

Maturing of the Church
Colossians 1:28-2:5
February 5, 2012

Introduction

Colossians 1:28-2:5 *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. ¹For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*

Paul loved the church. We see it in his writings and his actions in the Book of **Acts**. In **chapters 1 and 2** of **Colossians**, Paul reveals his heart through the actions that he does for the church.

- Paul's struggles
 - His teaching ministry (**1:28**)
 - His prayer (**2:1, 5**)

Note: He wants the church to be mature Christians, and he spends much of his time in teaching and prayer. He is heartbroken when he learns that anyone of them leave the faith or fall into sin.

- Paul's strength (**1:29**)
 - How did Paul continue in his ministry?
 - How did he not burn out after everything that has happened to him?
 - Strength not of himself but from God

Note: We have so many people burn out in ministry (in pastoral, teaching, etc). Why? It is simply because people rely on their own strength and do the things in what God has not gifted them.

- Paul's delight (**2:5**)

Note: Paul loved the church as Christ loved the church. Paul's love and zeal reflects the heart of Jesus. Paul had one goal for the church: to present the body of Christ as perfect in Christ Jesus. Like a loving parent, Paul wanted to see the church grow, mature, and made perfect.

I. Paul's Purpose in Ministry

we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus

- God's goal is that every believer to be like Christ

Romans 8:29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Note: If a person is a believer in Christ, placing his or her faith in Christ, then she or he will have His character. This is because God is changing us, our thoughts, our behavior, our attitudes to be like Christ. Jesus is that perfect, fully-mature Man.

Side Note: The church is the fullness of His Incarnate body in the world. This is really a staggering statement that the church is how Jesus Christ shows Himself. As we talked about last week with Paul's suffering to fill up what is lacking in regards to Christ's affliction, Paul's suffering is reflective of the sufferings of Christ (not to add to His perfect, once-for-all sacrifice) so the world will know that Jesus suffered and died for them.

Ephesians 1:22-23 *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

- We are to walk in the same manner as He walked

1 John 2:6 *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

- We are to mature through growth in studying the word of God

Hebrews 5:14-6:2 *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. ¹Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- Maturity enables church growth

2 Timothy 2:2 *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

Transition: A mature person in Christ will have an encouraged or strengthened heart.

II. Strengthened Hearts

that their hearts may be encouraged

- Word "encouraged" also means strengthened
- *that their hearts may be [strengthened]*
- Heart
 - Mind, thinking
 - From what emotions respond to what the mind thinks
 - What fills the heart (mind) will lead to bad behavior

Matthew 12:34-35 *Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵A good man out of the good*

treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

Proverbs 4:23 *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*

- How do we have a strong heart?
 - Holy Spirit

Ephesians 3:16 *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*

- Word of God

Psalms 119:11 *I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.*

- Biblical teachers

Ephesians 4:11-14 *It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

Transition: A mature person in Christ not only has a strengthened heart, but this person is always involved in loving fellowship.

III. Loving Fellowship

being knit together in love

1 John 3:16-18 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

James 1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

James 2:14-16 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*

Transition: A mature person in Christ has full knowledge of Christ.

IV. Full Knowledge of Christ

attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Proverbs 2:1-6 *My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ²turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Note: When we mature as Christians, we grow in the knowledge of God. We become closer to Him as we study and meditate on His words. Do we seek Him as we seek treasures? Do we go to Him for everything? In the Greek, hidden is also translated as storehouse. He is the provision for everything we need in life. Do we seek that in our life? It is rich. And within Him, we have full assurance! We know that we are in Him.

V. Protection from False Teachings

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words

Hebrews 5:14 *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Matthew 7:15-20 *Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*

Conclusion

From what Paul did, let this be a checklist for our church and ourselves. Are we maturing in the knowledge of Christ? Are we maturing through strengthened hearts? Are we maturing in loving one another? If as a individual, we are not growing, then we will be hurting the body of Christ, causing her to be sick.