

Date of sermon: 10/10/2020
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Col. 2:1-7
Title of sermon: **What's Driving You?**
Series: Against the Tide - #5

Colossians 2:1-7 NIV:

1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. **2** My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, **3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4** I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. **5** For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. **6** So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, **7** rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

People inspire me. They do. I'm a professional people watcher. I love watching people. Especially people that are motivated, highly motivated. People that are inspiring, they are passionate. They are driven. I love driven people. I do. One of my heroes, all-time heroes -- I try to become kind of a moderate expert in certain individual's lives, and one of them that I try to know a lot about is David Livingstone. He's a Scottish doctor. He went with a mission out of England to Northern Africa, and -- probably some of my favorite quotes, if you've hung around me a week, I've probably given you a David Livingstone quote -- because I'm inspired by them. I quoted David Livingstone when I was doing 57 miles an hour down the Rockies on a bicycle looking at my little tire, believing at 105 pounds that it was pressured, realizing that if it blew, I was probably in the presence of God. And I kept stating my favorite David Livingstone quote: "I'm immortal 'til the will of God is accomplished in my life." That's one of my favorite quotes. Why? Because I believe that. I'm immortal 'til God's will is accomplished, and so -- I try not to live recklessly, but -- when you're doing fast on a bicycle -- not motorcycle, a bicycle, and you're going down this hill at 57 some miles an hour. And I know that for professionals, that's nothing. For some of you, you've probably done that in your sleep. But for this old geezer, 57 miles an hour, that's a lot! And that's one of my favorite David Livingstone quotes. By the way, he made that quote, I believe, when he was about 106 pounds. Normally, he weighed about 180 pounds and his body was being ravaged, probably with malaria, and he was flat on a gurney, and he was asking to be taken from one village to the next, and they said, "Sir Livingstone, you're going to die if we take you to the next village," and he said, "I'm immortal 'til the will of God is accomplished in my life. Take me to the next village." And they did.

Another one that I love is: "If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there's no road at all." That's my kinda guy! I like that guy, or, I like that gal. I love people like that. I do. I love people who are tenacious. I love people who have grit. Don't you? Don't you love a person who's like, "Yeah! I don't need a road! Just give me the mission." "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa.... It is emphatically no sacrifice at all. Say rather, it is a privilege." I'm inspired by people like that. I'm inspired by people like the Apostle Paul, who in this text tells you what drives him. There are a lot of things that drive people. You know them. There are a lot of people who are driven by money. There are a lot of people who are driven by things. There's all kinds of people. A number of years ago, this whole idea of a bucket list came along. And a lot of people had a bucket list, and they all had a bucket and they put things in their bucket list, things that they wanted, and -- I tried to get a bucket list, but my bucket kept having a hole in it, so I gave up on it. And I have nothing against a bucket list -- if you have 'em, that's great! I just can't keep track of the thing. But to be motivated by something I think is really important -- to have vision and goals and things you want to

accomplish. Again, to be not driven in life, I think is to be pathetic. It's terrible. I can't imagine living that way. And so, when I look at Paul, that's why I said, Colossians chapter 1, verse 28, is one of my favorite texts in all of the Bible, when Paul says, "We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. And to this end, I labor and struggle with all of the energy that God gives me." That thing gets me out of bed! It does. When COVID drives me nuts and politics makes me mad, I come back to this text. Because it refocuses me. And so, Paul now moves to a point and he wrestles with this question -- what's driving me? Now, Paul is the same one who wrote in Colossians later, he says, "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." So, absolutely, the Apostle Paul would tell you that the glory of God is the single most important factor in his life. But when it comes to the issue of ambition and drive and focus -- more specifically, under the glory of God, what is it?

