

**Colossians 2:1-7 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. He is our leader, our King, our Savior, our Lord.

The only reason we are here in this place or watching online is because of Jesus. The Apostle

Paul was privileged to hear the voice of our risen Lord when he got knocked off his high horse.

The Light was so bright that it blinded him. Another time Paul got caught up into the third

heaven where mysteries of the universe were revealed to him. Having seen the risen Christ in

heaven, all of Paul's life was boiled down to this, that of building up the church. Every act of

Jesus is for the church, which is you, to build up the church, and lead us on to maturity in Christ

and eventually into eternity.

**"<sup>1</sup> 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."** Paul had never been to Colosse

and had never met the people there. Paul did not know the people of Laodicea either but felt an

incredible responsibility to minister effectively to these churches he had never set eyes on nor

they on him. Paul felt this burden, a load on the inside given by God, to help these two churches

overcome the false teaching of Gnosticism and to continue to move in the direction toward

Jesus and the cross and not false teachings made up by mere men. The teaching that Paul

gives to us in Colossae is as relevant today as it was when he wrote it.

**Pray for the church, not just this church, but for our churches throughout the**

**community for Jesus to build up the churches and to put people in the church to take**

**their rightful place of doing ministry with the spiritual gifts God has given to each one.**

Jesus wants you built up in the faith. Jesus wants you to build up the faith of those you worship with, work with, live with, and live near. You are all a bunch of builders, hired by Jesus, to build up the body of believers and God has gifted you to do just that. Every spiritual gift is given to build up the church and not tear it down. Some wrongly have a view that the person who has the most negative criticisms of the church are the most spiritual. We get in little circles and criticize when God wants you to get into little circles and build each other up in the Lord Jesus. I want us to be less critical and more into helping your circle grow in the Christian faith.

Paul wrestled with God in prayer for God to cause every person in the church to have a stronger faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had never even met the people of these two churches but felt a God given responsibility to help them mature in Christ. **God has given you responsibilities to help the church grow**, but unless you are growing in the faith yourself, this will not happen. You cannot lead people to where you have never been.

**<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.** When in high school my friend Bob Blessing invited me to attend his church, a charismatic Episcopal church. It meant driving 40 miles and my sister Cheryl attended with me. I had never been to a tongue speaking charismatic church. My sister and I only knew one person there, Bob. The moment we walked into the sanctuary you could feel something different immediately. It was the feeling of acceptance and love. The Holy Spirit, God's Holy Presence, God's love filled the atmosphere. My sister and I were hugged at least three times before we sat down near the back of the church. <sup>3</sup> These people did not know us at all yet hugged us. Everybody hugged everybody and that is when I learned how good and appropriate hugs are. It gave you the feeling of a family that truly loved each other and genuinely enjoyed each other's company whether or not they knew you by name. There was not a lonely person in the place for each one spoke to another

whether or not they knew you. **This was happening because they all loved Jesus so much that they had to show that love to each other. They loved Jesus so much because the Spirit of Jesus was so alive in them.** No one had a dead or boring look on their faces. Smiles were everywhere. It was not fake. It was the outward display of the inner work that God was doing in their lives. Time flew by. The sermons captivated you and the music uplifted you and all done in the felt Presence of God. After two months my father asked us to come back to our Lutheran church and that we did, wanting to bring back with us what we experienced in my friend Bob Blessing's church. Bob himself graduated from high school a year early so he could be a missionary in France and that he did.

So why am I saying all of this? As Christians we have the privilege of being loved completely by the one who created all that there is. I can say that to you 'till I am blue in the face but until you experience that love deep in your soul, I am just blowing wind. God's Presence impacts our affections, our inner emotions. And once our emotions are impacted in God's way, you can no longer keep inside of you what God has placed there. It has to get out. Head knowledge that does not sink into your heart is just that, head knowledge. True Christian faith impacts your entire being including your emotions. You feel loved. You feel Christian joy. You feel the peace of Christ and much much more. So many of us have only put our toes into God's water when God wants us immersed with His Holy Presence, the Spirit of Christ taking over your very life. You won't be able to come to church and be an old poop. You will be moved to speak to others instead of sitting or waiting for others to speak to you.

