

Turn with me, if you would please, to Colossians chapter 2. We’re going to be looking at vv1-5 this morning.

**Message in a minute:** Paul was praying that the Colossian believers would become spiritually mature in Christ – i.e. that they would know the mystery of God which is Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Why? Because Jesus is the Ultimate and only Source of all true wisdom and spiritual knowledge – Pr 2:3-6 says this: “If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding”). This is why Paul was struggling for them. He wanted them to become spiritually mature in Christ.

He wanted them to:

1. be “encouraged in heart and united in love”
2. have “the full riches of complete understanding”
3. not be “deceived by fine-sounding arguments” that were contrary to the true wisdom and knowledge of Christ – false teachers were claiming that they possessed a secret wisdom and transcendent knowledge that was available only to the privileged few. Paul was claiming that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were in Christ and were available to all who believed in Jesus without exception?
4. continue “firm in their faith in Christ.” Because Jesus is God, He is sufficient not only to save believers from sin’s penalty but to bring them to spiritual maturity.

That’s the message of Colossians 2:1-5 in a minute.

As a community of believers in Jesus Christ here at Warroad Baptist Church:

How diligent are we in encouraging one another to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another?  
How unified are we in our understanding of the essentials of the Christian faith and in standing together in them?  
How committed are we to studying the Bible and to sound Biblical teaching and preaching that leads to the application of the truth to life?  
How confident are we in our ability to not be deceived by false teaching that undermines the truths of God’s Word?

This, it seems to me, raises some key questions that each of us needs to be asking ourselves:

1. Where are my beliefs coming from?
2. How do I know that what I believe is right?
3. Am I willing to stake my life on what I believe?
4. Who decides what is true and what is not true?
5. What are my reasons for believing what I do? How valid are they?
6. How objective and accurate is the evidence others provide for what they want me to believe?

The Bible is the only written source in existence today that provides us with objective universal truth. All other sources fall short. If your beliefs are not coming from the Bible, they fall short of the truth and you are standing on spiritually shaky ground.

**Illustration:** John Ortberg, in a sermon he entitled "Choices," relates this incident ([www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com))

I can't live Jesus' life and Jesus knows that, but he says: You can ask me to come and live my life in you.

I'll give you a picture of this. Nancy and I were in a part of the country we had never been before. We were going to be driving on obscure back roads, so we got a rental car, and the guy at the counter said to me, "Along with this car, if you want, you can also get a GPS system." Have you ever used a GPS system? You plug it in and punch in your

destination. A woman's voice will tell you how to get wherever it is you are going. Well, when the guy at the counter asked if I wanted one, my immediate response was, "No. That's going to cost something. I don't need that. I can find where I'm going without that." Anybody want to guess what my wife weighed in with? "Get the GPS." So, we got the GPS.

Here's the deal: You can get the box. You can have the lady in the car, but that doesn't mean you trust her. If you trust her, what do you do? You do what she says. You go where she tells you to go. She says, "Turn left," you turn left. If she says, "Turn left," and in your heart you think, *But I want to turn right*, you remember, *There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death*. Okay?

To follow Jesus means I will do what He says. I will mess up a lot. I'm going to need His power. I know that, but I form the intention. I say to Him, "God, with your help, as best I can, I will do what you say. I give you my life, my time, my obedience."

Here is the thing: If that is not your settled intent, then it is best to be honest about it. If that is not your settled intent, then whatever else you might be, you are not a follower of Jesus. An admirer, maybe. But He is looking for followers. He is looking for people who will say, "All right, God."

There is something else you need to know about Him—something that is also true when dealing with a GPS system. At one point when we were driving in this car, I was quite sure the lady was wrong. She said to go left, and I didn't go left. I went right, because I knew she was wrong. Then as an interesting response, she said, "Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn." I knew she was wrong ... so I unplugged her. That's the beauty of that little box. You can unplug her.

I got as lost as a goose. My wife enjoyed that immensely.

So we plugged that lady back in, and you know what she said? "I told you so, you little idiot. You think I'm going to help you now? You rejected me. You just find your way home by yourself." No—she didn't say that. She said, "Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn."

Now see, that's grace. As soon as you're ready to listen, as soon as you're ready to surrender, God will say, "Here is the way home. Execute a U-turn." That's repentance. "I'll bring you home." That is grace. That's Jesus. He is the only one with authoritative wisdom about how to live. He is the only one who brings about the possibility of forgiveness for your sin and mine. He is the only one to give any kind of realistic hope for life now and for life beyond the grave.

Why would you not give your full devotion to Jesus? He does not present Himself as a good, spiritual teacher to be admired from a distance. He presents himself as Master, as Lord, as the One to be followed and served and obeyed and worshiped. There is no other way. He is it.

**Paul writes in Co 2:1 "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally."**

It's amazing how fast news travels. The impact of what the false teachers were saying to the Colossian believers was also being felt by the Laodicean congregation just 11 miles to the northwest. The fact that Paul had not met these believers personally and yet was struggling for them says a lot about his heart for ministry within the Family of God, the Body of Christ, the Church. The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Vol. II p. 193), renders the term 'struggling' as *strenuously exerting*. Paul's caring concern for the spiritual health and the unity of the Body of Christ as well as his deep love for fellow believers is to characterize us as believers today. That's spiritual maturity in Christ. Our unity is to be in Christ who brings all believers together into the same loving family relationship. Does this describe us? God wants it to.

