

Treasuring Christ Together

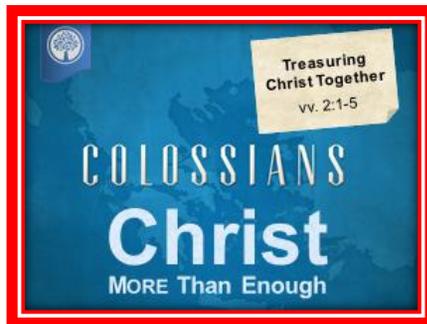
Colossians 2:1-5 - NCBC, August 16, 2015

Main Point: **A church that is treasuring Christ together will stand firm in its faith.**

Three evidences of a church that is treasuring Christ together:

- **Strong Hearts (v.2a)**
- **Growing Love (v. 2b)**
- **Firm Faith (v. 2c-5)**

Application: **Move deeper into treasuring Christ more and more with others.**



The penalty was paid in full, the spotless lamb was slain ... Salvation! what a priceless gift, received by grace through faith ... We stand in robes of righteousness, we stand in Jesus name. No wonder His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. How rich a treasure we possess in our communion with Jesus Christ our Lord!

Well this morning we continue our study of Paul's letter to the small little church at Colossae, located in the south-western region of modern day Turkey. What an encouraging and convicting letter for us. And if you are keeping up with our reading through this series, this past week you would have read through the entire 4 chapters of Colossians again for the 3rd time. The more we read God's Word the more gems we find within its pages! The Scriptures are like a storehouse of treasure – always revealing more and more of Christ the more we dig! So I want to encourage you – if you haven't read all the way through Colossians yet, this week would be a great time for you to join us in reading all four chapters at least once this week. I trust it will be good for your soul!

Let's now continue our worship by reading from God's Word. Please open your Bible to **Colossians chapter 2**. I'll be reading **the first 5 verses**, so please stand with me now in honor of God's Word as I read our text for us from Colossians 2:1-5, reading from the **English Standard Version**:

Colossians 2:1-5 *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.*

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

This past week I noticed that my car needed some tender loving care. I had been neglecting its cleaning for some time, and night driving out in the Mackinaw country left my front grill looking like a battle tank returned home from a grasshopper and bug invasion. It wasn't pretty. So I took my son Andrew with me to the local car wash and began to feed the hungry meter on the wall ... quarter after quarter...after quarter! Andrew was scrubbing with a brush, and I was spraying and spraying and spraying – working together to restore some of the original beauty that was hidden under the layer of buggy-gut-plaster.

By the time we finished three things had happened. 1) My car looked much better. 2) I had a personal sense of satisfaction on a job well done. And 3) I was out of quarters.

I must admit, I admired how nice my car looked for several days. And then one day as I was driving, I started to look around the inside of my car. I'm ashamed to say, there was a layer of dust across the front dash that would allow you to write your name in it. The side pockets in the doors were filled with trash. And then it hit me.

Kevin – is this how you approach your spiritual life? You work really hard to keep the outside looking good, and even take great pride in making improvements on the

outside of your life – while the entire time the inside of your life is polluted by neglect, procrastination, and unfulfilled good intentions?

It really made me think. And what about you this morning? No I don't care if your vehicle is clean or dirty. We're talking about your heart this morning. What's inside our minds, desires, affections – we're talking about the purity of our internal treasure this morning.

You see, when the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians, he wasn't most concerned about what people could see on the outside – how many people were in the church – who had moved away or who was staying – he wasn't writing with concerns about their building programs, or the number of their staff, or size of their budget.

No. Rather Paul was concerned about their hearts being moved away from the sufficiency of Christ and the purity of His Gospel. He was concerned about them getting enticed by a nice-sounding counterfeit Gospel. Listen to his heart in verse 1 of our chapter,

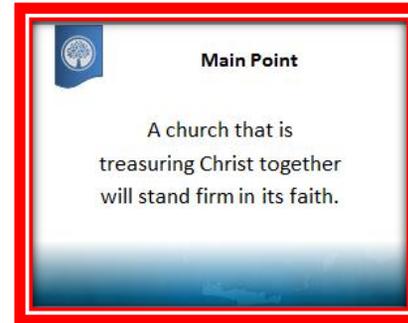
For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea (that was a neighboring town in the same valley as Colossae), and for all who have not seen me face to face...

