



Growth Sheet

Christ Our Treasure

Colossians 2:1-5

Where Does Encouragement Come From?

We all know what it feels like to be discouraged. Discouragement is like a leak in your gas tank: it drains out the fuel for your joy and motivation. Encouragement, on the other hand, is so powerful that it can provide stability and energy during dark and cloudy days.

The Apostle Paul valued encouragement so much that he wrote to tell the Colossians—whom he had never personally met—that he underwent great turmoil for them, agonizing in prayer that they would be encouraged (Colossians 2:1-5). Obviously, the kind of encouragement for which Paul craved is fundamentally different than the encouragement we might find from someone’s kind compliment or a motivational speech. This kind of encouragement is rooted in something that will never change, and therefore it is infinitely deeper and stronger. Simply put, this encouragement is found in knowing Jesus Christ.

In this Colossians 2:1-5, then, we discover three truths about this encouragement-producing knowledge of Christ. **Encouragement comes from a knowledge of Christ that is (1) unified, (2) full, and (3) firm.**

1. Encouragement comes from a knowledge of Christ that is *unified* (2:1-2a).

Paul tells the Colossians that he has a great struggle that their hearts would be encouraged; then he goes on to explain that this encouragement includes “being knit together in love.” This teaches us that the encouragement-producing knowledge of Christ is not a solo project: it includes other believers. In other words, as we grow in our knowledge of Christ *together*, encouragement grows as well.

Of course, we can grow in our knowledge of Christ as individuals: we can and should read the Bible and pray on our own. However, this kind of rich encouragement comes as we grow in our knowledge of Christ *together*. This aligns with what Paul urges later on, when he writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16).

2. Encouragement comes from a knowledge of Christ that is *full* (2:2b-3).

As Paul piles up phrases in 2:2-3, the effect is powerful. He wants to convince his readers of the magnificence of knowing Christ. From these phrases, we find three ways in which our knowledge of Christ should be *full*.

a. Full of certainty

Paul uses a word that means to be fully convinced, absolutely certain. A timid and tentative, knowledge of Christ will not produce true encouragement.

b. Full of understanding

When Paul writes about the “knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ,” his wording indicates a full grasp of who Christ is. Of course, since our minds are finite, we will never know everything there is to know about Christ. When a child first learns the whole alphabet, he may not yet be able to read complicated books; but at least he is not missing any letters he needs to know to read. So our understanding of Christ may be full in the sense that we are not missing any essential elements for growth in encouragement and Christlikeness.

c. Full of delight

Although the text does not contain the word “delight,” it is evidently Paul’s aim to entice his readers with the delight to be found in Christ when he writes, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). Paul’s point is not that wisdom and knowledge are impossible to find, but that they are accessible *only* in Christ. In other words, we cannot live wisely in this world unless we are guided by the reality of who Jesus is and what he has done.

3. Encouragement comes from a knowledge of Christ that is *firm* (2:4-5).

Paul is aware that—lurking in the corners at Colossea—there are very convincing arguments to look for wisdom and knowledge, encouragement and maturity, *outside* of Christ. This is why he writes, “This I say in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments” (2:4). We must recognize the possibility that at any point in time we might embrace a line of thinking or behavior that draws us *away* from finding our encouragement, delight, and maturity in Christ alone.

Discussion and Application

1. When do you find yourself most discouraged? What do you tend to do when you are discouraged? Have you ever found yourself leaning on *false* encouragement—encouragement based in something artificial or temporary? Give examples of such false encouragement.
2. Paul wanted the Colossians to be encouraged *in unity*, “knit together in love” (see 2:2). What would our church look like if it were full of people who were growing in their knowledge of Christ, but completely *independent* of each other? Why is encouragement increased when we learn more about Christ *together*? What have you learned about Christ from others that you probably would not have discovered on your own?
3. Paul writes that he wants the Colossians to “reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding” (2:2). Why might lack of certainty about Christ produce discouragement? Describe moments in which you have struggled in your certainty about Christ, and what restored your assurance?
4. As explained above, when Paul writes that “in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” he means that we cannot live wisely in this world unless we are guided by the reality of who Jesus is and what he has done. Give some examples of

actions and priorities that would seem very *sensible*—if not for the fact that Jesus came to die and rise again. Give some examples of actions and priorities that, in the world’s eyes, seem foolish—but are actually wise, in light of who Jesus is and what he has done.

5. Paul is aware of “plausible arguments” that could potentially draw people *away* from seeking their encouragement in their knowledge of Christ. These “arguments” may not be a set of statements, but even a way of life. Give an example of such an argument, and describe the attitudes and lifestyle of a person who has “bought into” that argument.