

The Apostle Paul began his letter to the Colossians by clarifying the choice that was before them. They could choose a path of pride that the false teacher offered, or remain in the abundance of what they had in Christ.

Paul used the words “fullness, mystery, wisdom, and knowledge” and applied them to Jesus which by contrast showed the false teacher’s use of the words to be a lie. By speaking of the glory of Jesus, Paul was showing how vain the false teacher’s ideas really were. Those ideas fell far short of what we have in Jesus.

Paul ended the last chapter describing his God given mission. (1:28) He was the apostle to the Gentiles, the revealer of the mystery of how God had made Jew and Gentile one by faith in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:13-16) **The life of Christ in the believer was the mystery that had been hidden for ages.** (1:27) Looking back through the pages of Scripture, it became clear that the rules and ceremony of the Law were to prepare us for the coming of the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Law. (Matthew 5:17) The emphasis of Paul’s message is that access to God is through the work of Jesus, not obedience to the Law. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Our obedience to the spirit of the law is a result of the life of Christ in us. If the life of Christ is in us, we have a sure hope of being in glory with Jesus.

Chapter two continues with Paul’s mission in relationship to the Colossian church. He continues, *1 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 wanted them to know that they were on his heart. Though they had never met him, he was their spiritual grandfather. He knew how precarious this new church was, how vulnerable they were to false teaching. He also knew how important these locations were to the future spread of the Gospel. So not only for their sake but also for all those who would hear the good news through them, he entered into a great contest. That is a literal translation. We get our word “agony” from the Greek word that is used here for contest or struggle.

There are a number of ideas as to what the struggle was in regards to. It was for the church in Laodicea and Colossae. My opinion is that this is the struggle he referred to earlier and in the following verse, the prayer that they be filled with the knowledge of God’s will and empowered to face their circumstances and relationships with the power of God’s glory. Specifically, he was praying that they not succumb to the false teaching, but instead increase in the true knowledge of God. (1:25)

**Commented [Paul1]: Colossians 1:28 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

**Commented [Paul2]: Ephesians 2:13-16 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.  
<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility  
<sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,  
<sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. .

**Commented [Paul3]: Colossians 1:27 (ESV)**  
<sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**Commented [Paul4]:**

**Commented [Paul5]: Matthew 5:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

**Commented [Paul6]: Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,  
<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**Commented [Paul7]: Colossians 1:25 (ESV)**  
<sup>25</sup> of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

This kind of laboring in prayer is something we usually think of as the work of specially called people like prayer warriors or intercessors. Certainly, some people have a gift of really entering into prayer. In chapter 4 verse 2, Paul will encourage the whole church to continue steadfastly in prayer and to be watchful in it. He's inviting all believers to enter into serious times of prayer, to join in the struggle for the advancement of the kingdom of God. We have the opportunity to practice this every day.

**Commented [Paul8]: Colossians 4:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

The next verse tells us the specifics of the prayer to attain that end. *<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,* We can add this to our prayer that we took up several weeks ago. Every church needs to have divine encouragement of the heart. It is easy to become discouraged, with our own failures, with people who leave the fellowship, with the conflicts that arise in the church because of differences. Is there any one of us that have not been discouraged at one time or another because the church is made up of fallible humans who are not yet perfected?

How many people do you know that no longer attend a church because they became discouraged over the way people act or decisions that were made? And so rather than face the pain and endure until God is glorified, they withdraw from fellowship. They decide to ignore the command to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. (Hebrews 10:25) Perhaps the Lord will use you to encourage them back into fellowship.

**Commented [Paul9]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

You can see why Paul prayed that their hearts be encouraged. Amen? Shall we add this to our prayer, that God encourage our hearts? I think every believer needs this prayer! (1Thessalonians 5:11)

**Commented [Paul10]: 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

He goes on to pray that their hearts be knit together in love. One thing that can keep us from being discouraged and forsaking worshipping together is to be knit together in love. That is what we are endeavoring to do through Ida's Dinner 6. We need to get to know and love one another. When our hearts become knit together in love, we will endure little differences and offenses and work through them until God is glorified. That is the word we learned in chapter one verse eleven, *makrothumia*. (Colossians 1:11) Understanding the fullness of the Greek terms helps us to see how these prayers of Paul all fit together.