1 Pe 1:22 says that we are to have sincere love for our brothers and sisters ... to "love one another deeply from the heart." Lk 6:45 reminds us that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. This is where I find myself struggling the most. *I feel* love, deeply, and *I think* love, but I don't express the love I feel and think in the ways that I

could. What my heart is set on is a pretty reliable indicator of the kind of love that is really there. I'm much more self-centeredly selfish in the things that I say and do than I'm willing to admit. My love tends to be more conditional than godly, but I really don't want to be this way. We're going to be talking more about the impact that what we set our hearts on has on us and those around us when we come to Co 3:1, 2.

Paul was wrestling inwardly for the spiritual well-being of all the believers of the Lycus Valley churches. The word translated 'struggling' in the NIV is the Gr. word '*agona*' from which get our English word "agony." Paul agonized in prayer over the circumstances these believers found themselves in.

What would it mean for you to know that someone you had not met personally before deeply cared about you and what you were going through, particularly someone whose reputation for pastoral concern was so evident – someone of the stature of a Billy Graham, Charles Swindoll, Beth Moore, or Elizabeth Elliot? And let's imagine for a moment that they personally wrote you a letter to express their concern for you and to let you know that they were agonizing in prayer on your behalf. My hunch is you would be encouraged.

The God who created the universe and everything in it has personally written to you and to me to express His loving concern, all the details of which are recorded in the Bible. That ought to be an encouragement to you and to me. It makes a difference to know that Someone of great prominence cares about you.

Paul continued in V2 "**My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ,"**

The purpose of Paul's passionate prayers for them was fourfold –

that they would:

1. be encouraged in heart – that their whole inner being including their thoughts and feelings would be uplifted.
2. be united in love . The sense of the term 'united' here is "knit together." Robert Gromacki in his commentary on Colossians suggests that "love for God and for one another is the bloodstream of the body, the Church." (Philippians & Colossians, p.167)
3. have complete understanding – which is the Spirit-guided ability to comprehend Scriptural truth and how to apply it in daily life experience; to be assured of having a solid doctrinal foundation in spite of worldly rhetoric to the contrary.
4. know the mystery of Christ – to rest in the settled conviction and complete confidence that **Jesus** is the one and only answer to all of life's questions – **He** is the answer to what life is all about.

Pr 4:23 says that the heart is the wellspring of life. The intent of Paul's fervent prayers for them was to uplift their hearts and to promote loving relationships. Lasting unity depends on two essentials: truth and love. Believers are to be of one mind and of one heart. Having a common mind about Christ and all that He is establishes the spiritual stability of the body of Christ. The centrality of the unity of believers in the body of Christ is a recurring theme in Paul's letters.

In Eph 4:2-6 he writes, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (*that's spiritual maturity*). There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

And in Php 2:1, 2, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." (*that's spiritual maturity*).

Jesus is the common denominator of the Christian life “In Him,” Co 1:17 “all things hold together.” Jesus is the central figure and unifying factor of the Christian faith.

Those who lack assurance of their salvation need to focus less on what they need to know and more on applying the truths they already know. John MacArthur in his commentary on Colossians suggests that “Truth that finds solid footing in a strong heart and works itself out in love of fellow believers results in deep conviction. That is the basis of assurance.” (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Colossians & Philemon, p. 90).

Paul’s purpose in writing this letter was to underscore the absolute supremacy and all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. A full, rich and complete understanding of the mystery of Christ is rooted in the settled conviction regarding Christ’s deity, supremacy and all-sufficiency. Given this reality, there is no need to pursue any other avenues in search of spiritual knowledge since Jesus is the Source of all true spiritual knowledge. In other words, if someone comes to you saying anything different than what God has already said in the Bible don’t accept it and don’t believe it.

You only truly know what you have personally experienced. Knowing about something is not the same as having experienced it yourself. Knowing about Christ and experiencing Christ personally in relationship are distinctly different. I knew things about Deb before she became my wife, but when I became personally related to her through marriage, my depth of understanding and my love for her as a person became much fuller, deeper and richer. In a personal relationship with Jesus you learn first-hand what God is like by experience. If you want to know what someone is really like, don’t ask them, ask those who know them best. We paint a much different picture of ourselves than is actually the case.

Complete and unwavering faith in Christ and grounding in the Word of God is the believer’s safeguard against worldly philosophies and false doctrines purporting to be the truth.

The world did not know Christ when He came according to Jn 1:10,11. It was only those who believed in Him and spent time with Him who truly knew Him. A relationship with Jesus is not natural; it is a supernatural gift of God. (Jn 1:12,13). A person who does not believe in Jesus and is not in a right relationship with Him cannot understand the real meaning of life or the importance of having Christ in their life.

Why is having Jesus in your life so central to knowing the truth? Paul points out in **V3**, that it is Jesus “**In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**” He *is* the truth (Jn 14:6) and *speaks* the truth – a recurring phrase of Jesus in the gospel accounts of the NT is, “I tell you the truth...”

