

**BUILDING A STRONG DEFENSE**

Colossians 2:1-4

**Intro:** In the latter part of chapter one in Colossians, the Apostle Paul wrote of his ministry. It was actually a twofold ministry, but he did not get to the second part of his ministry until he got to what is chapter two in his epistle. Remember that chapters and verses were added later, so this letter to the Colossians was one, rather long, continuous message. And he was not changing his subject when we come to chapter two, but it is a continuation of what he had been saying in chapter one. He had told them that his ministry was a ministry of preaching and teaching. (Read verses 27-29.) But as we move into chapter two we see that there was another, equally important, part of his ministry. And it did not take long for him to let the Colossian believers what it was. *It was a ministry of prayer.*

Perhaps you remember that as the work began to grow in Jerusalem, and the apostles realized that they could not do everything that needed to be done in caring for the needs of those who were being saved, that they asked the church to give them help. I am referring to what is recorded for us in the opening verses of chapter six of Acts. Let me read the first four verses of that chapter to you:

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But then they mentioned what they believed their ministry was:

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4).

All of this went on before the Apostle Paul was saved, but one of the first things we read about Saul of Tarsus (as he was then) after he went on into the city of Damascus was when the Lord told Ananias where he would find Saul and what he would find him doing. The Lord said to Ananias about Saul, “Behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:11b).

We have already seen in Colossians 1 from the middle of verse 2 all the way down to at least verse 12 that Paul told them how he had been thanking God for them, and how he had been interceding for them.

But then, as you can see, he spent the latter part of chapter one telling them about what he had been preaching, and why he was preaching. Now today as we go on into chapter two we want to see more about Paul's prayers. He described it as:

### **I. A "GREAT CONFLICT" (Col. 2:1).**

He spoke of his prayers for them as a great struggle. And Paul's prayers in this epistle, remember, were for believers he had never met. He may have known some of them having met them in other places, but primarily they were believers he had never met, and yet he called his conflict for them "great." Thayer says that Paul had in mind the struggles against the "dangers, annoyances, obstacles, standing in the way of faith, holiness, and a desire to spread the Gospel" (p. 10). Paul would never have described his prayers for the believers at Colosse (or anywhere else) as easy. The Devil and all of the forces of hell do all that they can to hinder the preaching of the Word, and the same is true of prayer. In praying for the saints at Colosse he was keenly aware that the Devil was doing everything that he could to hinder Paul from praying. We can have all kinds of good intentions regarding how we need to pray, how much we need to pray, and the people we want to pray for, but we very soon are conscious of the obstacles which the Devil can throw in our way, or ways in which we can excuse our prayerlessness. This is one very important place where we need to enlist the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Griffith Thomas in his commentary on Colossians quote these words which were penned by William Cowper:

And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.

But that isn't all that Satan does. He distracts us. He makes sure that we remember the many other things that we have to do. This is why we need the help of the Holy Spirit when we pray. Jude expressed this simply when he said, "praying in the Holy Spirit," and Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus about our warfare with Satanic forces:

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,  
and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for  
all saints (Eph. 6:18).

However, the requests which the Apostle Paul mentioned here in verse 2 constitute defensive measures which we need to take. Warfare calls for two very important measures to be taken: those that are defensive, and those that are offensive. However, in our warfare as Christians with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, it is easy for us to get so involved in what we are seeking to do against our enemies that we overlook the importance of defensive measures.

Let me explain what I mean. In the OT history of Israel and Judah we find that God often brought heathen nations against His people because of their idolatry, or because of other things that they had done, or were doing, that were displeasing to the Lord. As long as they obeyed the Lord, He kept foreign powers from invading the land of Israel. So we can say that what they did to please the Lord constituted defensive measures so that their enemies could not prevail against them. There is no way that we can guarantee that we will not be attacked, but obedience to the Lord, if it comes from the heart, is the way to win the blessing of the Lord.

Solomon expressed this truth in Prov. 16:7 where he wrote,

7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

So when Paul told the Colossian believers what he was praying for, he did not indicate, at least here, how he was praying against the false teachers, but how he was praying for the believers. This principle is illustrated when we say that generally a healthy body is the best defense against disease. The best defense against false teacher and false teaching is to know the truth of the Word of God.

It is important to notice the relationship in the Greek between the word “striving” in Col. 1:29 and the word “conflict” in 2:1. They both come from the same root and could be translated “agonizing” and “agony.” They show how completely devoted to the work of the ministry the Apostle Paul was, and how deep his conviction was in the truth of the Gospel and in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was greatly concerned about those false teachers which we will learn about later in our studies. But he was agonizing in prayer for the people of God. And this is why I have given my message today, “Building A Strong Defense.”

So now let us look at:

## II. PAUL'S REQUESTS (Col. 2:2).

His first request was:

### A. "That their hearts might be comforted."

The word that Paul used here was a word which also means encouragement. It means to be strengthened. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit Who is called in the KJV our Comforter. It speaks of exhortation also. To be comforted in their hearts means to be comforted in the very center of their beings. Again quoting Solomon, he said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Our comfort comes by the Holy Spirit from the Word of God. In Rom. 15:4 Paul told the believers in Rome "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

So I take it that here the Apostle Paul was exhorting the believers at Colosse to abide by the teaching of the Scriptures and by the instruction given to them by the apostles. We need to pray for one another that not a single day will go by but what we spend some time reading the Word with understanding. The child of God who is faithful in reading the Word is one who is not going to be turned aside by false teachers.