Verse 2 -- "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart, united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God." What is at the center of Paul's drive? People. And what I think he suggests is this, that the quality of our lives comes down to the quality of our relationships. When it's all said and done for the Apostle Paul, the quality of his life comes down to what? People. The people that he pours his life into and the quality of their life. And he identifies three things, three critical things that if you center people that they need that will make their life significant, that they actually need. Not out of sinfulness, but they need. Every day. The people sitting next to you right now, they need it. The people you're going to go home with tonight, if you live with folks -- they need it. The people you're going to have in class tomorrow, they need it. The people that you're going to teach with, they need it. The people you're going to police with, they need it. What? Number one -- they need to be encouraged. It's not an easy place to live in the world. Not just because of COVID. You could say this 20 years ago. You could say it 50 years ago. People need to be encouraged. That's what Paul said. You could say it 2000 years ago. He said, "My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart." Why? Because they need it. It's easy to get discouraged in heart. It's easy to get downtrodden. It's easy to get frustrated. In his book, *Winning Life's Toughest Battles*, Segal said that daily conversations are actually counseling sessions giving hope and assurance, or reassurance. And he identifies two things that I think people need every day in this idea of encouragement. Two things that people need every day, and without it, they don't live. It's as essential, if you will, as air. They need hope. If they don't have hope, they don't have a future. When a person doesn't have hope, they get very damaging to their own life.

When I was in Africa, and I was traveling through Africa, I began to look at people in Mozambique that didn't have a future. Didn't matter how they lived, their average lifespan at the time when I was there was about 40, and it didn't matter really how they were going to live. And whether they lived good or bad in terms of their overall health, their lifespan was about 40. And when that's the case, it doesn't matter -- I realized at the time that much of the way we live and how we do things is because we have the hope of a future. We take Vitamin D -- why? Because it allows us to live better and longer. You take Vitamin E oil, and you take Vitamin C, and all of the things you do is taken -- why? -- because you believe you can prolong life. What you're doing is instilling the hope of longer life. You intrinsically know, I want hope. People need hope. They do. Paul understands -- if the quality of the people that I'm going to invest in, and they're going to live well, then I have to own my responsibility. I don't have the -- kind of the ownership of their life, but the reality is, Paul says, "My purpose is to encourage them. To give them hope." It's a discouraging world that we live in. It can be. It's uncertain. Everyone's got these dire predictions. If Trump wins, we're gonna have riots in the street. If Biden wins, then we're gonna have riots in the street. Wow, hallelujah! If this person wins, man, the stock market's gonna crash. If this person wins -- and they all, you know, on the news -- I mean, by and large, they go home every night and say, How can I say things just to scare people to death? People need hope.

I've been so utterly delighted in Jonah. So amazed at God to take this recalcitrant pastor, this unwilling spokesman for God. This individual who has not a care in the world for anyone, not even really himself. When the whole ocean is going upside down, he goes down into the bowels of this ship and goes to sleep. How indifferent. The poor sailors up on top -- they're all God-fearers, but that's at best, maybe. Throwing things over the edge, trying to live, trying to survive, doing everything they can. Caring, having some care and concern for Jonah. And yet, not going to survive. And what does God do? He exposes His little rebellious pastor. He gets him over the edge into the water just where He wants him. Puts him in a whale. You say, Ah, I don't believe that garbage! I'm with E.V. Hill. You haven't seen all of God's fish. God can find a fish. And He got him just where He wanted him. And you know what my thought was? You know what? If God can take a reluctant pastor and get him to a really barbaric group of people and get them to confess and trust God, Washington DC is a cakewalk for Him. Amen?

See, people need hope. They don't need to be told how bad it is -- they need to be reminded of how strong God is, how masterful He is, how wonderful He is, how gracious He is, how persistent He is. That's what Paul said. The purpose of your life, my friends, is to cast a vision every day for the worried people in this world of how glorious their God is. They need hope, and they also need reassurance. That's what Segal said, every day -- in his book, *Winning Life's Toughest Battles* -- they need hope and they need reassurance. They need to hear the words that Muriel Anderson heard from her dad when she was writing an assignment when she was in the fifth grade, and she was asked by the teacher, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" She goes, "I'd like to be an author." And the teacher said, "You can barely write! You're not that good." And she goes home and tells her dad, and he gives her, as she said, the four most important words that he gave her. "Of course you can, honey. Of course you can." And she began to believe it. And every day he would remind her -- "Oh, Muriel -- yes you can. Of course you can. Yes, you can do it. You can make it."

