

Mark of a True and Faithful Church Part 1  
Colossians 2:1-3

INTRO: There are marks of distinction that characterize a true, living, and faithful church. These marks are visible for others to see. These marks stand out as a lighthouse on the shore. When these marks are absent, the church is less effective in ministry. Here are some of the marks of a faithful church:

I. VS 1, CARING LEADERSHIP

- A. For a moment the curtain is open, and we get a glimpse into Paul's heart. Paul is going through a struggle for folks, man of whom he had never seen.
  - 1. Paul wanted the folks at Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis to know that he had a great conflict within for them.
  - 2. The Greek word for "conflict" is *agon* from which we get our word agony.
    - a. Paul is fighting a pitch battle for his friends.
    - b. He is in prison at Rome; yet, he is in the battle. Christians are never out of the conflict.
- B. Paul battled for them in prayer (1:3).
  - 1. He longed to face the false teachers and compromisers himself, to set them straight; but he was in prison.
  - 2. The time had come that there was nothing left to do; nothing else he could do, but pray. What Paul could not do himself, he must leave to God.
  - 3. Paul wrestled in prayer for those he could not see.
  - 4. Friends, when time, circumstances, and distance separate us from those we long to help, there is always something we can do to help— pray (Jer 33:3).
- C. Paul battled for them in love.
  - 1. If he did not love the church in Lycus Valley, he would not go to bat for them. He loved them all, no selective love; he loved them all.
  - 2. Paul struggled for the church at Colossae as well as the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis.
  - 3. Paul loved the church because he loved Christ; and Christ loved the church.
    - a. Jesus loved the church so much that He purchased it with his blood. Paul admonished the Ephesian elders

to: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

- b. Ephesians 5:25 instructs: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”
- c. Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul said: “Besides those things that are without [weariness, pain, sleepless nights] that which cometh upon me daily [daily pressure] the care [concern] of all the churches” (II Cor 11:28).
- d. Paul battled for the churches, yes; but he also battled for the elect’s sake (II Tim 2:10). In Acts 13:44-49, we see Paul and Barnabas proclaiming the Gospel to the salvation of elect Gentiles.

## II. VS 2a, A CHURCH OF COURAGEOUS HEARTS

- A. Paul prays that their hearts would be encouraged and strengthened.
  1. The Greek word used here for “comforted” is *parakaleo* meaning “to call alongside.” Because a person can be called alongside for many reasons, this Greek word varies in meaning: for example, entreat, summon, comfort, exhort, encourage, strengthen, etc. Because the Colossians were plagued by false teachers, they needed encouragement and strengthening. Our nation is experiencing this plague in our day, a plague of polytheism, humanism, and paganism.
  2. The idea behind *parakaleo* is to enable a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and gallantry. At Brices Crossroads, near Tupelo, MS, Union forces greatly outnumbered the Confederates. Victory here was vital to the South. General Nathan Bedford Forrest left his place of safety at the rear, came alongside the troops at the front and led the South to victory at Brices Crossroads. That is what *parakaleo* means.
  3. Paul’s prayer for the church is that it may be filled with courage and gallantry, able to cope with any situation, and not retreat in disarray.

- B. To strengthen our hearts, we must dedicate our minds to Biblical truth. The term “heart” used here equals the minds. In Scripture, the term heart often refers to the mind. Jer 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” In Psalm 53:1 says: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God....”
- C. When you fill your mind with Biblical truth, your emotions will react properly. Emotions respond to what is happening in our hearts.
  - 1. The Bible counsels us to watch over our hearts: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23). Whatever fills our heart will issue forth in behavior.
  - 2. What’s in the well comes up in the bucket (Mt 12:34-35).
- D. The Holy Spirit is the means by which we can have a strong mind (Eph 3:16).
  - 1. The Holy Spirit strengthens those who yield their hearts and lives to His control.
  - 2. Inner strength, strength to win, comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).
- E. God also uses human instruments to strengthen His people.
  - 1. Jesus told Peter: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Lk 22:32).
  - 2. In Acts 15:32: “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted [encouraged] the brethren with many words, and confirmed [strengthened] them.”
  - 3. Paul went about strengthening the churches: “And he [Paul] went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming [strengthening] the churches.”
  - 4. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to strengthen the believers (I The 3:2).
  - 5. God uses His gifted people to strengthen the church (Eph 4:11-14).
- F. Powerful, victorious Christian living comes from having a strong heart (Eph 3:16-20).

### III. VS 2b, A CHURCH KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE

- A. There is one mark of a faithful church that stands out more than any other– Love! Love for the brethren.
  - 1. When love dies– the church dies.
  - 2. Love gives life to orthodoxy. Without love, we are nothing

- (I Cor 13:1-3).
- B. The local church body is to be knit together in love.
    - 1. The church needs to be one, knit together in love, working together for the faith of the Gospel (Phil 1:27).
    - 2. To have unity, there must be humility in the church (Phil 2:2-4).
- IV. VS 2c-3, A CHURCH EQUIPPED WITH EVERY KIND OF WISDOM
- A. Vs 2c, "Full assurance of understanding."
    - 1. A church that is centered on Christ will have discernment into God's way. We need to be a people following the principles of Proverbs 3:5-10.
    - 2. "Understanding" is the Greek word *scenists* meaning, "insight." A true church will have practical knowledge to know what to do when action is called for. Understanding is putting wisdom to work, putting it into practice.
  - B. Christ is the mystery now revealed. Christ is the anointed one; He is the Son of God. When you see the use of the word in reference to God, we think of the Son, for no one can be a Father who does not have a child. The mystery revealed that Christ is the Old Testament term used for the Messiah, the Savior of Israel. Jesus is the Messiah!
  - C. Vs 3, Much could be said about this verse, but simply stated it means Christ is the all sufficient Savior. He is the mystery revealed (I Tim 3:16).
    - 1. In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Greek word for knowledge is *gnosis*, meaning in the context of this verse, "the power to grasp the truth when it is shown." Wisdom is the Greek word *Sophia*, meaning, "seeing what God has done for the sinner and the ability to give a reason for the hope that is within."
    - 2. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden from all but Christians.

CONCLUSION: The faithful church is marked out.

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July 19, 2009