

Prayer

Help us, Lord God, to live this day with an attitude of service towards those with whom we live or work. May we show care in tending to the needs of others, may we demonstrate compassion in our interaction with those we meet, and may we act with honesty in all situations in which we are required to serve and work with others. May Christ our Saviour be our example: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Travel

Pray for the airlines of the world and their employees. It is a large industry with a great deal of influence. Pray that it will use its influence for good, and act with responsibility for all.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for the United Nations, for it to help nations work together*
- *Pray for the success of attempts to build world financial stability*
- *Give thanks for the assurance of salvation, available in Christ*

Meditation

Show me a servant, and our God will raise a leader

Show me a helper, and our God will raise a deacon

Show me a student, and our God will raise a teacher

Show me an encourager, and our God will raise a pastor

Show me the meek, and our God will raise them bold

Show me the enslaved, and our God will raise them free

Show me the poor, and our God will raise them rich

Show me the crushed, and our God will raise them victorious

Show me unhappiness, and our God will bring joy

Show me disease, and our God will bring healing

Show me distress, and our God will bring relief

Show me one who is lost, and our God will bring Salvation!

Bible Study - Colossians 2:1-7

¹ I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me personally. ² My intention is that their hearts are encouraged and united in love, so that they may have full and complete insight into the understanding of God's mystery, which is Christ Himself, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no-one deceives you with attractive but false arguments. ⁵ For even though I am physically absent from you, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the strength of your faith in Christ. ⁶ So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, go on living your lives in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and grounded in the faith, just as you were taught, excelling in thanksgiving.

Review

Paul was the greatest of all Christian missionaries and evangelists, and his story tells us that the task of evangelism is never complete when souls are saved. Those who are blessed by salvation need to be built up in faith not simply by teaching and worship, but by being encouraged as they face difficulties by having their fears and worries explained. In short, they need pastoral support, and they need understanding help in the battles they face. Too often, we think of an evangelist as someone who has the gift of bringing people to Christ, but separate this role from that of those who give on-going support to those who have responded. I suggest that Paul would have been horrified at this; for as the foremost evangelist in the life of the church, he felt a sense of personal responsibility for the communities founded through his missionary work. Subsequently, his letters were of course a result of his evangelism because he wrote to churches he founded. However, they are full of pastoral indicating the care he showed for people, and ensuring that churches did not wander away from the truth of the Gospel he preached.

Paul's concern was that the Colossians knew the truth All of this is very clear in our passage today. The struggles Paul spoke of (2:1) were not merely his own suffering in prison (as in 4:3,18), but a reflection of his on-going personal concern for all the churches in the region of Colossae (including Laodicea). He sought to support as many churches as he could through letters (such as this one) or possibly by verbal messages sent to those who had sought his advice about various issues. Paul's response to what had been told him about the Colossian church was to tell them to focus on Christ and Him alone; the 'mystery' of God had now been revealed to everyone and it was a mystery no more! God had made Himself known in Christ (1:27, 2:3), and Paul explained that this truth would build up the young Christian community at Colossae and unite them 'in love' (2:2).

One basic truth! Knowing what we do about the things people believed in those days of the Roman Empire, it is a fair guess to say that some people were telling the Colossians that they needed to be enlightened to other mysteries and truths if they were to attain a full knowledge of God. This sounds attractive, and not very different from an invitation to 'explore the faith'; however, Paul repeated over and over again in his letters that no Christian needed anything other than faith in the risen Jesus Christ for their salvation. There was much for them to discover and learn about God's work and His ways, but if they kept the channel open to God the Father through Jesus Christ by the presence of His Spirit, then they would 'have full and complete insight into ... God's mystery, which is Christ' (2:2).

The health of one church affects all What is so impressive to us today is Paul's personal sense of obligation to a church he had not even visited. He was concerned them and for the whole church of God, and it disturbed him to think that any part of it should have to deal with heretical teaching. He was not content to sit back and tell Epaphras to go and sort out his own church. Paul knew there was a connectedness about the whole church as the 'Body of Christ' (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12 etc.) which was spiritual (2:5). Therefore, in writing as he did, he put his whole reputation on the line in order to insist that the Gospel the Colossians had first heard could not be compromised (2:6), and that they should exercise personal discipline and good order in developing the life of their community (2:5,7).

Underneath the surface of what this robust text plainly says, lies Paul's conviction that because Christ was truly the head of the Church, then all of God's people were mutually responsible for each other. Whatever anyone else did, he was prepared to fulfil his obligations.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How can our hearts be 'encouraged and united in love'? How do we know that our faith is true?
2. Is it possible for us to overcome the divisions amongst Christians in the world today for the sake of evangelism? If not, why not?
3. What 'false arguments' are used by some people to lead others astray?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

We will never stop being challenged to check out the truth of what we believe while we live. This is a basic part of our heritage of faith, and as soon as we begin to take for granted some of the important things of faith, we will find that we are in a difficult place. Presumption never helps us, and the wisest course of action is to allow the sermons we hear and the Bible studies we take part in, to make us check out whether we are truly on track with our faith. You may be surprised how easy it is to forget what we should remember!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Spend some time writing down a list of the things you believe to be absolutely true about you and your relationship with God. It is worth doing this from time to time, because the very act of doing it forces us to be clear about what we believe.*
- *Pray for those who find it hard to express their faith and do not wish to engage with thinking about the Bible says, for example. Ask the Lord to energise His people so that they respect Him and seek and the truth of the Gospel.*

Final Prayer

Give us humility, Almighty Father, in the face of the great truths of the Gospel. May we handle them with dignity and care, and always remember that we are dependent upon You for everything, including our wisdom and understanding. Guide us in all truth, Almighty Father; AMEN