

Strengthening Our Faith Colossians 2:1-5

Objective: Strengthen ourselves against the hazard of losing our Christianity.

Reading: Colossians 2:1-5.

Introduction:

1. How many can you think of, who once followed Christ, but do so no longer?
2. Where have they gone spiritually? Surely such departure is prophesied by Jesus. I think of the Parable of the Sower in particular.
3. It will happen – but at the same time, there are passages that demonstrate Christian concern to protect souls and ourselves against such falling away. There are warnings against false teachers and other dangers folks might drift into. There are urgings to rescue and strengthen one another, to go to any who are caught in sin, to strengthen and encourage the weak.
4. The Apostle, Paul is constantly concerned with strengthening others so that may not grow weary or discouraged or be led astray. We should have same concern.

We need to strengthen ourselves against falling away from faith. (HOW?)

Each should personally do what we can to ensure against our own falling away. We should also do what we can to help keep others from falling away. In Colossians 2, the divinely inspired Apostle, Paul, relates several things that are important in enabling stability of faith.

To ensure that folks have a strong and stable faith the Apostle urges and works for

I. A full and valid understanding of Christ: Colossians 2:2, *“...that 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,”*

A. Here is where “assurance” comes from.

1. **“full assurance”** refers to a conviction of truth – yielding confidence / trust / faith.
2. There is a “wealth” here – an overflowing abundance of what is needed.
3. Here are all the **“treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** needed for knowing how to live, for providing a clear and solid conviction, for motivating faithfulness to Christ and trust in Him in all walks of life.
4. Here is awareness and revealing and knowledge of **“God’s mystery”!**
 - a. Here is understanding of life – what it is about, how it works, how to have it and have it to the full.
 - b. Here is everything that is of any real value at all.
 - c. Other treasures apart from Christ are of temporary value.
 - d. Wisdom and knowledge apart from Christ are also of limited scope – here is what is necessary to faith and to life.

B. How can one expect to obtain such understanding?

1. How will you distinguish between true and false? Study the reliable to recognize the counterfeit! Study Scripture! Opportunities abound. Classes, Home Bible studies. Attendance. Worship services, Sermons,
2. Pray for guidance. Pray for understanding. Pray for personal enlightenment.
3. Fellowship. Study with others in groups. Ask questions, share problems, fellowship. This strengthening of others is what God prescribes assembling for!
4. Discern the Spirit. Know the nature of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

C. Erroneous understandings abound.

1. They do not bring full assurance.
 - a. Sometimes their folly is obvious and folks lose their trust or stop seeking truth.
 - b. Sometimes they simply sound so good folks follow them even though they are misleading.
2. Verse 4 warns of **“fine-sounding”** or **“persuasive”** arguments.
 - a. Eloquent speakers can sometimes talk folks into anything. Like selling freezers to Eskimos.

- b. Check and recheck. Question! Apply! Discuss. Verify.
- 3. Verse 8 warns against being taken “captive through philosophy and empty deception,
 - a. Here again is preaching or teaching that sounds good but is not founded or based on reality.
 - b. Perhaps it follows current cultural trends or “feels” good because it is what you would like to hear. Sometimes folks like to hear that what they are doing is okay when it is not. Sometimes folks like to hear they are safe when they are not, when they really need to correct something.
 - c. Romans 1:21-25. Speaks of folks who knew God but did not honor Him as God. Instead they became “futile in their speculations and their foolish hearts were darkened. They exchanged truth about God for lies.
- 3. Verse 8 also warns about the temptation of such false and persuasive things in that they are things being taught **“according to the tradition of men”**.
 - a. “This is what we have done for years” – does not make it a reliable truth.
 - b. “It was good enough for my parents” relates a human tradition, but does not designate a reliable truth.
 - c. “I was born to such and such a faith, I will die in such and such a faith.” Depicts a reliance on tradition of men, but not a willingness and honest effort to seek valid understanding of the mystery of God.
- 4. Finally, verse 8 also warns against being taken captive by philosophy and deception that are **“according to the elementary principles of the world”**.
 - a. It is easy for people to be swayed by the way we SEE things operating in this world.
 - b. The “wise” get ahead. The one who looks out for himself is blessed. People are not simply forgiven, they pay penalties, etc. in this world.
 - c. So often it is not so in the Kingdom of heaven. Here there is grace. Here it is what is on the inside that counts.
 - d. In Matthew 16 Jesus scolded Peter for looking at things from “man’s” perspective and urged him to set his mind on God’s interests – there is a difference – sometimes a big difference.
 - e. Following worldly wisdom might be very deceptive.

