

Place: Lurgan Baptist 2:12:2012

COMPLETE IN HIM

Reading: Colossians 2:1-7

6. A PASTOR'S BURDEN FOR THE CHURCH

If someone were to ask you, what is the most important quality a pastor or an elder might possess, I wonder how you would respond ? Would you say its education, leadership ability, boldness, holiness or preaching ability. No doubt all of those things are important but probably the basic ingredient necessary for a successful ministry is love. Love for the Lord and then love for the Lord's people. Now "*Shepherding the Flock*," is no easy task indeed the reality is this, some pastors and elders can never do anything right. Someone has expressed like this.

If the pastor is young they say he lacks experience
If his hair is gray he's too old for the young people
If he has five children he has too many
If he has no children he is setting a bad example

If he preaches from notes he has canned sermons and is dry: If he preaches without notes he is not deep

If he is attentive to the poor people in the church
They claim he is playing to the grandstand

If he pays attention to the wealthy they say he is an aristocrat: If he uses too many illustrations he neglects the Bible: If he does not use enough stories he isn't clear

If he condemns wrong he is cranky: If he does not preach against sin he is a compromiser: If he preaches the truth he is offensive: If he does not preach the truth he's a hypocrite

If he fails to please everybody he's hurting the church and ought to leave: If he does please everybody he has no convictions: If he drives an old car he shames his congregation: If he drives a new car he's setting his affection upon earthly things

If he preaches all the time, the people get tired of hearing one man: If he invites guest preachers he's shirking his responsibilities: If he receives a large salary, he is mercenary: If he receives a small salary, well they say it proves he isn't worth much anyhow

With so many Baptist churches without a pastor, that poem is amusing but revealing. Now keep in mind that there are three New Testament terms that are used interchangeably to refer to leaders. Elder (presbuterion 1 Tim 5:19) bishop or overseer (episkopos 2:25 Phil 1:1) and pastor (poimen Eph 4:11) So what have we got in the New Testament ? Well, different words, elder, overseer, bishop, pastor, all used to describe the one office. Moreover, the office was designed for a plurality of

men (Acts 14:23 15:4 20:7 Phil 1:1) for one man cannot do it all. (Ex 18:13-26) Here we see Paul's intense yearning for the welfare and edification of the saints at Colosse and Laodicea and surely this is a model for every God-called pastor and every God called elder. *Someone has said a church will rise no higher than its leadership.* A half-hearted, half-committed leadership can only produce half-hearted, half-committed people. Now how did Paul care for the church ? Well, I want to talk to you about “ **A Pastor's Burden for the Church,**” and I want to do that in three ways.

(1) PASTORAL CARE

Do you know how Christ cared for the church ? Paul says, “ *Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.*” (Eph 5:25) My the apostle Paul had also had a deep love for the church and although Paul's death was not efficacious, it was not atoning, it was not substitutionary, but nevertheless the apostle Paul gave his life because he loved the Church. Did he not express that love in his letters ? To the Corinthians he said, “ *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*” (2 Cor 12:15) He told the Philippian believers, “ *I have you in my heart.*” (Phil 1:6) Now Paul loved the church because he loved Christ. He knew well the truth expressed in John's epistle, “ *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the*

children of God when we love God.” (1 Jn 5:1-2) We have heard the old saying, “ *Love me, love my dog.*” John saying is similar, “ *love God, love His child.*” You see, to love me is to love my children, if you do not love them then you do not love me. My to love the Father is to love His child. And remember that Christian love means we treat each other the way God treats us. Now it was Paul's love for the church that caused him to write this letter to the churches of the Lycus Valley (4:15-16) He is probably thinking of that group of three towns in the Lycus Valley, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse stood together and its these believers in these towns of which Paul is thinking and which he is picturing in his minds eye.

