctrine of Hell, God's love hates evil and clings to good and if a believer does not hate evil, it is hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9). As one commentator said, agape love never compromises truth.

Phrase #2 - A heart that is encouraged and strengthened will attain to all wealth of full assurance of understanding. **2:2b**

Coming to terms with the wealth of God is an attainment. Now the wealth refers to all the wealth one may have in a relationship with God. In fact, Solomon said that having the wisdom of God was more valuable than silver or gold.

Phrase #3 - A heart that is encouraged and strengthened will have deep knowledge of the importance of a relationship with Jesus Christ. **2:2c-3**

One will realize that the key to all of the hidden treasures of God and the key to deep knowledge is to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ and understanding what we have in Him.

The knowledge being referred to is a knowledge-upon-knowledge level or deep knowledge. Deep knowledge of the word of God is that which will produce assurance. Paul stresses the fact that this knowledge comes in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. This is all connected to heart work and this is all due to having an understanding of God's truth.

Paul says this is what keeps me going. This is why I continue to minister. This is why I keep teaching and preaching because this is what develops people, this is what encourages people. This is what strengthens people and this is what enables them to have deep, accurate knowledge of God's truth.

There will probably be times in your life when you will say why bother to communicate truth. Why keep at it? Because if someone does not communicate truth, how will people know it?

REASON #2 – Because teaching God's people the truth will protect them from deluders. **2:4**

This world is filled with religious leaders who will "delude" people. Their goal is not to accurately set forth the truth of God. They have their own agenda.

The word "delude" (*paralogizomai*) is eye-opening. There are many in the religious world who miscalculate things and come to false conclusions and then mislead the people (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 341).

Now Paul says these kinds of people use “persuasive arguments.” I don’t want to overlook this word. This word (piqanologia) is a word that means they persuasively present plausible and possible arguments (*Ibid.*, p. 360).

These religious teachers are very crafty in their teaching. It is not accurate to the text and it is not “rightly dividing” God’s truth, but it does sound good and reasonable.

Paul says this is why I keep teaching and preaching. So people can know the truth and not be swayed by these religious con men.

Growing and learning deep things from God’s word is vital to not being deluded by persuasive arguments of religious heretics. The idea behind using persuasive argument is to verbally talk to someone and get them to believe what you are saying.

Understand this, false preachers and teachers are persuasive. They can talk a good persuasive game. They are skilled at using phony reason. If you are not well-grounded in truth, they can talk you into something that is wrong.

One who grows deep in the truth will never be deluded or duped into following their phony religious ways.

Paul says this is what keeps me going.

REASON #3 – Because teaching God’s people the truth will produce discipline and stability.
2:5

Paul says I am not there in body but I am in spirit. Paul is in prison but he wants the Colossians to know that he rejoices over them for two reasons:

Rejoice Reason #1 - Paul rejoices because God’s word was producing good discipline in them.
2:5a

That word “discipline” (taxin) is a military term. It means to have discipline in the sense of having disciplined order and arrangement (*Ibid.*, p. 439). A life that pleases God is a life that is disciplined and orderly. It is not a life that runs by emotions and feelings. It is a life that is highly disciplined.

A spirituality that pleases God and causes key leaders to rejoice is a disciplined life.

Rejoice Reason #2 - Paul rejoices because God’s word was producing a stable faith. **2:5b**

That word “stability” (sterewma) refers to a faith that has a solid, firm, strong foundation (*Ibid.*, p. 417). Paul says I want people to know that I find great joy when I sit here in jail and think about the fact that there are people who are taking in the word of God and they are becoming stable in their faith.

Paul was going through difficult things in life and when he would learn that there were people growing through his teaching, it brought Paul joy.

When he learned that people were becoming stable in the faith pertaining to Jesus Christ, and were living disciplined lives, it brought him great joy.

Paul was not happy with shallow religious people who went to church. He wanted them disciplined and stable. That is what kept him going.

REASON #4 – Because teaching God’s people the deep truth is very practical. **2:6-7**

Paul prefaces this practical point with you have to “have received Christ Jesus the Lord.” **2:6**
In other words, the practical challenges he is about to give is for believers.

What this means is it is possible for one who has received Christ to not walk in Christ, and therefore will miss out on these kinds of things.

Paul uses four participles to describe how practical walking in truth actually is once one has believed in Jesus Christ:

Practical Application #1 - One who walks in Christ will be firmly rooted in Christ. **2:7a**

People who understand grace truth are fully aware that everything they need is in Jesus Christ. They don’t need religion or a denomination, they need Jesus Christ. They are rooted in Him.

Practical Application #2 - One who walks in Christ will be continually built up in Christ. **2:7b**

One will continually grow and be built up in the things of God.

Practical Application #3 - One who walks in Christ will be established in the faith. **2:7c**

One who walks in Christ will be as solid as a rock.

Practical Application #4 - One who walks in Christ will abound in thanksgiving. **2:7d**

The only way to have access to the deep knowledge of God that gives all of these wonderful things is to have Jesus Christ in your life. In Him are all the treasures of God.

Paul says that is what keeps me going. That is what keeps me writing. That is what keeps me preaching and teaching. People need to know this.

This is a very unstable world that is filled with all kinds of unstable people. If you really want stability, invite Jesus Christ in your life and invite Him to take it over.

I can tell you this for a fact, any person who has committed suicide did not do the one thing they should have done, “ask Jesus Christ to take over their life.”

No matter where you are right now, no matter how depressed you are right now, if you will turn your life over to Jesus Christ and get serious about understanding God’s word, you will have a stability and life that will please God.