

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

Paul's Burden for the Church

Scripture: Colossians 2:2-7

Code: 2140

Tonight for our study we come again to our second chapter of Colossians and it's been a real exciting time for me, I know, to study together in this tremendous book. It brings back great memories of our study together in the Book of Ephesians. It's kind of like going over the same ground in many ways, and I'm reminded as I study each week of things that I have learned in the past that the Spirit of God brings to a fresh commitment in my heart as I go over some of those things that we have seen are really in many ways sister thoughts to the ones that Paul gave to the Ephesian believers. And if you find a great deal of similarity in Paul's letters realize that Christians in all cities had basically the same problem, and basically the same solutions, and therein lies the similarity of these truths.

But we're looking at Chapter 2, verses 17, and discussing Paul's burden for the Church. We didn't get too far last time; we'll endeavor to get a little further this time and cover this Section 17 and see just exactly what it was that the apostle Paul desired for the Church at Colossae and what the Spirit of God desires for every Church and for every Christian.

I told you last time that Jesus loved the Church and gave Himself for it, according to Ephesians 5:25. And so did Paul, although Paul's death in the behalf of the Church was not efficacious, it was not atoning, it was not substitutionary, but nevertheless the apostle Paul gave his life because he loved the Church. And we mentioned at the beginning last time that probably the basic ingredient necessary for a successful ministry is the love of the Church. But a man of God must have that basic commitment that he really loves the Church. That he first loves the Lord and then that he loves the Lord's people.

You know, the ministry is a very self, I shouldn't say self, it's a Holy Spirit motivated thing, but it's a very dependent thing upon a man's own motivation. There's nobody sort of sitting over you like in some situations of employment, saying you have to do this and you have to do that and you have to do the other thing. It's very tempting sometimes to go along the lines of least resistance and do what comes naturally. If you happen to be kind of a loudmouth anyway and be able to stand up and shoot off your mouth with some alacrity and some sense of logic you can usually get away with it, and it becomes easy in the ministry sometimes to just substitute your own natural ability for the thing that you know God wants you to do. But I think the thing that finally resolves the issue in your mind is do you really love yourself and are you interested in proclaiming yourself so that people are rather in love with you and rather enamored by your ability or do you love the Church enough to give them what God wants them to have no matter what it costs you to do it? That's really the difference, and the man

of God somewhere along the line if he's going to have a ministry blessed by God must come to the place where he says, look, it isn't important that they get me, it isn't important that I come off looking good, it's important that they get what God wants them to have, and that was the case with the apostle Paul. And I think it's been the case with every true man of God since.

When Jesus said in John 10:11: "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep," he really set down a standard, didn't he? And any shepherd, any undershepherd, which is what the word "pastor" really means, is going to be at that point, bound, as it were, to the obligation of giving his life for his sheep. So the love of the Church has to be the most basic feature in the successful ministry in the way that God measures success. Paul had it, even as Jesus did, Paul loved the Church. And I think as I pointed out last time the reason Paul loved the Church so much is because he loved Christ and in I John 5:1 it says, "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone that loves Him that begot Him loves also him that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God." And so John said, the people who love God are going to love the Son, and the people who love the Son are going to love the people begotten by the Son, even the children of God. So tied up with your love for God and your love for the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be a love for the Church. And this is evident in the life of Paul.

Now because of his great love for the saints he says, in verse 1 of chapter 2, "I would that you knew what great 'agone' (agony) I have for you, and for them at Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.' Not just you but anybody else. It's obvious I love the people I've been with, but I love even the people who have never even seen me, those people who make up the Church, and because of that, when I see the difficulty that you're in, when I see the attack that you're under in terms of false teaching, when I know the anxieties of living the Christian life and walking the walk, I have a sense of agony and struggle and striving on your behalf, and that comes because he loved them.

Now his love had built into it certain goals for the believers. It's not unlike a parent has for his children certain goals. I can remember my Dad always telling me I would never amount to anything. He told me that all the time. Look, he said, "I want you to amount to something. You come home with all those (in those days they used to give an "N"; an "N" meant not cutting it, basically (laughter). Actually I think it was "not satisfactory", but it was not cutting it, and I used to get a lot of "N's" and they used to frustrate my father to no end (laughter). Sorry about that, but anyway. They would always write the same note on the bottom. "Johnnie has potential (ha, ha) unrealized." And my father used to say to me, I have this desire that you amount to something, and I would say, well, what does it matter to you whether I do or don't? Because I love you. Well, I never really understood what that had to do with it. But then I understood that when you love somebody you have certain goals for them. I love my children and I have the same exact thing. When one of our kids brings home a paper that's got an "F" on it or a "D" on it and they do believe me they do. You didn't know that; you thought they were all perfect, right? (Laughter). Yeah, they do. Well, we have a little discussion about it. Sometimes it

amounts to even more than a discussion. (Laughter). And the gist of the thing is look, kid, I expect more out of you, because I care about you and I want you to amount to something, and it means a little bit of effort on your part. And usually we can encourage that kind of effort.

Now the reason that the apostle Paul is saying what he's saying here is because his love has certain goals. He cares about these people, and built into that care is a certain anticipation that they will amount to a certain thing. I can relate to that as a pastor. The thing that gets me so fervent, that works me up, that makes me desire so much to communicate to you these things is because I care about you and it matters to me that you amount to something. Nothing is more heartbreaking than to see your own spiritual children flunking the exams on a day-to-day basis, and bringing home spiritual "F" papers. And the reason you say what do you care, I care because I care about them, and in caring about them there are certain goals and objectives that are built into that kind of care, that kind of love. And so as the apostle Paul, in view of the Colossians, is pouring out love to them, it takes the form of certain goals for their lives. Certain manifestations in their behavior. And we have seen in the passage at least in an introductory sense, the first of what amounts to five basic things that he really wants for the Colossians to experience. Now these items become a checklist for every church and a checklist really for every Christian.

