

# LABORING FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD'S MYSTERY

(Colossians 2:1–5)

## WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO?

Paul's pastoral concern for Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and others in the Lycus valley (and for you today) is that you know that God has openly disclosed the genuine understanding of His mystery, Jesus Christ, to humanity through straightforward language rather than convincing rhetoric. Proper knowledge of Jesus through God's Word (preaching and teaching of the Bible) unifies us in love, imparts to us the riches of the full assurance of salvation, and helps present us as mature and complete before God. Therefore, Christians should not overlook the intended purpose of those who labor on their behalf preaching and teaching God's Word, which is not meant for entertainment or amusement, but to uplift and protect our hearts in a deceitful world filled with false teachings and persuasive arguments.

### 1.) The Struggle: 'I want you to know.' Paul's work for the Colossians, Laodiceans, and even us today (2:1)

- 'How much I agonize!' Paul continues from 1:29 and wants all who read his letter to know *the way in which God is working to bring them to maturity in their Christian faith*. 'I want you to know,' he says and explains it is for their good. What was it that he was doing?
- Paul prayed purposefully and intentionally without ceasing (1:9, 4:12)
- Paul preached Christ, working hard to warn and teach everyone despite how it brought him suffering (1:24).
- This hard work of preaching and praying is for *you*, and others like you, so that your hearts may be encouraged.

A great deal is at stake, and Paul's labor is a work of God. He wants all to know how God works through true servants of the Gospel like himself.

### 2.) The Purpose: A Full Understanding of the Mystery of God (2:2–3)<sup>1</sup>

- Paul explains his purpose in 1:23 and 1:28. Believers need to continue in the faith, be stable and steadfast, and not shift from the Gospel they had heard. A stable faith based upon a full understanding of Jesus leads to spiritual maturity in Christ. Not persisting in the faith, not being mature and established, poses a danger that becomes clear in Ch. 2.

### 3.) The Focus: Paul's joyful mission and the danger to avoid (2:4–5)

- God's mystery is now being joyfully proclaimed to all. He is working hard for them to know, understand, and be impacted by Christ—in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge exist. After all, Jesus is the one on whom all things depend (1:15-20). There's nothing more

important to capture our focus. As we saw in 1:27, 'Christ in you [Gentiles is] the hope of glory.'

- Some Old Testament books (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes) speak about how the wisdom humans need to live in God's world is precious and, at times, hidden (ex. Job 28:20, 21). But now, Paul reveals the secret is out! All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and understanding are in Christ. This does not mean you automatically have all the answers to all of life's questions. It does, however, give you the wisdom to live well—godly living is possible.
- The danger is one of deception. The Gospel is the 'word of truth' (1:5). The truth is that all things (including us) depend on Christ for existence, and it is Him who reconciles us with God (1:15-23). The blood of the cross is the power to heal creation (1:20), and Christ is the world's only Hope (1:27). To misunderstand or be turned away from these truths by false teachers is a grave danger.
- Persuasive speech, plausible arguments, and better words have lured men and women away to believe in wrong ideas for centuries. Mature Christians are not likely to be deceived by unimpressive arguments. It will take a persuasive speech to deceive them, and so it is persuasive speech they must beware of. Persuasive speech will sound as though it is right. That's what makes it persuasive! The more right it sounds, the more dangerous it is (if it is not right). This is why we must recognize the true Gospel. We need to appreciate Paul's labors (and those of all the Gospel servants today who labor as Paul did) so as not to be deceived by persuasive speech.
- For though I am absent in body [literally, 'in the flesh'], yet I am with you in spirit [literally, 'in the spirit (or, Spirit)'] means much more than that he is with them in his thoughts. He is with them 'in the Spirit'. He has heard of their love 'in the Spirit' for all the saints (1:4, 8). There is a bond that the Spirit creates between all who are in Christ, all who have joined the assembly of which Christ is the head (1:18). It is a bond that the distance between Colossae and Rome does not weaken.

## APPLICATION:

Paul's great struggle was to make Christ's Gospel plainly known to all in hopes of leading believers to the wisdom that produces Christian maturity. *Looking at your life, do you think Paul would rejoice to see 'your good order' and 'the firmness of your faith in Christ'? What precisely would he see displaying these things?*