Paul had a tremendous care and spiritual concern for them. He calls it a "great struggle" or "great conflict." His love for Christ's church is very evident – a love that would compel him to pray fervently for these believers, and

even now send a letter of encouragement and instruction to them lest they fall prey to a slick sales pitch of a different gospel.

As it has been said, there are really only two religions in the world. The religion of human achievement, and the religion of divine accomplishment.¹ Only the religion of divine accomplishment – of **God sending His Son Jesus Christ to pay for our sins and give perfect righteousness and welcome to everyone who has faith in Him** – only this religion of **God Himself ultimately rescuing undeserving sinners by His grace and mercy** – has the power to truly save.² All other “gospels” in this world are religions of human achievement. People seeking to gain God’s favor or acceptance through their own sophisticated systems of mysticism or religious duties.

There is only one defense for the well-crafted persuasions of a man-centered Gospel... the sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone! Paul knew that a church that is treasuring Christ more and more – and growing in that joyful dependence upon Christ together in loving relationships – is a church that would stand firm against all attacks and opposition. And that’s our main point this morning for today’s sermon,



Main Point: A church that is treasuring Christ together will stand firm in its faith.

No matter what contemporary philosophies might swirl against the simplicity of God’s Gospel today, Christ is more than enough for us. If we continually seek to move deeper in treasuring Christ together, our faith will stand firm.

Paul goes on here in our text to give us **three evidences of a church that is treasuring Christ together**. A church that intentionally is seeking together to excavate the glories of Christ more and more will be people of strong hearts, growing love, and a firm faith.

First, a church that is treasuring Christ together is growing **Strong Hearts (v.2a)**

¹ John MacArthur

² Rom 1:16-17



We see this in our texts in vs 2, where Paul is saying that he wants the Colossians to know about his concern for them,

so that their hearts may be encouraged..(or comforted)..

Our hearts must be encouraged, filled with courage, or strengthened if they are to stand against the errors of our heretical surroundings.

Notice the internal focus here. Paul is not primarily speaking of our emotions here. In the Scripture heart refers to our entire inner man. It's what's on the inside. All of our beliefs, thoughts, desires, affections, will. When the Scripture speaks of our hearts, we point here – to our heads. It's what is inside of us that truly defines and controls our lives. **And it's what's on the inside of us that really counts.**



If we are going to be a church that stands New Castle, we must be a people of strong minds – hearts that treasure Christ more and more together.

Jesus teaches in **Luke 6:45** Jesus teaches that *“the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.”* In other words, our hearts are our control command center for our entire lives – and whatever our hearts “value” as our highest treasure drives and determines all the desires and behavior of our lives.

We could say it this way. **Our hearts follow after our treasure. We do what we do, because we want what we want. And we want what we want because we value what we value and worship what we worship!** As Jesus said in **Matthew 6:21**, *“for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Church, the truth of the matter is that Christ is so valuable that He is worth losing everything to gain Him (Phil 3:8-9). Christ is the highest treasure we could ever know and desire after! But we have a huge problem here. Because of sin our hearts are leaky – even for Christians who have been made new in Christ, all it takes is a little bit of neglect, and our heart’s treasure begins to drift towards some shallow glitter from this world.

So we must constantly be seeking to strengthen our hearts with grace and truth. And this inner strength only comes by the power of God’s Spirit. **God’s Spirit strengthens our hearts with the truths of Christ and His Gospel work.** Through God’s Word, God’s Spirit shows us more of Christ! Every time you open your Bible, God’s Spirit is there to help you mine gem-stones of grace and truth which serve to strengthen your heart in God’s gospel love.

But notice in our text, there’s another key means of our strengthening that helps a church treasure Christ together – and that’s our relationships with one another in Christ’s church. Notice the second phrase in verse 2,

Being knit together in love...

If we are going to move deeper in treasuring Christ together, our hearts must be strengthened *by means of* our being knit together in love. A church that is marked

by its mutually **Growing Love (v. 2b)**, is a church that is treasuring Christ together.



Don’t you love the word picture Paul uses here – being knit together in love. If you look down the page, you’ll see the same word used in verse 19 in this same chapter. The individual members of Christ’s church need to continually be closely united – welded together – drawn together – as they all hold fast to Christ their Head (Col 2:19).

Don’t miss this church. **Heresy grows wild in the empty cavern of self-justified isolation.** If the church is going to stand firm with the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), we must treasure Christ together. Loving unity creates strong hearts of faith.

