

# **“A Faithful Church Is...!”**

*Colossians 2:1-7*

**Intro.** – You all know too well that I have always had a fascination with cars. Remember wanting to watch Bonanza for no reason other than when they were coming out with the new Chevrolets models... There was a time when I could spot, or identify every car on the road. Why/how? -- Because of their distinguishing marks... This is especially true in the identification of a faithful church. I believe from this passage we can know there are some distinctive marks that identify a faithful local church or even a person as being a true Christian...

*Purpose: to learn some distinguishing marks of a faithful church*

These marks will also hold true in identifying marks of a true and faithful servant of the Lord. Our text is the apostle Paul’s great prayer for the faithful local church. Seven marks are given in this text identifying a faithful church:

## **I Courageous at HEART (v 2)**

- one outstanding mark of the early Church (Christians) was the fact they were confident/courageous...
- A. Paul Prays for Their Encouragement
  1. He uses the word *παρρησια* -- literally involves the following:
    - a. “comfort” – to set at ease, to cheer and reassure...
    - b. “exhort” – appeal to, urge, to impress upon...
    - c. “instill courage” – always at the back of this word is idea of “enabling” a person(s) to meet difficult situations with boldness, courage and confidence...
  2. Unlike Thomas Edison – true story of Western Union offering to buy the “ticker” invented by Edison. The great inventor was unable to name a price; so, he asked for time to consider his asking price. Talking it over with his wife, she suggested he ask \$20,000. This seemed “exorbitant” to Edison. But the appointed time came, Edison was asked to name his price. “How much?” asked the Western Union official. Edison tried to say \$20,000, but lacked the courage; so, he stood in silence. The official broke the silence by saying, “Mr. Edison, will you take \$100,000?”
- B. The Righteous Are Bold
  1. Should be the middle name of every Christian. Why?
    - a. 2 Timothy 1:7 *“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”*
    - b. i.e. urging you and me to take that bold, limitless, never failing power available to all servants of the Lord and then go forth ready to wage God’s battles with it!
  2. Ephesians 3:11-12 *“This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.”*
  3. Hebrews 4:16 *“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”*
- C. Examples of This Courage
  1. Abraham... Moses... Joshua... Caleb... Rahab... Esther... Peter... John...
  2. Paul – in prison awaiting trial before Nero as he writes this epistle... Note, it is he who is telling other Christians to take courage!

Thus, Paul’s prayer/indication here is that faithful churches will be recognized because of their great courage. Courage that is not obnoxious/proud/arrogant but courageous/bold – courage from X alone!

## **II Knit Together in LOVE (v 2)**

- A. Love for Christ
  1. As Redeemer of men (Acts 4:12 *“... no other name given... to be saved.”*)
  2. As Head of the Church – work towards HIS ends and not their own... HIS Church!
- B. Love for One Another

1. Paul speaks of this, in effect, as *the cohesive ingredient* of the church (Eph 3:17; 4:16; 5:2 etc.)
2. John speaks of this as being a commandment – 1 John 3:23 “*This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.*”

The true Church (Christians) is marked by her love for the Lord and for one another which knits them together for effective service to God’s glory!

### III Equipped With WISDOM (vv 2-3)

- Paul uses three different words to explain *wisdom*
- A. Understanding (συνεσις – v 2)
  - the ability to apply Biblical principles to given situations – i.e. able to take practical course of action almost without thinking...
- B. Knowledge (γνωσις – v 3)
  - ability to apprehend the truth – i.e. to distinguish the truth from a lie... discernment...
- C. Wisdom (σοφία – v 3)
  - ability to support the truth – i.e. defend the faith with wise, intelligent responses...

Thus, the mark of a true church is its understanding, knowledge and wisdom!

### IV Discerning of FALSE DOCTRINE (v 4)

- A. Enticing Words
  1. Word from the law-courts which stands for “persuasive power of the lawyer’s arguments”...
  2. Modern phrases = “pulling the wool over one’s eyes”
  3. Such is certainly prevalent today – charismatic personalities using enticing words to appeal to emotions rather than the truth to be persuasive...
- B. Church’s Attraction is TRUTH
  1. Wisdom (understanding/knowledge) enables the faithful church to detect “enticing words...”
  2. Why seek anything less than *truth*? – is the question the faithful church promotes!

### V DISCIPLINED and STABLE Members (v 5)

- 2 military terms used : 1) ταξις = “orderliness, well-regulated conduct” i.e. disciplined!  
2) στερεος = “firm, steadfast, bulwark, solid”
- A. Put off the “Old Man”
  1. Deny “self” = old desires... old habits... old ways...
  2. Learning to despise what God despises... i.e. thinking more like God!
- B. Put on the “New Man”
  1. Putting “on Christ” = clothed in His righteousness... thinking/acting like X... having mind of X
  2. Sanctification = process of growing in Him... in thought and deed...

Those making up a faithful church are those obviously growing in discipline/godliness unto His glory!

### VI Established in the FAITH (v 7)

- A. Must Walk “in Christ”
  - rooted as a tree receives nourishment from ground, Church receives nourishment way X intended!
- B. Must be Instructed “in Christ”
  - the Bible is in the forefront of teaching/training in faithful church... “the source of faith”!

### VII Where GRATITUDE Abounds (v 7)

- Constant identifying mark of the faithful church is her *thanksgiving* – faithful church shows gratitude!

A. She Shows it in Her Words

1. Hebrews 13:5 *“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*
2. Singing of praises to God and to one another (Psalm 92; Ephesians 5)
3. Preaching, teaching, singing, praying, testifying of God’s marvelous, matchless grace!

B. She Shows it in Her Life

1. Obedient lives committed to Christ and His Word...
2. Holy lives – lives that reflect His grace... Grace responsive lives...

**Conclusion:** Just like there are distinguishing marks on cars... there are distinguishing marks revealing the faithful church (Christian). We have covered seven of them today; yet, this in no way is an exhaustive list. Take any one of these seven away; however, and the church would prove unfaithful...

Let me conclude with this exhortation. Let us be a courageous people... a people knit together in His love... equipped in His wisdom... discerning and resisting false doctrine... disciplined and stable... established in the faith... and filled with gratitude and thanksgiving! These, dear brethren and friend, are the marks of a faithful church!