

20220807 Colossians 2:1-5 "For this I toil"

*2 For I want you to know what a great conflict (struggle) I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, <sup>2</sup> that their **hearts may be encouraged**, being **knit together in love**, and **attaining to all riches of the full assurance** of understanding, to the knowledge of the **mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ**, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

*<sup>4</sup> Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. <sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. (Colossians 2:1-5, NKJV).*

### Paul's Goals and Desires for a Church



Sandy was a singer in a Christian Band called Seeds. This was during what they called the "Jesus movement." The movement wasn't strong in Texas, but it blossomed on the west coast, and it blossomed on the east coast. On the west coast, thousands of young people (many out of the hippy culture) came to a saving faith in Jesus under the leadership of a pastor named Chuck Smith. A couple in our church were both baptized in the Pacific ocean on the same day before

they even met one another. The picture below is of one of those events. Sociologists have



tried to explain it in all sorts of ways. I heard that it was a reaction to a materialistic generation that followed World War II. I've heard it was a reaction to the drug culture. Some were driven into "religion" by seeing the purposelessness of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Many establishment Christians thought they were crazy because they said "all we have is Jesus, and Jesus is all we need." The bottom

line is that they were right and the world was wrong. Paul was telling the church in Colossae that Jesus was ALL THAT THEY NEEDED. HE WAS SUFFICIENT. HE WAS GOD IN THE FLESH.

In our last chapter, Paul explained that his suffering and all that he was going through and doing was so that the church might be mature in Jesus. We talked about what maturity in Jesus really means. I said that it really boils down to **LEARNING TO TRUST JESUS**. Paul continues that idea in chapter two when he says "for this I toil" that you might be brought to maturity.

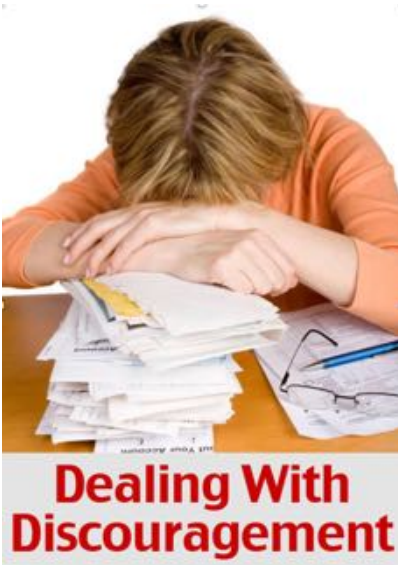
In chapter two he uses the word **agona** again. Note how it looks like the word "agonize" in English. I suppose how he "agonizes" for them is in his praying for them, in his writing them, and in his thinking of them. He is agonizing for them. What is the struggle that Paul is talking

about? I think Paul is doing all that he can to ensure that they, as a church, become certain things. He prays that:

1. Their hearts may be encouraged.
2. That they would be knit together in love.
3. That they would achieve all the riches of...
  - a. the full assurance of understanding.
  - b. the knowledge of God's mystery.

Let's look at these three things now.

### 1) THAT THEIR HEARTS MAY BE ENCOURAGED



We all know what it means to be **discouraged**. It means you're down. It means you can't see much good in what is going on in you or around you. You sometimes **no longer have the heart** to do anything. Well, that's EXACTLY what the word means because you are "dis" "couraged." Courage comes from the French word "coeur" meaning heart. Discouraged means the heart is gone. "Encouraged" means the "heart is put back in." Sometimes when we get discouraged it is hard to find ANYTHING to make us feel better. I think battling the world with its problems pulls us down. It removes our heart to keep going, but the Holy Spirit puts our heart and our hope right back in us. There are some people that come along in our lives who just give so much encouragement. There is something Holy Spirit powerful about encouragement. It can right the ship when it's sinking in the wind and the waves.