Now to begin with, Paul agonizes that the Church be number one, strong in heart, verse 2. "That their hearts might be strengthened." Now we translated that term strengthened rather than comforted because we think that is the more particular emphasis that the apostle is making here, the word means to comfort, to console, or to strengthen, it embodies all of that idea. It even means to grant endurance, so it's a lot of things. But it seems to me that the sum of it all, and what Paul is really working on is that their hearts would be strengthened. We saw last time that the term "heart" basically in the Bible has reference to the intellect and the will, to the mind. The Hebrew didn't talk about the brain, he talked about the heart, and the heart was the area of intellect and will, learning information and acting on that information, or the will to act, came out of the mind. So heart means mind. And what he's saying is I want your mind to be strengthened. I want strong minds. Why? Because the mind is the first thing that Satan assails. You understand that? Satan assails the mind with lies. He is the father of (what?) lies. He brings around false truth and false information and assaults the mind with it, and that directs the behavior that responds. And so it is necessary to have a strong mind.

Now the term in the Bible, heart, generally is used to refer to the mind or the intellect. That's its technical meaning. I would add, though, that there are times when heart is used in a general nontechnical sense to refer to the totality of man's inner being. But when it is used in its technical sense, it has reference to the mind, or the seat of knowledge, which is basically the beginner of action. So, it is necessary to have a powerful, fruitful Christian life to have a strong mind. The way your mind is strengthened is by filling it with divine truth that can trigger a positive behavior pattern in your will. And then your emotions will be responding, and we saw that the Hebrews just designated emotions as bowels and my wife made me promise I wouldn't discuss that any further, so we'll go on

from there. (laughter).

Now the Colossian Christians can protect themselves, Paul says, from the assaults of false teachers, and you and I can also, when our hearts are strengthened. Now last time we said there are several things to understand about this. How is your heart strengthened by the Strengthener. Remember that? And we can take the word comforter as it appears "paracletas" in John 14, 15, and 16, and is well translated, strengthener. So it is the Holy Spirit that strengthens us. We saw in Ephesians, chapter 3, that we need to be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man.

So the Spirit of God does the strengthening. He does it as we feed on the Word of God. He does it through trials and difficulties that come our way. He does it through other teachers, Christians, who minister to us in the spirit and strengthen us, like in 1 Thess. 3:2 "And send Timothy our brother and minister of God and our fellow worker in the Gospel of Christ to establish you and strengthen you." So Paul says, I'm sending Timothy, because the Spirit may do it directly in your life, He may do it through the Word, He may do it through some other believers in your life. The idea is to have strong hearts, and as you yield to the Spirit, as He works in you, as you yield to the Spirit, as you read the Word and discipline yourself to study it, as you yield to the Spirit by submitting yourself to the ministry of other believers, you find your inner man strengthened. Your mind and your will become strong, and you can have positive action as a result of that and not fall into misinformation and untruth as Satan would want you to.

Now that brings us to a second thing The second thing that the apostle wishes for the Colossian Christians and the second thing we should wish for ourselves is that we be united in love. Strong in heart, united in love. And this of course is the beautiful balance to number one. We don't want to get carried away with the intellect; we don't want to turn Christianity into something that is coldly academic, because that isn't it. There is a great beating pulsing heart of Christianity, and that is love. "And though I speak with the tongues of angels and have not love," as Paul says as we shall soon see in the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, "I am nothing." He says, though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and have all knowledge and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not love (what?) I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it has no benefit to me." So all of that theology and all of that knowledge and all of that brain power is balanced off by love. And so hastily Paul says, "I pray that their hearts might be comforted (now watch the next line) being knit together in love." Being knit together in love. He wants, a onemindedness of hearts, that are knit together in love, And as I said, this is the balancer to doctrine.

The word knit, or knit together, simply means to unite. Your body is a combination of billions of cells, all knit together. You can't pick any one of them apart because they blend indiscriminately together and that's the thing that the apostle Paul is after as of the cells of a body are indistinguishable because they're lost in the mass, so should you be indistinguishable as you're lost in the mass, so

should you be indistinguishable as you're lost in the unity of love that exists among the brethren. The sense of the word here as it appears and also it appears later on in Chapter 2 verse 19, you'll see it knit together again, they're talking about the body again being joined together and knit together, is the idea of all the parts being put together in a way that leaves them almost without any personal identity. And they're held together, like atoms are held together in your body by what we called a few weeks ago nuclear glue, which is nothing more than a funny name for God; God holds it all together, so in the spiritual sense we are to be united, and the nuclear glue, if you will, that holds us together, is being knit together in (what?) love. Love is the thing that ties believers together.

Now all Christians are connected by a common life. We are like in one sense a whole bunch of beads strung on a string, and the string that runs through every one of us is the common eternal life. We all possess it. We're like people who live, if you will, on a planet somewhere in the middle of space and we all have the apparatus to breathe whatever the atmosphere is. We all have the unique capacity to live in a single kind of atmosphere, and that atmosphere is the atmosphere of eternal life, that's been bestowed upon us at the point of salvation. That's why I Cor. 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." That's why I Cor. 12 says, "We've all been made to drink of one spirit, we've all received one spirit, we've all been baptized into one body by one spirit." There's a basic positional unity. We've all come to Christ in the same way, we are all saved by the same method, by the same God. We were placed into one body by the same spirit in the same way and indwelt by the same divine life in the same fullness as every other Christian. So there's a basic positional unity that ties us all together, common eternal life. We are knit together. We are knit together by this fact of life, as if we were all people who existed in a special place only able to breathe a special air and all able to do that and thus having commonness we are Christians in the same sense. There are absolutely no differences in the basic identity of our common life.

