

Paul's Ministry Goal

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[0 : 00] Colossians chapter 2.

Colossians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. We're going to read verse 1 through verse 5 this morning. And here is the word of the Lord. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so that, I say this, so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

For even though I am absent in the body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline, and the stability of your faith in Christ.

Now, this is classic Paul the Apostle, writing something very dense, writing something that on the first reading kind of makes you go like, what?

And so I want to kind of lay out for you the structure of the passage before I start into the sermon proper. What he's doing is he's got four things that he does in this passage, or that he says that he's doing, and he does it for two purposes.

[1 : 57] That's how the passage is sort of structured. Let me just briefly go over the four things he does. You'll see in verse one, he says, I want you to know. That's the first thing he does, is he desires.

He desires, he wishes, he wants, he wills, and he wants them to know something. Okay? The second thing he does, is he talks about this struggle that he has.

I struggle on your behalf. Now, this struggle is the idea of a fight. It's the idea of a conflict. Okay? So he's in conflict on behalf of, the Colossians, the Laodiceans, that's two different churches, and all those who have personally not seen my face.

That would be you. That would be me. This struggle that Paul the Apostle's talking about right here is a struggle for all of us as believers, as Christians, and it is a struggle for ministry.

That's what he's talking about. He wouldn't be talking about, I'm struggling to pay my taxes. He wouldn't be talking about, I'm struggling with my kids. They're misbehaving. He's talking about the struggle, the fight of faith that he's living.

[3 : 10] He is one who is an apostle of Christ. And you'll remember, only 13 apostles of Christ have ever existed, and no one else, because you must have been with them since the baptism of Jesus, all the way through the ascension of Jesus, and you must have visibly seen Jesus rise, risen with your own eyes.

Paul the Apostle was one untimely born, and so he saw Jesus after his resurrection, after his ascension, so he's an apostle of Christ. Therefore, he is giving to us revelation from God, which we call the Scriptures.

So that's his struggle. The third thing that he does, he says that it's down in verse 4, he says, I say this to you so that no one will delude you.

In other words, I'm giving you a warning, because there's such a thing as persuasive argument.

Now, this persuasive argument doesn't mean that it's a right, good, and logical argument.

This has to do with rhetorical force. Do you know what I mean by rhetorical force? Let me tell you what I mean by rhetorical force. If I were to tell you, listen, you don't need to jump off the building, right?

[4 : 24] I know you're up there, and you think you can jump off the building, but you can't, because listen, here's the facts about the human body, here's the facts about gravity, and when the ground and the human body meet because of gravity, bad things happen.

I'm lining out for you all the logic. That's one way to persuade and give arguments. Another way would be to look at you and say, don't jump off that building!

That's a terrible idea! Rhetorical force has to do with how you say something instead of the content of what you say. So Paul is warning them, because he doesn't want them to be persuaded by people with rhetorical force, because all these false teachers are coming in, and they have all kinds of manipulative ways to try to capture people's minds and attentions.

So what he's telling them in this passage, his aim with them, helps them to be able to fight against the false doctrine that they're hearing. And then the fourth thing that Paul does is right there in verse 5.

He talks about being absent in the body. In other words, he doesn't see them, but he's there with them in spirit. He's just saying, I'm with you. I love you. I'm for you. I want good things for you.

[5 : 43] And he says, I'm rejoicing. I'm rejoicing. What is he rejoicing in? He's rejoicing in your good discipline and stability in the faith.

Their pastor came to Paul and said, Paul, I've got false teachers all over the place, and the people are beginning to believe these things. And listen, these are good people.

Their lives are well ordered. You've got families that the Scripture orders their lives, and you've got all kinds of things where they're ordering their life by the Word of God, and they're stable in the faith, and I'm afraid that they're going to be hoodwinked.

And so Paul says, listen, I rejoice that things are going good for you, but I don't want you to be deluded. And so you need to know about the struggle that I'm having for you so that two things can happen for you.

Does that make sense? Okay, well, good. Because if it doesn't, nothing else I'm going to say is going to make sense to you. So if not, you'll have to go back and listen to this.

[6 : 47] So Paul then puts forward two goals, two purposes, two things that he wants to see developed in the Colossians, Laodiceans, and everybody who has not seen his face personally.