**Commented [Paul11]: Colossians 1:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,

That word reminds me of the martyr of Cali, Columbia, Julio Ruibal. He quit attending a pastors' gathering because someone offended him. The Lord convicted him with the phrase, "Refuse to be offended." He went back to the meeting and repented, seeking forgiveness from the group. Out of that humility and obedience came revival to the entire city. It so affected the drug trafficking that the drug lords had Julio assassinated, but it was too late. His message and example had transformed the city. He learned the

depths of *makrothumia*, of hearts being knit together in love and patience that overlooks faults.

This encouragement and knitting of the hearts was *to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery*, The false teacher offered mysteries, secret wisdom, and a way to please God through works, but it was a lie. Paul is saying the path to the greatest mystery, and true wisdom, and really pleasing God is found in Christ through being encouraged and knit together in love and the unity of salvation.

It isn't found through keeping men's rules or secret wisdom. To reach the riches of full assurance we must continue in fellowship, allowing God to encourage our hearts, knitting them together in love. It's life in the body of Christ! "The one mark which distinguishes a true Church is love for God and for the brethren. When love dies, the Church dies." When we go Lone Ranger, we fail to reach the riches that are ours in Christ. If the church is the body of Christ, how are we supposed to know the fullness of Christ without being with His body? (Acts 20:7)

It's in the endurance through trials that we really grow together, whether friends, couples, or a church body. The trials are inevitable and they either make us stronger and more united or we give up on obedience to God and go our own way not realizing the easy way is the way of great loss.

*...God's mystery, which is Christ,<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* The end of verse two is usually watered down in most translations. The Greek literally reads, (του μυστηριου του Θεου Χριστου) "the mystery, the God Christ!" But that so clearly says Jesus is God that it must not be the intended meaning, right? Why not? I think it means what was written in the earliest manuscripts! I wish man would quit trying to make it fit their theories and just read it as is! That's when we get fed and grow spiritually. **The Bible is meant to transform our thinking. Our thinking isn't supposed to transform the Bible!** (Colossians 3:10)

The hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not for an elite few but available to all who will come to Christ. (1Corinthians 2:10; Isaiah 45:3) Through the ages the spiritual seeker wondered how they could be made right with God. The Jew wondered at Abraham being justified by faith (Genesis 15:6), and at David counting himself blessed for having his sins covered (Psalm 32:1). They knew sin was serious and required blood, but they also knew God was not satisfied with the blood of bulls and goats that were offered in sacrifice. (Hebrews 10:4) The mystery all came together in Jesus who was the Lamb of God who would die in our place. (John 1:29) That was the mystery, the plan of God from the beginning.

**Commented [Paul12]:** Barclay commentary on Col 2:3

**Commented [Paul13]:** Acts 20:7 (ESV)  
<sup>7</sup> On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

**Commented [Paul14]:** Colossians 3:10 (ESV)  
<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

**Commented [Paul15]:** 1 Corinthians 2:10 (ESV)  
<sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

**Commented [Paul16]:** Isaiah 45:3 (ESV)  
<sup>3</sup> I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

**Commented [Paul17]:** Genesis 15:6 (ESV)  
<sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

**Commented [Paul18]:** Psalm 32:1 (ESV)  
<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

**Commented [Paul19]:** Hebrews 10:4 (ESV)  
<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

**Commented [Paul20]:** John 1:29 (ESV)  
<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

There are three Greek words for wisdom in verses two and three. In verse 3 we are to be encouraged and united in love and understanding. Understanding is described as critical knowledge, in other words discerning what to do in a given situation. We understood the mystery, the plan of salvation which is one of our main uniting factors. That leads us to discover in Christ the other two words, wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom is to confirm and commend the truth with wise and intelligent argument. Knowledge is the instinctive power to grasp the truth when we hear it. Put these together and you have a church that discerns the will of God intellectually and then finds in Christ spiritual wisdom and then understands how to respond. This is what we have in Christ, every kind of wisdom that we need for a life that honors God. (1:9-10)

Paul is really confronting the false teacher's doctrine head on. He is contradicting him in the strongest possible way. The false teacher offered the treasures to a select few. What kind of a God would that represent? It would be an unloving and bigoted god at best. But Jesus' arms are open to all who will come to Him. (Matthew 11:28-30) He freely gives them those treasures, the ability to discern the will of God intellectually and spiritually, and understanding how to proceed. That represents the God that loves the world. (Proverbs 2:3-6)

*<sup>4</sup> I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.* Paul was so clear about what was needed to help them deal with the slick talkers. We can't out argue people into faith, but we can point them to the God Christ! It is a personal encounter with Him and the forgiveness of sin that no argument can ever overcome. We know what happened in our heart. We find a deeper wisdom in Him. We know our desires have changed.

