



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Apostle's Goals for the Church (Colossians 2:1-7)

APRIL 13-14, 2010

Paul Meinsen / PO Box 891, Jefferson City, MO 65102 / www.capitolcom.org / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, April 13, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, April 13, 8:30 PM in Room #134**
- **Wednesday, April 14, 7am in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided

There are two notes about a believer's life implied throughout Scripture:

#1 The Christian life is not a spectator sport—where one can sit around, throw in some money and let the paid professional or a few of the enthusiastic ones do all the work. And when they are done, wait for a “thumbs up or thumbs down” from the crowd.

#2 The Christian life is not an individual sport—where one is out there on his or her own. The church was established so that believers may help each other. Believers are to worship together, serve together, pray together; and if need be, carry out discipline together.

These two truths may not be directly taught in today's text, but they are quite obvious as the Apostle Paul lays out the goals for the church.

Colossians 2:1-7 *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. ⁵For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in*

Christ. ⁶Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

In the previous passage, Paul makes it quite plain that his struggles, in the form of persecutions and laborious work (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:22-32), were on behalf of the church. It wasn't for personal acclaim. They were for the growth and benefit of the body of Christ (Colossians 1:29); that is, the church.

His labors were even for those churches, like the one in Colossae, that he did not start or even visited (2:1). In this section of the letter, he gives five goals for the church, in his work for them.

#1 THEY MAY HAVE A STRONG HEART (2:2)

Proverbs 4:23 *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.*

When sports announcers see an athlete perform well, in spite of deterrents or distractions, they will often commend an athlete's “heart” or will to win. Many times it is not the conditioning, or the practice, or the abilities that carry a person to victory, but their hearts; their drive or desire to win the prize.

This heart or desire is seen in Paul's goal for the church. Peter Obrien commented, “‘Heart’ is employed in its customary OT sense denoting the inner life of the person, the center of his personality, understood as the source of the will, emotion, thoughts and affections.”¹ This source of the will is what Paul desires to see encouraged and strengthened. Therefore, he labors that their hearts may be strong.

The Apostle illustrates a strong heart in another letter. He wrote, *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...*(2 Corinthians 4:7-9). No matter what happens on the outside, it is the heart which “flows the springs of life” that is encouraged and strong, and keeps

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #134

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: WEDNESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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Paul and his companions faithful in spite of afflictions and persecutions. This heart is one empowered by God. Even Paul realized that it was not his own "will-power" that kept them motivated. Rather, it was the power of God that energized their will, motive and desire, regardless of the events that took place. This is a heart that is encouraged.

A heart that is strong is also a heart that has been changed. King David wrote, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way* (Psalm 139:23-24). Jesus stated on a number of occasions that it was from the heart that all kinds of evil are birthed (Mark 7:20-23; Matthew 12:34-35). Thus, it is imperative that one's heart, the "...source of the will, emotion, thoughts and affections" be pure upright before God.

IF JESUS CHRIST IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, SOVEREIGN OVER ALL CREATION, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, THE ONE WHO WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD NEVER TO DIE AGAIN AND IF HIS DEATH WAS THE SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE TO COVER THE SINS OF GOD'S PEOPLE SO THEY MAY BE RECONCILED TO GOD, WHAT OTHER MESSAGE COULD THE APOSTLE TAKE AROUND THE WORLD THAT WOULD BE OF ANY BENEFIT? JESUS CHRIST IS PAUL'S MESSAGE.

Paul labored diligently for the hearts of believers to right before God and to be empowered by God. Strong hearts will steady the helm of God's people when they come across the stormy seas that life may bring.

#2 THEY MAY BE UNITED IN LOVE (2:2)

Paul's second goal is one that needs to be proclaimed from every church rooftop today. He works so that the church may be united in love.

The Greek word translated "knit together" gives the picture of many strands being woven together into one piece of work. And that which weaves the believers together is love; a love defined as *agape*. It is the type of love motivated by a person's will and is seen in his or her action. It is a

love that is a conscious decision to care for and to look out for the interests and needs of others. This love for one another is visible when one considers others better than him or herself and when the needs of another are being met (Luke 10:15-37).

Paul further defines this uniting love in his letter to the church in the town of Philippi:

Philippians 2:1 -8 *Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

You want to know what love is? Look to Christ.

Jesus Himself covered this topic while He was with the disciples on the night before He died. He said, *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:34-35; cf. John 15:12-17).

Concerning this passage, John MacArthur notes,

"The late Francis Schaeffer called the unity of the church "the final apologetic" to the watching world (*The Mark of the Christian* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1970], p. 15). He went on to write, 'In John 13 the point was that, if an individual Christian does not show love toward other true Christians, the world has a right to judge that he is not a Christian. Here [in John 17:21] Jesus is stating something else which is much more cutting, much more profound: We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians. Now that is frightening. Should we not feel some emotion at this point?'²

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If Paul were to write a letter to our churches in the 21st century, there probably would be very little content that would be changed (see his letters to other churches in the 1st century--1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). The reminder of the call to love is still needed to be proclaimed and practiced. The world is watching. It can be intrigued and interested as to why people truly care for each other, or it can be turned-off by the hypocritical words when actions show something different.