But notice the second part of Paul's prayer here in Col. 2:2:

### B. "Being knit together in love."

False teaching divides; the truth of the Word of God unites. False teaching destroys fellowship in a church; the truth of the Word causes the Lord's people to love each other. False teaching makes us enemies; the truth of God's Word causes us to love each other.

Paul used this word, "knit together," in Col. 2:19. (Read.) This, of course, speaks of the edification of the church. The truth binds us together and becomes a further safeguard against false teachers and their teaching. Col. 2:19 indicates that where the Word is taught, God will see to it that there is genuine growth.

And then we move on to the third part of this request:

### C. "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to

**the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ.”**

But Paul’s point in the latter part of verse 2 is carried over into verses 3 and 4 of Colossians two.

The Greek manuscripts differ greatly as to the last part of verse 2. But conservative scholars seem to agree that the last part of the verse should read, “the mystery of God, even Christ.” Actually whether you take it as it is in the KJV, or shorten it as it is in some MSS, and is translated as it is in the NASB, “resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, “ the meaning remains the same. It is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One, and we might add, the only One, Who totally and finally completes the revelation of God.

The problem that unregenerate men have with Scripture is focused upon Christ, whether or not He is God, questions about His death and about His resurrection and His ascension.

“Riches” is a favorite word with the Apostle Paul. It speaks of the abundant evidence of the truth concerning Christ, as well as its infinite value, leading to a full assurance of understanding that Christ is the revelation of the Father, and that He truly is the Messiah which was predicted in the Scriptures of the OT, and that He is the One and only Savior of sinners. To believe anything else about Christ is error.

Verse 3 tells us that in Christ are “hidden” all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And in verse 4 Paul indicates that having this knowledge will serve to protect us against the deceitfulness of false teachers even though, as the NASB expressed it, their arguments seem to be very persuasive.

William Hendriksen gives this statement regarding verse 3, “in whom (Christ) are hid(den) al the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”:

The Colossians need not, must not, look for any source of happiness or of holiness outside of Christ. Do false teachers boast about their wisdom and their knowledge? Or about that of the angels? Neither man nor angel nor any other creature has anything at all to offer which cannot be found *in incomparably superior essence and infinite degree* in Christ. In him *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden*, like “hidden treasure” . . . *hidden*, indeed, but in order to be unearthed, not in

order to remain concealed. That this practical purpose is also in the apostle's mind here in Colossians is clear from verses 9 and 10. What the apostle means, therefore, is this, "In Christ all these treasures are stored away. Hence, come, and discover them and enrich yourselves by means of them" (pp. 104, 105).

There is a key that unlocks the great truths of Scripture. The key is Christ. Nobody can understand the Scriptures who does not see that from Genesis to the Revelation He is the key to unlocking the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In the Bible we learn the truth about God, and it is in the Bible we learn the truth about ourselves. In the Bible we learn that all people are under divine judgment because of sin, and that there is only one way of escape from God's judgment, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, who offered Himself as a sacrifice for sinners.

**Concl:** The world of the Apostle Paul had no place for Jesus Christ, no place for the Gospel, no place for the Word of God, and really no place for churches where the Word of God is preached and believed. The world has not changed from that day to this. But the interesting thing about the Bible is that it remains even though it has never been changed. But we see in the latter part of chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2 that God has used two mighty instruments for the preservation of His Word, and for the fruitfulness of His Word throughout the world. But these mighty instruments are not new. They were being used in Paul's day, and they have been used under the blessing of God ever since.

What are they?

The first is the preaching of the Word of God, the Bible. And often the preaching has been done at great cost. The Apostle Paul is one of the greatest of all examples of those who faithfully proclaimed the Word knowing that it is only by the preaching of the Word that people were going to be saved, and it was only by the preaching of the Word that those who are saved would grow in their faith and in their conformity to Christ. So we must continue to preach the Word, and nothing but the Word. And our goal must be the perfection of every true believer in Christ.

But this is not all. And perhaps it is on this second point that we need the greatest improvement. As you already know from our text today, the second mighty instrument which God uses is prayer. Prayer with Paul

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was like it was with our Lord Jesus Christ. It is easy to read about how the Lord prayed when He was here on earth, and to read the prayers of OT saints. You can't read Paul's epistles without reading his prayers, and how earnestly he sought the blessing of God. As our text has informed us today, Paul agonized in prayer. He knew that whatever he did by way of preaching would never be successful without the blessing of the Lord. And it was by prayer that he saw the blessing of God transforming sinners into saints, and drawing himself and hundreds, perhaps thousands of others, in lives of precious fellowship with the Lord.

So by God's grace let us continue to preach. And let us continue to pray, praying that the Lord will use the preaching of the Word to draw sinners to Himself, that they might know the joy and peace that can only come through knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.