

Jesus is our TREASURE for spiritual maturity

Colossians 2

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Introduction

Jesus is our treasure, fullness, everything, all in all. The apostle's purpose is clear. He wants to enrich lives, encourage hearts, and enable love throughout the congregation. There is an incorrect chapter division here. Paul says, "To this end I labor [or, I toil], struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me. And I want you to know how strenuously I am exerting myself for you..." He calls attention to his efforts to bring the Colossian Christians into vitality. 2:2-3: in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The overflowing of Christ in our lives depends on three things---

(1) A Spiritually Mature Church has Knowledge and Understanding, 2:1-3

Paul says faithfulness and our love for each other will lead to: "the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The mature church (and believer) is growing in their knowledge and understanding.

Paul told the church at Rome that the way to resist the push of the world to conform was to "renew your mind." We must grow in our knowledge and understanding of the gospel. The two words "knowledge" and "understanding" denote that what is needed is more than an increase in factual information. We need not only to learn facts but we need to know why those facts are important and how they relate to our lives. And notice that it is not just *any* facts that we should be seeking. . . we should be seeking a deeper knowledge of Christ!

What happens to many Christians is this: they make a decision for Christ. They become active and involved. They learn the talk; they learn to do some things. These things may be spectacular (which is more dangerous) or ordinary. They make it to the "mainstream." They talk like a believer, they act like a believer; they are respected and admired. They know enough to fit in. Once they fit in, they sit down! They are content.

But we learn from watching sports that one of the worst things that can happen to a team is to become content; that's when you lose your "edge." That is when the fire begins to go out, when you are primed for defeat. Our opponent has not lost his fire . . . he is as enthusiastic and diligent as ever. To withstand his attacks we must continue to grow in knowledge and understanding.

Chuck Swindoll shares a list of the benefits of being spiritually informed

- Knowledge gives substance to faith. Those who do not know the truth are forced to rely on emotion, feelings, or someone else's opinion, a book, a tradition or some other empty humanistic hope. Their faith lacks substance.
- Knowledge stabilizes during times of testing. When we know God's promises we have something to hold on to in the times of struggle.
- Knowledge enables us to handle the Bible accurately. The more we know the Bible, the better and more accurately we are able to interpret it. We get better and better at letting the Bible form our values, rather than using the Bible to validate our opinions.
- Knowledge equips us to detect and confront error. You have to know the truth before you can detect error.
- Knowledge makes us confident in our daily walk. The better we know the Lord, and the more fully we understand the salvation God offers, the more confident we are of our position in Christ.

I share a caution....Paul warns Timothy that in the last days, the unsaved will be "always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth." (2 Timothy 3:7). We live in a world where information is readily available. We can learn as much as we want to learn. However, it is not enough to grow in information . . . we must seek out the truth and then acknowledge it and commit ourselves to it.

Are you sitting or still moving forward in your faith? Are you remaining fresh in the faith or are you beginning to stagnate?

(2) A Spiritually Mature Church is Disciplined and Thus Free, 2:6-7

A disciplined life will always be hard to deceive. Gordon McDonald's book, *Ordering Your Private World*, is helpful in assisting many to discipline their lives in right and proper ways to discover the freedom of disciplined living. I have always wanted to be able to play the piano. I envy people who are able to sit at a piano and play it, seemingly without effort. But I cannot do that, because I have never disciplined myself to study and practice piano. Thus, I have no freedom in this area. Almost any discipline will help us resist error and Paul compliments the Colossians on their orderly life, for it makes them resistant to deceit.

(3) A Spiritually Mature church is Discerning in Confusing Times, 2:4, 8-10,16-23

Paul agonized for the maturity of those believers. They lacked focus because they could not discern the things that mattered most. We have already been told that he remembered them constantly. He was so focused on the goal of the church that he constantly lifted these people in prayer. He agonized by suffering with them/for them.

There will always be people who talk authoritatively about God's will but have no idea what the Bible says. Many people engage their mouth well before they engage their brain. Many (most?) People merely parrot what they have heard others say. Some have never considered the implications of their words.

Something that sounds good is not necessarily something that IS good. Most deception comes in brightly colored packages. We must see beyond the polished words and slick presentation.

Most deception minimizes or seeks to eliminate any talk of sin and responsibility. Deceivers will diminish the character and person of Christ. They may talk about how much they love Jesus, but if you ask them to describe Jesus you will get a different picture. Sure, at first they will say, He is the Son of God and Savior. But if you continue to probe, you will find that when they talk about Jesus being the Son of God they believe He is the Son of God much the same way you and I are sons of God. They believe he saved us in the sense that He showed us a way to overcome.

Paul's goal is to encourage the hearts of the Colossians and to unite them in love. I am rebuked by that because too often I am ready to jump on someone and try to straighten him out on the spot. It is a great lesson to see how Paul seeks to lift their spirits first, to cause them to appreciate one another. Building a relationship with others is the true way to help them. Have you ever tried to help someone, only to find your efforts fell on deaf ears? The best way to help is to find something encouraging to say. None of us like to be corrected by a negative approach. We first need a word of encouragement, as the apostle so beautifully demonstrates here.

After the apostle has lifted their spirits, they will be able to understand the mystery, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Occasionally I meet people who are turned on constantly by Scripture. They discover a new verse every day. Others find the Bible dull and boring. That is probably because they have not fully understood what it is saying. When we grasp what the word of God is saying about how to handle life it becomes exciting. It puts zest in living. It gives the sense that we are not alone, that we don't have to handle problems alone, that we don't have to lean on human wisdom, though God often helps in that way.

Conclusion: Forgiveness

To Christians: Him we preach, warning and teaching every man in all wisdom. --Colossians 1:28

Making plastic straw chains is so absorbing that one can momentarily forget about life's pressing needs.

Afterward, however, those needs are still there.

There's nothing wrong with harmless pursuits and times of leisure. But are we so absorbed with our own interests that we forget the countless people who are stumbling blindly into hell?

Paul understood the urgency; his focus was Christ. "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man...to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (1:28). Are we absorbed with making disciples?

To those away from Christ: Is all this talk about spiritual maturity "over your head?" Do you need to grow in Christ to begin to walk with Him? We can stop depending on our own efforts to be good enough. The message of the gospel is that Jesus came into the world to save those who could not and would not save themselves. He gave His life as payment for sin, wickedness and rebellion. All the things about you that you don't want anyone else to see . . . He sees. He knows what you're really like and still loves you. You matter to God!

Give your life to Jesus today. In simple trust confess his name and claim His gift of grace as you submit to and obey his will.