

# Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 5  
CHRIST OUR  
WISDOM



**"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"**  
Colossians 2:3

As we begin our study today, again note that the historical background of Colossians is essential to understanding Paul's purposes in writing as well as applying his teaching rightly. False teachers in Colossae promoted a "higher spirituality" that demanded submission to, besides Jesus, heavenly intermediaries and ascetic rules (among other things) for true holiness ([Col. 2:16–23](#)). Consequently, the apostle wrote to the Colossians to stress the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ, not so that Christians might think true spirituality has to do only with having a personal relationship with Jesus (at the exclusion of fellowship with His church), but to show that salvation rests on Christ alone, as proclaimed in the apostolic gospel (1:1–23).

Today's passage offers a profound reflection on the sufficiency of Jesus. In Christ, Paul explains, are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). The apostle is not saying that there are secrets about Jesus hidden to all the church except for a select few; rather, he means that every Christian has access to wisdom and knowledge sufficient for holy living in Jesus. Paul likely draws on Old Testament wisdom here and its linking of wisdom and knowledge.

COLOSSIANS 2:1–5

CORAM DEO

*The gospel is scandalous to unbelievers even though Christ is the wisdom of God ([1 Cor. 1:18–31](#)). But it is important to note that the message is to be scandalous, not our actions. We must take care not to add to the offense of the gospel by being rude and self-righteous, even though we must always clearly proclaim God's salvation. Let us pray for unbelievers we know, and even for ourselves, that all might see the sufficiency of Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

Knowledge is equivalent to the intellectual content of the faith; wisdom is the ability to see reality as God does, enabling people to apply knowledge in a life that pleases the Creator and creates godly abundance ([Prov. 2](#); [Ecl. 2:26](#)). We are being told in [Colossians 2:3](#) that everything we need to know about the Father and how to properly interpret reality and live to His glory is accessible to all believers in His Son. Matthew Henry comments, "The treasures of wisdom are hidden not from us, but for us, in Christ."

Yet the wisdom and knowledge in Christ is hidden to the world in a different sense. Paul elsewhere speaks of the wisdom of Jesus and His cross as foolish to fallen humanity, not because the idea of an atonement is too hard for people to grasp but because they lack the moral ability to see themselves and the world as God does. Apart from divine grace, people cannot rejoice in the cross, the means whereby the Lord atoned for sin, maintained His righteousness, and absolved His people ([Rom. 3:21–26](#); [1 Cor. 1:18–25](#)). Unless the Spirit opens the eyes of sinners, they remain blind to the truth and sufficiency of the gospel ([Rom. 1:18–32](#)).

## OPEN IT



Describe a time when you enjoyed seeing someone else succeed.

What made this success so meaningful for you?

## READ IT | Colossians 2:1-5

## EXPLORE IT



1. For what two groups of people was Paul struggling?
2. According to the end of verse 1, what do we learn about Paul's relationship with the Colossians?
3. According to verse 2, what three things does Paul seek for the Colossian believers?
4. What does Paul hope his ministry will accomplish, in verse 4?

## GET IT

*The division of chapters here is unhappy, for this verse is but a supplementary explanation of the preceding one. "I am in an agony," he had said, and now he adds, "I would ye knew what an agony I am in about you." The Greek noun "agon" means deep and earnest solicitude, accompanied with toil and peril. It points out that intense and painful anxiety which preyed upon him, now in occasional terror, and now in reviving hopes—that ceaseless conflict which filled his waking hours with effort, and relieved with prayer the watches of the night. His soul was in a perpetual distress for them: every suspicion about them left a pang behind it—the bare possibility of their relapse or apostasy brought with it unutterable dismay and sorrow.*

*Therefore he says, "How great a struggle...." It was no easy or supine struggle. He knew what was at stake. They were in danger, and he could not be in the midst of them. The seducer might have been pictured out to him, but he was not privileged to confront him. How the Colossians stood he knew not. He was aware of the hazard they were in generally—but the shifting of the crisis and its individual results could only be faintly apprehended.*

*Like the caged bird beating its bare and bleeding breast against the wires of its prison, as it hears the repeated cry of its unseen young ones, the apostle turned ever and "anon" toward those churches, painted to himself their danger and their need of help, and strained his eager spirit to the utmost as he sighed over the possible desolation which might come upon them.*

*Nor did he idly chafe in his confinement,—but he wrote this letter, and he wished them to know the depth of the love which he cherished toward them.*<sup>1</sup>

1. What do you think Paul means when he says he has “a great struggle” on behalf of these people? Is it physical? Emotional? Spiritual?

