

# NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON 28th May am Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ" Pt 4 "Standing firm by standing together"

Text: Colossians 2 verses 1-5

## Scripture references from the ESV

**Colossians 2:1-5** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup> I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

As we have worked through the letter to the Colossians over the past few weeks, one theme has consistently come up time and time again. That theme is

### what it means to be in Christ

In the first chapter, we have seen that it is very much a reason to rejoice. Paul wanted his readers to be encouraged by what he had to say about being 'in Christ'. We have this incredible new identity, with the fulness of Christ dwelling in us. A miracle has taken place and where once we were alienated from God and counted as enemies, we are now reconciled, holy and blameless. Even more amazingly, we are co-heirs with Christ.

In this passage, we discover why Paul felt it was so important to write to the Colossians. Many different philosophies were circulating (what Paul describes as plausible argument in **v4**), and those philosophies could have distorted the wonderful truth of being **in Christ**. This same danger applies today just as much as it did

in 60 AD. There are always those who will try to change, water down or add to the Gospel. There are many

calls today to 'modernise' what God teaches in his word, to change it so that it is more palatable to

our culture or simply to ignore it altogether.

There is even a commission set up by the Church of England to consider whether Anglican clergy should be allowed to use gender-neutral terms to refer to God. We cannot take it for granted that what we rejoice in and hold to **in Christ** is not at risk of being distorted by our culture's **plausible arguments**, none of which are true.

Paul was determined that the Church as a whole should stand firm in the truth of the Gospel. He shows us three interconnected ways to stand firm **in Christ**, to encourage us, and to spur us on to live out our new life **in Christ**. He wants us not to stand still but to grow in Christ.

**1. We stand firm and continue to grow in Christ by growing closer together** (v2 above). Paul was very clear that our hearts will be encouraged, cheered and emboldened to stand firm

**by growing closer together.**

Paul wants all churches, including ours, to be knit together like a body, just as God first knitted each of us together in our mother's womb.

**For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb** (Psalm 139:13)

The church is like a body, as Paul tells us in **I Cor 12:12: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ**. Paul goes on to tell us about the different parts of the body and their functions. Often, we assume that this is a purely functional matter – we have different gifts and as long as we all carry out our different roles the church will function as it should.

Here, Paul is telling us that this is not about functionality but about closeness and togetherness. It describes how we are to be as a church. We are not knitted together so that we can do our different jobs, but

**God has placed us here so that we can be knitted together in love.**

The word for love here is agape – godly and sacrificial love of the kind that he displayed to us

**For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son** (John 3:16)

This love that redeemed us and brought us into our close relationship with God is the same love that binds us together as one body. We walk in obedience and align

ourselves with God's will for us when we partake in this active agape love for one another by growing closer together.

This means so much more than attending Church on a Sunday and going to a home group. Those means of being together, wonderful and right though they are, constitute a minimum. We are called to be together,

and when a church functions in that way, it displays the beauty of the love of God.

Today, we live in an individualistic society, and our culture tries to shape us into that mould. However, we are called to be different – to be knitted together in love. This means opening up our lives to one another:

- Being ready to open up our homes, not putting on a show but in an attitude of come as you are
- Arranging to meet up with each other, as we work on the excellent task of getting to know each other not for an official church-related activity, but because you are **being** church.
- Offering lifts not just for the Sunday meetings but also whenever else the need arises.

There are plenty more possibilities. Introverts may be a little nervous of some of these ideas and it will look different for each one of us.

**Whatever you do, you need to do it out of agape love, not because you feel forced into it.**

**Do it out of the overflow of the love that you have received from God.**

## **2. Growing closer together in love leads to growing in understanding together (v2b).**

This is a significant thing for us to grasp because it runs counter to our individualistic, intellectualised culture. Our culture tells us that if you want to know something, you should read a book or (for younger generations) watch a YouTube video.

Here, Paul tells us that we miss out on a deep understanding of what we have in **Christ** if we are not growing closer together in love. We will have some head knowledge but we will not have understanding.

**When we are loved by other believers, and bound together in agape love, we experience Christ through one another.**

**The Holy Spirit is working through us, revealing Christ through each of us to one another.**

That is why Paul wanted to go to be with the Colossians. He wanted to use his particular gifting and knowledge to help with this. We need each other to reveal Christ to one another. No Christian is an island and no Christian should be alone.

**We need to be in each other's lives to have a living Christianity.**

When you are working in a secular job, you may well feel isolated and under attack, as your company tries to force on you more and more views that go against Christ's teaching. What a comfort and a support to receive a message from a friend from church, encouraging you with a text from Scripture, telling you he is praying for you, and suggesting you might like to meet up.

**You are not alone, after all. You are growing in understanding of Christ, together**  
**The love of Christ, the reality of being in Christ and the fulness of his riches are revealed**  
**in that moment.**

Perhaps you are stuck at home and have not been out for ages. You are worried about falling if you go out alone. Then you get a call from someone from church to say you have been prayed for and would you like to be picked up to go out for coffee and get to know each other a bit more.

**You are part of this family, and not alone. You are growing in understanding of Christ,**  
**together**  
**The love of Christ, the reality of being in Christ and the fulness of his riches are revealed**  
**in that moment.**

This does not exclude doing Bible study – in fact doing Bible study together takes this sort of meeting on to a higher level. Many of us are confused and perplexed by aspects of the Christian life. If you are not a great lover of reading, the idea of trying to wade through a book to help you understand a particular issue can create an intellectual barrier.

Imagine how it would help you to meet regularly with a couple of others, digging deep into the word, discovering new concepts, covering various topics and being able to ask questions. You would learn to enjoy God's word together and be committed to praying for one another.

**The potential growth in love and knowledge of the mystery of Christ would be tremendous.**

We have this in place in our home groups (please speak to an elder if you would like to join one). The members study the word, usually based on the Sunday preaching, and have the opportunity to really bond together.

**They are growing in understanding of Christ, together.**

**3. Growing closer together in love leads to growing in understanding together, and the overflow from this is growing in the riches of assurance in Christ. (vv2b,3)**

The more we love one another, the more we reveal Christ to one another, the more our hearts will be encouraged and the more assured we will be of who we are in Christ. Then amazingly, we can start plunging into the depths of all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are available to us.

**The more assured we are of who we are in Christ,  
the more we will let our lives be defined by him and not by the world.**

Then we will want to explore more and more who we are in Christ, and increase our knowledge.

- Our love for his word, our knowledge of him, and our wisdom from him will increase.
- Our delight in Christ will overflow into love for others as we plunge into this bottomless mine that has been opened for us to discover.

**We get to do this together!**

When we love Christ and his word more, we love the Church more and Christ reveals himself more. So we love him more, we love his Church more and Christ reveals himself more. It is a cycle of discipleship.

**The only reason we can love in this way is because we are in Christ.**

Paul has good reason to rejoice (v5). He knows that:

**as the church continues to grow closer in love and understanding,  
they will stand firm in the assurance of who they are in Christ and what they hold to in  
Christ.**

Questions to reflect on:

1. Where do you feel you have allowed our culture's individualism shape your Christian walk? Do you view church as a place you go to and receive from, without actually being part of it, or partnering with it?
2. What would it mean for you to grow closer in love? What practical things could you do? You may already be involved, but could you do more?

**It is the responsibility of every one of us to take steps to grow closer together in love.**