You see, Paul was concerned about them. They were being attacked by false teaching. On the one hand there was Greek Philosophy which said Christ plus knowledge equals salvation, on the other hand there was Jewish Ceremony which said Christ plus works equals salvation. So because of his love and concern for the saints he writes, “ *For I would flesh,*” (2:1) My what a glimpse into the heart of Paul as he shows the struggle he is going through for these believers he had never seen but whom he deeply loved. Now is this not pastoral care ? Now pastoral care reveals itself,

(a) IN PRAYER:

Look if you will at (2:1) The word “ *conflict,*” there is referring to Paul in prayer, it is our word “ *agony,*”, it is an athletic word, it is a word talking about the pain and the struggle and the sacrifice of an athlete

competing in an athletic contest. And so Paul pictures prayer that way. The phrase “*great conflict*,” shows us his intense earnestness. Sometimes, however, we hear the statement “*If you can do nothing else, you can pray*,” as though prayer were the easiest of all types of Christian ministry. As a matter of fact, it is the hardest and no believer knows the real meaning of it unless they experience what it is to labour in prayer. In fact this is exactly what Paul said about Epaphras the founder of the church at Colosse. Look at (4:12) “*Labouring*,” is from a Greek word (agōnizomai) meaning to “*agonize*,” or strive. It is an athletic term meaning to exert the last ounce of strength to win the match. Agony comes at the end of the match where strength is spent.

The Saviour also was in “*agony*,” in the garden of Gethsemane when He prayed (Lk 22:44) “*Fervently*,” means “*hot*.” For it is “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much*.” (James 5:16) My do you know why it is a struggle and conflict to pray ? Because prayer implies opposition. It’s a struggle against unseen foes, the forces of one who wishes above all things to thwart our petitions since “*restraining prayer we cease to fight*.”

***And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees***

Now is this how you see prayer ? As a conflict, a battle, and a struggle ? Or are you playing at prayer and not treating it with true seriousness ? Bishop Moule tells

how a caller, who was kept waiting at the door of one of the Puritans was told by a servant, “*My master is at prayer this morning and has been long in getting access*.” Now if we genuinely care for one another will that not be revealed through praying one for another ?

(b) FOR PEOPLE:

Isn’t this a wonderful thing by the way ? Paul had never even seen these people, he had never even met these people personally, and yet so wrapped up was he in their success as Christian believers Paul found himself in an agony of prayer. “*As many as have not seen my face in the flesh*,” (2:1) Now this is not easy, indeed it is difficult. “*Out of sight, out of mind*,” but not Paul. Paul’s love was not selective, he loved the whole church not just those personally known by or close to him. My we are talking about pastoral care. You say “*that’s the work of the pastor and the elders*,” well it is but not exclusively. For Paul says, “*Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ*,” (Gal 6:2)

Do you recall how Peter expressed his love for Christ ? Do you recall how Christ expanded His labour for Peter ? “*Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*.” (Jn 21:15-17) Are you a leader, elder, shepherd of the flock ? Are you taking care of them ? Are you a Christian who seeks to meet the needs of some of this flock ? What “*sheep*,” do you know ? Believers in your church, your home, your workplace, have so many needs. Are they wandering away from church, drifting

from the fellowship of God's people as they are lured by the sirens of popularity, prestige, power, position and "*just things* ?" Surely my you can tend just one sheep, Emerging from the rubble of a demolished house following one of the German air raids on London, there appeared a short, cockney lad, carrying a fellow nearly twice his size. A policeman on the scene turned to the lad, and said, "*mate leave your burden there. He's far too heavy for you. I'll give you a hand in a moment.*" But the cockney looked up in his cockney way and replied, "*Cop he isn't heavy, he's my brother and I, am taking him home.*" Do we know anything about this ? "*He isn't heavy, he's my brother and I'm taking him home.*" (1)

(2) PASTORAL COUNSEL

You see, just as parents have goals for their children so Paul had goals for this assembly at Colosse. What were they ? What was Paul's concern ? That in the midst of a hostile environment they might know,

(a) ENCOURAGEMENT:

