

Every day we read in the news about the turmoil in the world. In this current climate of uncertainty, how do we keep our faith grounded? We are called to be countercultural, to stand up for our faith in a non-believing world. Previously we looked at Colossians 3, which told us to put off the old and put on the new, to put into practice what we already are in position. And a few weeks ago, Minister Stephanie preached about Colossians 1, which was about the supremacy of Christ. Now, we will fill in the gaps and study Colossians 2 in order to learn how to be firm in our faith.

First, let us review chapter 1. Paul stated that Jesus is over all things. He is the firstborn, a position of highest rank. Paul highlights the different areas of Jesus' authority. He is before all things and encompasses all things. He is supreme, the ultimate in power, importance, and authority. He created all things, sustains all things, and will reconcile all things to God. So what is the implication of His supremacy for us? We see in chapter 2 that the followers of Christ are called to be faithful to Him, to be steadfast and unwavering in the gospel. Beginning from 1:28, we can sense Paul's passion and concern for the Colossians, that they may be strengthened and united in reaching full knowledge of Christ. Through teaching, his goal is to present the believers as mature and complete Christians before God. The Greek word used for "toil" implies laboring unto exhaustion, and the word for "struggle" is the word used to describe the extreme exertion of the athletes in the Olympic Games. Because Jesus is supreme, we should be eager to know Him in depth, both in terms of objective knowledge and by subjective experience in our lives. This knowledge goes beyond the standard Sunday school answers. In 2:2-3 Paul describes the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. We should strive to delve deep into this knowledge of Him.

And in vv. 4-5 Paul tells us that this knowledge serves to strengthen us so that we will not be deceived by false teaching. At the time, fine-sounding arguments of gnostic thinking, as well as deceitful Hellenistic philosophies and Jewish mysticism led to ascetic rules and codes that were not only in addition to the gospel, but led people away from Christ, who is supreme. Today we are also bombarded with a flood of information that Paul couldn't possibly have envisioned.

Deceit and falsehood permeates through our government to the highest level. How do we tell the true from the false? We must be grounded in faith. We must be determined to know Jesus more, so we will not be deceived into turning away from Him. Knowledge of Christ makes all the difference for us in the world and in eternity because He is above all things and His love for us is infinite. Our vision of Christ should shape our lives and strengthen us in the midst of all trials. Just as the Colossians' faith was put to the test by false teaching, so our faith will be proved genuine if it withstands the trials and the deceitfulness of the world.

Faithfulness doesn't depend on our own ability to keep believing, but rather on how well we know the object of our faith. To know God more, we must accept Him for who He is and not try to constrain Him to our own ideas. We shouldn't buy into ideas like the prosperity gospel, which tries to fit God into a formula that guarantees material blessing for those who believe in Him. We must submit to His will, instead of trying to conform Him to ours. This idea of constraining and oversimplifying God comes out in our reaction to two recent films. The movie *Silence* is about a Jesuit who experiences extreme persecution in Japan. His fellow missionaries and local believers suffer because of his faith, and though he prays to God, there is only silence. The movie *Hacksaw Ridge* is about a conscientious objector who becomes a medic in the war and is able to rescue 75 soldiers in Okinawa without using a gun. Each time he rescued a soldier he prayed for God to give him one more, and each time he was able to rescue another soldier. In this age of uncertainty, the reassuring message of *Hacksaw Ridge* was more popular than the more pessimistic message of *Silence*.

But we should not try to make God into what we want Him to be. The reality is that sometimes He does answer our prayers the way we expect, and sometimes He doesn't. The book of Job teaches us that God's wisdom is beyond our understanding. We should not expect that He will do what we expect all the time. Neither should we assume that God will never come through for us. Though sometimes we can't see it, God is always wise and faithful, and we must be faithful to Him and remain on His side, even if it seems like He may not be on ours. We must strive to know Him in ever increasing depth, and then Christ will shine through in our character in the midst of all trials.