

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Strengthen Your Heart

Scripture: Colossians 2:1-2

Code: 2139

Now coming to the first seven verses of the second chapter, Paul is in the midst of his argument against the false teachers and he's arguing of course for the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of Christ without any other needed additions.

But here he is also discussing something of his own view of the ministry. And so we find from Chapter 1 verse 24 through the beginning of Chapter 2 a real inside look at how Paul viewed his own ministry. We studied the last time we were in Colossians Chapter 1 something of his attitude toward the responsibility

that he had in verses 24 to 29 and as we look at Chapter 2 and see the opening statements in it we're going to get an idea of the goals of Paul's ministry, not so much the attitude toward his own responsibility but the result that he was after.

By way of introduction let me say this. People might argue, and they have over the primary requisite for an effective minister of Jesus Christ, they might debate about what if there was one quality that a minister would have what would it be? What would the one thing be that would make the shepherd the true shepherd of the sheep, the pastor the true pastor of the flock? Some people might say the most important ingredient would be intelligence, so we can understand the Bible. Others might say knowledge. He should already know the Word of God. Some might say education. He should have a lot of input, he should have a lot of experience, others might say. Some might say any combination of those foregoing. And others would say no, the most important ingredient for the pastor or the leader or the minister or any Christian servant would be leadership ability. Or others might say boldness, or holiness, or purity, or preaching power or sympathy or whatever or whatever or whatever, and multiple combinations of all of these. And I grant you that all of those have a part; that's why I thought of all of them. Because they all fit in somewhere.

But behind it all, I think the most basic, the most effective, the most necessary ingredient in the life of any minister is the love of the Church. The love of the Church. Because that becomes the catalyst that motivates him in every other dimension. The love of the Church. In Ephesians, Chapter 5 and verse 25, it says: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." It was Christ's love for the Church that prompted Him to give Himself for it. And that's why I say all of those other ingredients that come into play when a man gives himself for the Church are predicated on the fact that he loves the Church. In Acts Chapter 20, and there are many

verses we could look at in this particular passage, it says in verse 28 (Paul, speaking to the Ephesian pastors or elders: "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." Paul is saying that, remember, you have an obligation to feed the Church. What Church? The Church that He purchased with His own blood. If He loved it that much, if He loved it that much that He would give His blood for it, then the undershepherd can do no less than love it with his entire being.

Jesus loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He didn't love the institution, particularly. He didn't love the organization, particularly. It wasn't the structure. He loved the people that are the Church. And He was willing and able to die for them. And I hasten to add that the apostle Paul was not far behind. His death was not substitutionary, Paul's. It was not efficacious, it was not atoning, it was not divine. But Paul loved the Church, and again it wasn't the institution that He loved, it wasn't the denomination that he loved, it wasn't the organization that he loved, it was the people that he loved and gave his life for them. There are so many Scriptures that speak of this, that I don't even want to begin to get into all of them. But the apostle Paul's love for the Church becomes manifest again and again and again and again. I'm thinking of II Cor. 3:2 for one where he says, you are our epistle written in our hearts." You are inscribed in our hearts. We care about you. As we shall see later, and I just mention at this time in II Cor. 6:11, he says: "Oh, you Corinthians, our speech to you is candid, our heart is wide open." We love you. In II Cor. chapter 12, that very, very melancholy statement in verse 15: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." I'll die for you, he says, even though the more I love you the less you love me.

Paul loved the Church. He loved the Church so much that in the pursuit of it and the maturity he gave his life. He suffered pain all the way along the way until finally he was executed. We've seen again and in the epistles Philippians, Colossians primarily, the love of the apostle for his Church. In Philippians 1:7 he says: "Because I have you in my heart, I have you in my heart." In Colossians Chapter 1 we saw earlier in verse 24 that he literally rejoiced in suffering for the sake of the Church of which he was made a minister. Paul loved the Church. And you would have to say I think that his entire life was a love affair with the Church. The people. The believing community.

And the reason he loved the Church so much is because he loved the Lord so much. And if you love the Lord, you love whom the Lord loves. I John 5: "Whoever loves Him will love him who is begotten of him." You see? That's why John says it's impossible to say you love God and don't love the brothers. Because whoever loves Him will love who is begotten of Him. It was never really Paul's Church, it was Christ's Church. And he loved Christ so much that he loved what Christ loved, and he would give his life for what Christ gave his life for. And it was that motivation that made him purify his life, that made him preach with power, that made him act with sympathy, that made him apply his mind to the things of God, that made him bold. It was all of that that was a byproduct of a deep down love for the Church.