When I was studying under Dr. Crabb one time -- it was a year-long course with him, and he would lecture in the morning and then counsel in the afternoon. We got to watch him in the afternoon. And he was counseling this lady, and one time he paused for a moment, and he was interviewing her, and he asked her this question, "Do you remember what it was that I said that helped you become convinced that, you know, and gave you the insight?" And she goes, "Yeah, I do. I remember actually very vividly the day that I turned the corner." And Dr. Crabb told us later, he goes, "I was waiting for this phenomenal insight that I'd given her." And she turned to him, and she goes, "Dr. Crabb, you put your hand on my shoulder, and you looked me in the eyes, and you said, 'You're gonna make it.'" And he said to the class, "That's all it was?" Yeah. "You're gonna make it." Sometimes, like Joseph Bayley, who wrote the book *The View From a Hearse*, after he had done the fifth funeral in his family, he said, "I've walked into the raging waters of the Jordan and I have touched bottom." Sometimes it's a person who has walked into the raging waters of the Jordan, they've gone through the tumultuous path of death, and they look back and they see a struggling saint, and they say to them, with the confidence of one who has walked that path, "You're gonna make it. Oh yes, you can."

See, Paul says that the quality of your life is measured by the quality of those whom you encourage. They need hope. They need encouragement. And secondly, he says, "I promote unity among the ranks. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love." There's a lot of things that unite people. Might surprise you, but do you remember the day that we were united with the USSR? I know today we're not. They're spying on us, and they're doing all kinds of things to our elections, but there was a day that we were united with them. Do you remember what united us? We hated Hitler. Oh yes, we were absolutely locked step with the USSR! We were their friends, and we trusted them, and they trusted us! Why? Because we had a common enemy that we hated. But I guarantee you, friends, if you trust hatred as your unifying theme, it will give way. It will. It won't

hold you together. There's a lot of churches that unite over hatred and something they're against, something that they're going to dismantle. But the reality is, hatred, whether it be from countries, from Christian organizations -- candidly, even people -- hatred will never keep you together. What you're going to destroy will never keep you together. What you will dismantle will never keep you together. What does Paul say? United in love. Jesus is the one who prayed, "Father, may they be one just like you and I are one." Do you think that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit get together and say, "What can we destroy today?" Do you think that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit link arms together and say, "Ah, what can we dismantle? What can we destroy? What are we against?" No. "Father, may they be one just like you and I are one." "May they have an affection for each other just like we have an affection for each other." That's what Paul said. "I want to promote that, I want to build that. I want to build that into their hearts." Unity and love go hand in hand. It does. And if your unity is built upon the precarious nature of destruction, what you're against, it won't sustain you. If your unity is built upon something that is rigid, it won't sustain you. If it's built upon love, oh, it will. If it's built upon an interdependence, something of an intertwined strength, oh, it will strengthen you. Romans chapter 12, verse 5 and following talks about an interdependence. We belong to each other. I love aspen groves. Oftentimes because you'll see a score of aspen together, and they will tell you that it's probably or more likely than not one tree system. I didn't know this until I began to study them, but redwoods are in some ways the same way. They're not one tree system, but redwoods -- they can oftentimes get to be the height of 300 feet -- have some of the shallowest root systems for trees.