**Colossians 2:2 (NLT2) <sup>2</sup> I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love.** There are specific people in this church that just by looking at them I feel emotionally encouraged. I sense their love for me and my love for them. Personal Illustration. When we first moved here, we did not know anybody except the call committee. Our four children did not know anyone. At Easter it was our oldest child's birthday. My wife always had a

big birthday for each child every other year. It was to be Taylor's big birthday party but we really did not know anyone yet. My wife bought a huge cake for him, and we served it between services on Easter. I felt terrible for Taylor. In Mt. Olive our home would have been filled with friends but here those relationships were yet to be formed. We felt all alone. It just so happened that a couple who attend here invited us over to their place for Easter. I was hurting for my son. When we walked into their home, they had a huge banner on the wall. "Happy Birthday Taylor." When I saw that banner, I welled up with tears. I was thrilled for Taylor. They had a stack of gifts for him. We felt loved by this particular family and of course the love of God through them. Our hearts were tied together, knit together by God's love and that friendship continues to this day.

**Christian relationships, Christian friendships are priceless and are worth everything you put into them. I learned young in life that in order to have a friend you have to be a friend.** Sitting in a worship service, looking at the back of a person's head does not make it easy to build friendships.

Yes, God brings the right people into our lives at just the right time for us to love and for us to be loved by. But this will not happen until we let God move so deeply into our lives that we cannot help but love one another. God ties our hearts together. It is the deep work of God doing this. It is possible to miss out on this until our faith deepens and impacts every part of our lives. Jesus loved John as much as He loved Judas. John's heart received the love of Jesus, and the heart of Judas was as cold as an iceberg. Icebergs don't love much back and it is impossible for them to receive love unless they let God warm up their hearts by God's Holy love.

When Janet and I moved to Mt. Olive we did not know anyone. There was one couple who had children at a similar age as ours and we asked them to our home 16 times and 16 times they said no. 16 times. It was so discouraging and disheartening. It gave you the feeling of coldness, of unfriendliness. Finally on the 17<sup>th</sup> phone call they said yes, and it was the beginning of a wonderful set of Christian friendships. We did not give up on them.

I can think of nothing worse than coming to church and feeling all alone, feeling that no one cares about you. You might even feel invisible. Personal illustration. I got super sick when I moved 3700 miles from the home, all my family, friends, and farm. I became homesick to the max. No one knew me and I knew absolutely no one. New England is not an easy place to break into. I found a Lutheran church and went there. No one said hello to me or greeted me. I came and went, and no one knew the difference. It was mere drudgery getting myself out of bed and driving to church. I would often leave in tears feeling so homesick that I could hardly stand it.

Finally, I had this thought go through my mind. "I am not going to let these ice-cold New Englanders get away with being so inhospitable." The next Sunday I went to church and deliberately forced myself to say hello and I was said hello back to. The next Sunday I walked up to a family and said, "I am Terry Breum, a seminary student from Seattle. When are you going to have me into your home for dinner and I don't like lasagna. I remember the first time said this the person took a step back, caught their breath, and said, "What about next Sunday?" After a time, I received more invites than I had time for. It took a lot of effort on my part, and it took a lot of time, but it worked. In order to feel loved in a church and not all alone, it takes effort on your part even if you get 16 nos. Eventually the God's Presence will tie you to another heart, another person, another family, and a wonderful Christian friendship has been born. Coming to church becomes thrilling. It is like a weekly family reunion where you genuinely like the family. Relationships will not come to you. You have to go after them for relationships to exist and God is the one right in the middle of it all with the ties that will keep the relationships good, solid, healthy, seeing visibly the treasures of Christ in each other. We can't act like a bunch of icebergs and expect people to warm up to us.

People who are extraverts, such as myself, can come across to strong at times. It is easier for extraverts to begin conversations. We actually think we have something interesting to

say. Introverts are great listeners but have a more difficult time putting themselves out there. Introverts actually have so many treasures inside and are quite interesting, but they tend to keep it on the inside. Introverts, please take a risk and do not give up. When you see someone not conversing walk up to them and ask them a question or meet them. If someone says, "I've been here 30 years," don't let that stop you. You can ask, "What has kept you here so long." **Opening up a conversation may have no end. God is working and you are showing Christian love by reaching out.** Please do not wait for someone to reach out to you. It is time to take the initiative.

My heart aches and I lay awake in the middle of the night when I sense the coldness of our times, people mistreating and abusing one another and calling it the news, free speech. Tik Tok, 2. Face Book, 3. Tumblr 4. Instagram 5. Twitter 6. Google+ 7. Skype, 8. Viber 9. Discord 10. Snap Chap 11. Reddit and 12. WeChat to name a few of today's social media frenzy can be used for good but in reality, they do not build nice, warm, uplifting Christian friendships established by God.

Please let this sink into your heart. "You are loved with an everlasting love, and underneath are the everlasting arms." There are treasures of Christ, placed inside of you by Jesus. Let's let those treasures out so you can discover even greater treasures of Christ through Christian friendships brought and tied together by Jesus. Amen and Amen.