

真爱驱动的事工——歌罗西书 2:1-5

The Love-Motivated Ministry--Colossians 2:1-5

Introduction, Context, Outlines

- **Scripture reading:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a、Colossians 1:24-2:5。
- **Context:** Colossians 1:24-2:5 is the expression of Paul's heart in serving the Lord. Today is the last part of this passage, which focuses on Paul's love for the saints he serves.
- **Connection:** God commands that all believers employ their spiritual gifts to serve one another, and the fundamental motive behind all service is the love for the church. If our service is not motivated by love, it truly falls short in God's eyes. Therefore, we need to imitate Paul, to learn from his example of love for the church so as to motivate our service to the Lord.
- **Outlines:**
 - The Love-Motivated Ministry
 - A. The Expression of Love (v1a)
 - B. The Labor of Love (v1b)
 - C. The Desire of Love (vv 2-3)
 1. ...that they be encouraged
 2. ...that they be knit together in love
 3. ...that they have full assurance
 4. ...that they truly know the Lord
 - D. The Concern of Love (v4)
 - E. The Joy of Love (v5)

The Expression of Love (v1a)

- **“For I want you to know”:** Paul often uses phrases like this to emphasize, sometimes for important theological teaching (1Thessalonians 4:13; Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 12:1), sometimes for personal experiences (Romans 1:13; Philippians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 1:8). Here it's the latter use, emphasizing Paul's love for them .

Application: Though it may seem redundant, it is an expression of sincere love. “My son, listen to Daddy, Daddy has something to tell you.....”; “Honey, may I ask your opinion on this thing?.....”; “Brother, there's something on my heart for a while, may I talk with you about it?.....” Use expressions of love to prepare the hearts of the recipient and of yourself, especially when you want to start a difficult conversation.

The Labor of Love (v1b)

- **“How great a struggle”:** True faith will not make a believer lazy, because of one word: Love. If you don't understand labor, you don't understand true love. 1Thessalonians 1:3“.....your work of faith and *labor of love* and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus

Christ in the presence of our God and Father.” (see also Paul’s love for them in 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12.)

The word “struggle” emphasizes the body pain caused by high intensity work, just like athletes whose muscles are all sore and painful yet still persevere in training. In order to express this intensity, other passages translate it as “conflict/much opposition” (Phil 1:30; 1 Thess 2:2) or “fight” (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7). See also 2 Cor 11:23-29 for a detailed description of Paul’s suffering in serving the Lord.

- **“On your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea”**: Paul’s service is for the benefit of brothers and sisters. This kind of selfless love is what motivates Paul to serve them with a great struggle. Without the motivation of love, no one can lavishly give of oneself for others’ benefit; **“and for all those who have not personally seen my face”**: It originally refers to believers around Colosse, but we who have not personally seen Paul have also benefited from Paul’s service. Paul’s love for the church is still bearing fruit today!

The Desire of Love (vv 2-3)

1. ...that they be encouraged

- **“hearts may be encouraged”**: The Chinese translation has “comforted”, but it’s not the kind of mere emotional support we give to hurting people, for the need of comfort is not seen in the context. The original Greek word (*parakaleo*) is composed of the verb “call” (*kaleo*) and prefix “beside” (*para-*), thus “to call beside someone,” which can express such thoughts as “to comfort,” “to exhort,” or “to encourage” in various contexts and can cover every aspect of teaching and admonishing one another in 1:28. In this context, the Colossian church is facing the harassment of heretics, so “encourage/exhort” is the main idea. They need to be encouraged/exhorted to hold fast to the truth and not be moved.

Expansion: The Holy Spirit is called helper (*parakletos*) (John 14:16 etc), which is derived from this verb (*parakaleo*). The Holy Spirit is the actual giver of all comfort, exhortation and encouragement. We are simply the vessels which the Holy Spirit uses.

Application: Remember to pray when we comfort, encourage, or exhort one another. Pray that the Holy Spirit will Himself accomplish the work which He alone can do.

2. ...that they be knit together in love

- **“having been knit together in love”**: “knit together” is often used to describe the connection among different body parts — 2:19 uses the same verb to say the church is “*held together* by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.” Similarly in Ephesians 4:16, “from whom the whole body, being fitted and *held together* by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” The desire of Paul’s love is not only to build up

everyone individually, but that the entire church body is knit together in love so as to grow together! The participle is linked to the main verb “be encouraged,” indicating that the spiritual growth of each believer is closely related to and cannot be separated from knitting together in love with one another. There is no lone-ranger Christian in the Bible.