Now in I Corinthians it tells us in chapter 3 verse 21: 'All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollus or Cephus or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.' Now that statement just sums up every Christian into one big bag. No difference. We all possess the same things, we all share in the same spiritual truths, the same verities, if you will. The distinctions are gone when you come to Christ. In Gal. 3:28 we've studied that reference in connection with some other things, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus. Verse 26: "You are all the sons of God by faith. For as many of you have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ." So there you see the positional unity. There is a oneness that is a part of every Christian's identity. In Romans, I'm thinking of another passage, chapter 10 verse 12: "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You'll be saved, and you'll receive the same benefits, and the same riches and the same Spirit and the same life and the same everything.

So, he says, "I pray that you be knit together." And we all say, "But we are knit together. John just proved it to us. We are already knit together." Yes, we are knit together, positionally. Positionally. And I think this in a primary sense answers the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Jesus prayed, "Father, I pray that they may be one," and I believe primarily that prayer has been answered in the identity of the Church as the Body of Christ. I believe that Jesus was basically talking about a positional thing, and it was answered. The prayer was answered in the unity of the Spirit.

But, there is still a part of it that is still unanswered, and that's the part that Paul is dealing with here, because if you'll notice carefully, Colossians Chapter 2 he says, "Being united or being knit together (not in common life, but in what?) in love, and that's practical. Paul says, I want you to be practically united, experientially united, experimentally united as you are positionally. In other words, make your life match your position. You are one, now act like it. Live out your oneness that's inside. As we saw in I Corinthians 1, Paul says to the Corinthians, he says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus that you speak the same thing, there be no division among you, you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment." In other words, you are one; now act like it in practice. Behave as one. In II Cor. 13:11: "Finally, brethren. Farewell, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind." Unity.

Now this is something, folks, that we have to work on. Because basically speaking we are one but practically speaking we have a lot to be desired. We don't manifest that unity, and that's one of the things that confuses the world. The Bible says that the world would know the Father has sent the Son if the Church is one, and part of the problem that the world hasn't defined in Christianity in who Christ is our failure to practically live out our unity. In Acts 11:22, "Then tidings of these things came to the ears of the Church which is in Jerusalem and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch, who when he came and had seen the grace of God and was glad and exhorted them all (listen) that with purpose of heart they would cling unto the Lord." Now he's saying to them, you have to work on hanging in there. You're saved there's a basic unity, but I want you all to make sure that you cling to the Lord, and that will manifest that unity that ought to be there in a visible sense. And this as I say is something that we have to work on. In Philippians 1:27 he says that "You should stand fast in one spirit with one mind." One spirit, one mind. In Jude we studied recently verse 3, he says, "Beloved when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write and exhort you. Even though there was a common sal-vation, there were some believers wavering away from what should have been a unified kind of lifestyle within a common kind of salvation. So it is very important that we live out our unity. You say, well, John, how do you do that?"

Well, look at Ephesians 4:3 and I'll show you basically what is the key to everything. Ephesians 4:3, now listen: "Endeavoring to keep (or to guard, if you will) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Now notice something very important here. He says, you should endeavor to guard the unity of the Spirit. Listen to me. We do not have to create unity. The Spirit has already created it, we just have to what? Guard it. We have to guard that unity. You say, how do you guard it? By being a peacemaker.

It is the unity of the Spirit that is guarded by the bond of peace. That is that you and I have a covenant that we will be at peace with each other. That's the bond of peace, that you and I agree that we will not argue, that we will not fight, that we will not hassle, but that we will be at peace. We're peacemakers. And we will keep, we will guard the unity the Spirit has already put there positionally; we will guard it and allow its practical manifestation by being peacemakers.

Now you say John, what's at the heart of being a peacemaker? How can I be a peacemaker? All right, that takes you back to Colossians Chapter 3. How can you be a peacemaker? Watch, verse 12, Colossians 3:12: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, tender mercies (and that's really a heart of compassion) kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, that is, tolerating one another, forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against you even as Christ forgave you so also do you, and above all things put on what? Love, which is the bond of perfectness, or which binds everything perfectly together.

Now listen, what is the bond of peace then? The bond of peace is love. He says, first of all, put on this, put on this, put on this, all these humility things. And then he says above everything else, the key ingredient, put on love. Love is what binds everything together. How do you keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? The bond of peace is love. The thing that makes me at peace with you is when I what? When I love you. Love is the basis of everything. And you'll notice that love is connected with humility there, because love is always connected with humility. I'll say that again. Love is always connected with humility. Because only humble people have a capacity to love. Proud people can't love because they're too busy looking for it. They don't give it away, they look for it. Humble people give it away.

So, the Spirit has already created a basic unity in the life of the believer, there is a commonness in all of us. We are not to make up that thing or to create that thing but simply to guard it. We guard it by being at peace with one another. We are at peace with one another when we love one another. That's why it's difficult to maintain an enemy that you really get to know very well. Now you say, I still don't understand how this thing works out.