Biblical love is the sum of the Christian life. It is best displayed in Christ’s death for us (Rom 5:8), but it is also our greatest commandment (Matt 22:37-40), the aim of

our instruction (1 Tim 1:5), the fruit of God's Spirit (Gal 5:22), and the measure of all Christian maturity (1 Cor 13).

So what's your definition of love?

A warm feeling that you get when you meet someone who is nice? Actually quite the opposite. Let me give you a helpful definition,

Love is sacrificially laying down your own life for the eternal good of others.

Love is sacrificial by its very nature. You haven't loved someone if you haven't sacrificed for them. Love is active – it's action first, not emotion. Laying down your own agenda, desires, comfort for the eternal good of someone else. No matter if we're talking about marriage, dating, friendship, family relations, or the relationships of Christians among themselves or even towards God...This is love.

So what does it mean to really grow in love for others? This morning I want to urge all of us deeper into 4 specific practices of love that can help us all strengthen our hearts in Christ: prayer, peacemaking, provision, and praise.



First **praying for others**. Paul's love for his brothers and sisters that he hadn't ever met personally drove him to pray for their head, hearts, and hands to be empowered by God's power (Col 1:9-11). **And prayer doesn't just prepare us for greater ministry – prayer is the greatest ministry we can engage in as God's children.** The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16). So as a member of this church, is God calling you to sacrificially love your brothers and sisters with more prayer this week?

When Christ is your greatest prize, your love for His church brings strength to her as you engage in biblical **peace-making**. Notice I said, peace-making...not peace-faking. There's a big difference isn't there? Christ's church is family. So we should expect conflict of course. But ignoring conflict, or just "brushing it under the rug" and moving on as if nothing really happened and waiting for "time to heal" our differences ...is just peace-faking, and only serves to spoil the unity of Christ's church.

Spirit-filled believers labor to build up the body through the hard work of biblical peace-making. The Gospel makes every believer a minister of reconciliation (2Cor 5:18), and Christ's forgiveness of us empowers our forgiveness and reconciliation with one another (Col 3:13). Peacemaking takes responsibility for one's own sins first and most – getting the log out of our own eye before ever trying to remove the splinter out of others (Matt 7:1-5). Peacemaking – like all expressions of true love – is very humble, and rests securely in our Gospel identity as we confess our own sins, acknowledge the harm we may have caused, and seek to repair any damage that has occurred to the relationship.

Church – can I be bold with you this morning? We need to excel yet more in these expressions of love together. We are never more like God than when we forgive one another...and make peace. And God unites His church together when we pray.

Love of course is not limited to prayer and peacemaking. Sacrificially **providing for one other's needs** also unifies and strengthens a church family... as does genuine and sincerely sacrificial expressions of **praise**, gratitude, and appreciation.

Biblical love is so powerful. Paul knew this for the endangered Colossian church...and it's true for us today.

Spiritual lone-rangers open themselves up to every wind of doctrine and crafty deceitful schemes. **Gossip, slander, discontentment, division – all undermine the attractiveness of learning more about grace and truth together.** This is why Francis Schafer called the unity of the church “the final apologetic” to the watching world. The mutual love of the church for her members is the final proof that Christ is real, and that He is more than enough for all of our needs!

Our text this morning is highlighting three evidences of a church that is treasuring Christ together. A church with strong hearts. Growing love. And now, **Firm Faith (v. 2c-5).**



A church that is treasuring Christ together will stand firm in its faith.

Notice the progression of the verses here in Colossians 2:

I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you... so that your hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, [and now] to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

First – let me just say I'm pretty sure an entire sermon could be written on just these verses alone. But don't miss the progression...from great struggle to strong hearts, by means of growing love... and all of this results in a firm faith... or as the text says, an **assured understanding of God's mystery** – a mystery which has now been made known through the person and work of Jesus Christ!

God wants His church to have a complete certainty, full confidence, and settled conviction in their understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Christ – the mysterious and saving plan of redemption has been revealed and made known to all of us who would believe in Him – **In Christ has been hidden, or stored up, or deposited all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

Now just let that soak in for moment. The false teachers in Colossae were promising wisdom – and Paul wanted them to know that they must not buy what the false teachers were selling. These sophisticated systems of

mystical knowledge and religious rituals were a smoke-screen.

Years ago my parents were invited to look at a new lakeshore development project. The developer was seeking people to buy lots and build homes. They were promised a diamond if they came to tour the sites. So they went. After deciding not to invest, they were handed a small card with the diamond attached to it. You guessed it...the diamond was about the size of a freckle!