And I'll say to you this, Christian, you will never serve God on the behalf of God's people with any kind of motivation other than an outright and total love for the Church. It's necessary. He poured out His life loving the Church. In II Cor, 11 1 would just have you look with me at verse 23 and I will remind you of a passage you probably have read many times. II Cor. 11:23 he says: "Are they ministers of Christ?" It's a little sarcastic there. He's talking about his critics, really. Are they ministers of Christ? "I speak as a fool, of course." There's sarcasm there. "I am more, In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequently, in death often "and he goes on to say five times he received 59 stripes, three times he was beaten with rods (and they take a whole lot of whippy kinds of rods and they would tie them with string and they would beat the person with them), suffered shipwreck, a night and a day, journeys and perils of waters and robbers of his own countrymen and gentiles in the city, in wilderness and the sea from false brethren, and he goes on weariness, painfulness, so forth, thirsty, naked, fasting, and on and on. Then in verse 28 he says this: "Beside, beside all of those things that are without -outside things the main anxiety of my life is that which comes upon me daily the care of all the churches. It isn't the outside stuff that bothers me nearly as much as the inside anxiety, the daily pressure.

Well you say, what was the pressure? The pressure that comes automatically on a man of God who loves the Church. Because he lives and dies with every success and failure in the life of the people he loves. The minister will spend most of his life brokenhearted. And he will spend it brokenhearted because there will be that many people in the Church who will break his heart and he will try to balance that off with being joyous over the people who are doing the thing God wants them to do. Demus broke the heart of Paul, because he forsook him. The Judaisers came in infiltrating the Galatian churches, and made Paul so furious he poured out Galatians, which is just a flow of wrath against false doctrine and those who would destroy the Church. If you read Ephesians you can sense his tears. As you read Acts 20 you can see his tears. As you read the Book of I Corinthians as we have on our studies on the Lord's Day in the morning, we can hear and feel his heart as it beats and it pours out the truth of God to counteract the sin of man. In I Corinthians we studied, you remember, Chapter 4 (and I'll just have you look at verse 11. He says this: ""Unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted (literally punched in the mouth) and have no place to live and we labor working with our own hands. Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we endure it. Being defamed we entreat, we are made as the filth of the world and the garbage, the refuse of all things to this day. That's what we go through, that's what we endure. You say, why do you keep it up, Paul? Verse 14: "I write not these things to shame you but as my (what?) beloved sons." The reason I do it is because you're beloved to me, that's why. You see, that's the difference between the professional and the passionate, that's the difference between the one who cranks it out and fulfills it on a professional level and the one for whom it is a heart passion.

Paul couldn't minister without emotion, because he loved the Church so much. Because Jesus loved it and anything Jesus loved, and anything Jesus would die for he would die for. Acts 20, verse 1 (just

a little phrase here that I think is beautiful. Acts 20 verse 1: "And after the uproar was ceased (and this is the Ephesian uproar when they threw away their idols) after the uproar was ceased Paul called to him the disciples and (what?) embraced them." The word embraced

is literally "kissed". The word appears in the New Testament a lot of times that means kiss, to kiss fervently or affectionately. It is used of the prodigal, when he came home and his father kissed him. It's used in Luke, Chapter 7 of the woman who continually kissed Jesus' feet, and it's used as the early church. There was a tremendous sense of affection, and it was all bound up in Paul's love for Christ. Now this is the thing that I believe more than anything else the man of God must have. This is the thing above anything else in my own life that I would pray that God would give to me. The kind of love for the Church that would make me sacrifice my life for the sake of the Church. And this is the thing that made Paul different. This is the thing that made him head and shoulders above any man that ever lived apart from Jesus Christ since the New Testament era. Never a man like this man, because of the tremendous quality of his love for the Church. And added to that the marvelous gifts the Spirit of God gave him.