3. ...*that they have full assurance*

- **“and attaining to”**: literally “into,” indicating this point is built on the basis of the second point above. When we are encouraged and knit together in love, then we will attain “to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding”.
- **“all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding”**: literally “all the riches of full assurance of understanding”, to be interpreted as “all the riches that comes from the full assurance which comes from understanding”. Here is how it works:

“the full assurance which comes from understanding”: Assurance comes from understanding. No understanding, no assurance. Assurance is the certainty you have about what you believe. Postmodernism which rejects truth and rejects certainty on anything is a clear manifestation of no understanding.

“Understanding.” The Greek word literally means “to put things together”, meaning to reach a conclusion by observation and comparison. One with understanding is a perceptive person.

Example: Putting together the observation of creation, understanding gives the conclusion: There is a powerful Creator who deserves our reverence and thanksgiving (Romans 1:19-20). Sinners deliberately deny this revelation, and as a result, “their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21). The eye of their heart is blind, understanding isn’t working, so they cannot get to any correct conclusion. The starting point of understanding is God’s revelation.

Extension: This is why our society at large has no principle on some basic moral issues such as homosexuality and abortion. Some literature work goes so far as to question the reality of human existence. **Once man rejects God’s revelation, he has rejected all truth and forfeited understanding. What’s left is only relative subjective opinions and personal preferences, and there is no full assurance for him on anything at all!**

Dig deeper/application: Back to the causal relationship indicated by “attaining to,” being knit together in love is how one attains this full assurance! It is an assurance to be enjoyed in the loving fellowship of fellow believers!

Hebrews 10:25 “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.” **Hebrews 3:13** “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ”

“**all the riches that comes from the full assurance**”: Riches of what? Life? Wisdom? Knowledge? Blessing? ... *All* the riches!

4. ...*that they truly know the Lord*

- “**resulting in a true knowledge**”: Another progression, based on the previous three points, bringing Paul’s expression of love to a climax.

“**true knowledge**”: not shallow head knowledge, but true knowledge that is deeply and fully integrated into life. The progression shows: the believers are encouraged personally so as to be knit together in love, which brings out the full assurance which will then bring out the true and full knowledge of Christ!

Application: Without fellowship with one another, the knowledge of Christ will never be complete. Christ is the head and the church is the body. If you are not committed in the body, the knowledge of Christ will never be full. Every member has different spiritual gifts and reflects Christ’s glory from different angles, but each individual by himself is very limited, so we need one another to know more of Christ’s glory! ———The purpose of membership: Not to set up rules to lord over them, but to help us all to be better knit together with one another in love and to grow together into the full knowledge of Christ!

- “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”: There is a treasure house in Christ, filled with infinite treasures of wisdom and knowledge for you to explore! Many of these treasures are easy to find. You just open the door and it’s there. Others are hidden more deeply, in the grammar and precise wording of the original text, which takes a trained explorer to dig out-- which is God’s calling for me personally.

Summarizing the desire of Paul’s love: that the believers are encouraged, knit together in love, enjoy the full assurance of understanding, and know the Lord completely——The focus is totally on brothers’ and sisters’ true spiritual benefit. It’s totally other-centered and spiritually minded.

The Concern of Love (v4)

- “**so that**”: No loving parent can be unconcerned when the kids are in danger of foolishly harming themselves. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. When a loved one is in danger of deviating from the truth, true love must give a warning.
- “**I say this**”: expresses the connection to the verses before: the previous two verses are the weapon to fight the temptation of false teachers. When false teachers try to sell their deception to you, your defense is the full assurance and all wisdom and knowledge from Christ.
- “**delude with persuasive argument**”: Their purpose is to lead people astray by arguments which seem persuasive. Satan used the same tactic to tempt Eve into sin. His minions are doing the same thing throughout all ages, deluding people with persuasive arguments.

Example: Persuasive argument includes every worldview which seems reasonable but is in fact against God. It includes postmodernism, false religions from man's own imagination, atheism, evolution, materialism... These are the deceptions that badly affect Chinese people.

Application: True believers cannot be deluded completely (Matthew 24:24 "if possible"), and one of the ways God protects us from delusion is through our teaching and admonishing one another. That's why Paul says "I say this, so that....." This is also our responsibility to one another (Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 3:13 etc).

The Joy of Love (v5)

- **"I am rejoicing":** Paul knew that God will keep their faith. So after he expressed the concern of love, Paul can rejoice for them. Paul's love is a joyful love. He rejoices to see his beloved saints living in good discipline guided by truth, stable in their faith in Christ.
- **"good discipline"** originally refers to soliders' orderly arrangement; **"Stability"** originally refers to stable lines of defense that cannot be breached by enemies. Paul is fully confident that true believers will live as brave soldiers when facing the attacks of false teachers, fighting to hold fast to sound doctrine and holy living and not giving opportunities to the enemies.

Concluding Application: The expression of love, the labor of love, the desire of love, the concern of love, and the joy of love.....In which of these areas do you see your need to grow and to imitate Paul's example in order to live out the brotherly love which God has given you?