

Wednesday in the Word

Digging Deeper

November 25, 2020

Colossians 2:1-7

The Conflict of Love

Have you sent your little son off to kindergarten or your teen daughter off to college? Maybe you sent a son into the military or married your daughter off to her husband. We sometimes refer to an empty nest but its more than that. Our lonely days and altered routines are trifling compared to the serious stress of watching a child leave home for a new phase of life. You've had them under your wing for these past years. You've trained them and nurtured them in the ways of life but perhaps not enough in the ways of the world. Will other kids pick on him? Will they reverse her education causing her to forsake the values she learned at home? Will he be sent off to war? Will her husband treat her with love and honor? Our fears can be irrational but they are our response to love. When you love and care so much for a tender family member who is but a "baby" in your sight, you can feel as though you've released them to the wolves. Often our fears become reality. Sometimes the damage cannot be undone. Paul faced just this dilemma. In the latter verses of chapter one, after exploring the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ, he recounts the sufferings and afflictions he has endured to instill the doctrines and rich mysteries of the Savior into his "children" at Colosse and Laodicea. His hard work and even agony becomes evident as he displays the tender love a minister can have for those in his charge.

Now in today's passage, Paul exposes his personal weakness as he alludes to 'great conflict'. In the Greek this phrase is 'hēlikos agōn', a term comparing a venue for conflict such as a gladiators arena to the heavy labour he spoke of in 1:29. Our word, 'agony' comes from this term. Paul is saying, "As hard as I worked and suffered to teach you, warn you and present you to Christ, I now agonize for you as you grow and learn". We will pursue this shortly but first turn to John 17:20-21. Notice here how Jesus prays down through time right to our doors trusting that the gospel will be passed on one believer at a time. Praise God for His continuing Providence. Who first witnessed to you? This beautiful long line led to your salvation as well as your inclusion into the unity of the family of God. Now you can extend that offer to others. Paul, in verse 1, might be making the same prescient statement knowing in the Spirit that his words may transcend time as well they have. We are reading personal letters that are almost 2000 years old. Though we have not "seen his face in the flesh" we certainly feel we know him more and more.

Why was Paul in agony? After relating to them the immense truth and value of the knowledge of Christ, he now agonizes over the prospect that unity may break down and that their growth may be stunted by false teaching. See verse 4. Those of us who have invested much into the lives of young and new Christians are often fearful that they might be led astray or beguiled by the myriad of false teachers out there. So many seemingly well grounded and well taught people wind up in churches that pervert the Word of God or they fall out of fellowship as a result of the misleading of the evil one. To beguile as in verse 4 is in the Greek, paralogizomai which is to lay a nearly accurate but different doctrine along side the truth thereby distorting and replacing it. Know your Bible!!! When you know the Truth you will see the lie! In verse 3, this hidden wisdom and knowledge came under the pretense of gnosis, which replaced the

experiential knowledge of Christ with the esoteric hypocrisy of secretism and intellectual pride. While all this was stressful for him, Paul nonetheless acknowledged with great relief that though he could not personally fellowship with them, the report he had acquired from Epaphras was very encouraging. See 1:4-8. He goes on in 2:5 claiming to be "joying and beholding their order and steadfastness of faith in Christ". Let's dig in to that. He says he is full of cheer, perceiving by the eye their "taxis" or regular arrangement and "stereōma" or confirmed stability. He says this relative to their faith in Christ. Paul was quite pleased that the Colossians kept strong, unwavering faith and were holding to the truth. He urged them to continue to walk according to Christ. In verse 8 he uses Jesus' symbolism of a house well built. See Matthew 7:24-25 and a tree well rooted, Jeremiah 17:8.

We may stress over the possibilities and uncertainties of the lives of those we love but like Paul, we can also learn that all those we love are in God's hands and under His control. What beautiful results await those who trust in the Lord. 2 Samuel 22:31, Psalm 37:5 and Psalm 125:1. Rejoice that God is protecting your family and enjoy a Happy Thanksgiving!