Now in his love for the Church, as he comes to chapter 2, looking at the Colossian assembly. And he's including with it the other two cities in that area, Hieropolis and Laodicea, all three of them being sister cities located in the Lykus Valley, and he sees that Church and those other two sister Churches being attacked by false doctrine, false teacher. And as we've seen already in our study there were a lot of different aspects to this false teaching; they were getting it from legalizers, they were getting it from philosophizers, they were getting it from ascetics, people who wanted to go off and live in a monastery all alone. They were getting all kinds of heresy from everywhere. And he has such a tremendous love for them that even though he has never met them and even though he did not found that Church when Epaphrus who did found it and who was their pastor came to Rome as he was a prisoner for a period of three years and told him about it, it created in his heart such anguish that he sat down and wrote the letter to the Colossians. And he says in verse 1 of chapter 2: "I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you in Laodicea." And some manuscripts add and also them at Hieropolis. And for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, I wish you knew, he says, how much I ache for you.

And so he writes in the initial part of chapter 2, he pours out his love, and you know what it winds up being? It winds up being the expression of the deepest desires that he had for the Church. He pours out his heart, and listen to what he says. "I have this great conflict (verse 2) that their hearts might be comforted, that being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and this I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words for though I am absent in the flesh yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, having been rooted and being built up in Him and being established in the faith as you have

been taught, abounding with thanksgiving." Abounding with thanksgiving.

Now what it comes down to, folks, in those simple verses is five things that Paul desires for the Church, that come pouring out of his love for people he's never even seen, for a people he's never even met, but that didn't matter. Because you see, now mark this, his love for the Church was not predicated on the people in it, it was predicated on the Christ who died for it. You see? It was not a discriminating love, it was not a love that was isolated to the ones he liked in terms of personality or even the ones he knew, but he could love the Church, the whole Church, equally because he loved Christ. And so he pours out his love, and as it comes gushing out you can pick out of the outpouring of his love five things that he desires for the Church. And they come like a checklist for you and me, and I went through these five things and just checked my own life against them and checked Grace Community Church against them, because they're vitally important,

Now let's back up to verse 1 and get a running start. "I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you." The word conflict picks up a word that he used in the previous verse, the word striving in verse 29, it is the word the verb *agonidzo* from which we get agonizing. It's a word that was especially related to athletic endeavor where somebody was agonizing and striving and striving to win, He says, you don't know the anguish and the pain that I endure for you. And the word "agone" may be only has its ultimate understanding to an athlete. No one but an athlete who's been in the throws of the ultimate kind of competition where victory is everything will understand what it means to pursue a goal experiencing pain that is beyond belief to attain what it is you're after. And I've experienced it sometimes. I can remember playing in a football game for 60 minutes with a separated shoulder so much desiring to win that I wouldn't acknowledge it to anybody. And just biting the bullet, as they say, enduring the pain. It's that kind of thing that Paul says I experience agony. He wasn't alone.

Epaphrus, look at chapter 4 verse 12. Epaphrus, who was their pastor who came and reported to Paul, he had the same thing. Verse 12: "Epaphrus, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, for I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you." Here's the same spirit, the same attitude, another man with an aching heart for the spiritual life of a people of God. And as I said, Paul's emotion is not simple personal love, it isn't just that he's concerned about some people he likes a lot, he has this agony over people that he's never even met, because he loves the Church, the Church anywhere. God help us to have that kind of thing instead of bickering, instead of being proud, instead of rejoicing in the failure of other believers. We ought to have the same agony in our own hearts and souls over those believers who do not fare as well as God would have them.

I wish you could understand it, he says. I wish that you could understand what I feel for you. He longed that they would grow and mature as any of the congregations he himself had ministered to. And I think this idea of being able to love the Church that you don't know really sets a pattern for all those who minister. It in no way diminished his passion for the people near him, but it was right that

he lovethem equally. And so out of this love comes the deepest desires for the Church, and let's look at them.

Number one, the first thing. The first thing that he wants for the Church is that it be strong in heart. Strong in heart. Verse 2: "that their hearts might be strengthened." That their hearts might be strengthened. Even though you have not seen my face in the flesh, I have a great agony for you. I don't want you to fall into false doctrine. I don't want you to get sucked into error. I want you to be strong in heart, and I want to talk about this for a minutes. You see the word heart. That their hearts might be strengthened.