And the two things that he wants to see developed in their lives are unity in love, knowledge of Christ. So let's talk about this unity in love.

Unity in love. First of all, let's talk about unity's foundation. What is the foundation to unity within the body of Christ?

What is the foundation of unity within the body of Christ? It starts with the ministry of the word of God saturating the inner man.

What do I mean by that? Well, let's take a look at this. In verse two, it talks about hearts, being encouraged in their hearts, right? That their hearts might be encouraged.

[7 : 47] The word heart in the Bible is the inner person. It's the center of the personality. It's not the blood pumping organ.

It's not the place of emotion. But instead, the heart is the control center of the life. It's maybe what we might think of as the mind, right?

The Bible tells us that we live out of our hearts, that we pray from the heart, that we can sing from the heart, that we can love from the heart, that we can think with our hearts, that we can worship from our hearts, that we can meditate in our hearts, that we can act out of our hearts, we can even sin out of our hearts.

The heart is the control center of the human person. And so what he's saying is he wants them to be encouraged in this control center.

And this word encouraged, it's the verb form of the word used for the Holy Spirit in John chapter 14, where Jesus says, I'm going to send you another comforter.

[8 : 58] This word means to call alongside. It means to comfort. It means to counsel. It means to summon. It means to encourage. It means to lift up.

And so he wants their hearts to be encouraged. Now here's what Paul is saying. He's saying that his ministry, his struggle, his struggle to produce the teachings, his struggle to get the doctrines out, the truths that he's getting from God, that he's calling upon all people to believe, his ministry struggle is for the purpose of our unity, unity, of the foundation of our unity.

Because the foundation of our unity is the ministry of the word saturating the inner man. You cannot have unity apart from the word of God.

Now let's talk then briefly about the unity's glue. What is it that we know the foundation that unity is built upon? What's the glue that holds us together?

He says, he talks about our hearts being encouraged, having been knit together. Having been knit together.

[10:11] That's kind of like, those two phrases go together and describe the heart. So not only is the heart to be encouraged, but the heart is also being knit together. The inner parts of us are being knit together with one another.

This knit together is the idea of the ligaments that connect the muscle to the bones and connect bones to bones. Like, you know, my forearm is connected to the upper arm because of all the connective tissue.

If that is not there, then, you know, well, it would look funny. So the point is, is that he's saying, yeah, all of a sudden I had the image, I just couldn't share it with you. So anyway, what he's saying is that, okay, I want you to be united, but you need to be united, founded upon scripture, founded upon the ministry of the word, the ministry of the apostle.

And then in love, you're going to be knit together like the body is knit together with all of its ligaments and all of its tendons and all the muscles and all the connective tissue. That's what he wants us to be with one another.

And it's knit together in love, or in other words, by love. Love is what brings us together. Now here's the thing. We've got to ask a question. What kind of love is Paul talking about here?

[11:26] Because he could be talking about the love of God for us, or he could be talking about the love we have for God, or he could be talking about the love we have for each other.

And the answer is yes. I think it's probably all three of those. Because you see, I can't love God except that he loved me first. And I can't love you unless God has loved me first and I love him because that is how that works.

So Paul is basically saying, Christian, my ministry struggle is for your unity. Let the word encourage you.

Let the work in you knit you together so that you can maintain your stability in the faith and not be deluded by false doctrine.

In other words, I would say it this way. Church unity brought about by both love and truth is a weapon in your life against the deceitfulness of false doctrine.

[12:37] Let's just let that sit there for a second. Church unity brought about by both love and truth is a weapon in your life against the deceitfulness of false doctrine.

We need both truth and love in order to have unity in the body of Christ. It cannot come just because of love.

It cannot come just because of truth. We must have both. Truth and love.

The truth comes in many forms. From the apostles' ministry to us it comes through what we do with the word of God whether we preach it, we teach it, we share it, we fellowship over it.

And as we understand the word we are then supposed to have love for one another and our lives be knit together in love.

[13:49] The preaching of the word should grow our love for one another. The preaching of the word accomplishes great things.

