

Be Encouraged!

(or, How to Have a Heart of Hope)

Colossians 2: 1-3

(NKJ) Colossians 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and [for] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and [attaining] to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(BYZ) θελω γαρ υμας ειδεναι ηλικον αγωνα εχω περι υμων και των εν λαοδικεια και οσοι ουχ εωρακασιν το προσωπον μου εν σαρκι
ινα παρακληθωσιν αι καρδια αυτων συμβιβασθεντων εν αγαπη και εις παντα πλουτον της πληροφοριας της συνεσεως εις επιγνωσιν του μυστηριου του θεου και πατρος και του χριστου
εν ω εισιν παντες οι θησαυροι της σοφιας και της γνωσεως αποκρυφτοι

Paul's Pep Talk to the Colossians—[Paul Relates Why He Works So Hard in the Ministry]

The center of these verses tells why Paul labors so diligently in the ministry, why he does what he does—

That the hearts of the Colossians may be encouraged.

The "that" at the beginning of verse 2 is commonly translated "in order that." Paul says that all the "labor" and "striving" and "working" and "energy" are spent "in order that" their hearts may encouraged, lifted up, emboldened to walk in Christ and be established in the faith—**Col 2:6,7**

ENCOURAGED = to put courage in

The word for "encouraged" is παρακαλεω, *parakaleo*, that is, one "called alongside."

Though *parakaleo* can be translated in several ways, the context seems similar to that in:

Acts 11:23 "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and **encouraged** them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord."

1Thes 3:2 "and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and **encourage** you concerning your faith,"

Paul wants the Colossians to know that his efforts are for them, for their spiritual growth, and he wants to spur them on. We, too, can be encouraged in our faith, to fight the good fight!

[Barclay defines the word by citing a parallel in classical Greek:

"There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to it to such purpose that courage was reborn and a body of dispirited men became fit again for heroic action. That is what [*parakaleo*] means here. It is Paul's prayer that the Church may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation."]

[The definition of *parakaleo* is "to pour courage into," and this talk by the Greek general sounds very much like a pep talk from a football coach at halftime.]

HOW TO BE ENCOURAGED!

I. By Knowing That Your Leaders Labor for you.

2:1 "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,"

Paul speaks of his "**great conflict**" for the Colossians, even though he had never met them face to face. Epaphras, 1:7, is the one who brought the Gospel to Colosse.

"**Great**" is only used here and in **James 3:5**, evoking a great, raging forest fire.

Jam 3:5 "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles."

"**Conflict**" is translated from *αγωνα*, *agona*, from which we get our word, agony, as in **1:29**.

The word originally seemed to have more of the idea of an arena, and meant the assembly of Greeks for their national games. It came to mean a struggle or contest, and is even translated "race" in **Hebrews 12:1**- "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us"

[Conflict seems to involve **suffering** (Phil 1:30; 1 Thes 2:2; cp verb form in 1 Tim 4:10); relates to **every believer's fight** of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and it is something Paul successfully completed (2 Tim 4:7). At the very least, it involves difficulty. Even the concept of a race would infer a long, agonizing experience.

Two verses use both the verb and the noun form (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7).]

You can be encouraged by knowing of the hard work of your leaders, and by knowing that their sacrifice and prayers are for you.

Paul wanted them to know how hard he worked for them so they would be encouraged. [Look back at 1:29, which ties in with proclaiming, teaching, and admonishing activities.] You can take courage from the fact that your leaders work and study hard.

The same word is used of Epaphras as he prays for the saints at Colosse.

Col 4:12 "Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Perhaps Paul has the same idea of agonizing prayer in mind in 2:1, as he writes from prison where he is certainly praying for them.

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II. By Loving One Another Sacrificially, Which Knits Us Together

2:2 "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love"

"**Being knit together**," συμβιβασθεντων, *sumbibasthenon*, literally is to have a "basis together." TDNT translates this as "to hold together," or "to unify."

The word is used in the NT to speak of the unity of the Body.

Eph 4:16 "from whom the whole body, joined and **knit together** by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Col 2:19 speaks of "holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and **knit together** by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God."

The way that you can be encouraged, and that you can encourage others, is to be united in love by supplying your part to the Body. The word for "love" is *αγαπη*, *agape*, which means unconditional love and is best demonstrated by sacrifice.

If each member of the Body puts the welfare of the other members, the good of the other members, before his or her own, the Body will build and grow. The same is true of any sports team, and the same is true of any family. If each member of a family is pulling in his or her own direction, each one just tugging to get his way, the family will fly apart. But if every member pulls together for the good of the "team," the family will flourish.

- you may want to stress the opposite - do you feel disconnected? LOVE

Paul sees love—unconditional, sacrificial love—as the basis for unity.

Col 3:14 "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

[The word for bond here is translated "chains," as in handcuffs, in Phil 1:13

Phil 1:13 "so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;"]

III. By Pursuing the Treasures Which Are in Christ !

- this ties back to the admonishing and teaching in Chapter 1, and forward to 3:16

[3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.]

2:2,3 “and [attaining] to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Paul’s encouragement isn’t just so the Colossians feel good about themselves. He’s not just pumping up their feelings. The ultimate goal of Paul’s encouragement is that they would attain:

A. “To all the riches of the full assurance of understanding”

“Full Assurance,” *πληροφορέω*, *plarophoreo*, is a combination of “to completely fill _____” and “to wear, carry, or bear _____.”

Paul is encouraging them to put aside any doubts, that they are able to have “full assurance.” It is a great richness to know that they can completely stand on their understanding of what they have been taught, that it will fully carry them.

B. “To the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ”

“Knowledge,” *ἐπίγνωσις*, *epignosis*, strengthens that meaning of assurance and means that we can know God (both the Father and the Son) experientially.

The clearest verse to see this experiential knowledge is **2 Timothy 3:7**.

2Tim 3:7 “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

C. “of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

“Treasures,” *θησαυρός*, *thasauros*, is our word, thesaurus. Christ is the

treasury of all wisdom and knowledge, and we may tap into that storehouse through our experiential knowledge of Him.

What a great reason to be encouraged! No matter what inadequacies the world claims we have, we can be fully assured of all the riches of the treasury of wisdom in Christ!