

# *CHRIST AND CHRIST ALONE*

*THE POWERFUL TRUTH OF FULL ASSURANCE*

*TRUTH WORTH FIGHTING FOR ...*



## FOR REVIEW ... (Colossians 1 ESV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 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, 10 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; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 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, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 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. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

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## OUTLINE ... (COLOSSIANS 2:1-5 ESV)

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### 1. PAUL'S RACE: The Apostle Paul gives an account of his mighty struggle/race/fight for the Colossians and Laodiceans, 2:1-3.

- (Colossians 2:1-3 ESV) 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, 2 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, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**\*\*\* "Struggle" ... Gk ... ἀγών** [agon / ag-one/] ... A place of assembly; especially an assembly met to see games; the place of contest, the arena or stadium; **generally, any struggle or contest.** [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.]

**Same word in 1:29 for "struggling" ...**

- (Colossians 1:29 ESV) For this I toil, **struggling** with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

**Same word in Hebrews 12:1 for "race" ...**

- (Hebrews 12:1 ESV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every

weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance **the race** that is set before us.

**A. HE WANTED THEM TO KNOW THAT HE WAS FIGHTING A MIGHTY BATTLE FOR THEM.**

**WHY?**

They needed to know that there was an intense battle going on between the domain of darkness and the kingdom of God's beloved Son. They needed to know that they were in the middle of this conflict; that there were no neutral positions; that not fighting was losing. To walk worthy they needed to fight. Not defending the word of the truth of the gospel was conceding ground to the false teachers.

**B. HE FOUGHT FOR THEM SO THAT THEY COULD DEFEND THEMSELVES WITH THE POWERFUL TRUTH OF FULL ASSURANCE IN CHRIST.**

- i. **He fought so that they may have strong hearts.**
- ii. **He fought so that they may grow strong together in love.**
- iii. **He fought so that they would reach the spiritual riches of complete confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ.**

**WHY?**

**So they could defend themselves.** This "full assurance" of course had implications concerning their eternal destiny—heaven or hell—but that is **definitely not the emphasis in this text.** They needed this powerful truth of full assurance so that they would not break ranks and lose love for each other and their unity of purpose. Assurance is too often "me focused" and not directed to Jesus Christ and the body of Jesus Christ—i. e. our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**2. PAUL'S REASON: They needed the powerful truth of full assurance in the sufficiency of Christ to defend themselves from false teachers, 2:4.**

- (Colossians 2:4 ESV) I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

They needed to know without a single doubt

that Christ and Christ alone was more than sufficient for their deliverance from the domain of darkness and for their ability to walk worthy in the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

The Apostle Paul gives the Colossians and Laodiceans the reason they need to understand his mighty struggle. Having full confidence that there are no other answers but "Christ and Christ alone" they can refuse and refute the delusions of the false teachers—the superficially pleasing or reasonable arguments.

**3. PAUL'S REJOICING: Paul rejoices that they are not breaking ranks, 2:5.**

- (Colossians 2:5 ESV) 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.
- (2 Corinthians 10:1–6 ESV) I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— 2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

**COMMENTARY ...**

The fine thing about this word of exhortation is the balance of it. The apostle recognizes that lasting unity depends upon truth as well as love. Christians have to be substantially of one mind as well as of one heart. That is why Paul wants all the Christians at Colossae to share that rich spiritual assurance that comes with the conviction that all the secret treasures of divine wisdom and insight are to be found in Christ. This seems to be the thrust of the

remarkable words in verses 2 and 3. **Once it is agreed among the brethren that there are no essential truths outside of Christ, and that therefore there can be no essential insights hidden from anyone who is now in Christ, it becomes possible to maintain mutual confidence and love among themselves.** [Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (pp. 82–83). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

**This powerful word, ‘deluded’, means simply that people were deceived and led astray from the right paths. The Greek word occurs in one other place in the New Testament, James 1:22, where it is used to refer to our capacity, even as Christians, to deceive ourselves.** So listeners to the new teachers might also be self-deceived, wanting to believe what they heard. Possibly, too, some of the teachers themselves were not conscious deceivers of others, but self-deceived in their turn. [Ibid. (p. 84).]

It was essential to listen to Paul’s warning in his own day: it is even more essential to heed it in our day when the arts of persuasion, and the means by which they can be exercised, are so highly developed. There is a fresh responsibility laid on Christians to examine all teaching for the truthfulness of its content rather than the attractiveness of its packaging. There is a new call to be skeptical of exaggerated rhetoric, the tendentious anecdote, or the theatrical appeal, **for nothing is so dangerous as feeble reasoning allied to fast talking.** [Ibid. (p. 84).]

**There is also a responsibility on those who preach, to follow Paul in his renunciation of the smooth talk of the salesman, or the clever one-sided presentation of the propagandist.** People’s minds are far too easily influenced by these means today. It is not that there is evil in possessing gifts of persuasiveness so long as these gifts are harnessed to, and controlled by, sound thinking. **But as our business is with truth, and with the God-given conviction that it brings, all our methods of presentation should be as frank and truthful as we can make them.** [Ibid. (p. 84).]

The Greek text has “their hearts” as the subject of the passive verb “be encouraged” (cf. NASB); the idea is captured accurately in the TNIV’s encouraged in heart. **References to the “heart” in the Bible require English speakers to “distance” themselves from their own culture.** For the strong tendency in modern English is to use heart with reference to the emotions, **whereas in Scripture “heart” designates the center of the personality, the source of willing and thinking in addition to feeling.** Hence it is a new heart that God promises in order to transform his people’s basic orientation toward himself (Ezekiel 36:26). **“Encouraged in heart” or “to have hearts encouraged” is therefore a way of referring to an encouragement that touches the deepest part of our being and that affects every aspect of our persons.** [Moo, D. J. (2008). *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (p. 165). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.]

\*\*\*\*\*MOO ... But “awkwardness” is in the eye of the beholder (or the reader), and the repetition of ideas may be emphatic rather than simply repetitious. **Paul is again piling up words in order to hammer home the truth that Christ, and Christ alone, is the source of every conceivable bit of spiritual knowledge worth having.** [Ibid. (p. 167).]

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**(Douglas Moo)**