I think sometimes we fail to remember that. That's what the verse scripture video was about earlier. Psalm not Psalm Ezekiel 37 the valley of dry bones. God tells Elijah in a vision to preach over this valley of dry bones and as he does these scattered bones begin to come together and begin to get knit together and sinews cover them and flesh cover them so that they stand fleshed out bodies with no life and no breath.

and then he's to preach again to the wind and the wind comes and breathes into them the breath of life. Now this is all a vision that he's seeing and the point of the vision is that when God's word is given it's God's word that brings life and raises God's people to be an army.

That is what we need in our lives. We need that as we're going to try to stay away from false doctrine is we need the word of God as it is preached as it is taught as it is shared as it is read as it is read one to one in order to bring life to the lifelessness of our lives so that we can live the way that he's called us to live because here's the thing we face the specter of false doctrine in our lives all the time and we could go over here and we could talk about things such as the deity of Christ related to the Mormon Jehovah's Witness we could talk about justification by faith alone with the Catholic Church and how they teach it we could talk about you know whether it's justification by faith alone or you got to be baptized to be saved I mean there's all kinds of things we could talk

about and there's a lot of doctrines that other churches teach that we could get into we could get into the prosperity gospel we could talk about the false doctrine of the Joel Osteens of the world but what I want to talk about is the false doctrine that we tend to believe and that's wrapped up in our hearts because when times get rough and when things begin to be a lot of suffering that we're facing we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that God does not care and in the middle of our suffering we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that perhaps maybe God is just not capable to help us or maybe that God is not knowledgeable to help us or we can believe the false doctrine that maybe

God is just too busy and my stuff is just too unimportant for him to be bothered with it or when when I face sin in my life or sin in your life and that sin keeps damaging and ruining relationships we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that my sins are small compared to yours we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that my sins don't hurt anybody we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that my personal private life is no one else's business we're tempted to believe the false doctrine that God is uninterested in what I do Monday through Saturday so long as I show up on Sunday and it those kinds of false doctrines that the unity of the body built upon the word of

[17:26] God and the preaching and teaching and moving of the ministry of the word of God in his people that becomes then the weapon that helps us to fight against these things so that we might love one another the way we ought to Christians we need the unity that comes from the word we need that truth so that our hearts can be knit together in love I mean this is what I want you to imagine okay every Sunday right here in this moment it's not my ugly mug sitting looking at you but all of a sudden as David gets through singing and the little scripture video goes and it's over just imagine for just a moment that showing up is this Jewish man with scars right here Jesus himself glorified body coming and standing here and looking at you all and then saying things to you just imagine that for just a moment

I don't know about you but like if Jesus himself really showed up and really started speaking I'd be kind of like every word can I record it three times and watch it twelve like I mean I just need every word and I think there's not a person in here who would just is there a person in here if Jesus showed up do you think that if you started struggling to stay awake during preaching because listen preaching is a terrible thing and you fall asleep because the flesh is weak the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak and I get it okay I get it and sometimes it just happens because life and the weakness of our flesh but do you think if Jesus were here speaking do you think that if all of a sudden you started feeling sleepy that maybe you might stand up to kind of wake yourself up because you didn't want to miss anything all I'm saying to you is that if I'm rightly interpreting the scriptures if it's me if it's brother Robert Wheat or whoever stands here whoever is properly interpreting the scriptures to you just go ahead and think of it like

Jesus is here talking to you and that that is what brings us life that's what our unity is founded on so that we can love each other the way we should and this is what Paul wants for them this is what Paul wants for them and we're not going to get it if we don't saturate our life with the word of God all right let's talk about the second thing not only unity and love but knowledge of Christ okay so I want you to think about cooking for just a second this is for Jack if I were to tell you that I had this fantastic recipe for making homemade gnocchi and I was going to stand here and I was going to recite to you this recipe there are some of you who would be like oh I can't wait I'm going to take every note just go right ahead I love yeah I love gnocchi and I know how to do the because you've got skill and you've got knowledge of things that make you like yeah yeah yeah yeah some of you would be kind of like you're going to read a recipe and some of you would be like