I think that giving encouragement is not just something we can discipline ourselves to do, but it is a gift from the Lord. I'm not trying to give any glory to anyone in particular in this congregation, but some of you seem to have a spiritual gift of encouragement. I'll finish a sermon and wonder if it spoke to anyone, and I'll get home to a text that tells me that what God said through me is exactly what they needed to hear. Some others whisper in my ear as I'm going out the door from the service. They'll say something like, "Man, you did a heck of a job." It makes me feel so validated and affirmed. You'll never know what it means to me to receive your encouragement. God uses it to lift me up and keep me going. This is what Paul is wanting for the church.

What does it take to encourage our hearts when we're down? Primarily what it takes is an operative work of the Holy Spirit. We need a "Jesus-Holy Spirit reboot." Do you remember when we studied the book of Acts? We came across this guy named Joseph who was called "Barnabas" by the group. My seminary professor, Dr. Wicker, used to refer to him as "Barney."

Anyway, Barnabas means “Son of Encouragement.” Bar means “son” in Hebrew and *nb’* as a root word means “speaks on behalf of.” That’s where the word נבא (*naba’*) means to prophesy or speak for some authority. A prophet is speaking on behalf of God. What a privilege. **When someone speaks encouragement into you, they are a son or daughter of God speaking biblical truth into you.** Sometimes encouragement is called “exhortation.”

Note that teaching is different from the gift of exhortation/encouragement.

The gift of encouragement or exhortation differs from the gift of teaching in that **exhortation focuses on the practical application of the Bible.** It is speaking the promises of God into another person (or even into yourself!) The gift of **teaching focuses on the meaning and content of the Word**, but a person with the gift of encouragement focuses on the practical application of the Word. **The encourager** can relate to others and speak straight into the heart of someone discouraged reminding them of who God is, what He has promised, and what is Biblical truth. **A good teacher says, “This is the way you should go;” but an encourager says, “I will help you go that way.”**



A person with the gift of encouragement can help another person move from pessimism to optimism.<sup>1</sup> That’s the kind of guy Barnabas was. The apostles called him “Barnabas” because he came alongside and encouraged others to continue in grace (Acts 15:36-41). When Paul was finished and fed up with John Mark, Barnabas picked him up and chose John Mark as a partner in ministry.

Encouragers see the best version of others and help to bring that side out of them. Be like Barnabas. Be an encourager. Whenever we see Barnabas in the Bible, he was helping, comforting, and encouraging others to be all they could be in Jesus.

Paul found purpose in his suffering, knowing that his response to it would encourage others to keep the faith. He was saying that if his suffering helps encourage others, then he was okay with it. The writer of Hebrews says, *“<sup>24</sup> And let us consider one **another in order to stir up love and good works**,<sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, **but exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:24-25, NKJV). **Question for today: What do you do to “stir up” love and good works in others?** Are you a divider? Do you denigrate others? Or, do you lift others up? Do you “stir up” others to “love and good works?” What are you stirring up? Be THAT kind of “stirrer upper.” Paul says to the Church in Rome,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/gift-of-encouragement.html>

<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— <sup>12</sup> that is, that **I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.** (Romans 1:11-12, NKJV).

That's Paul expressing the goal of us working together to help each other to be the best version of ourselves. We should be doing this for one another. So, how can you be a person that encourages?

- 1) I think maybe the best way is to help others to put their eyes back on the Lord. Help others to put their faith back in His Word and the truths and promises of His Word. His Word is truth (John 17:17).
- 2) It might mean praying with others. I have a habit of praying RIGHT THERE AND THEN when someone asks me to pray for them. I just take their hand and talk to God immediately. If I say, "I'll be praying for you", I am likely to forget, so, I just pray for them right there and then.

## **2) THAT THEY WOULD BE KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE**



Paul's second goal for the little church is that they would be knit together. Think about something being "knit together." The first thing that comes to my mind is Psalm 139:13: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." (ESV). That's talking about a human body. So many times in scripture the Church itself is referred to as a body with all its working parts. By definition, the Church is the Body of Christ. A body will not work right if the parts are not working in conjunction with one another. A church can't function if the parts and pieces are not working together.

It also reminds me of a masterpiece of embroidery. A masterpiece is made from all those different colors and threads being tied together in beauty and love. A human body can't function with one part. An embroidered masterpiece cannot exist without diversity of the parts that make up the whole. What a great picture that is of a church functioning healthily.