Let me take you a step further and look at Philippians chapter 2. Philippians 2, we're going over some ground we've covered before as I've said in Ephesians, but it's very, very practical and important. In Philippians chapter 2 verses 18, we have a great illustration of how love works. Now Paul says, "If there is any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions (in other words, if there are any of these good things, comfort and love and fellowship and mercy toward one another and suffering with each other, if there's anything at all to this stuff), "fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, (now watch) having the same love, of one accord, of one mind." Now watch this. Paul says, "I want you to be likeminded." What does that mean? I want you all to be the same. I want you all to, like Cor. I, I want you to speak the same things, and have the same minds and the same judgments, I want you to have beautiful unity.

Oh, I want unity for the Church, you say, but how could you have that kind of unity? It's impossible. You can't just get all these people to have unity. How does it happen? Notice verse 2, likeminded is based on having the same what? Same love. You know what having the same love means? Loving everybody the same. You say, you mean I've got to love everybody the same? That's impossible. That's impossible. Not if you understand what love is. You say, what's love? How can I love everybody the same? That's impossible. That's impossible. Not if you understand what love is. You say, what's love? How can I love everybody the same? Well, the answer comes in the next verse. Unity is built on love, then, in verse 2, and love is built on, in verse 3, humility. "Let nothing be done (here's the key to love) through strife or vainglory, seeking self glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others what? Better than themselves.

Now listen, if you believe that everybody in the world in the Church of Jesus Christ is better than you, you're on the ground that you have to be on to love them. Get that? That's where you have to be. Unity, the Spirit gave it to us. Positionally. Practically, we can maintain it when we're at peace with one another. We will be at peace with one another when we love each other. We will love each other when we get down on the bottom shelf and see everybody else better than ourselves. You see, that's a lot of humility you're talking about. That's getting pretty low. Verse 4 says, "Look not every man on his own things but every man on the things of others." Be more concerned about somebody else than you are yourself. You say, who can ever live like that. Oh? Here's one, verse 5: "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not something to hang on to, to be equal with God but made Himself of no reputation, but took on Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, became obedient to death, even the death at the Cross." Now stop right there.

Jesus the perfect illustration of humility. He came from Heaven to earth, He who was rich as Paul says in II Cor. 8, "Became poor that through His poverty we might be made rich." Jesus, who was far beyond any of us, considered it not something to hang on to, to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and died for us. That's the mind of humility. It's a mind that says I will do anything; I will spend myself in total self sacrifice, if it benefits you, whoever you are, see? That's having the same love, that's loving everybody the same. And when you begin to be humble, then you'll begin to love. And when you begin to love then there will be unity, and then the bond of peace will exist, and you will be guarding that which the Spirit of God desires.

Now you say, I'd like to be humble and love folks. How does it manifest itself? How do I love them? Do I sit in a corner and feel something for 'em. Do I get the spiritual willies when I think about them? How do I love them? Do I do like some places, where they hug everybody all the time? How do I love people? Look at I John 3:11, and let's remind ourselves of what we learned in our study there. I John 3:11 gives us a definition of how love manifests itself. Very basic. I John 3:11: "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." What beginning? The

beginning when they first heard the Gospel. This is the tradition of the Gospel as long as they've heard it, that we should love one another. That's not just a duty, that's a proof of being a Christian. That's a proof of Sonship. The Holy Spirit energizes love in the believer. It's there, and we must exercise it.

Verse 12, he makes a comparison. "We shouldn't be like Cain who was of that wicked one, Satan, and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Can you put that into one word? What was it? Jealousy. You know what jealousy stems from? Pride. Cain didn't love his brother, he killed his brother. Jealousy was behind Cain's act, and jealousy is life on the level of the children of the Devil. Satan first created the rebellion in Heaven because he was what? Jealous, Jealousy is a thing of Satan. And if it exists in the life of the believer, just stop and consider where it comes from. Jealousy, you know, doesn't stay where it's at. Verse 13: "Marvel not, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we've passed from death unto life because we love the brethren and he that loves not his brother abides in death. Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Jealousy progresses to hatred and hatred progresses to what? Murder. And Jesus says, if you look after a man to hate him you've committed what? Murder in your heart.

So you can have one form of not loving people is jealousy to hate to murder. But there's another form. You say, boy, a lot of people hate and more people are jealous, but they don't all progress through that. Let me show you another form of not loving somebody. This is indifference, verse 16. "By this perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whosoever hath this world's good, ye have money, supplies, and you see your brother have need and you shut up your bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? In other words, it isn't just murder that results from a lack of love, it is indifference that results from a lack of love, you see? You see a guy with a need and you could care less. And even though you could supply his need you don't bother to do it because you just don't care that much. That's indifference.

On the other hand, loving is not spiritual willies or anything. Loving is whoever has this world's good and gives it to his brother. Loving is laying down your life for the brother, verse 16; that's loving it is self-sacrifice. I love the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke Chapter 10 he goes along the road down to Jericho and he sees the guy who's been beaten up by the thieves and he's laying there and he's a mess. It is a perfect illustration of love; the Good Samaritan went over to the guy, patched him up, took him to the inn and took care of him. What is the act of love? The act of love is this: It isn't emotional and it isn't because he knew the guy and it wasn't because the guy had a great personality. The thing is here is a guy with a need and here am I with something to meet it and I met it and that's love, see? That's love. Here is a need. I met a need, I loved. And the emotion comes flowing along at the tail end. And you who have done that have experienced the emotion that comes following that kind of act. You see a need, you meet a need, you've loved.

Now that's what Paul says I want to see in the Colossian Church. I want to see in the Colossian Church you people knit together practically in love. I want you to maintain the bond of the Spirit, I want you to live out that inward unity of common eternal life and the way it will manifest itself is in love and love is built on humility and humility has of its, consequences acts of self-sacrifice. Let me ask you a question. When's the last time you sacrificed anything to meet somebody's need. Anything. When's the last time you ever made a sacrifice for anybody else. Any kind of sacrifice whatsoever. That's the last time you loved. That's the last time you loved. So Paul then is saying in Col. II, "My burden for the Church is that they be strong in heart and united in love."

