



COLOSSIANS

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...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, Colossians 2:2

In saying "their hearts," Paul is speaking of those who had not yet seen his face in the flesh from the previous verse. The conflict he had was for them in order that their hearts may be encouraged. As noted in the previous verse, Paul's conflict was certainly a spiritual one, and in that conflict, he had striven to bring them to a point where they would be content while facing trials and troubles of their own. This was something that was (and still is to this day) expected. Being in Christ does not mean freedom from troubles. Rather, it often means facing even greater troubles. But Paul desired that they would be encouraged through them.

One way for this to happen would be for them to be "knit together in love." A unified body is a body which can support one another through times of trial. Add in love, and it is a source of great comfort and even joy. Facing trials alone can be miserable, but when facing them with others, there is strength and resolve which is often otherwise lacking. Paul prayed for this to be the case among them.

However, he desired more. He also wished for them to attain "to all riches of the full assurance of understanding." These words look forward to the coming words as the object for which they should be encouraged and knit together. The riches are what are contained in the object to be mentioned, the "full assurance" is the benefit of having those riches, and the "understanding" is what make the other two possible. In understanding what he will mention, there will be full assurance, and the riches will be fully obtained. And so, he next relays what he is referring to with the words, "...to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ."

"The knowledge of the mystery of God" is that which has been revealed. A mystery is something once hidden, but now known. The "mystery of God" which Paul speaks of here is that "both of the Father and of Christ." The word "Father" is not included in many manuscripts, and thus is lacking in most translations. Regardless of this, What Paul is speaking of is what will be explained in verses 2:8 and 2:9. The mystery is that Christ Jesus reveals the unseen God to

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us. He is a member of the Godhead, and in him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. This is the mystery which Paul is speaking of, and which he desires his readers to know and to understand. In so doing, They will possess the riches and have full assurance of their faith.

Life application: Paul's words always lead the reader to Christ Jesus. He is the focal point of the Christian faith. Without Him, God is not fully knowable, but in understanding Christ, we can then understand God in a full and intimate way which brings us joy, and which also makes possible a personal relationship with our Creator. Let us follow the admonition of Scripture and fix our eyes and our thoughts on Jesus.

...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3

The order of the Greek is, "...in whom are all the treasures the wisdom and knowledge hidden." The "in whom" is speaking of Christ, not the mystery, of the preceding verse. Christ is the nearer antecedent, and therefore it is identifying Him as the repository. In him are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The reason for introducing the thought will be seen in the coming verse. Paul is now identifying the true Source of everything which deals with true wisdom and knowledge. "Wisdom" is referring to that which is general in nature, such as the need for salvation. It is from this general body that comes understanding. And so understanding is that which is specific and which deals with the intellect after it has applied wisdom. Hence it embodies doctrinal matters. As the need for salvation is general, the way to be saved is specific. In Christ are also found the specific answers to such general things. In Him are found all things necessary in order to be fully knowledgeable about that which we need in order to be complete in our walk with God.

If we think through what we are being told, then it becomes obvious that if there is a need to be saved, and that God wants us to be saved, then He would provide that knowledge to us through the repository of that knowledge. This is the purpose of the Bible, which is the word of God, coming from the Word (meaning Christ) of God. There is nothing lacking in what we need in order to be saved, and in order to continue our walk in that state of salvation, so that we can be pleasing to Him.

Life application: We do not need a secret wisdom which only a few enlightened people can impart to us. What we need is to get our noses into the Bible and to discover Christ Jesus. In Him we have all that is necessary to be reconciled to God, and to be pleasing to Him in that state of having been reconciled.

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Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. Colossians 2:4

This verse explains the reason why Paul specifically stated these words concerning Christ Jesus in the previous verse – “...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” In Christ, and thus in the word which He has given to us, we find the true and accurate revelation of wisdom and knowledge. Whatever we need to know about Christ, the Godhead, salvation, our relationship with God, and so forth, will logically be revealed to us by Christ Jesus and not by someone claiming they have a special, insightful knowledge that only he possesses. In saying that the Bible is revealed by Christ, one understands the Bible to be that necessary revelation, given to us by the Holy Spirit, also known as the “Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9).

Therefore, Paul says, “Now this I say.” As an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and as the Apostle to the Gentiles, his words are guided by the Spirit and are thus authoritative. In contrast to that certainty, he continues with, “lest anyone.” Anyone means anyone. There are the true apostles, and then there are those who will come contradicting them, or claiming extra revelation beyond them. And such has been the case for 2000 years. There has been a stream of false teachers and false prophets since the beginning. This is certain, because Paul’s words are given to refute such people. This means they were there even at the beginning. And they have been steadily making up crazy things ever since.

The words “should deceive” are from a Greek word used only here and in James 1:22. They give the sense of reasoning contrary to the truth in a misleading or erroneous way. These people use words which seem plausible, but will later disappoint. There is no true substance behind them. The “persuasive words” are from a Greek word found only here in the Bible. They indicate words which beguile. People have the ability to weave words together which sound reasonable and persuasive, but they actually only lead the hearers down paths which oppose a sound walk with Christ.

A perfect modern day example would be a heretic who teaches dual-covenantalism. One of the leading proponents of this false doctrine is an excellent orator, speaking words which are powerful and full of deep emotion over the subject he speaks. And yet, his words form arguments which are often not grounded in Scripture, and are even contrary to Scripture. However, because of the powerful presentation of his words; and because of them being mixed with occasional truth from Scripture which are combined with conservative emotions of national pride, as well as pride in the people of Israel, his sermons are accepted as wholly truthful. But when analyzed apart from the eloquent oration, what he states often forms unsound non-biblical messages.

The list of people like this, especially in more modern times where their writings are available, is long, and it grows longer by the day. We must be careful never to get caught up in being deceived by persuasive words, but all things must be compared to Scripture.

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Life application: Do you truly measure the words of the teachers you listen to against Scripture, or do you just take their instruction at face value because their arguments sound correct? First, never take any commentary concerning God's word at face value, but rather check it out against His word. And secondly, how can you check out an analysis of God's word against what His word actually says unless you know enough of it to make the check? Know your Bible!