

## COLOSSIANS

Paul: The Ideal Pastor  
Colossians 2:1-7

### INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at “Paul: The Ideal Servant.” In that section, we saw Paul’s commitment, dedication, sacrifice, zeal for the gospel, faithfulness to confront and willingness to suffer for Christ. In every way, Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ.

Today, we see another side of Paul. We get a glimpse of Paul the pastor. We see his shepherd’s heart, his love for Christians, his concern for the needs of others, his sensitivity to people, his passion to understand men and his ability to sympathize with and encourage the saints.

It is easier to be a servant than a pastor. To be a servant one must learn obedience which can be learned in a relatively short time. To be a pastor, one must suffer and struggle which takes a long time. Young men just out of seminary make great servants but only time, suffering and struggle makes a pastor.

Starting in chapter two, we come to a new division of the Book of Colossians. In 1:1-19, we see how Paul dealt with the person of Christ - Creator, Head of the Church, Firstborn from the dead, the exact image of God and God in the flesh. Now in 2:1-4, he defends the Christian faith from the heresy of Gnosticism. He counters the heretical teachings that have entered into the Church of Colosse. He seeks to expose and flush out the errors of Gnosticism. This actually begins in 2:8. In 2:1-7, we see how Paul prepares the Colossian Christians for his rebuke of those who were being taken in by the heretics.

### THE MINISTRY OF CONCERN 2:1-5

His Concern To Struggle In Prayer (2:1): ***I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.***

Paul had some godly anxiety about the Colossian Christians who were being influenced by the Gnostic heretics. Paul loved Christ and loved the Colossians but he hated any teaching that would demean Christ in any way. It tore Paul up when he saw Christians following false teaching. ***“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.”*** (Philip. 3:18.19).

The word “struggle” means “to agonize.” It is used of the agony of an athlete in the arena who is contending in a contest to win. Paul wrestled with the powers of darkness, which were constantly trying to destroy the work of Christ. Satanic opposition was real; therefore, Paul met it head on through prayer and understood who the real enemy the Christian fights. ***“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** (Eph. 6:10-12).

Someone might say, “Is praying for the Colossians all Paul could do?” Well, he could write them a letter which he did. Remember, Paul was under house arrest in Rome, chained to a Roman guard. Surely Paul would have gone to the Colossians if he could but he couldn’t, so he prayed diligently for them. He was at the place where there was nothing he could do but pray. What he could not do himself, he must leave with God.

What a lesson for all Christians. When we have done all we can to right a situation or make something happen and it doesn’t come to pass, then we must leave it completely in the Lord’s hands. When time and distance and circumstances separate us from those we long to help, there is always one way left to help them and that is through prayer. God changes things through prayer.

Paul was struggling in prayer for the Colossians, for the Laodiceans and even those in the City of Hieropolis who were being lured away by the false teaching of the Gnostics. We get a poignant view into Paul’s heart for Christians. Most of the people to whom Paul was writing had never met him but he was burdened about their condition. We see the bigness of this man’s heart for all God’s people. He was a true pastor. He was concerned for all the churches: ***“Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”*** (II Cor. 11:28). He had a pastor’s heart and dealt with them as a concerned shepherd. ***“As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not on the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”*** (I Thess. 2:7-12).

His Concern To Encourage (2:2a): ***My purpose is that they might be encouraged in heart...--*** Paul’s first purpose was to encourage the saints. The Greek word for “encourage” means “to call to one’s side,” signifying comfort, encouragement and to buoy up. These Colossians were being deluded by false teaching. They didn’t need criticism or brow beating but they desperately needed encouragement in positive Christianity so they might fight off negative false teaching.

A wise pastor and a wise Christian knows the value of reinforcement and encouragement. More can be accomplished by building up than tearing up. Affirming the person, giving positive strokes can make a Christian strong for Christ. Encouragement was to be “in heart.” The heart is referred to scripture as the seat of emotions. Encouragement lifts up one’s emotions.

His Concern For Love (2:2b): ***And united in love***, -- Paul’s second purpose was to challenge the Colossian Christians to be united in love. He wanted them to be knit together, welded together in true love. Love goes across personality conflicts and respects and honors and accepts a person because he is in Christ and a fellow-believer. Without love there is no church. It is by love that the world knows we are true disciples of Christ. ***“A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that your are my disciples if you love one another.”*** (Jn. 13:34,35). If we claim to be a Christian and do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we are not true Christians at all. ***“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”*** (I Jn.3:14).