Thirdly, thirdly, let's look at verse 2 again. The third thing that he wishes for the Church is that they be settled in understanding. That they be settled in understanding. Strong in heart, united in love, settled in understanding.

Now I want to say something to you, because I think you have to follow Paul's sequence. When you know the truth in your head, now watch this, and you act it out in your life in deeds of love, you will give to yourself a tremendous sense of confidence and assurance. Because you're not only hearing and seeing Christianity intellectually, but you're watching it operate, and that's building confidence. If somebody comes to me and tries to deny Christianity they can give me an intellectual argument and they can go through all the intellectual arguments and I'm going to say but wait a minute, I have seen it operate in my life. I've seen the power of God within me. I've seen things happen that I know was God energizing me because I don't normally do those kind of things toward other folks. I've seen God at work. People come to me and say, well I have such doubts about my salvation. I know all the verses and I've read all the books, and I've got all that stuff, but I have doubts. You know why? All that stuff's never been lived out. They've never convinced themselves that Christianity is credible because they've lived it and seen it work, you see. That's the subjective side of it. It's when we live in that kind of love that we become settled in our understanding, that we become convinced that we become people of conviction, and that's what he's saying.

Look at verse 2: "That your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." You can stop there. The riches of the full assurance of understanding. I want you to have confidence. That's what assurance means. I want you to be secure in your minds. Now you know a lot of Christians, aren't a lot of them like Ephesians 4:14 are "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine." You know why? Because they've never been built up by love. By not only the knowledge of the truth, but the operation of the truth. So Paul says, I want you to have a thorough, gratifying insight into spiritual truth which includes the operation of it in a loving way in your life so that you become solidly entrenched in the knowledge of truth, settled, confident, having full assurance of understanding.

Now this is where assurance comes from. It doesn't just come from reading books about assurance. It comes from living it out. It comes from having your life so given over to this pattern that the Spirit of God is demonstrating and demonstrating and demonstrating through your life, and you're confident. So, truth finds solid footing in a strong heart and then works out in the love of the believers and it brings as a result deep conviction. You receive the truth in your mind, your will is strengthened, it manifests itself in obedient love to others, and the result is a settled conviction that this is true. And so, behavior has a great deal to do with nailing down. Every good deed, every act of love drives another nail into your assurance. Doctrine in the mind, love outworking. Then settled assurance. This is kind of like speaking the truth in love, Eph. 4: "speaking the truth in love builds that confidence."

Let's look at the phrase now in verse 2: "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Now that's kind of tangled up thing in the English, let me see if I can go a little further. "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding. Literally, say it this way. The full riches of settled understanding. In other words, he says, I want you to experience all of the riches that are available to you when you're solid and you're assured of what you have. In other words, you can't claim these things and really enjoy the richness of them unless you're really assured that they're yours, right?"

Have you ever just sat down and plain contemplated what Heaven's going to be like? I've done that. Just thinking about it. Man, just think about it. And it's mine, and I get excited about that and I feel rich. I'm going to be up there possessing the whole universe. Oh, the riches of that promise. But if I had doubts, and was saying oh, I don't know if I'm to get there. I know what the Bible says, but I don't have ...oh, I couldn't enjoy it. I'd think about it and I'd say, oh, I might miss it, and it would cease to be riches to me and I would become poor. Poor me, I don't know if ... You've got to have that confidence that comes with the full settled understanding, and then you know you're rich. Peter says, you better add to your faith virtue, and this and this and II Peter this and this and this. That your calling and election might be sure. Not sure to God it's already sure to Him, but sure to you. And as your life becomes holy and your behavior manifests what's inside you get a settled understanding of what's your and you can enjoy how rich you are.

Now he says I want you to have a settled understanding. The word understanding is just means facts connected to conduct. Facts connected to conduct. True understanding doesn't belong to anybody but Christians. "The natural man understandeth (what?)not." He understandeth not. Ephesians, a very simple statement, 4:18, says: "The pagans have their understanding darkened. They don't understand, their understanding is darkened. Romans 1:31: "without understanding." Romans 3:11: "there is none that understandeth." The unregenerate man does not have truth connected to conduct. His mind is a blank. Paul says, I want you to have settled understanding. I want you to understand. Paul, you say, what do you want me to understand? I want you to understand the will of God and all that's involved in it.

Eph 5:17, listen, I'll quote it: "and be not unwise, but understanding (what's the rest?) what the will of the Lord is." What does God want you to understand? The revelation of God's will. And I'll tell you, the more you study, the more your mind is filled, the more it begins to flow through you in terms of operation, in terms of behavior, the more you understand how really rich you are. And you can enjoy the Christian life. And the things of the world mean less and less and less and you find that the things you initially couldn't let go of you finally can let go. You know where the true riches are and you can begin to do what Jesus says with confidence, "lay up for yourselves (what?) treasure in Heaven..." cause you know now that's where your confidence is, because where your heart is, that's where your treasure's going to be, and until you have a heart that is settled and assured, and confident in God, you're going to hang on to some things in the world. But when your mind is confident and your behavior roots that confidence you're going to have the kind of assurance that let's you let go and trust the true riches.

