

Theme: The world is full of persuasive, engaging "teachers" whose plausible lies lead many to destruction. But there is only One in whom is hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Only through Him will you have true wisdom and the assurance of life.

Background: We are finally at the end of Paul's introduction. Having told them about who is writing, he now tells them why he writing.

Introduction: How do we learn to pay attention?

I. Paul's Struggle

A. The "Why" of Paul's struggle

1. It is how God works - God's ways may seem unconventional
2. For their good - But not just for them

B. The "How" of his struggle

1. In prayer!
 - a. With thanksgiving, intercession and exaltation
NOTE: Prayer is hard work. It is not a casual activity.
 - b. The Power of Prayer (Jeremiah 29:11 & 33:3; Psalm 65:2 & 69:13; James 5:16; Luke 6, 9, 11)
2. In the Word of Truth
 - To reveal the mystery that was hidden
 - Proclaiming Christ as he is revealed in the scriptures
NOTE: With the pace of life that we keep today - the "struggle" to spend that time in the Word and in prayer is likely very real.

II. The Goal: To Be Encouraged

A. Three-fold goal

1. Their hearts may be encouraged
 - they don't lose heart as they enter the fray
 - as his struggle becomes more and more their own
2. They may be knit together in love
 - The powerful bond of love!
3. To partake of the riches of full assurance and understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery!
 - a. Riches of full assurance of understanding
 - b. And the knowledge of God's mystery!
 - This is Paul's calling/ministry - to make the mystery known!
 - Left to ourselves, wisdom is really hard to come by.

B. Christ - The Source of Their 3-fold Blessing

NOTE: There are strong parallels Proverbs 2:3-6

III. The Danger

A. Don't be deluded (deceived)

- It is a deadly error to be turned away from the truth
- The danger is a great today as it was in Paul's day

B. By "persuasive" arguments

- Lies can be made to sound very reasonable

NOTE: The only real defense against the world's deceptions is knowing Christ.

C. Your protection?

- Together in Spirit

IV. Their Struggle

Where is their battle?

- To walk in him - to be rooted and built up in him
- To be established in the faith
- To abound in thanksgiving

V. Or "Struggle"?

- A. We must guard against being "deluded" by the plausible arguments of the world
 - The centrality of Christ in all our decisions, actions must direct us
- B. Will we "struggle" in prayer, and in the proclamation of the word of truth for the church and the world?
- C. Maturity comes in
 1. a heart that is full of encouragement
 2. Being knit together with my brothers and sisters in love
 3. Resting (and exalting in) the riches of full assurance of understanding
 4. Living according to the knowledge that is being revealed in Christ Jesus

Is this your experience today?