The mark of a true pastor is he always desires to produce love among the brethren.

His Concern For Their Comprehension Of Christ: (2:2c): ***So that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ***, -- Through encouragement and love from the brethren (through mutual instruction and concern) Christians get complete understanding, and this understanding gives them insight into the mystery of God which was hidden from the Old Testament saints and the Gentiles. That mystery which is now open to all is Christ. The goal of Christianity is to understand who Christ is and to know him personally. “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death... (Philip. 3:10). Christianity is Christ. Christianity is not a cold, doctrinal system, nor a legalistic list of do’s and don’ts, nor a warm, fuzzy feeling about God, nor a sweet good works system, but Christianity is knowing, loving, obeying the resurrected and living Christ who is God in the flesh, Creator of the universe, Fulfiller of the covenants, Head of the church, King of the world, Savior of God’s people and Lord of all. Christ is the supreme revelation of God, and it is our privilege as Christians to have a dynamic relationship with Him.

A good pastor directs his people to Christ. He longs to see God’s people deeply in love with and obedient to Christ. People in love with Christ cannot be shaken from that position in spite of the false teaching all around.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century, a Christian man and scholar, Aonio Palearo, experienced an interesting martyr's death. He wrote a book entitled The Benefit of Christ's Death. For writing the book, he was brought before the judge in Rome, by order of the Pope. The judge said, "We will put to him three questions: we will ask him what is the first cause of salvation, then what is the second cause of salvation, then what is the third cause of salvation." They thought that, in putting these three questions, he would at last be made to say something which should be to the glory of the Church of Rome. So they asked him, "What is the first cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." Then they asked him, "What is the second cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." Then they asked him, "What is the third cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." The first cause Christ; the second cause Christ; the third cause Christ; and for that confession, he was condemned to be put to death as a martyr.

His Concern For Their Appropriation Of Wisdom And Knowledge (2:3): ***In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*** -- The revealed mystery is not only Christ but that in Him are hidden (deposited) all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ is the focal point of all wisdom and knowledge. He is the Creator of all true knowledge in the universe, and man simply discovers this knowledge through his research and studies. Paul is saying dogmatically that there is no true wisdom and knowledge outside of Christ. Does this mean the unsaved world has no true wisdom or knowledge? Absolutely! The world has false wisdom and knowledge but truth belongs to Christ alone. ***"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."*** (I Cor. 1:18-21). Man's knowledge is so infinitesimal compared to that of Christ. Today there is great interest in space, the stars and the planets, and science is learning much about the universe but it is a drop in the bucket to what Christ knows. Psalm 147:4 says, ***"He determines the number of stars and calls them each by name."*** There are trillions and trillions of stars in the universe and Christ knows all about them and has named each one. Human knowledge seems so insignificant when we think of the infinite knowledge and wisdom of Christ.

This statement, "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" was given to refute the Gnostic heretics who were saying that Christ was not enough for salvation, but one had to have higher knowledge than Christ to be saved. All any person needs to be saved according to the Bible is Christ. ***"Salvation is found in no one else (Christ), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** (Acts 4:12). Salvation is Christ and Christian living is going deeper into Christ. Once a person finds Christ for salvation, he looks no where else to be saved but only determines to go deeper into the salvation in Christ he already possesses.

This verse tells us that it is impossible to separate Christ and knowledge about Christ for He is wisdom and knowledge. It is possible to separate Buddha from his message, and Confucius from his message and still have these religions. But it is impossible to separate Christ from his message of wisdom and knowledge. If we do, we have no Christianity at all.

Did you know that Col. 2:3 is the motto of CCS? We have a Christian school because in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul is a good pastor because he knows that all wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, and every Christian is in Christ; therefore, this treasure of wisdom and knowledge is accessible to and available for every Christian. He longs for people to discover this wisdom and knowledge by faith.

His Concern For No Deception (2:4): ***I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.*** -- Paul was concerned that the Gnostic false teachers might delude, lead astray, trick the Colossians by their beguiling, smooth and persuasive speech, fast talk and arguments. The gnostic system seemed to have some truth in it but it was far from the real truth.