You say, how do you get that assurance, how do you get that confidence? Well, you need to pray for it, I think. Praying just keeps you acknowledging the source of it. Col. 1:9 remember we studied, he said, "We prayed for you since the day we heard, and don't cease to pray for you from now on, desiring you might be filled with knowledge and wisdom and spiritual understanding." So we pray for it, that God would show us clearly His will." In II Tim. 2:7: "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding." We have to recognize that our understanding, our settled assurance, comes from God. Comes from Him. Through prayer, through the Word, through behavior, we get this confidence. So, Paul's got a simple prayer here, a simple burden. That the believer would have in his brain revealed truth, that he would see it manifested in his conduct, lovingly, and that he would have as a result a settled, solid position of confident assurance in the truth and then he would be able to enjoy the riches that were his.

You know, just a footnote here. Paul is really talking about having Christians that have some conviction. That really have some solid convictions. There's nothing really more tragic than a vacillating Christian because there's no reason to be. It's a result of two things either he's never learned the truth or he's never functioned on the truth to give him that solid confidence. And so he vacillates, and he floats and he wanders, and he can never really enjoy his riches. And that's sad. We need Christians today who can go out into the world and say with confidence, this is the truth, this is what Christ has done in my life, I am rich, and this is the kind of riches that He has given me and I have absolute security and confidence in Him. Those are the kinds of Christians that made a dent in society. The kind that go out and say, "Well, I don't know..." that doesn't help anybody. We need some convictions.

Now first of all, now we'll get back to the text. I was just preaching there, that wasn't part of this. (Laughter). He says, all of this stuff comes from one source. You've got to have a settled conviction about one thing, verse 2, he says, "The full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement (I'm going to read this the way it is in the Greek) to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, Christ."

To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now listen to me. Paul says, I want you to have a basic settled assured conviction. And the place that that thing has to start is that you have to be convinced that the mystery of God is Christ. Now listen, what do you mean, Paul. You have to be convinced of the deity and allsufficiency of Christ, is what he's saying. That the hidden God has manifested Himself in the revealed Christ. You see what he's saying? I want you to have absolute, unwavering assurance and acknowledge that the mystery of God, that is, the hidden God, is revealed as Christ. What is that saying? That Christ is deity. And that in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That is sufficiency. And why does he say this? Because those are the two things that the false teachers in Colossi were attacking, the deity of Christ and His sufficiency to save.

And he says, you have to start there, you have to have a settled conviction about the deity of Christ and His sufficiency. And these people would come into Colossae attacking the deity of Jesus Christ. They were saying that Jesus was just one of those emanations, remember we talked about them? Just a sort of an angelic being down the line, a good emanation, a good spirit, like many others. And they were saying it isn't enough to come to Christ for salvation. He's just one step on the ladder, you've got to have super wisdom, and you've got to go for some mysterious knowledge, etc., etc., and Paul is saying, 'Look, I don't want you to fuss with that. I want you to have an absolute, settled assurance about the riches that you have and the first thing that you have to be sure of is that this Christ is none other than the hidden God revealed. He is deity, number 2 in verse 3, "that in Him is all sufficiency." That's his point. A settled conviction about Christ.

Folks, if you're wavering there you're in trouble. If those Jehovah's Witnesses that come to your door and fiddle around with the deity of Christ get into your head at all, you're in trouble. You ought to be really solid on that one. And if you have learned it in your mind and you have worked out in your life the behavioral patterns, and love has been exemplified in your life and you have as Paul says in Ephesians 3 become rooted and grounded in love, then you're going to know what is the love of Christ, and you're going to know what are the attributes of God and they're going to manifest in you and nobody's going to come along and tell you anything about Christ that isn't true, right? It's right anyway, even if you didn't answer. (Laughter). That's right. You've got to be settled on this one. That's the heart of it, boy, when anybody comes along with the deity of Christ that's when my neck gets up. Don't touch me on that area. You can't fiddle with me there. I Tim. 3:16, discussing the term the mystery of God, Christ, explains it. What is the mystery of God? Christ explains it. That is the mystery of God? And without controversy, in other words, you can't argue with this. Don't even discuss this. No argument here. No debate left. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness." What is the mystery of Godliness? What is the mys-tery of God in Colossians that we just saw? Here it is.

God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the nations, believed on in the world, and received up into Glory. So what is the mystery of Godliness? Jesus Christ. Everyone of those describes Him. God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, that is His ministry ordained and given justification by the Holy Spirit at the baptism, seen by the angels who attended and watched Him, preached to the nations, believed on in the world and ascending into Glory. Who is that? None other than Christ. That is the mystery of Godliness, the hidden God now revealed. And incidentally, I Tim. 3:16 may have been an early Church hymn. They may have sung that verse. If they did I know why. To just keep driving home the truth of who God was revealed in the world in Christ.

Now, out of that settled confidence that Jesus is God, that He is deity, and that in Him are all sufficiencies, the treasury of wisdom and knowledge out of that settled confidence comes every other confidence. Because if He's who He said, then listen to me, then His Word is what it says, right? And I can believe it all.

You know, if my wife died, that's a terrible thought, but if she did, and left me \$5 million, I wouldn't believe it. She doesn't have \$5 million. (Laughter). I know who she is. She doesn't have that. She has everything I have. She gives me a little now and then (laughter). She gives me \$3 on Monday; I come back on Thursday and ask for another \$1. She says, you spent the three I gave you already? (Laughter) She doesn't have \$5 million. You see, I can't accept the statement of those riches. I can't accept that legacy because I know her and I know she doesn't have that kind of money. Because I know her. Now there are other people who might leave me \$5 million and I might have to check on them because maybe they do have it. I don't know. I mean, I don't know of anybody that would do that, but I could at least check into that if I didn't know them.

