

If you want to talk into pastors what would you seek to do? making the church?

THE MARKS OF A FAITHFUL CHURCH

Text: Colossians 2:1-5

Paul's prayer for the church - notice the spiritual nature of the goal - not material

INTRODUCTION: I am an incurable admirer of the Apostle Paul. No man ever more perfectly exemplified the spirit of Christ, nor served the Church more faithfully--an example for all who would be faithful followers of Christ. Here is a brief lifting of the curtain, a glimpse into the heart of Paul. Paul is going through an intense struggle for these Christians whom he has never even seen. Like an athlete in a severe contest, Paul is wrestling and struggling in his soul through prayer. There is in this small church a danger of false teaching--taking away from Christ's glory by adding to Him--; he has a painful and perpetual anxiety for them--because of the bare possibility of their relapse, etc. His burden voices itself in an exhortation to steadfastness.

Prayer: Paul in prison

An unfaithful church is as unthinkable as an unfaithful mate, considering the vows made at the time of union. There is nothing so tragic as an unfaithful church--"left thy first love." Today there is a great need for faithful churches. For example: Mormon heresy--more fruitful among Baptists and Methodists--visited 3,000,000 Christian homes and had 80,000 converts.

Here is that for which Paul anxiously longed that the Colossians might attain. It is likewise a statement of the Divine desire concerning each of us, and of the Divine design of the gospel. Here is set forth what God would have all Christians to be, and in Jesus Christ, has given them the power to be.

Godspeed! what a great fight I am putting up for you. ^{what} ^{great agony}

I. A FAITHFUL CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP OF COURAGEOUS HEARTS.

Verse 2a

Comforted

in meaning

1. The Biblical word is much wider than the modern popular use of "comfort." It is stronger than comfort--means: encourage or hearten, strengthen. These Christians needed encouragement and strength more than they needed comfort. They were called to fight and what they needed was courageous confidence.

2. Discouragement and dejection are great weapons of Satan. No church can be effective and victorious if disheartened, and lacking in confidence. The attitude of "we can't" is a deadly poison to the life of any congregation. We constantly need encouragement in the midst of warfare.

3. Back of this word there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry.

Maybe needs to be encouraged

III--A Greek historian uses this word--A Greek regiment lost heart, courage, and utterly dejected; general sent leader to the group and he talked to it in such a manner that courage was reborn, and a body of dispirited men became a body of men fit again for heroic action. That is what "comfort" means. It is Paul's prayer that the Church may be filled with that courage which can cope heroically with any situation.

4. The Holy Spirit is called by Jesus the Comforter. He has

been given

1 us to hearten and encourage. Acts 4: "Filled with the Holy Spirit and with boldness."

5. The greatest blessing is to enter into conflict with the confidence that anything is possible rather than defeat.
"Paul, pray not for these only, but also for us!"

Concern

II. A FAITHFUL CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE.

Verse 2b--"They might be firmly bound together in Christian love."

1. This is an illustration drawn from the body--parts of the body knit together as one body--a broken bone knits together--damaged cells knit together, welded together.

when we hurt all hurt & rush to heal the hurt

If the Church is to remain faithful this must be an out-standing characteristic.

2. There must be unity--as one.

With the possibility of heresy, there would be a tendency for one to stand off and be filled with suspicion of the other--
"Is it he?" instead of "Is it I?"

If the church was to stand the test they must come together and be one. There are some who always stand off and accuse others.

3. The element of union must be love. This is love to one another--a powerful force. But this is also love to Christ. They are bound together by the common love to Jesus Christ, for in Him they have received a new meaning of love--to know the love of Christ deals the death blow to all pride, gossip, etc. Knowing and loving Christ always results in loving one another.

Confidence

III. A FAITHFUL CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP FILLED WITH ASSURANCE.

Verse 2c and 3--meaning-- "assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ. The fixed persuasion that you comprehend the truth and that it is the truth that you comprehend.

IV.

1. "So as to bring them into the enjoyment of all that wealth which consists in the full assurance, the absolutely unquestioning, unwavering certitude which either meets & answers all the questions of the understanding or so satisfies and fills the heart that there are no questions to ask--that they may fully know Christ, God's secret; for full knowledge of Him will give full assurance and satisfaction to the understanding--
this is confidence that we have the truth and life in Jesus Christ."

Do you have this--?--that you look no where else?--if so why then are you unfaithful, living in the world--trying to solve your own problem, plan your own life--?

*The mystery is not "X" but
-3- X as containing in Himself all the
Treasury wisdom.*

2. This full assurance that we know Christ is described as riches. Verse 3--Treasure

(1) It is certainly riches for a man to be assured of his knowing Christ as Saviour--to know that He lives within.

(2) In Christ, as in a great storehouse, lie all the riches of spiritual wisdom--wealth of the church. He is the Father's glorious Treasure chest, in which are shut all the mysteries and treasures of grace, planned and wrought by the Eternal Mind. All which we can know concerning God and man, concerning sin and righteousness, etc, in Him who is the home and great mine where truth is stored.

(3) We do not need to go to others to learn new truth. The new problems of each generation to the end of time will find their answers in Christ, and new issues of the old message which we have heard from the beginning will continually be discerned.

Vs-4--"This I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." The test of truth is Christ.

Ill of Christian Scientist who tried to win Christian.

3. This full assurance of knowing Christ is the issue of love. vs. 2b--"Being knit together--unto the full assurance." This union of love leads to such an assurance.

(1) Against all who would try to intellectualize Christianity, Paul emphasizes that the revelation of God cannot be known fully and properly apart from the cultivation of brotherly love within the Christian fellowship. SUCH LOVE IS AN EVIDENCE OF KNOWING CHRIST. If you do not have this kind of love, you do not know Jesus very well.

(2) The ordinary type of Christian life is contented with a superficial knowledge and acquaintance with Christ. Many understand no more of Him and His gospel than they did when they first learned of Him..

Constant, Consistent

IV. A FAITHFUL CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP WITH A SOLDIER'S DISCIPLINE. Verse 5b.

These two words, "order" and "steadfast" are both military words. The enforced companionship of Paul with the soldiers of the guard at this time might have suggested this image. He had close contact daily with the drilling soldiers. He is saying: "Your orderly array and the solid unbreakable front which your faith in Christ presents against the assaults of the Deceivers."

1. ORDER--"appointed order, rank, ordered arrangement; standing shoulder to shoulder." Paul is saying that the Church should be like an order army, rank upon rank, with every man in his appointed place, ready and willing to obey the word of command.

2. STEADFASTNESS--"Solid bulwark;" describes an army set out in unbreakable square, solidly immovable against the shock of the charge of the enemy. Drilling is one thing, reading the books, but steadfastness is tried under fire or in severed--battle--the same with the testing of your faith.

Paul is comparing the Church to an army under attack, keeping its lines unbroken, showing the firmness which comes from confidence in the commander--addressing soldiers who are posted firmly and in good order--no wile, no temptation shakes their ranks.

Faith in Christ

III- of guards at Buckingham Palace.

3. OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST--This is the only able shield; it will stand against all, our faith in Christ (heresy, sin, false teaching, etc.) "I know Him too well for that."

*How is this to be accomplished?
vs 6+7 - "Therefore"*