

Colossians, Chapter Two, Lesson One

LOVING THE FLOCK Colossians 2:1-5

STIMULATE

** In our studies together throughout the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians, we have enjoyed seeing the heart of the apostle poured out on their behalf (and ours as well). Paul has taught them; to be "Praying Always, to spend their life "Learning to Serve", how to form their prayer life so it will be "Pleasing the Lord". He taught them what it means to be "Living in the Kingdom" and how to be "Holy and Blameless" as they strive to present all men "Complete in Christ".

That first chapter was filled with very practical instruction and application from God's Word for the Colossian believers and for our own hearts. I hope that you were able to apply some of what we have learned to your own daily walk.

MOTIVATE

** As Paul now moves into what we call chapter two of his letter, we are going to benefit from seeing how he cares for the flock of God. Over the next month we will learn four specific aspects of how Christians are to care for one another. Paul will demonstrate for us how his own heart is;

LOVING THE FLOCK - Colossians 2:1-5

PROTECTING THE FLOCK - Colossians 2:6-10

REMINDING THE FLOCK - Colossians 2:11-15

STRENGTHENING THE FLOCK - Colossians 2:16-23

For today's study, please open your Bibles to Colossians 2:1-5 and let's read through that passage in preparation to learning how we too can be "**Loving the Flock**".

Read passage (V.1-5)

Opening Prayer

Loving the Flock

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** In the first demonstration of his love for the flock of God there in Asia-minor, what does Paul want them to know about his daily life?

"...how great a struggle I have..." Each day in the life of Paul, he struggled for the cause of Christ!

The word translated here as "struggle" is agon, from which we get our English word agony. Back in Colossians 1:29 Paul used a different form of this same word to say that was "striving" in the ministry. You will recall that agonizomai refers to competing in an athletic event, and that we get our English word agonize from it. Either way, in agony or by agonizing, Paul willingly and joyfully suffered on behalf of the saints. cf. 2Corinthians 11:23-28, 2Timothy 2:10

** Paul says that his struggle was on behalf of the Colossians, was anyone else to benefit from this man's willingness to stand for the gospel, even if it meant he would experience "agony"?

Yes - "...and for those who are at Laodicea..." Paul's concern was for all in the Lycus valley.
cf. Colossians 4:15-16

** As Paul spends himself "Loving the Flock", did it stop at just those two churches?

No - "...and for all those who have not personally seen my face..."

That would include the church at Hierapolis as well (Colossians 4:13), but it would also include in principle any of God's elect because Paul simply loved the church - the Body of Christ!

We too should adopt and then employ such a genuine, self-sacrificing love for one another. If we are Christlike, we should spend ourselves "Loving the Flock" of God for which He died.
cf. 1Peter 5:2-3

V. 2 ** What impact was the knowledge of Paul's struggles supposed to have in the life of those believers?

It was designed to "encourage" them. We have seen this word before. Do you recall what parakaleo means? "To call alongside" - Paul is going to love them by coming along side of them in their time of need. Remember all of the false teaching and heresy which was being spread throughout the area. Paul will encourage them by standing for the truth and by proclaiming the truth to them.

** What does Paul mean by saying, "their hearts may be encouraged"?

When used figuratively in the Bible, as it is here, the word heart is referring to the mind. Paul wants to keep their thinking on a Biblical track.

cf. Jeremiah.17:9-10, Psalm 53:1-3, Matthew 15:19, Luke 6:45

** Secondly, Paul shows us how to be "Loving the Flock" by walking them through all that they share together, in three concise statements regarding the faith. What is the first thing to which Paul refers?

a) They have "been knit together in love"!

The word "knit" translates *sumbibazo* which means "to unite or bring together". While it is true that the Christian life is based upon the truth of God's Word and the appropriate application of that truth to our thinking process, it is also needful for that truth to be bathed in the love of God. cf. Ephesians 4:15-16

** What is the next statement by Paul, which is designed to show the treasure of what they share in common?

b) They are "attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding..."

There is a growth process for the Christian, both individually and corporately as we walk together with our Lord.

** Beginning with the word "wealth", let's take that statement apart to enhance our own understanding. To what kind of wealth is Paul referring?