D. Such understanding comes with personal application.

- 1. The “Word” explains things, but they must be applied to become real and personal.
- 2. “Full assurance” comes from applying them and seeing how they work and so developing trust and conviction that this is truth and solid.
- 3. So Romans 12:2, calls on us to be living sacrifices and NOT be conformed to the ways of the world but rather to be transformed by the renewing of our minds **“... so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”** Let give yourself to it and do it and your faith in it will grow!

2 Corinthians 4:7, speaking of the same treasure (this knowledge of Christ), says, **“...we have this treasure in jars of clay...”** This is grasp, this understanding of Christ is NOT simply information memorized in our heads, but is a treasure that is found in our lives as they interact with others, demonstrating and revealing Christ. Thus, Paul’s appeal in verse 2 that each one be encouraged, has an action implied for each of us to:

II. Encourage one another’s heart: Colossians 2:2, **“...that their hearts may be encouraged, ...”**

A. Encourage them to cling to Christ.

- 1. Urge them to let no one persuade them away from Christ.
- 2. Strengthen them to stand against efforts of peers to dissuade them or lead them to sin.
- 3. Let them see your own faith in how you stand against temptations, in how you turn to the word of God, in how you are strengthened and encouraged by knowledge and understanding of Christ.
- 4. All this implies social interaction / fellowship of some kind. We have got to be getting together if we are to encourage one another.
- 5. Faith strengthens faith. Here is good reason for coming to church! So, God’s prescription in Hebrews 10:23-25, **“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”**

6. We cannot watch over every one every minute, but
 - a. We can gather to teach and talk and give a solid foundation of knowledge of Christ.
 - b. We can gather together to share one another's burdens.
 - c. We can inspire one another with our own faith.

B. To "encourage" is to "give courage to". To strengthen, comfort, and establish.

1. Help them know they can do it. Instill confidence in them!
 - a. That God's way is the right way.
 - b. That they can resist the deceitfulness and the pressures of this world.
 - c. That they can be transformed into a child of God.
 - d. That they are not alone in their effort.
2. Give them confidence in their own ability to read Scripture, to reason, think, feel.
3. Help them realize that they are important, valued by God. Even in Cradle role we can do this.
4. Help people know that they can see Truth and understand Truth themselves.
5. The idea here is to think about other folks and point them to Christ helping them know that Christ is the answer and is adequate for all their needs.

In line with this concept of mutual encouragement for strengthening each other is to do whatever we can to make sure we...

III. Grow together in love: Colossians 2:2, "...*that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, ...*"

A. There is strength in a united unit.

1. Literally the word here has to do with walking together.
 - a. Cf.; arm in arm, one purpose, one goal. A team, a unit, a family! Brothers and sisters.
 - b. Ephesians 4:15-16, has same concept; "...*but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*"
2. Christianity is NOT supposed, or intended by God, to be lived in isolation!
 - a. It is a social matter. Only from uniting and working together with other Christians, is a "**complete understanding**" of Christ obtained.
 - b. Like so many things, you cannot really understand by reading about it, you need to live it; Understanding Christ and Christianity is a "hands-on" experience.
3. One can not obtain the "complete understanding" of Christ entirely from a book, even the Bible. True and valid understanding of Christ comes only as what is learned in the Book is implemented and applied; only as love interacts with people in a Christian application of love. The Bible so directs us. The Bible is about what we are to DO. (and this involves interaction with each other).

B. Love is the foundation of Christian life and experience.

1. NAS "**knit together**" presents illustration of a sweater in which the threads are all woven and intertwined to make a unit, It is love for each other that binds us together for mutual strength.
2. Love is an action word; something to be done, not simply thought about.
3. Love is a bond to hold us together, to keep any from falling. If Christians are cinder blocks, love is the mortar that binds together and makes a strong unit.

So What?:

We need to be about strengthening each other. Spiritual stability and growth comes from a valid knowledge of Christ and mutual, loving involvement with Christians.

Closing Prayer:

Strengthening Our Faith
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Things that are important in enabling stability of faith.

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- B. How can one expect to obtain such understanding?

- C. Erroneous understandings abound.

- D. Understanding comes with personal application.

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Hebrews 10:23-25

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- A. There is strength in a united unit.

Ephesians 4:15-16

- B. Love is the foundation of Christian life and experience.

So What?:

Spiritual stability comes from knowledge of Christ and involvement with Christians.