Heresy of any kind always has some truth in it or people wouldn't go after it. Heretics are often fine people with winning personalities. They display intelligence, zeal and commitment to their false cause. Often they are handsome people. Think about Herbert W. Armstrong and Ted Armstrong in the magazine "Plain Truth." These are attractive people; they use their Bible but they teach heresy. They say that Jesus Christ is not God. Heretics pray and show tremendous zeal but in every case they deny something about the person and work of Christ which is crucial to salvation.

A good pastor is concerned that his people do not get taken off into false teaching.

His Concern To Build Up (2:5): ***For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*** -- Paul is about to rebuke these Colossians for toying with the heresy of the Gnostics, but before he does, he seeks to acknowledge some strong points about their faith in Christ. The word "orderly" was a military word meaning "a rank or ordered arrangement." They were as a whole a disciplined body of Christians. The word "firm" is also a military word which meant "bulwark." It was used of the Roman phalanx, describing an army set out in an unbreakable square, solidly immovable against the shock of the enemy's charge. He commends the vast majority of these Colossian Christians for not caving in to the heresy of the Gnostics.

A good pastor looks for every opportunity to build up the church and not tear it up.

## HIS MINISTRY OF EXHORTATION 2:5-7

To Remain True To Christ As Lord (2:6a): ***So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live (walk) in him,*** -- The Colossians were facing great danger from the Gnostic heresy, so Paul the pastor, now begins to exhort the Colossian Christians. The “so then” goes back to Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In light of this fact, they are to live a certain way. When they were originally saved, they received Jesus Christ as Lord. They received Him as the promised Messiah (Christ), as the historic Savior (Jesus), and as sovereign God (Lord). The means whereby they received Christ was by grace through faith alone apart from any works. Paul appeals to them to continue to live (walk) as Christians by grace through faith in Christ as Messiah, Savior and God. They must in no way think of abandoning Christ to go after Gnostic heresy. Instead, they must go deeper into Christ, acknowledging His Lordship over their lives. Their lives were to conform to Christ. They had trusted Christ as Lord for salvation, now they were to continue to trust Christ as Lord for each day’s problems.

Everyday the Christian is to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. His walk to match his talk. Life may take us down many roads but we must live acknowledging Christ’s Lordship, knowing He has a perfect plan for our lives.

To Progress In Faith (2:7a): ***Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught,*** -- The Colossian Christians were rooted as a tree in Christ at salvation. As Christians, they were being built up as a house on the foundation of Christ and they were being strengthened in their faith. Faith refers to objective truth and subjective growth in truth. There were given facts about the Faith but they were to be growing in faith.

Christianity is a dogmatic religion so it could be theoretically possible to learn all the facts about it, but we never stop growing in practical faith. Faith is to keep growing; faith is to be stretched; faith is to take risks for Christ. As Christians, we do not always learn new truths but must live by faith in the old truths we have learned. Many Christians want to be taught something new when they have not yet learned to live on the truth they already know. The key to Christianity is a growing, living and dynamic faith.

A growing faith is also the basic way to not fall into the trap of false teachers. We know that most cults fill up their ranks with people who have been in churches but were poorly taught or in some way became disillusioned with the organized church.

To Overflow With Thankfulness (2:7b): ***And overflowing with thankfulness.*** -- Paul exhorts these Colossian Christians to overflow with thankfulness like a river overflows its banks in a flood, to Christ for their salvation, for His working in their lives, for His answers to prayer, for His good gifts and for His sufferings. ***“Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*** (I Thess. 5:16-18)

Perhaps Paul is saying that those who lack a deep sense of gratitude to Christ are especially vulnerable to false teaching and false teachers.

## CONCLUSION

Would you like to have all wisdom and knowledge? You can if you trust Christ. In Christ is deposited all truth and if you are in Him by faith you potentially have the ability to begin to understand the mysteries of the universe, the complexities of life and the secrets of death. When you become a Christian, you will not automatically become the smartest person in the world, but you will begin to relate everything to Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and you too will begin to understand things from a spiritual perspective.

How can you get into Christ? Believe Christ died for your sins and bow your will to Him as Lord and Savior. In Christ, life and death will begin to make sense because in Him are stored up all wisdom and knowledge.