#3 THEY MAY BE ESTABLISHED IN UNDERSTANDING (2:2-5)

The third goal Paul works toward as he serves the churches is that they will be established in understanding. This has already been noted in his prayer for the church at Colossae in 1:9b, *we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding...* Paul's desire for all churches is seen also in his letter to the church in Philippi, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment...* (Philippians 1:9).

For the understanding of what is Paul praying and working? Whatever it may be, it is quite valuable for Paul wrote that they may attain "all the wealth" (Colossians 2:2) and calls it "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3).

This treasure of knowledge that Paul labors, strives, and struggles to give results in a true knowledge of Jesus Christ (2:2). In the previous passage, Paul said that he was a servant of God to preach the Word (1:25) and reveal mysteries that were hidden from past ages (1:26). The specific mystery he spoke of to the Colossians was the truth that Christ now dwells in the life of every believer (1:27).

In putting all this together, Paul taught, preached and proclaimed Jesus so that the followers of Jesus may truly know the One who is dwelling in them. This truth is such a valuable treasure. It is vital to the growth of believers to know their God and the Christ that He sent who now dwells within them. It is what gives strength, direction, and encouragement when opposition comes; and even reproof when one strays from what is good, right and honorable.

Along these lines, Paul continued with the reminder that he taught these things so they would not be deluded with persuasive argument (2:4). "The

verb, meaning 'deceive', 'delude' is used in the New Testament only here and at James 1:22 which refers to the self deception of those who are hearers of the word but not doers..."³ One who does not have a good and growing understanding of the nature, work, character, and teachings of Jesus (and of God) will easily be deluded into wrong thoughts about Him. And thus, they will also be deluded on what it means to love Him, worship Him, serve Him and obey Him.

Arguments by other religions and philosophies sound tight and are very persuasive. Many are lead astray by them. Therefore, Paul is so adamant in this letter that the church has a right understanding concerning Christ. He taught on the nature and works of Jesus in 1:12-20, and will again in 2:9-15 and 3:1-4. Then the remainder of his letter addressed how believers are to live their lives based upon this knowledge of Jesus.

#4 THEY MAY WALK IN CHRIST (2:6-7)

And this leads to Paul's fourth goal that the believers walk in Christ. Used in this sense, "walk" is in reference to living everyday life (cf. Ephesians 4:1; Deuteronomy 5:33; Joshua 22:5; Romans 8:4). Thus, they are to "live their lives in Christ." Again this is the same sense of Paul's earlier prayer, *that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God* (Colossians 1:10). It is a part of John's admonition:

1 John 2:6 *The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

In many ways, our church society has trivialized the WWJD question (What Would Jesus Do?), but the truth of it is what's applicable in this passage. If one is to walk IN Christ, then he or she is to, as John wrote, "walk in the same manner." In other words, one is to live as He lived--do as Jesus did. A follower of Jesus is to follow Him in attitude, love, compassion, holiness and even to take up their cross daily and follow Him (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

But where does one find out how He lived? The answer is found back in Colossians 2:2-3; by having the wealth and treasure of understanding the mystery of Christ—where all wisdom and knowledge are found. It is back to studying and living the Word of God.

And this leads the believer to being firmly rooted (like the seed planted in the fourth soil--Mark 3:8), and being built up in Him (like the building

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Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 3), and being established in faith (Colossians 2:7).

This description of Paul's goal sounds much like the difference between the wise and foolish builders in Jesus' parable.

Matthew 7:24-27 *Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell-- and great was its fall.*

The difference between the two builders is that one did what he heard (he walked in Christ) and his building remained after the storm. The one who heard but did not walk in Christ was swept away. He was deluded and deceived by the persuasive arguments of men; he did not stand when the storm came.

#5 THEY MAY OVERFLOW WITH THANKSGIVING (2:7)

Psalm 100:4-5 *Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalm 95:1-2 *O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

Paul's fifth goal in this passage is that the people of God will be filled and overflowing with thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving for all that He has done on their behalf. F.F. Bruce notes, "This gratitude is the spontaneous manifestation of the divine presence and power within them, as they enjoy daily fellowship with Christ; it is a sign that they are indeed living in the new age."⁴

It is the natural expression of the believer who has the treasure of the knowledge of Jesus, who walks in Him, who is rooted in faith and built up in Him to overflow with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; Hebrews 12:28-29). An ungrateful believer is an oxymoron. The two terms do not go together.

In essence, everything that the Apostle Paul does and the goals he strives for in his work for the church is to bring all believers to the point of thanksgiving and praise to God. This is one more way that Paul showed his desire to see the name of God glorified in all things--"...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31b).

CONCLUSION

Just like we discussed in Paul's prayer requests for the church in Colossae, this list of his goals for the church should be seen as things that believers should be striving for themselves and seeking to see grow in others. It is not simply an explanation of what drives the Apostle, but also a road-map of Christian living: to be strong in heart, to live with others in true love, growing in the knowledge of Jesus, walking in Him and living a life filled with thanks and praise and glory and honor to God.

But these things are only for those who have been forgiven. It is for those who are now living in the kingdom of Jesus (1:14); who have been reconciled and have peace with God through Jesus Christ (1:19-23). Friend, this may not include you right now, but it could. God can forgive your sins--are you interested?

¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 44 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 93.

² John MacArthur, *Colossians & Philemon* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 88.

³ O'Brien, 97.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 94.