But you know something, here's the same thing with Christ. Christ says, I leave you a legacy. And you say, yeah? Well, before I'm going to believe that all this stuff is mine I've got to check on you, right? I've got to find out whether you have that. That's precisely what we're saying here. When you have a solid, and settled conviction about who He is and about His sufficiency then you can believe His legacy, right? When He says, Heaven's yours, MacArthur, the angels are all yours, they're taking care of you and nothing will ever come upon you that I don't plan. When He says to you, I'll supply all your needs according to my riches, when He says to me you don't have to fear anything because your life is in my hands and everything is going to be taken care of, take no thought for this and that, and the other thing. I've got it all under control, and I say, you know something, I believe that, I have confidence in that. I'll accept those riches because I know you well enough to know that that is true. See? So when you have that settled conviction about who He is, then you can spend your riches. You can enjoy them. That's what He's saying. If you're hung up on who Jesus is, you've got some problems in believing what He's going to give you.

Now notice, verse 3, because I want to talk about this for just a second. But He says, "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You say, what does it mean, they're hidden? You mean, you've got to go in there and poke around to try to find them? It means they're hidden; listen to this, from everybody but the Christian. All you've got to do is go in there and pick them up, and you know what it's like? It's like a diamond mine that somebody blasted the lid off of and you just walk in and pick up the diamonds. They're all there. All you have to do is study to show yourself approved unto God. All you have to do is let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; all you have to do is apply yourself a little bit. And you can go in and pick them all up. And of course, the heretics, they believed that all wisdom and knowledge was hidden in their mass of elevated material. Um, treasures... hidden.

The word hidden is an interesting word in the Greek, apocryphas, from which we get apocryphal. Hidden the heretics and the false teachers believed there was a great mass of divine knowledge necessary for salvation and it was hidden in secret books, and the secret books were called apocryphas. And only those super intellects could open them, and Paul says, baloney. The only apocryphas where all of this stuff is hidden is Jesus Christ. And the day you opened your heart to Christ, God took the lid off of the diamond mine, and just said go ahead, take what you need. It's all here; you don't need the special books of the secret intellect. You don't need the Bible plus the Pope. Or the Bible plus the Book of Mormon. Or the Bible plus Mary Baker Eddy Patterson Grover Frye. (Laughter) You don't need the Bible plus anything. Judge Rutherford, Madam Blavatsky, Annie Bezzant, or anybody else (laughter). Mr. and Mrs. Philmore, or anybody else. You don't need the Bible, plus somebody else, because in Him are hidden some of the treasures... is that what it says? All of them. You just need the Bible; the revelation of the one in there is enough. There's enough wealth there.

Paul just says, boy, if you could only understand it, it would blow your mind off, and in Ephesians 1:17: "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know, what is the hope of His calling and the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints. He says, I pray for you that you might just get a grip on what's there for you. Staggering. It's all there. Paul says, I want you to be settled on this one thing: Jesus is God. Verse 2. Second thing, He is all sufficient, and in Him is everything that man needs.

You say Paul, why are you so hot about this? Why are you so concerned? Because in verse 4: "And I'm saying this lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." Lightfoot translates it, "I wish to warn you against anyone who would lead you astray by specious arguments and persuasive rhetoric." He's saying, I don't want you to exchange proven riches for speculation. Boy, it's sad when a Christian would come to a place where He would listen to some of that garbage about Christ, "Well, I don't know, I've always believed the other way, and..." "See? Paul is saying, look, have a settled conviction and I'm telling you this lest anybody is going to beguile you with enticing words, clever

phrases and they're clever, and their arguments are good. This is the basic attack of all false systems.

They'll deny two things, they'll deny the deity of Christ, now mark it in your mind, they'll all do it. They'll deny the deity of Christ and they'll deny His sufficiency to save. One or the other or both. They'll come and say, oh yes, Christ saves plus works, right? Or oh, yes, Christ isn't God. These are the two things around which all that false stuff revolves. It is a denial of the deity of Christ and/or His sufficiency to save alone. And the cults are all brought to the bar of God right here and condemned, folks. All of them. Anything that reduces Christ to less than deity or anything that adds anything to His saving sufficiency belongs in the beguiling activity of Satan.

So, Paul desires the Colossians and all Christians to resist the seductive teaching of Satan and it could only be done by having settled convictions. Deep down confidence. Then He says in verse 5: "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in Spirit. Joying and beholding your order and steadfastness of your faith in Christ. He says, now I've just warned you, I've just told you what I feel, but I'm just saying thanks that even though I'm not here in my spirit, my inner man, I'm thankful that you haven't collapsed yet. I'm thankful you're still hanging in there tough. I always think of the cat on the poster hanging over the bar thing (laughter), "Hang in there, baby," it says. He says, I'm glad that you're hanging in there. I can't be physically present, I am slightly detained for three years or more as a prisoner in Rome, I see no immediate hope of release, but I certainly am supportive of you in my spirit, and I'm so thrilled to know that you're hanging in there. I have a happy confidence because of, notice this, a beautiful thought, your order and steadfastness.

Both of those words are military terms. The word order, is an interesting word. It means rank, and it means a single file line of soldiers. You're still holding rank. You know what happens when an army begins to lose the battle? The ranks begin to become depleted. They begin to shoot 'em down. This comes from a way back. The army would do out in a phalanx and they'd start shooting them down. And they'd be falling. In some of the old movies the British used to do that. They'd charge in rank. It was the stupidest thing I ever saw. They'd all run out there, half of them would get killed, they'd all go back and they'd regroup and the rank would be this big, see? (Laughter). No wonder we won the Revolutionary War (laughter) sitting ducks, you know. But they would get in rank, and they would stay in rank, and they would charge in rank and you would try to break their ranks. And he's saying, you may be being attacked, but nobody has broken rank everybody is in single file. You're holding the line- nobody's been shot down yet and that's good and I'm happy.