"*That their hearts might be comforted,*" (2:2) . The word "*comforted,*" is a very interesting word. The word is better rendered "*encouraged, or strengthened.*" It literally means, "*to call to one's side.*" It is the same word used to describe the Holy Spirit as the 'Paraclete,' or Comforter. He comes alongside to help us. Do you recall Paul's prayer for the Ephesians ? "*That he would grant you to be*

strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." (3:16) So the Spirit of God does the strengthening. He does it as we feed on the Word of God. He does it through trials and difficulties that come our way. (2 Cor 4:8-9) He does it through other teachers, Christians, who minister to us and strengthen us. I mean Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians "*to establish you, and to comfort or strengthen you concerning your faith.*" (1 Thes 3:2) What was this not an important part of Paul's ministry ? Luke tells us "*And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming or strengthening the churches.*" (Acts 15:41) My ... all of us need our hearts encouraged. You know, from Sunday to Sunday you don't know which of the brothers or sisters it is who needs encouraging. Sometimes folks come into this building and they really do need a word of encouragement, be sure that you give that word of encouragement that our hearts may be encouraged, that our hearts may be comforted. (a)

(b) ENDEARMENT:

"*Being knit together in love,*" (2:2) The word "*knit,*" simply means to "*unite.*" One of the most beautiful aspects of belonging to a local body, and church is the fact that there is a tie that binds our hearts together. We have been saved by the same grace, we are standing on the same ground, we are striving to the same goal, and, we are serving the same God. We have a lot of things in common. The Bible calls it Positional Unity. But Paul is speaking here of Practical Unity. Paul says, "*I want you to be practically united, experientially united,*

experimentally united as you are positionally.” In other words, make your life match your position. You are one, now act like it. Live out your oneness that’s inside. Now is this not where the rubber hits the road ?

Positionally we are one but practically speaking we have a lot to be desired. A motorist stopped and asked a little boy directions to a certain church. The boy innocently replied in a telling way, “ *Sir, take the road to right and you will come to two churches. One is the United Church and the other one is the one you are looking for.*” Now let me ask you, are you a trouble-maker or a peace maker ? Do you recall what Tertulian said of the early Christians ? “ *How those Christians love one another.*” Today the world may look on and say, “ *How those Christians despise one another.*” (a) (b)

(c) **ENLIGHTENMENT:**

“ And unto all riches,” (2:2-3) I am helped by Moffatt’s rendering of the verse, “ *all the wealth of conviction that comes from insight into the truth of God.*” You see, the Gnostics thought they had some big secret no one else was enlightened about. No Gnostic could comprehend the mystery of God and Christ. There was nothing equal to it. But God’s secret (mystery) was now manifest. Christ is God manifested and indwelling every Christian. In Christ “ *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” Now do you see what Paul is saying ? He is saying I want you to have a settled conviction about the riches you have, that Christ is none other than God manifest in flesh. He is deity and that in Him are hid or stored all the treasures

of wisdom and knowledge. He is sufficient. My there is no need for the writings of any cult, philosophy or psychology to supplement the Bible. Christ is the source of all true spiritual knowledge. Steve Wagers tells the story of a wealthy man who had only one son whom he loved dearly. The wealthy man was also interested in collecting expensive, and rare pieces of art. He taught his son to love art, as well, and, together, they began to collect some of the most exquisite pieces of art in the world. A war broke out and the son was called away to fight. After a few months, the father received a message that his son was missing in action, and, not long after, he received word that his son had been killed in battle. The father was overwhelmed with grief and heartbroken. He had accumulated all of these treasures, but none of them could compare to his only son.

One day, a knock came to the father’s door. As he opened the door he saw a soldier standing there who said, “ *Sir, I was a good friend of your son. I want you to know that he died trying to save the lives of other people. Sir, I am not an artist, but I painted a picture of your son just before he died, and I wanted to present it to you.*” The father was overjoyed. He had seen better, and more quality art work, but none of that mattered, because this was a portrait of his beloved son. The father took that painting and put it over the mantel in his house, in the midst of millions of dollars worth of art. In time, the old man died. Invitations were sent to come to an auction of the old man’s art collection. Many came from all over the world over to bid, and get