Now when we talk about the heart, what do we mean? We have to make that clear, because in the English language the heart is the seat of what? Emotion. "My heart cries for you," we say, "I love you with all my heart." The heart is the symbol of emotion, To the Hebrew it was not the symbol of emotion. Did you get that? In the English language heart represents emotion, To the Hebrew, it did not. Now the Hebrews referred to two organs of the body, and I want to talk about these two. The two organs that they referred to many, many times in the Scripture are the bowels and the heart. Don't panic. There are many references in the Bible to the term bowels. They have been fairly well erased in the later translations, but the pure translation of the Hebrew indicates that that is the word. Now it is used in the Bible to speak of the womb, of the stomach, of the intestines and of several other abdominal organs, so it becomes a general term for the gut, if you will. When a Hebrew says my bowels such and such, he means I feel it in the gut. That's what he's saying. Now watch this. The Hebrews did not know anything of speculative thinking, and they did not know anything of interpreting things in abstraction, everything to them was a concrete, experiential physical reality.

Turn with me and I'll show you. Turn with me to Psalm 22:14. And here is a description of Jesus on the Cross, and this is a prophetic picture of Him on the Cross, but I want you to notice how the psalmist expresses what Jesus feels. He's dying on the Cross, "I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint (a perfect picture of crucifixion, listen now) my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels." And here he means my whole abdominal area is in upheaval, I feel it in the gut, is what He is saying. I feel it and my stomach is in knots. A very experiential concept, not abstract at all. A Hebrew would never say, "I sense a certain anxiety." (Laughter) You see, anxiety is an abstraction, you've got to say what you mean by that, but He doesn't say that, He doesn't speak in abstractions; He speaks in experiences, "I feel it in the stomach."

I'll show you another one. This is very interesting. Song of Solomon. Chapter 5, and I know you're all racing there. Song of Solomon, chapter 5 verse 4. Now this is very interesting. Just to give you an idea of how the Hebrew expressed his feelings. Now you've got to have the picture. The bride is waiting for the bridegroom. It is time to consummate the marriage. This is a great hour. Now listen, The Hebrew says in verse 4: "My beloved put his hand to the latch of the door and my bowels are moved for him." Now you say, wait a minute, (Laughter). That's in the Bible? That's in the Bible. You

say, what does that mean, John? That means that the bowels include that whole area including the arousal of sexual desire in the human body. All of that area, even feeling in the genital area, was expressed by the Hebrews in that terminology. You see, they didn't say, "And I began to sense great overwhelming passion." That's an abstraction. The Hebrew defined it in its lowest level of experiential feeling. Now we'll hurry to Lamentations 2, because we do not want to mangle at that particular point (laughter). Lamentations Chapter 2 verse 11, (You know, the Bible isn't nearly as uptight about some things that people are uptight about, I want you to know that.) (Laughter)

Lamentations Chapter 2 verse 11. Now Jeremiah he was a patriot. I mean he was a real patriot, Jeremiah. But he wasn't a blind patriot. He loved his country when his country loved God. In Lamentations 2:11 he says my country's falling apart, in essence. He's seeing the death of his country. That's why Lamentations is called Lamentations; it's the weeping of Jeremiah over the death of his country. He says, "My eyes do fill with tears (and here it comes). My bowels are troubled," I feel it in the gut again. The pain in my stomach is I'm in knots. Now you've experienced that. He is having psychosomatic responses in his body to anxiety in his mind, but the Hebrew expresses it in terms of the psychosomatic symptom, not in terms of the abstraction.

So emotions biblically in the Old Testament particularly are not experienced as abstractions, but at the lowest level of experience. And so now watch this, in the cases of the bowels being used in the Scripture they have reference to emotional responses. So that to the Hebrew mind the heart is not the seat of emotion. What is? The stomach. The bowels. Further, look at I John chapter 3, and I'm going to pull this all together and show you something interesting in a minute. This is interesting too, but something summarily interesting. I John 3:17. And I never understood this. I can remember when I was a little kid I'd hear my dad preach and this was before they retranslated this and I'd always hear that. I didn't know what he was talking about,, And some of you may be in that same boat, but it says in I John 3:17 "Whosoever hath this world's good and sees his brother hath need and shuts up his bowels from him, how dwells the love of God in him?" Boy, that is strange. That is strange. What is he saying?

He is simply expressing what in the Hebrew mind is an obvious thing. He is saying look, when you see somebody have a need that ought to cause a gut feeling in you, it ought to stir you up and tighten up your stomach and make you feel some real anxiety.