How can one struggle greatly in this way on behalf of people whom they have never met?

2. What moves someone to such a level of sacrifice? What things hinder you from such service to other believers?

*Notice that Paul's immediate goal is to encourage the hearts of the Colossians and to unite them in love. Many of us are only too ready to jump on someone and try to straighten him out on the spot. It is a great lesson to see how Paul seeks to lift their spirits first and to cause them to appreciate one another. It indicates that building a relationship with individuals is the true way to go about helping them. Have you ever tried to help someone, only to find that your efforts fell on deaf ears? The apostle indicates the right way to help is to find something encouraging to say first. None of us like to be corrected by a negative approach. We first need a word of encouragement, as the apostle so beautifully demonstrates here.<sup>2</sup>*

3. In our culture we usually associate the heart with the emotions, especially love, but in Scripture it usually refers to the center of our will, thought and personality as well as our emotions. Why do you think Paul thought the Colossians might need encouraging in their hearts?

4. How are the Colossians', and all believers' hearts “knitted together?”

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<sup>1</sup>John Eadie, **Commentary on Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to Colossians**

<sup>2</sup>Study Notes on Colossians 2:2 [www.preceptaustin.com](http://www.preceptaustin.com)

5. Why is close Christian community, characterized by unity, foundational to our encouragement?
6. When have you experienced a time when your heart was so deeply connected to other believers? What made it possible? What did this type of intimacy produce in the lives of all involved?

*Paul emphasizes that the revelation of God cannot be properly known apart from the cultivation of brotherly love within the Christian community. This means that mere intellectual comprehension of the mystery of Christ will not bring full understanding of the mystery, for understanding also comes through the love of Christians one for another. How is this so? When we are loved by other believers, we experience Christ through them, and thus our knowledge of Christ is enhanced....The deepest knowledge of the mystery of Christ comes from both the head and the heart. We must study the Scriptures about Him intensely, with all our heart, and we must love Him and His people with all our heart—and then we will know as we ought.<sup>3</sup>*

7. How does living life in community with other believers help each of us in our personal assurance in the faith?
8. Are you being encouraged and growing in the wealth of knowledge of Christ as a result? If so, how? If not, why not? How does a church help to create this type of atmosphere of growing knowledge and love?

*In verse 4, Paul wants the Colossians to be educated so that "no one may delude you with plausible arguments." This statement carries a negative connotation. The Colossians had been exposed to those with Platonic influence, being great with oratory skills, and some may have been persuaded by the speaker, rather than the subject matter itself. The more intimate communion we have with our fellow Christians the more the soul prospers: Being knit together in love. Holy love knits the hearts of Christians one to another, and faith and love both contribute to our comfort. The stronger our faith is, and the warmer our love, the greater will our comfort be.<sup>4</sup>*

9. In our own culture, why do we fall so easily for plausible arguments? What causes us to become so enamored with gifted and charismatic leaders and speakers?

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<sup>3</sup> Kent Hughes **Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ**

<sup>4</sup> <http://gracemahomet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Colossians-Small-Groups.pdf>

*Plausible arguments in the Greek is the word **pithanologia** which was a word of the law-courts; it was the word used for the persuasive power of a lawyer's arguments, which could enable the criminal to escape his just punishment. The true Church should have such a grip of the truth that it is unmoved by seductive arguments.<sup>5</sup>*

10. What are some "plausible arguments" that are propagated today? How do they in reality move us further away from the true gospel?
  11. How does our passage help us understand the value of sound doctrine and specifically a sound understanding of Christ?
  12. How do we help each other to not become deluded with fine sounding arguments that seem so attractive today?

<sup>5</sup> Paraphrased from William Barclay Daily Study Bible Notes Colossians 2