Did you notice that the text of Co 2:2 does not say ‘some’ of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? It says ‘**all**’ of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge – full, total, complete. And these treasures are found in Christ. Treasures are those things that we prize over all other things – they are what we view as most valuable.

Wisdom is the *application* of truth to life, while knowledge is the *apprehension* of truth. I believe the word order is significant here. God’s intent in giving us His truth is so it will change our lives not just our minds. James says in Jas 1:22, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

The point here is that it is not necessary to look outside of Christ and all that He offers you in Himself to know what life is all about and how to live it. Anyone who suggests you need more than what Jesus offers you has it wrong – don’t believe it.

We are to “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ...” (2 Pe 3:18). Anyone who tells you that you need more than Jesus is wrong. Don’t accept it, and don’t believe it.

In Ga 1:11,12 Paul put it this way, “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

It's important to distinguish between three kinds of wisdom spoken about in the Bible and referred to in this letter:

1. man's wisdom or the wisdom of the world (2:23) which, when compared to God's wisdom, is said to be foolishness in 1 Co 2;
2. the wisdom of believers in Jesus (1:9, 28; 3:16; 4:5) which is the result of spiritual discernment, and is shared by all believers in Christ; and
3. God's wisdom (2:3) which is hidden in Christ and is unique to God in that it is original, creative, and exalted – it accomplishes what no other wisdom in the universe can.

Although all the wisdom and knowledge of God are hidden in Christ, and Christ is in the lives of every believer in Jesus, this does not mean that we know everything. We don't know all that God knows and are not capable of doing everything perfectly like God does. The term "hidden" carries the idea that God's wisdom and knowledge are resident within us in Christ, but we don't have full and complete comprehension of it. De 29:29 reminds us, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever ..."

In Ro 11:33 we read, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!" It's pretty evident from these words that even believers in Jesus will never plumb the depths of God's wisdom and knowledge.

Where do we find God's wisdom and knowledge? Propositionally we find it in the Bible. God in His wisdom determined to give us the Bible which is our only reliable and trustworthy source of information about God and about life. It is literally our lifeline to God and it is vital to our spiritual survival in this world. The Bible is the indispensable and essential repository of truth for the believer in Jesus Christ. Most of the internal turmoil we experience as believers is the result of not knowing and acting upon what God has revealed to us in the Bible. He gave it to us expressly to transform our thinking and to change our lives and how we live them.

The Bible is the treasure chest that leads us to the treasure mine of Christ. Paul in Php 3:7,8 declares, "... whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ." The most valuable possession in Paul's life was Jesus Christ." What is the most valuable possession in your life?

Not only is Jesus our most valuable possession whether we live like His is or not, but The Psalmist in Ps 119:72 says, "The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold." Our second most valuable possession is the Word of God, the Bible. Solomon warns us in Pr 30:5-6, "Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to his words (*or take away from them for that matter*), or He will rebuke you and prove you a liar." Do not accept as true what someone says that is inconsistent with what the Bible says is the truth.

The Bible is replete with references to its indispensableness to living life (Josh 1:8; Job 23:12; Ps 119:97-104; Ro 15:4; 1 Pe 2:2; 2 Pe 3:1,2; 1 Jn 2:1,2 to name just a few).

There are five principal passages from the Bible worthy of careful consideration:

1. **2 Ti 3:16,17**, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
2. **Eph 4:11-16**, "It was He (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who

is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

3. **Co 3:16,17**, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”
4. **2 Ti 2:14-17**, “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who engage in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene.” This is what will prevent us from being misled by the wisdom of the world.
5. **1 Ti 6:20**, “... guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith (*the truth – the teachings of the Bible*).”

Paul was writing Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the believers in Colosse and in **Co 2:4** said, “**I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.**”

To be deceived is to allow yourself to be led astray by false reasoning and persuasive rhetoric – which amounts to little more than fast or smooth talk that lacks real substance.

Paul was passionate in his prayers for the believers of the Lycus Valley churches that they would not be misled by false teaching. The wisdom and knowledge that Christ gives us is designed to prevent us from being deceived by those who would have us believe their faulty reasoning and flawed thinking about what is true and what matters in life.

The living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ and the written Word, the Bible are to be our most prized possessions and are to take center stage in our lives. Anything inconsistent with the truth claims of Jesus and the testimony of the Word of God is to be rejected.

**V5 “For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.”** ‘Firm’ has the idea of steadfast and solid.

The Colossian believers were an encouragement to Paul in his imprisonment because they were ordering their lives on the basis of their faith in all that they had in Christ and were not buying into the deception of the false teachers.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Vol. II, p. 194) states that the terms ‘orderly’ and ‘firm’ carry the imagery of an army under attack and affirms that their lines were unbroken, their discipline intact, and their reliance on Christ unshaken.

How orderly is your life and how firm is your faith in all that you have in Christ. We have a responsibility before God to encourage one another in the faith and to pray diligently for each other’s spiritual maturity in Christ.

### **Benediction:**

“Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ro 15:5-6) Amen.