Now notice, in every one of those passages that I showed to you the bowels are always responding. They responded to pain in the first one I told you about, they respond to sex in Song of Solomon, they responded to disaster in the case of Jeremiah, and they respond to human need in the case of I John 3. So that that in the Hebrew mind the bowel is always that which responds. It is emotion. They felt it inside. Now you say, what did they respond to? In the Hebrew mind it always responded to the second organ that they discussed the heart. The heart. Now listen. You say, well what is the heart symbolic of? Revelation 2:23 and I'll show you something very interesting. Revelation 2:23, and we

could look at you know stacks and stacks of Bible verses related to the heart, to show this, but I'll just give you a couple and you can study it on your own. But I want to show you the point.

Revelation 2:23, the middle of the verse: "I am He (the Lord's talking) who searches the minds and hearts." Now what you have here is judgment, because he's just talked about the fact that he's going to cast this particular sinful situation into great tribulation if they don't repent and kill the children with death and etc. etc. And He says, I will search the minds and the heart. What is the heart? Listen to me. First of all, we see from that passage the heart is the place of responsibility. It's the place of responsibility. The heart is that which is wicked, in Jeremiah 17. The heart of man is what? Deceitful above all things and what? Desperately wicked. It is the seat of responsibility. It is that which God is going to judge and He will try men's what? Hearts. It is that which is righteous or wicked. When God redeems Israel He will take away their stony heart and give them a new what? Heart. It is the seat of responsibility; it is that which is judged. I'll take you a step further. It can't be emotion, then. It can't be emotion. What is it?

Let's look at Revelation 18:7. And here he's talking about Babylon the Great, the destruction of the final world system in the tribulation. "How much she bath glorified herself (Rev. 18:7) glorified herself and lived luxuriously. So much torment and sorrow give her (listen), for she saith in her heart, 'I sit a queen, and am no widow', and she'll see no sorrow." Now notice something. To say in her heart is a metaphor for doing what? Thinking. She said in her heart, what does that mean? She thought in her mind. What then does the heart picture? Not the emotions, but the mind. The intellect and the mind is made up of two things the intellect and the will. That's the heart in Biblical terminology. In ancient times you don't find them referring to the brain. Listen to this one "...the fool hath said in his brain." No. The fool hath said in his what? "Heart." Why? Because the heart was the seat of thought, it was the seat of thinking. And so that the heart represents the mind that sets the pace and the bowels represent the responding emotion.

You say, well how did they get to this discovery? Well, it's easy to know how they got to the bowels being connected with emotion because when they got emotional they began to have what we have today upset stomachs, colitis, and all those symptoms that we get, right? All right here. But how did they get the heart out of the brain? Well, someone surmised that because when the brain is really functioning the heart is really working, and they could feel it throbbing and pulsing. But that's the way they did it. Real serious thinking says a Hebrew can be felt in the beat of the heart. For the heart thinks and the bowels respond with emotion. That's the way you are.

Now remember this. In the mind of the Hebrew and in the Revelation of God emotions never initiate, they always respond. The heart thinks and the emotions respond. That is the divine pattern. You know when somebody comes to me and says, I can't control my emotions. Oh, your bowels are running wild, is that it? Hebrew terminology, you've got a real problem, I can't: control my emotions. You know why? Because your emotions will only be controlled by your mind. Because emotion is a

responder. You see, the key to controlling your emotions is filling your mind with divine truth. That's the key to controlling your emotions. You see, the emotions respond to what the mind perceives as true.

Did you get that? Your emotions will respond to what your mind perceives is true. Even if it isn't true! Try it. Have you ever been lying in bed and all of a sudden you woke up with a jolt when you landed after falling off that 40-story building? (Laughter). You weren't falling, but your mind perceived it and your emotions responded to it. You know what that teaches me about emotions? Don't ever trust 'em. Don't trust 'em. Because you can make your emotions do anything if you can just make your mind think it perceives that. And the only way to control your emotions is to make sure that your mind is filled with divine truth. Emotions are like bad little children, they'll run amuck if you don't control them. And you say, how do you control them? You control them indirectly by feeding the mind.