in on these rare finds. As the auction opened the auctioneer started off with the painting of the man's son. Many of the famous art collectors shouted, "*That isn't worth anything. We came to see 'real,' art. Let's get to the good stuff.*" The auctioneer stated that the stipulation of the father's will was that the painting of the son was to be sold first. They started the bidding at one hundred dollars, but there were no bids. Fifty dollars, but there were no bids. Finally, the bidding went to ten dollars, and a fellow in the back said, "*Ok, I'll give ten dollars for the painting.*" Suddenly, the auctioneer said, "*The auction is over.*" There were cries from the crowd, "*What do you mean over? You only sold one painting.*" The auctioneer then explained, "***According to the will of the father; whoever gets the son, gets it all.***" My according to the will of the Father, the day that we were saved, when we got the Lord Jesus, we got it all. He is all we need, because He meets our every need and we are complete in Him. Now remember we are thinking about A Pastor's Burden for a Church. We are thinking about (1) (2)

(3) PASTORAL CAUTION

When Paul was saying goodbye to the elders at Ephesus he warned them. He said, "*For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock therefore watch and remember.*" (Acts 20:29-31) You see, it's the responsibility of the elders to protect the flock. My there are all sorts of wolves out there who want to bring in false teaching and so the shepherd has to guard the

flock. Sometimes along the way the shepherd has got to make some tough decisions. Times when the shepherd says, "*No, I am sorry we are not allowing that into this flock.*" In other words there has to be a word of warning. Is this not what Paul is doing here? Do you see,

(a) ***THE PERIL THAT HE DESCRIBES:***

Look at (2:4) The picture is that of the persuasive talk of a lawyer. "*Lest any man should fool you with smooth talk.*" My is the devil not a smooth talker? Do you remember Satan's enticing words in the Garden of Eden? Satan commenced by sowing **doubt** ("*Yea, hath God said?*") continued with **denial** ("*Ye shall not surely die*") concluded with **delusion** ("*Ye shall be as gods*") My beware of persuasive words from those who would attack the Deity and Sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Did you ever use rat poison? We use it to seduce the rat. Did you know that rat poison has 95% wholesome content in it? Only the 5% kills. My do we need to be careful as to who we watch and what we listen when it comes to spiritual matters? Of course we do. I mean all we see on our televisions are the '*faith-healers,*' the '*prosperity teachers,*' and the '*name-it-and-claim-it believers*' who are to be marked out as those who are propagating a false gospel.

Do you remember John's words? "*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*"

(2 John 10) There is a word of warning here.

(b) THE PRAISE THAT HE DELIVERS:

For Paul rejoices that individually and collectively the Colossians were standing firm against the attacks of false teaching. But he wants them to keep moving forward and so he sets before them,

(c) THE PROGRESS HE DESIRES:

1. Paul wants them to be Grounded:

“ *As ye have walk ye in him rooted,* ” Now the word ‘ *walk,* ’ there is commonly used in the New Testament to talk about living the Christian life, the Christian life is compared to a walking. “ Rooted,” suggests that Christ is the source of our spiritual nourishment, growth and fruit. You see, Paul wants them to be grounded in relation to,

Their Conviction about Christ: he does not want them to waver in their Christology. What they believe about Christ.

Their Conformity to Christ: for John says, “ *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked.* ” (1 Jn 2:6) Have you ever seen a little girl trying to mimic her Mummy ? Have you seen her get on Mummy dress and high heel shoes and go wobbling down the street. What’s she doing ? She is trying to mimic her Mummy. Is that the way it is with you and

the Saviour ? Are you being daily conformed to His image ?

2. Paul wants them to be Growing:

“ *And built up in him,* ” how are we to built up in Him ? By studying “ *the word of his grace which is able to build you up,* ” (Acts 20:32) You see, the Christian life is intended to be one of constant growth, progress and maturity.

*More and more, more and more
Still there’s more to follow
Have you on the Lord believed
Still there’s more to follow*

3. Paul wants them to be Grateful:

“ *Abounding therein with thanksgiving,* ” Now why is it so important to be like a river, just overflowing with thanksgiving all the time ? Well, the more thankful you are for the Lord Jesus Christ, the less likely you are to be attracted by the devil’s cheap substitutes. My are you thankful for Him ? Listen,

1. **He is Sovereign:** (2:2)
2. **He is Sufficient:** (2:3)
3. **He is Saviour:** (2:6)

And when you got Him, you got it all and you are complete in Him.