Well fast forward 30 years. And while cleaning out the safe, wouldn't you know it, they found this card with the diamond on it! There was an 1-800 number printed on the card, so of course they decided to call the number and see how much their little treasure was worth. "Doo-Doo-Doo! This number is no longer in service!" And so they promptly threw their precious treasure away... what once had promised so much value proved to be absolutely worthless!!

Let's pull the car over for a moment this morning. Do you know Christ?

Listen up all treasure hunters: Stop making treasures out of glittery promises that will never deliver you. Your job can't help you with your sin. Your money can't purchase your eternal home. Your comfort won't last once the death angel comes for you. Eagerly seek to explore the

vast depths of Christ together! If you seek him, you will find him, if you search for Him with all your heart (Jer 29:13). All that we need for salvation and sanctification is found exclusively in Christ. Invest nowhere else. All we need is found in the never-ending storehouse of Christ Himself.

It is true – the preaching of the cross is foolishness to unbelievers. They cannot accept such a simple and unsophisticated message. Such a free “turn from your sins by believing in Christ and you shall be saved” salvation is offensive to people who want to somehow justify their own worthiness in their own salvation. But it is true. And it is good. For God is good. And when you come to a settled conviction of the truths of how He has made a way for us to be eternally reconciled with him, you can place your treasure in nothing else.

Satan is the father of lies, and we must not become deceived or beguiled by such smooth talk. Next week we plan to expose more of the popular philosophies and false teachings of our day – but for now, let’s just say that the basic slant of all false teaching throughout history has been to deny either Christ’s deity, His sufficiency to save, His sufficiency to sanctify, or both.

And this is why we must move deeper into treasuring Christ together. For when we treasure Christ more and more together, our hearts are strengthened, our love

abounds more and more, and our faith remains firm. There is little that protects a flock better from heresy than the assured understanding of Christ resulting from a loving community seeking to build up one another’s hearts.

And so this leads us to our application this morning. If we are going to be known for our “good order and firmness of our faith in Christ” as the Colossians were to Paul at the end of verse 5... then we must **Move deeper into treasuring Christ more and more with others.**



We must link arm and arm and heart in heart together as we continue to seek to know Christ more and more. This is why here at New Castle Bible Church we’re committed to the values of:



Loving God together, Learning God's Word together, Sharing Life together, and Serving others together. All of these values come out of our desire to treasure Christ more and more together as His church.

Practically then, our various ministry events and programs are designed to be gateways for you into treasuring Christ more and more with us. For example, Regularly attending worship services and affirming your commitment to the body of believers gathered here in this assembly helps you go deeper in loving God together with others. And then joining an Adult Bible Fellowship group that meetings during the Sunday School hour between services helps you learn more about Christ in knowable communities. And next month, we will be formally starting up our Life Groups again – small groups of believers that meet periodically – usually in people's homes – for the purpose of sharing life together in evangelism, prayer, provision, and praise. And of course the member who loves Christ's church and is seeking to

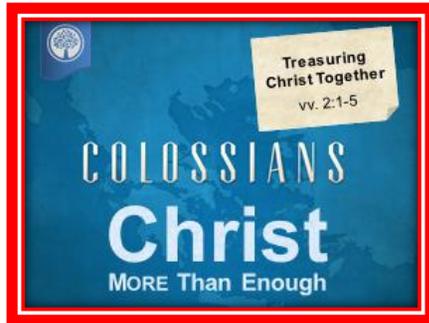
encourage other's hearts will be active on one of our service teams fulfilling the ministry that has been entrusted by God's Spirit to him or her for this season of time.

And in all of this – Christ is made much of. It's all for His glory in His church, as we all together become more and more satisfied in Him.



This morning we've learned that a church that is treasuring Christ together will stand firm in its faith.

Christ is enough loved ones. Be encouraged this morning. It's not enough to just do all the right things on the outside. Open your heart to His cleansing work. Pursue love. Learn more of Christ and His doctrines. He is our highest treasure. Count everything else as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ our Lord.



Next week we will continue in chapter 2 and consider the protective power of thanksgiving as we seek to move deeper in treasuring Christ together as a church family. So keep reading Colossians this week, and pray that God will continue to ground your faith in the treasure chest of His all-sufficient wisdom and knowledge. Christ is more than enough.

Let's pray.

Closing prayer.

10,000 Reasons – Closing Song

***Jude 24-25** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*