Let me take you to II Cor. 6:11 back to that passage I mentioned earlier to you. And here's what he says, II Cor. 6:11, "Oh, ye Corinthians, our speech to you is candid, our heart is wide open." Now listen: Corinthians, listen to me. My speech to you is straightforward, candid, pulling no punches, and my heart or my mind is wide open. Listen, I've got all kind of truth to tell you. It's in my brain and my brain's open; it's in my mouth and my speech is wide open and straightforward. Now watch this. But, on our part there is no constraint. But there is constraining in your affections. You know what the literal Greek is there? You are tightened in

your bowels. That's the literal translation, I would certainly like to impart truth from my mind to your mind, but you are all tightened up emotionally. You are straightened emotionally.

Listen to this. The Corinthians had put an emotional attitude against Paul in the way and they couldn't receive the truth. People who have emotions in the way. Just think about the person who comes to church and has something against me. They can't learn, can they? Because they put their emotions in front of the truth. The emotions have stopped being a responder and the emotions are running the show. Here the Corinthians were putting emotions first, they wouldn't accept Paul, they were emotionally upset at him, so they were all tightened, uptight and they couldn't perceive truth. They had it all backwards. When people start putting emotions first then they really get into problems.

One classic illustration of that today is the Charismatic Movement, Pentecostalism. You know what they attempt to do? They attempt to start the emotions without the mind. And they

get you there and you've got enough halleluiahs going and enough and runnin' around and wavin' goin', you can bypass the mind and you can really get the emotions flying. The only problem is that the emotions are responding to something they perceive that isn't the truth. Because there hasn't even been the introduction to the truth. What they attempt to do is shortcircuit the truth, and let the emotions run wild, and that's the opposite of the Biblical pattern.

You see, emotions should always respond to the truth. The key then to behavior and the key to the control of emotion is the heart. The heart as seen as the mind. We need to plant the truth in the mind, and it will control the emotional responses. I don't know about you, but when they were singing tonight, when the kids were singing tonight, I got emotional. Did you get emotional? You know what I got emotional about? The truth, Every time they sang something that was the truth, oooh... terrific. (Laughter) Just got emotional about it. You get kind of sweaty, you know, and you get kind of those spiritual goose bumps and your emotions are reacting to the truth. That's the way it ought to be. And that's why Proverbs 4:23 says, and this is good: "Guard your heart." What does it mean? Guard your mind, your brain, with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

You see? You want to control life, guard your mind, and don't let anybody shortcircuit it. That's 4:23. And Proverbs 22:5 further, says, "...thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse, but he that doth guard his soul shall be far from them." The same basic terminology the guarding of the mind, the Hebrew. You find it in Proverbs 23:19: "Hear thou, my son, and be wise and guide your heart in the way." Guide your heart guard it and guide it, that it might hear and perceive the truth and that your emotion might respond to the truth. A beautiful passage, Deut. 4:9, I can't resist reading it to you. "Take heed to yourself, keep your soul diligently lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your (listen) heart." I'll read it again, listen to this. "Take heed to yourself, Guard your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which you have seen and they depart from out of your heart." Don't forget the truth. Guard your heart. In Psalm 139, a beautiful portion of Scripture in verses 23 and 24: "Search me, O God, and know my (what?) heart. Try me, and know my thoughts." You see, the heart equated with thinking. "And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Guard the heart. Guide the heart. Ask God to protect the heart that's your brain, your mind. A good man, said Jesus in Matt, 12:35, "Out of the good treasure of the (what?) heart, brings forth good things. All the goodness will come out of the mind. The mind must guide the pattern of behavior.

One other passage, Matt., 15:19. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemy. Jesus said in Matt, 12: "All the good things come out of the thinking process." Jesus said in Matt. 15: "All the bad things come out of the thinking processes." So the Bible says, "God, guard my thinking processes."

Now let's go back to Colossians, and watch what this means to you now, "I wish you knew how great a conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen My face in the flesh that their (what?) hearts might be strengthened." What do hearts mean? Minds. Paul says number one thing I want out of you is to be strong in heart. What does the word comfort mean? You say its comfort in my Bible... sure, "paracoleto". "Paracoleto". A very beautiful word, a word used repeatedly in the New Testament and a word that always contains the idea of strengthening. In Ephesians 6:22 it says, "...that He might strengthen your hearts." In II Thess. 2, "Strengthen your

hearts." The word "paracoleto" includes in it the idea of comfort. It includes in it the idea of courage. It includes in it the idea of being strengthened. And it always carries all those aspects, In fact, we can look backwards into etymology and we can find the use of this word to mean specifically strengthened. One such incident is used by a Greek historian.: He says, there was a Greek regiment that had lost heart and lost courage and was totally dejected and they were just you know, going to give up, and the general sent in a new leader and he gave a great speech and he encouraged them so much that they were strengthened, and they went out and they became heroic. It means to strengthen. It means to provide a strong courageous inner man. An intellect, and a will that will act heroically for God. A strong heart means a firm mind. A mind that has courage. A mind that has conviction. A mind that believes. A mind that has principle.