I've told some of you that have personality conflicts with others in this body that we're not called to "like" everyone in here, but we are called to "love" everybody. Some have come up to me and said, "I just really don't like old so-and-so." I've responded back saying, "Well, first of all, he or she probably doesn't like you much either, BUT you are BOTH called to love each other. You are not called to like each other. You are called to love each other. It's incumbent on us to show love for one another. That's how "all men will know that we are His disciples" (John 13:35).

So how can you love someone that you don't particularly like? Sometimes it's just a simple step of being obedient to the Lord. We love each other not because it makes us feel comfortable, but because WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Peter says,

*<sup>8</sup> And above all things **have fervent love for one another**, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."<sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:8-10, NKJV).*

What does "fervent" mean? It means burning. You know when you have a camp fire, you have to keep it going by adding fuel to the fire. You have to tend the fire. That's how it is when we love one another. We have to put something into that relationship. You have to add energy to keep the fire going. I have told you all over and again that when we love others it will cost us our time, our talents, and our treasure. It is costly. Love is not free. Stop thinking you can truly love others without some cost to yourself. It won't happen.

What does it mean exactly to "cover a multitude of sins?" It means to forgive when someone does wrong against you. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR GRUDGES IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER. If you are carrying a grudge, you need to repent. You'll die carrying that grudge or it may kill you. In the passage above, Peter is talking about how we get along with one another. We are to reflect God's love on to the other. Jesus told His disciples, "This is my commandment that you love one another" ... why? SO THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL (John 15:11). Love doesn't keep score of wrongs. We are commanded to "keep no records of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Let me ask you, "Are you a score keeper?" Love covers over sin or wrongdoing that we are willing and ready to forgive.

Love also covers sin because it **doesn't gossip** and tell a story of wrongdoing or sin over and over. When it's over, it's over. When others do you wrong it's sort of like manure; the more you stir it the more it stinks. **Love protects** (1 Corinthians 13:7). It doesn't cover up wrongdoing or sin, but it deals with it in a biblical way. Love protects victims and offenders, and it tries to keep more offenses from happening. Protection also means that we should have personal boundaries. We don't "cover" a multitude of sin by inviting someone into our hearts to abuse us. We "cover the sin" by acknowledging that it has happened. We give forgiveness for it, but we're not supposed to invite the abuser to go after us again.

- 3) **THAT THE CHURCH WOULD REACH ALL THE RICHES OF....**
  - a. Full assurance of understanding – Understanding Grace Alone
  - b. The knowledge of God's mystery – That it's all about Him



Paul says he's struggling so that the little Church will have the "full assurance of understanding." I think this is telling us that there is a lack of assurance among believers. I am talking about people that believe that Jesus died on the cross for them, but they don't have a full assurance of His work within them. When Christians don't have that assurance, they don't know how to live

life. They are not aware of the RICHES OF FULL ASSURANCE THAT WE HAVE IN JESUS. There is NO CONDEMNATION in Christ Jesus.

Many believers think they're just not accepted because they're not being "good enough." They think they're not really saved because they still have sin in their lives. Our spirits are now alive, but we still have a struggle with the flesh. IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HE ALONE THAT WILL DO THE WORK TO CLEAN YOU UP (Philippians 1:6). Stop thinking when you have sinned that you're not saved or you're no good. You are righteous before God in heaven, and by submitting not to the flesh but to the Holy Spirit you can and will walk in righteousness. Just agree with God that you're not where He desires you to be and get back into the game (1 John 1:9).

You might believe that you're saved by grace, but you think it is your job to keep your salvation. It is not your job. Who is it that keeps you? Is it your white-knuckle existence trying to follow Jesus? No. Jude tells us, *"<sup>24</sup> Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, (Jude 1:24, NKJV).*

A word about eternal security:

*"<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39, NKJV).*

Paul is "agonizing" for this little Church to learn how to encourage each other, how to be knit together as one, and how to understand the riches of love and grace that are available to all believers. That is what he desired for the Church in Colossae, and that is what God desires for the Grove.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or

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