The words "persuasive arguments" in this verse were used for lawyers whose gift of rhetoric allowed the guilty to go free. Know Christ and let Him strengthen you, be filled with the wisdom that is hidden in Him, and you won't be deluded.

*<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.* Paul was not present in some esoteric sense. He means it just the same way we would mean it today. "I am with you in spirit." It means my heart is there. (1Corinthians 5:3)

He next told them what it was about their fellowship that caused him to rejoice, their good order and firmness in their faith in Christ. These were two military terms. Good order is (*taxís*) an ordered military arrangement. (1Corinthians 14:40) Those who despise structure need to consider the term and its defense against false teaching. Though there is equality in the church, there is also order, structure, and authority. Each person has a role without which there is a weakness.

**Commented [Paul21]: Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,  
<sup>10</sup> so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

**Commented [Paul22]: Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  
<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Commented [Paul23]: Proverbs 2:3-6 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,  
<sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,  
<sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.  
<sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

**Commented [Paul24]: 1 Corinthians 5:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

**Commented [Paul25]: 1 Corinthians 14:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> But all things should be done decently and in order.

**Firm in the faith (*stereoma*) is the term for an immovable phalanx.** They were trained to take a position and hold it with each man holding a square meter of ground, side by side. (1Peter 5:9) These military terms are applicable to the spiritual battle they were facing. Each person had a role and is aided by all the others. Any loss is a costly one. Paul wanted them to see themselves as spiritual soldiers of the kingdom of God under attack from a spiritual force.

**Commented [Paul26]: 1 Peter 5:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

I believe the Spirit wants us to see how important each of us are in encouraging others and aiding one another spiritually with prayer, fortitude, and loving concern.

In these verses we have the description of a healthy church. First, there are those who pray for the church. We need the power of prayer to withstand the spiritual attacks all churches face on a regular basis. Some of you have taken up that call to pray for the service each Sunday in the prayer room. If you feel led to participate in that, see Lara Snider who is coordinating that effort. We will have 24 hours of prayer a week from Tuesday. We are all praying the prayer from chapter one and can add some of these points from the passage today to that prayer. Prayer is the unseen power behind all we do!

We need to be encouraged. The author of Hebrews suggested that we encourage one another more and more. (Hebrews 10:25) We need to pray that all our hearts be encouraged in our faith. **Look for opportunities to encourage fellow believers.** Write a note or an email. Give a phone call and offer a prayer for them to have a day of walking with Jesus in victory.

**Commented [Paul27]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**  
<sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**We need to focus on being knit together in love.** Some worry about the church being too inward focused. In our world, the tendency is to be isolated and self-absorbed. If we don't love one another, how can that love overflow to the community? (Romans 12:10) People should be drawn from the world into the family of God because of the love the church enjoys. This is our focus this year, to be knit together in love for one another that others might know we are truly Jesus' disciples. (John 13:35)

**Commented [Paul28]: Romans 12:10 (ESV)**  
<sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

**Commented [Paul29]: John 13:35 (ESV)**  
<sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

As we encourage one another and knit our hearts in love, we access the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Christ. That is, the ability to discern the will of God intellectually and spiritually, and understand how to proceed in a way that will glorify God.

Finally, we need to see that we are in a spiritual war and continue to maintain order within the church. We need to hold our position, side by side understanding that our spiritual success or failure affects those around us. We need one another! A healthy church isn't a perfect church, for there are no perfect churches. **A healthy church is a**

church that refuses to be offended, that loves and prays for one another, and plumbs the riches of the wisdom in Christ. Ministry will naturally flow from that kind of church.

We are a family and like the family in Colossae, our success or failure will affect not just us, but those in the future who would hear the Gospel because of the faithfulness of this church. It's about bringing glory to Jesus, our Savior and King and living a life that is worthy of Him, not to earn heaven but in response for all He has done for us!

#### Questions

- 1 What was Paul's struggle?
- 2 Who should heed Colossians 4:1?
- 3 What are we adding to our prayer?
- 4 What is the testimony of Julio Ruibal?
- 5 What is the result of being knit together in love?
- 6 What are the three kinds of knowledge?
- 7 How does verse 2 end?
- 8 How can we prepare for slick arguments?
- 9 What two military terms did Paul apply to the Colossian church? Application?