You say, but how do you do that, John? How do you get a strong mind? And Paul is really saying, I don't want you people to fall prey to the false teaching of the errorists, I don't want you to fall to these people who are teaching you lies. I want you to be strong in your mind. I want you to hold the truth. You say, but how do you get strong like that? I'll show you. Ephesians 3:16 tells you in one verse. How do you get that mind, that inner part of me strong? Verse 16: "He prays to the Father that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power by His (what?) Spirit." Who is the strengthener of the heart? Who is it? It's the Holy Spirit. And we need it. We live in a world with a weak heart. People don't have conviction, people don't believe in things, people don't know the truth, people don't learn the truth, they don't pursue the truth, they don't mine the truth.. And he says, "I want you to be strong in it, I want you to be courageous, I want you to be comforted, encouraged and strengthened by it, all of that's in the word "paracoleto". And the Holy Spirit is the one who can do it.

You say, how does it happen, John? I believe as you yield to the power of the Spirit of God, as you walk in the Spirit, he strengthens the inner man. I think that's what he's saying here. You give the Spirit of God control of your life on a daytoday, momentbymoment basis and the Spirit of God will feed that inner man. The Spirit of God, by the revelation of God, will feed your mind and strengthen your mind. As we yield momentbymoment to the presence of the Spirit of God, we're strengthened. Paul is a perfect illustration of that. In Acts 9 he tells us that he was converted and immediately one of the things that began to happen after he was converted was that he began to be strengthened. Acts 9:19 says, "He was strengthened." Acts 9:22, "...but Saul increased the more in strength." He became stronger, and stronger. It wasn't that he was lifting weights and it wasn't that he was eating a lot of food, it was that he was being equipped by the Spirit of God and he became so strong in his heart, he became so solid in his confidence, he became so unflinching in his ministry, that in chapter 20 verse 22 he said, "I go bound to the Spirit to Jerusalem. I don't know what's going to happen, but I hear that bonds and afflictions await me; but none of these things (what?) move me." Strong. Strong in his heart. He had convictions about God. He had convictions about God's will for his life. He had convictions about the acts of obedience that God was askingof him, and he was strong enough to carry them out. He was strong. Tremendous courage, did Paul have.

In II Cor. 4:9 he says, "We're persecuted but not forsaken; we're cast down but not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body." He says, in verse 8, "...we're troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair." He says we go through a lot, but we never flinch. Why, Paul? Because we're strong. How did you get strong? By walking in the Spirit and the Spirit pouring divine strength after all.

Now listen to me. If the word "paracletto" means to strengthen, it is the very same word that is used in John 14, 15, and 16 as the name of the Holy Spirit. Do you remember the Holy Spirit being called "Paracletos", the paraclete? That's the identical word. You could just as well translate those verses this way. John 14:16, this would be accurate according to the meaning of the word. John 14:16, Jesus says, "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another strengthener." Verse 26: "...but the strengthener, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things." John 15:26: "...but when the Strengthener is come...", John 16:7 "...if I go not away, the Strengthener will not come. It's the same word. If you're going to be strong in heart, then you're going to be strengthened by the Strengthener, and that's the Holy Spirit, and I'll tell you what makes a weak Christian, and that's a Christian who walks all the time in the flesh. Right? Listen. Every step you take walking in the Spirit is a step like spiritual weightlifting. Just that much stronger in your mind, in your convictions, in the things you know and believe about God.