The riches which transcend this world and its possessions. We spend our lives as Christians by adjusting our value system to the point where we can see those things of eternal value, and learn to treasure them, while "the things of earth will grow strangely dim".

cf. Ephesians 1:3, 7, 18 and Proverbs 23:4-5, Matthew 6:19-21

** From where does this kind of "wealth" come?

"...the full assurance of understanding..." It is little wonder that Fanny Crosby wrote these words, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!" That assurance comes from our divinely bestowed understanding.

cf. 1Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 1:9, 1John 5:19-20

** Thirdly, to where does all of this divine insight lead us?

c) To "...a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself..."

Remember 2Peter 3:18!

** What would be considered a "false" knowledge of Christ?

Any view of Him which is contrary to Scripture or rejects Him for who He is. That was at the very center of the heresy in the Lycus valley - denying the deity of Jesus Christ. People and fallen angels have done this repeatedly throughout the history of mankind. cf. Acts 19:13-16

V. 3 ** Alright then, Paul is "Loving the Flock" by:

1) Struggling for their continued walk of faith.

2) By walking them through what they share in Christ.

** Here in verse three, how does he further describe our resources, which are available to us through faith in Jesus Christ?

"...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge..."

** Who, in Paul's day - there in Colossae, would have been especially challenged by that phrase?

The Gnostics - They believed that they had the secret knowledge, and that they were above those who simply accepted the gospel truth regarding Jesus Christ. They would even try to make Christians feel defrauded of their eternal hopes by acting spiritually superior based upon their higher knowledge. cf. Colossians 2:18

While Gnosticism was probably not a formal force in Colossae, there was enough of its influence in the region that Paul wants to establish the only true source for wisdom and knowledge, which is Jesus Christ Himself.

V. 4 ** What is Paul trying to prevent by writing these very compelling statements about our Lord?

He wants to stop heretical influence from deluding the Colossians' solid faith in God through Christ by the means of "persuasive argument".

** Who is ultimately behind that kind of "argument".

Satan himself! We are not to grant an audience to those who want to propagate Satanic lies. We can give them the truth if they will listen, but not in exchange for us having to listen to their heresy. cf. Colossians 2:8, Ephesians 4:14,6:11, 2Corinthians 2:11

V. 5 ** In our last verse for today, Paul continues to demonstrate how we can be "**Loving the Flock**". What does he do?

He rejoices in their "good discipline and the stability of [their] faith in Christ".

** Paul uses two military terms to describe the faith of the Colossians. What do they mean?

"good discipline" - taxis, refers to a line of soldiers drawn up for battle.

"stability" - stereoma, refers to the solidity of a formation of soldiers.

Together, these two terms express Paul's joy over the fact that the Colossians, both individually and collectively were standing firm against the attacks of false teaching. A very loving expression indeed.

** Paul said that he was "rejoicing to see" their firm faith in the truth of Christ. How had Paul seen that faith?

Through the eyes of their pastor, Epaphras. cf. Colossians 1:8

** Just one more thought before we bring our study to a close. What can be learned from Paul in the area of "**Loving the Flock**", even if you are not physically with them?

We need to be praying for each other, especially when we are apart! (Colossians 1:9)

We should take the time to communicate with each other, especially when we are apart! (Colossians 1:2)

We should genuinely encourage one another with the Biblical truths regarding Jesus Christ which we have in common by His grace. (Colossians 2:2)

EXTRICATE

** What word did Paul use in today's passage to describe his lifestyle in the ministry?

It was a "struggle"! agon - Paul would agonize in the pursuit of "**Loving the Flock**" into a closer walk with Christ.

** How did his willingness to labor and even suffer on behalf of the Colossians impact their minds?

It was encouraging for them to see him stand for the same faith for which they were standing.

DELINEATE

** That should help us to answer this next question. What were the two ways in which Paul was "**Loving the Flock**" in this passage?

1) Struggling for their continued walk of faith.

2) By walking them through what they share in Christ.

EVALUATE

** How can you best follow Paul's example? Do you feel qualified to do your part in "**Loving the Flock**"?

If you do, why are you qualified? - Because of the salvation granted to you by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, you are now qualified to show His love to His flock! cf. John 13:34-35

ACTIVATE

** If we belong to Jesus Christ, we are to spend our lives "**Loving the Flock**" for His name sake. Would you ask the Lord to give you opportunities to put into practice what we have learned today?

Father, thank You for Your gift of Jesus Christ and the salvation You have given to me in His name. May I honor Him by "**Loving the Flock**" the way that You do with each opportunity that comes my way.

Closing prayer