You say now what's he so excited about? Listen, folks, an ounce of prevention', right? And then he uses another term, "steadfast". "Stereoma". This again speaks of a solid front of soldiers, ready to stand the shock of attack. And it speaks of more of not the unbroken rank but the solidarity. Not only are you unbroken in your rank but man you are standing firm and when the shock of battle hits, BOOM! You're going to stop it. And I rejoice. You're obedient, you're disciplined, you're holding

rank, and you're going to stand the attack, and that makes me happy.

Yet I warn, and I say that to you, Grace Church. No-body that I know of has been shot down in the ranks, although I'm sure there are some that are being worked on, and so far I feel like if anything hit us we'd stand firm, buy, we'd be there. But I warn you. I warn you. It happened in churches where the apostle Paul was the pastor. In later years. Hold your ground.

So what does he say? Strong in heart, united in love, settled in understanding. Let me give you a fourth. Walking in Christ. Walking in Christ. Verse 6: "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Now, since all those other things are true, therefore, you're now settled in Christ, you're confident about Christ, you're firm in Christ. If that's the truth, then keep on walking in Christ, don't waver. Don't change. As you have received the truth, "erest" which speaks of a decisive point in time past, you received Christ, you received Him as Lord, you declared Him as Lord, you have that settled confident assurance, therefore, keep walking in Him. Don't waver. And what does walk mean? Daily life style, daily conduct. Keep walking in Him.

The primary impetus of this point is don't change in your view of Christ. Don't let your Christology flounder. Keep walking in Christ. But the upshot of it is walking in Christ means more than just walking along believing something, it means walking in union with Christ. Following Jesus. Doing what He would do. I remember when I was a little kid; my Dad would say to me -do you think that's what Jesus would have done? No. (Laughter). Same thing my kids say, "No". But that was always the standard at my house. What would Jesus have done? Not only to maintain continuing faith in Him, a continuing settled conviction but to maintain a continuing pattern of life patterned after Him. Paul says, this is what I pray for you. If you've received Him, don't forsake Him, but walk as He walked.

Look at I John 2:6, isn't that what He says? He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as (what?) He walked. How did He walk? He walked in love. He walked in wisdom. He walked in truth. He walked in the Spirit. He walked in holiness. All those things that describe the walk of the Christian in Ephesians chapter 4 and chapter 5 were characteristic of Christ. So, if you're a Christian, pattern your life after Him. The choir sang tonight, wasn't it, to "Be Like Thee"? That's it. That's the sum of the parts. I learn in my head, I live it out in my life, I get a settled conviction that Jesus is who He claimed, and then I set my life goal to be like Him. To walk as He walked. To make my lifestyle like His lifestyle.

Then he adds four participles in verse 7, to kind of sum it up. Rooted, and incidentally, the tenses of the verbs here are critically important, it's a perfect participle, "having been rooted". Since you have already been rooted in Him, you ought to walk in Him. You have already been rooted. Like a tree with deep roots in rich soil drawing its nourishment, so the Christian is deeprooted in Christ, the source of life and nourishment and growth and fruit, then being built up (that present) you have been rooted and you're being built up as you walk in Him, now listen, now I'll say this, it is only when you do what

Christ would do that you grow. Did you get that? You are being built up as you walk in Him. Whenever you do the deeds of the flesh you're not building yourself up, are you? What are you doing? 'You're tearing yourself down. So, you are built up when you walk in Him, when you obey Him.

The source of that of course is the Word of God, Acts 20:32, "I commend you to the Word of His Grace, which is able to (what?) build up up." The Word builds us up. Jude 20, he says, "Beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith. How do you build yourself up? By knowing the Word, the will of God, and obeying it. And you're built up. What will be the result? You will be established in the faith. That's a present passive. You will become established. God will establish you. You walk in Him because you're rooted with Him, and as you walk in Him, you are being built up, edified, only in terms of the positive, when you walk in Him. And you're not edified any other time. And when you're walking in Him, and being built up, God will establish you, solidly, in the things that you have been taught. And all of a sudden you'll find that information takes root in your life.

Well, God wants established Christians, solid, deeprooted, strong, who don't get pushed around by false information. And here's how. Get the Word in your mind. And he's come full circle incidentally. He gets all the way back to being established in the faith you've been taught, and all the way back to here again. Start out by feeding on the Word, let it produce activity. That activity will give you settled conviction, the conviction will be that Christ is who He claimed, and then you can claim all of His promises and begin to walk step by step like He walked, and that's where your life will come from and as you walk in Him you'll be built up, and you'll even be more established in the faith, and then there's a final thing, a last thing.

Strong in heart, united in love, settled in understanding, walking in Christ, and lastly, the response to all of it abounding in thanksgiving. The end of verse 7, the fourth of those participles and we just separated out because it's the only one in the active voice; it's a response to the others abounding with thanksgiving. What should be the life attitude of a Christian? Thank you, thank you, thank you. For the riches that I', enjoying, for the life that I'm living, for the walk that I'm walking. Thank you.

PRAYER: Father, we do thank You, for making us rich. Thank You for the good time of study we've had tonight, for the privilege of learning the things you have for us. I thank you for the love of this people, to You and to me, and my wife and family, I thank you for how you've blessed us and made us rich in Christ. Help us to be firm and thankful. We pray in His Name, Amen.

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