I can't pick on Randy he's not here I was going to pick on Randy some of you would be like Randy saying skip the explanation and just fill up my plate right and so sometimes preaching can kind of be this way because I can tell you sort of the bottom line and just serve your plate and tell you what it means or I can explain why I'm saying what I'm saying it gets pretty detailed sometimes and what we're about to go through in the rest of verse 2 and 3 is kind of detailed this way so here's what I'm going to do for you because some of you some of these things I may say it may go over your head so what I want to do is I'm going to give you the bottom line I'm going to go ahead and put the food on the plate for you okay and after I do that then I'm going to give a detailed explanation and if you don't want detailed explanation you can just tune out for just a second and in just a moment I'll serve the plate again with the bottom line so you'll know that we're ready to move on okay but as you look at verse 2 and 3 okay now I'm just going to read it again before I tell you the bottom line

attaining to the all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery that is Christ himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge okay here's the bottom line the bottom line is what Paul is saying by this is that he wants us to interpret all of life through the lens of the knowledge of Jesus

Christ because you can't know anything rightly apart from Jesus he wants us to interpret all of life through the lens of the knowledge of Jesus Christ which is coming from scripture because you can't know anything rightly apart from Jesus Christ that's the bottom line now how did we get there well here's how we got there verse 2 and 3 are filled with a lot of phrases that are just strung together without any verbs verbs which makes it a little difficult because the translation I've used puts verbs in there some of them are correct some of them I don't think so but it starts back in verse 1 as Paul's ministry it he wants to accomplish something and it begins with the word to that is he wants this to also be accomplished not just the unity and the thing is is that it's to wealth it's to riches Christians have a type of riches and it is this riches that come from the full assurance or from confidence or from a conviction okay so you've got riches that come from a conviction from a full assurance and this conviction or this full assurance comes from understanding and this word understanding it's not knowledge but instead it's the old testament word for wisdom it's the old testament word for wisdom for insight it's the idea that I get knowledge and then I know how to live out that knowledge knowing how to live out that knowledge is biblical wisdom that's

[24 : 34] Daniel right if you studied Daniel with us over the last few weeks you know it's wisdom literature so he's telling us how do we live right the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord the fear of the Lord is being obedient to the Lord so that's what he's saying is that that this conviction comes from this wisdom I know how to live this out therefore I have this confidence well this wisdom or this understanding it's in the knowledge of God's mystery and this mystery of God is Christ and so with just what we have here then what we have here is we just have this idea that if we know Christ we have wisdom and from that a confidence that brings a richness to our lives but then we add verse three and in verse three Paul is taking aim at both groups of false teachers and he's telling us that in

Christ he's basically telling us what it is we know about Christ the knowledge of Christ covers what in Christ are all the treasures all the treasures everything worth knowing everything that is there to profit from everything that is there to cherish it comes from wisdom and knowledge there's your two false teachers how is that there is a group of Judaizing false teachers the things that they were teaching we don't know exactly but as we get into chapter two we see some of their thoughts coming through but they held on to wisdom they believe that they had wisdom Jesus is good but not enough come get wisdom from us and you'll be better and the Gnostics had knowledge Jesus is good but not good enough come to us we'll give you the knowledge you need to finish off your you know discipleship but what Paul says is no no no no it's not in this group or this group but both wisdom and knowledge are found in

Christ in Christ a true knowledge of Jesus Christ leads to a life full of wisdom and understanding which yields and conviction and confidence that produces a richness in the believers life so here's the bottom line Paul wants us to interpret all of life through the lens of the knowledge of Jesus Christ that's the scriptures because you can't know anything rightly apart from Jesus now let me see if I can interpret this because what this means is that it's all of life for it's all of Christ for all of life it's it's this idea that we need to interpret life through the lens of scripture what scripture says about the world what scripture says about relationships what scripture says about everything ought to be what we believe let me give you one example and this is an example and I could give you a hundred of these but I'm just going to give you one so we don't get stuck in one place and this will be controversial but I'm right alcoholism is listed as a mental health issue the world calls alcoholism a disease and yes it has devastating physical effects on a person who is that addicted to alcohol it can cause serious health problems but the Bible does not call this alcoholism and the Bible does not call it a disease the Bible calls it a sin that's the lens through which we need to look at such things when you call it a disease then you have just gutted the hope of the gospel as Christ came to die for our sins and anytime somebody is told well you just have a disease then what does Christ have to do with that what does his death have to do with that does Jesus hit well yes he does but what we're talking about is a hope that needs to be there the hope that we are okay with God and that he's okay with us beloved we need to call things what the