Now I want to go a step further. Although the Holy Spirit is the Strengthener, He uses human instruments. He uses people like me to strengthen you. People like you to strengthen each other. Listen to Acts 18:23: "...and after he had spent some time there (that's Paul) he departed and went over the country of Galatia and Frigea, now listen, strengthening all the disciples. What was he doing? What was Paul doing? What did he do to them? He went in there and he poured into their minds divine truth, and that strengthened them. God uses human instruments empowered by His Spirit to strengthen. Did you ever read 1 Tim. 6:2 this way: Paul says to Timothy at the end of the verse, "...these things teach and strengthen." Same verb. You know what strengthens, people? Teaching. "These things teach and strengthen." It is the Word of God in the hands of the Spirit of God, whether it is directly as he ministers to you or through a teacher that strengthens you.

We studied Jude recently. This is good. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence (Jude 3) to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful of me to write unto you and strengthen you that you should earnestly fight for the faith once delivered to the saints." He says, I had to write you to strengthen you. What do you mean? I had to impart to your brain knowledge to make you strong. Listen. People don't get strong by exercising their emotions. Do you understand that? You must understand what it says; I want you to have strong hearts, it doesn't mean I want you to have over exercised emotions. What it means is that I want you to have the input of the Spirit of God and the truth of God in your mind. And so it will come from the Holy Spirit who is the Strengthener, and it will come from other instruments, such as Paul, such as Jude, such as me, such as anybody. And you know something, it will come

from you, because if you're strong you'll be able to pass that truth on.

Let me show you that in 1 Cor. Chapter 1. Listen to this, this is really exciting. Every time you see the word "comfort" or "consolation", it can be translated "strengthened". II Cor. 1:4 or 3 "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all strength, who strengthens us in all our tribulation that we may be able to (what?) strengthen them who are in any trouble by the strength with which we ourselves are strengthened, For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us so our strength also abounds by Christ, and whether we be afflicted it is for your strength." In other words, what we endure we pass on to you as strength. The end of the verse: "Whether we be strengthened, it is for your strength." See, he's saying look, what we go through, what trials we endure, we pass on to you in strength. Strong hearts. Paul says, I pray for you Colossians. I pray you be strong in heart.

What do you mean, Paul? I don't mean that you have overexercised emotions. What I mean is that you take your heart, which is the mind, the source of intellect and will and strengthen it, so that it knows the truth and has the will to act on the truth. And then the emotions will flow along. You ever have one of those little toys with a flywheel on it? You know what a flywheel, a big heavy wheel? And you give it a little push, and it goes zooooom... right across the floor? On the first day. The second day it doesn't do anything because your kid broke it. Now listen. Emotions are like that flywheel. Truth is like your hand- Truth gives it the initial impetus and drives it, then the emotions will take over and carry it. But you can't do it the other way around. You can't just sit there and say, little machine, go. (Laughter) Go. Your emotions are a responder. They are the appreciator of your soul. And when the truth of God is poured into your mind and you understand it and you act on it, it spins the flywheel of emotion and it will carry you out.

Paul's prayer for you, and his prayer for me, and his prayer for all of us is that we have strong hearts. Because if we have strong hearts we're not going to be sucked into false doctrine, are we? We're not going to be sucked into emotionalism, and we're not going to be sucked into disobedience because a strong heart has a will to obey. And I'll tell you something, when you have a strong heart, man, the results are so exciting. I'll close with this, Ephesians 3:17-21 gives you the results. When you have a strong heart, when you are strengthened with might by the Spirit, here's what happens in verse 17, verse 16 says: "...strengthened by the Spirit." When that happens and your heart is strong, "Christ will dwell in your heart by faith and that is He will settle down and be at home in you. He will be rooted and grounded in love. you will find a new dimension of understanding (verse 18), You will begin to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, you will be filled with all the fullness of God, you will be able to do exceedingly abundantly above all you can ask or think according to the power that works in you, and unto Him will be glory in the Church." You see the results, from strong hearts? Paul says, I love you people; I care about you. And what I want to see in your life first of all is that you be strong in heart.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for our fellowship tonight, for the things we've shared and learned as we've just begun this exciting study of these truths. We do not desire that this should be the end of our pursuit of these truths, but that it just be the beginning. We thank you, our Lord, that you have provided for us the food to feed the mind, that you have provided for us the flywheel of the emotions to respond and carry us out, excited, thrilled, happy, blessed, to fulfill your will in response to truth. Help us to control the emotions by filling the mind with your truth, and activating the will to respond to it. We thank you for Paul and his love of the Church. Give us the same. In Jesus name, Amen.

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