

# The Iron Men of Fellowship of Champions

Colossians 2:1-5

Lesson 13

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## Opening Prayer

\*\*\* Start Recorder \*\*\*

### Introduction

- In Co 1:24-29, Paul highlighted two features of his ministry: suffering in ministry for the Gospel, because of his love for others and God, and the risks and labor of preaching and discipling in a world hostile to Christianity.
- Beginning in Chapter 2, Paul highlights a third feature of his ministry: that of pastoral care. Paul's compassion for the believers at Colossae (whom he has never met) is strong. Equally strong is his concern for the unbelievers there, and everywhere.
  - Php 3:17-19 "17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is [their] appetite, and [whose] glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."
- In Chapter 2, Paul will also deal with the four specific gnostic errors:
  1. Human philosophy – the wisdom of man including psychology.
  2. Eastern mysticism – knowledge through ritual experience, spirit beings, evil matter, etc.
  3. Jewish legalism - adhering to Jewish laws written and oral, which were fulfilled in Christ and are, thus, no longer in effect.
  4. Asceticism - the life that denies earthly pleasures. Some groups require self-denial in the extreme, such as poverty, silence, sexual abstinence, etc.
- Christian Gnostics refused to identify the New Testament God, the Father of Jesus, with the Old Testament God, whom they considered evil.
- They wrote apocryphal Gospels to substantiate their claim that: risen Jesus told His disciples the true, Gnostic interpretation of his teachings:
  - Christ was a divine spirit, but not God.
  - He inhabited the body of a man named Jesus.

- Christ did not die on the cross but ascended to the divine realm from which he had come.
- The Gnostics thus rejected the atoning suffering and death of Christ, and the resurrection of the body.
- Gnostic rites were intended to facilitate the ascent of the human soul's divine element to the spiritual realm. Gnostic ethical teachings ranged from asceticism (self-denial, denying oneself pleasure - food, hard liquor, sex, wealth, etc.) to libertinism (total liberty).

### **Colossians 2:1 (NOTES)**

- “struggle” (Gr. – agona) – literally “agony.”
- “For, I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf” – What is Paul's great struggle?
  - His present incarceration (literally linked by chain to a Roman soldier) for the sake of the gospel he preached.
  - His perseverance in faith.
  - His prayer burden (exhausting spiritual combat/warfare is perhaps his greatest burden):
    - That others may not lose heart (“that their hearts may be encouraged”)
    - that they may be in unity (“having been knit together in love”).
    - that they may grow and mature in their faith and walk with Christ (“attaining to all the wealth ... from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of ... Christ”).
  - 2Co 11:23-29 “Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 Apart from such external things, there is

the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin [o]without my intense concern?"

- “those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face” - Paul founded the church at Ephesus, but one of his converts, Epaphras, carried the message to Colossae. Paul had never been there nor to Laodicea, yet his burden of concern and prayer and perseverance for the saints there was heavy.

### **Colossians 2:2 (NOTES)**

- "that their hearts may be encouraged" - Who's hearts may be encouraged? The whole body of Christ - as Paul said above: "on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face." Paul struggles, especially in prayer for the saints everywhere.
- What does Paul want for the Church? To be encouraged internally; the members encouraging, and being encouraged by each other. (Gr. - *paraklethosin*) Similar to "paraclete" (Encourager - Holy Spirit), to call to one's side. Paul "agonizes" in prayer for the Church, for each member to come alongside others as encouragers, and thereby become knit together as a true family.
- "having been knit together in love" - This is the means by which the body is encouraged - *love*. As mutual love flows in the body, it naturally results in believers coming alongside one another in compassion and concern, praying for each other and with each other, encourages one another because of their love for their out of being knit together in love.

**Discussion:** Are you an encourager? Do you actually come alongside others in the body or encourage anyone in the body, especially our home church, Fellowship of Champions?

- How do you go about encouraging others here at Fellowship?
- What is your strategy?
  - Prayer for someone, or for guidance to assist him or her?
  - Notes, phone calls, emails?
  - Handshakes and hugs?
  - Use your special skills, talents?
  - Offer your hospitality - perhaps the loan of an automobile, an extra bedroom, a meal, financial support, invite out for lunch or supper, or even take them fishing?

- What are some specific, tangible ways others have encouraged you here at church that are memorable? Or at other churches?
  - How did their kindness affect your relationship - closer together, or farther apart?
  - As you have encouraged others, or as others have encouraged you, did you sense the church was becoming more closely knit, at least with regard to you, and the person you encouraged?
- "[attaining] to all the wealth" - Spiritual wealth.
    - Ep 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."
  - "wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" - The encouragement that comes from being knit together in love leads to "assurance of understanding."
    - He 10:22 "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [clean] from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 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."
  - "resulting in a true knowledge of ... Christ" - (Gr. "epignosis" = super knowledge). The aim of encouragement through love is the knitting together of the church. In this environment, the body is strong, and well-fortified, and defended against heresy, sin and spiritual attack. False teaching is kept out, and the true knowledge of Christ reigns in the Church.
  - The true knowledge of Christ is the foundation of the work of conscience and the Holy Spirit, which work together build up the Church in unity and holiness.
  - When we neglect unity and fellowship (this cannot be overstressed) in the body, each keeping to his own, people become discouraged, and their spiritual defenses become weakened, which opens the door to doubt and heresy, temptation to sin, and spiritual harm from Satan and his minions (principalities and powers). Just like a home in which the family spends time together, loves one another, encourages and builds up one another, and stands firm together.

- Ep 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]."
- Church is the place to gather, but unity and fellowship, encouragement and love do not come simply from attendance of the Sunday morning service, but from the lingering afterward, from Sunday afternoon lunches and home groups, from Wednesday evening prayer services and from other events where the body can interact and develop intimacy, such as Q&As, movie nights, and game nights (not to mention telephone calls, one-on-one get togethers, etc.).

**Application:** Were there any new concepts you picked up today? Is there anything you have trouble accepting in these doctrines? Did anything stand out that may prompt you to do further study? Do you feel confident that you can explain the doctrines of deity and trinity to your family, other believers, nonbelievers?

## Closing Prayer

## Small Groups

- Discuss current Scripture reading assignment.
- Prayer:
  - Anything praiseworthy.
  - Areas of accountability.
  - Other prayer requests.