I'm always a little frightened at my house. We have some oak trees. They're huge. Some of the guys in our church that know trees have told me they probably are in the vicinity of 225, 250 years. I'm fine with it. I have nothing against age. 'Til the wind blows. And then, I look at those things and I think, how close are those.... And one time we had a really just wicked windstorm, and I moved my truck. I thought, you know, if it comes down -- I really don't want to hassle with that to get another truck. They're big! They scare me. They are 300 feet in the air. Their root systems they say are as large under the ground as what I see above the ground, and they go down deep. Not redwoods! They just travel along the surface of the ground. So, what gives them their strength? They intertwine their roots with each other. They share their strength with each other. Interestingly enough, those closest to water share with those furthest from water. It's almost like God wants us to have a picture of the body of Christ. You see, that's the unity that He wants to see here. To be quite honest with you, there's a sense of which we're all weak. Not because we're shallow people, but our root system's really not all that deep. We're not meant to be stand-alone people. We're meant to be intertwined. We're not meant to have to go it all alone. We're meant to be a hand connected to the arm connected to the eye. We're meant to be interdependent, and to need each other. And when we're intertwined, we're strong. That's what Paul says I want to build in. Why? "Because I want to promote unity, because that's what builds you." And one of the things that we're going to have to redevelop in this era is the ability to trust each other. Because we've been divided over so many things in the last six months. The ability to welcome each other into our hearts because we have fought over so much. And so, Paul says, "My friends, my purpose is to develop the quality of our lives -- by encouraging you. By promoting unity. And by building strength." He says at the end of this, "in whom are hidden all the treasures and the wisdom of knowledge. And I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you and delight to see how orderly and how firm your faith is." What's his goal? To encourage them. To promote their unity and to strengthen their faith. How does he do that? To build it upon the Word of God. To make them strong. To make them able to withstand those false teachings that come along the way. "I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments."

Over the years, I've seen some of those. I've seen a lot of those, actually. Number of years ago, there was a movement that was happening in India. And people called, "Pastor, there is a work of God in India and if we don't get involved in it, we're not going to be a part of the greatest work of God. We need to send money." I'm always hesitate to use God's money, the church's money, to invest in people I don't know. Oh, but it started spreading across the evangelical framework, and it was going to be something that swept India. Time came and went, and we found out that it wasn't a great work of God. It was a hoax. But it stripped the body of Christ of millions.

There was another one that came. Ah, I'll tell you -- we were in a building program in the church that I was in, and -- "Oh, Pastor, this is going to finish the building program. We're going to be able to build something far more. If we just take this amount of money -- Focus On The Family pastor has done it, Young Life has done it -- we've got to do it! And it is going to be the most incredible thing! All we have to do is take \$250,000, and it's going to turn into a million dollars, Pastor, if we do it! But we've got to do it now!" I was hesitant. But I tell you, when you hear Focus On The Family's done it, and when you hear Young Life's done it -- you kinda feel like if you don't do it, you're kind of an idiot! But man, I had that check in your spirit. I'm in Utah. I'm sitting in a hotel room getting ready to speak the next day -- and the news breaks out. It's a Ponzi scheme. Hundreds of organizations have been scammed. Pastors discredited, some go to jail. I could go for hours of the things that we and the body of Christ have seen. Paul understood. He didn't want to turn us into a bunch of cynics. He didn't want to turn us into a bunch of skeptics. But he did understand that there would be a lot of deception that would come down the pike. And John Wesley understood that there have to be some criteria of test, and so, John Wesley knew that there had to be the test of scripture. Does what you're hearing stand up against the Word of God? Does what you're hearing stand up against the test of church history, orthodoxy? Does this new phenomenal insight that you're hearing, does it have a ring of orthodoxy against what the church has preached and taught for 2000 years? And does it come up against the test of reason? Does it make sense? And Wesley said, if it doesn't pass all three of those, most notably number one -- be suspicious. Be patient. Why? Because one of the gifts that Paul wanted to build into people was what? Discernment. And the quality of the relationships that he wanted to build were people who were encouraged in heart, unified in love, but wise as serpents. Let me tell you what -- those people endure. They make it. The quality of our lives comes down to the quality of our relationships. And when you build those kind of people, they endure. They do. They endure through COVID. They endure through rough political seasons. They endure through these times when the church gets a little prickly and times get hard, and they are hard right now. But my friends, when you get up in the morning, you're going to have to ask yourself the question -- Paul did every day -- what drives me? And I've got news for you. I have no idea how long this craziness is going to last. But the purpose that I live with every day hasn't changed. A year ago, my purpose was the same. To build into the lives of people that they might be encouraged in heart, strengthened in love, secure in their faith. And that assignment hasn't changed. And my friend, I want to commend it to you. That's your assignment. What's driving you?

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