Bible calls them we we can't understand what it is to defend the faith if we don't understand the knowledge of Christ we can't understand what relationships are supposed to be if we don't understand Christ we can't understand finances mathematics science history anything apart from Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ if you don't know Christ you don't know anything fully rightly in this world and it gets us right back to where we've been for the last few weeks how do you know Christ you know Christ by his word I feel like a broken record player you need the word in your life you need to be in the preaching of the word you need to read the word on your own you need to read the word with one another you need to be in a Sunday school in Bible study classes you need to saturate your life with the word of God I know it's a broken record but let me tell you what I'm gonna do I will stop talking about getting the word in your life when I die fair some of you have taken up the challenge of the first John reading seven weeks some of you didn't get a chance to take that up it's okay you can grab it today and pick it up go with it run with it right but you need to be reading the Bible yourself and let me just let me just encourage you with a couple of real practical things if you're not reading the Bible right now if you're not reading it right now then here's what you need to do pick one New Testament book a gospel is what I would suggest read one chapter a day read five days a week one chapter in a day ten minutes pause long enough to ask yourself what does this teach me about the father the son or the Holy Spirit what does this teach me about his ways then ask yourself what does this teach about humanity whether it's Christians or non-Christians and then is there something I need to believe feel or do because of what I've read simple questions one chapter read it and then think about it test your knowledge test your knowledge and I guess I want to do this to kind of you know encourage you and say listen you really ought to read because what if somebody were to come up to you on the street and ask you is homosexuality a sin and if it is what where would you point to in Scripture and show them this if somebody were to ask you does the Bible have anything to say about which political party you should vote for could you answer them if somebody were to ask you does the

[32 : 38] Bible tell me which friends I should hang out with and which people make terrible friends does it give me answers to those questions if somebody were to ask you does the Bible give me directions about who I should marry or which college I should go to do you know how to answer those questions from God's Word if somebody were to ask you does the Bible have answers related to AI or aliens or Big Foot would you know how to answer those questions if not I'm not trying to browbeat you but like I'm trying to browbeat you you need to read the Word you need to be in the Word there is no substitute for being in the Word of God and this is what Paul wants he's wanting us to have a unity that comes from being in the Word knowing the truth so that our hearts are knit together in love and he wants us to be able to interpret life through the lens of Scripture therefore we need to have a knowledge of Christ because

I guarantee you there's a lot of things we've probably believed over the years about God and Jesus and Christianity and things that aren't true but it's things that we were taught things that we I can remember the one time somebody looked at me and said with all confidence that they were quoting the Bible that God helps those who help themselves that's not the Bible as Benjamin Franklin but did you know it you can you just need to read the Bible I know that there may be some who as we're talking about all these things it's kind of like I just wish you would stop talking I'm ready to go home I don't really understand the things you're saying anyway nothing's really clicking like I sort of kind of get it but not really and I mean I got to prepare for the Super Bowl you know the Cowboys aren't gonna win so oh they're not playing that's right I just I'm convinced that a person who has very little interest in the things that we're talking about of God I'm not saying that you don't that you're sitting there and you just it's like I'm saying things you don't understand I'm not talking about that but you're just sitting there you go like I really I'm really not interested like I'm okay with my life I like who I am everything's good I'm kind of convinced that there's a good chance that you might not be a Christian if you have no interest in the things of God that's really hard for me to imagine but maybe you are and so so so we just kind of test it because think about these questions right out of the Ten Commandments right have you ever told a lie if you have like I have that makes you a liar have you ever stolen anything I used to steal pens out of my teacher's desks at school when they weren't there stole a pocket knife once what does it make you makes you a thief and you know that the fact of the matter is is that it's an uncomfortable truth but

God is going to judge us by the Ten Commandments one day and if you have broken any one of them just one just one time what would be the sentence against you guilty and what's the just punishment for guilty sinners God's wrath in hell and the big question is does that bother you does that bother you about your own life as you just sit and think of it plainly and there's there's other things we can talk about but does that bother you because because it ought to because that's where we stand as humanity but the good news is that God sent his son into this world to pay our penalty and if you will turn from being the boss of your own life turn from doing things your way and follow after him he will cover you with that righteousness that Christ has that that penalty paying righteousness and you will be set free forever my prayer is that you would trust him some of you for the first time ever but the most of you you would grow in your faith in Christ let's pray