

# The Hope of Glory:

An Exposition of Colossians

August 2, 2020

*Sermon 7: Deception & the Hope of Glory, pt. 1*  
*Colossians 2:1-5*

**Opening Illustration:** In my experience, not only as a Pastor, but simply as a Christian, I have rarely seen anyone drawn away by false doctrine unless they thought that the people they were joining were better than the people they were leaving. It seems that long before false doctrine grips the mind, it conquers the heart. Before people are deceived, they are most often drawn away. How many people (including Christian celebrities) have we seen in the last few years who claim to leave evangelicalism, not because they think the doctrines are wrong (at least, at first), but because they have become convinced that evangelicalism is unloving, narrow-minded and even hateful? They were first discouraged, then drawn away, then deceived, and then became deceivers. Brothers and sisters, we must remember that in any given situation, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.

## I. Introduction

### A. What is the relationship between discouragement and deception?

1. See above
2. An overview of Paul's line of argument in this passage.<sup>1</sup>

**ILL:** Have you heard someone tell you a story, and interject useful, but somewhat secondary details? [show them what you mean.] It can be very easy to miss Paul's line of thought here because of the amazing, wonderful details and descriptions he adds. Before I deal with each clause (or even each word), I want to make sure that we have a feel for the passage as a whole.

- a. Paul's line of reasoning is this: I want you know how much of a struggle I have...that their hearts may be encouraged...I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.
- b. Did you see that? Paul's burden is to preserve their encouragement to protect from deception.

### B. In other words, how does a right heart protect us from the wrong doctrines and practices?

1. **Proverbs 4:23** Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it *flow* the springs of life.

## II. You Oughta Know! Colossians 2:1-5

### A. What did Paul want them to know? v. 1a

1. He wanted them to know that he is carrying a burden for them.
  - a. He is experiencing "a great struggle" for them.
    - a) This is the Greek word **ἀγών** from which we get the word "agony".
    - b) This word refers to a context, like a wrestling match, and hence, "struggle."
    - c) What is Paul's point here?
      - That the spiritual welfare of the Colossians is something that Paul is truly burdened with.
      - He is genuinely, affectionately invested in the spiritual well-being of his people.
2. What difference does this make?
  - a. Paul seemed very concerned to remind the Colossians that his interest in them went well beyond a cold, detached, intellectual interest. He cared about them!
    - a) Compare Philippians 1:7-11 as here Paul communicates something very similar.
    - b) Pastoral affection is very important. People need to know how much you care before they care how much you know.
  - b. Do I do a very good job with this? Do you? Do the people around us...the people beside us truly know that we indeed care for them?

---

<sup>1</sup> Dunn, NIGTC, actually refers to Paul's writing here as "awkward." I'm not sure I would go so far as to criticize the text or its author, but I understand where Dunn might be coming from.

## B. For whom was Paul concerned? v. 1b

1. For them, the Colossians—his primary audience
2. For the Laodiceans—his secondary audience
  - a. Remember that these epistles were meant to be copied and circulated.
  - b. Even though Colossae was the primary audience for this letter, Paul didn't want to neglect those who would receive copies of this letter from them.
3. For all who haven't seen his face—his ultimate audience.
  - a. This is important, because it reminds us that the Bible is written for us.

**Point:** Paul had this burden for the Church as a whole. We really need to pay attention to this. What he is saying to the Colossians is not just important for them, or for those in the same region as them, but for everybody, regardless of where they are. This, then is a universal Christian truth.

- b. This reminds us that we are meant to understand and to apply the Bible's message ourselves.

**Point:** Compare **Acts 1:8** but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

## C. What did Paul want to see happen?

1. That their hearts would be encouraged.
  - a. What does this mean?
    - i. Paul wanted them to live their Christian lives together with joy.
    - ii. Paul wanted them to have a clear conscience and a true faith.
    - iii. Paul wanted them to be motivated by overflowing and sincere joy.

**Quote:** ...though it be our bounden duty, and the highest privilege we can propose to ourselves, to have our hearts kept close to the Lord; yet we must not expect it absolutely or perfectly, much less all at once: we shall keep close to him, in proportion as we are solidly convinced of the infinite disparity between him and the things which would presume to stand in competition with him, and the folly, as well as ingratitude, of departing from him. But these points are only to be learned by experience, and by smarting under a series of painful disappointments in our expectations from creatures.

- b. What does this look like?
        - i. That they would be knit together in love.
          - a) Paul wanted them to love each other in the highest and most obvious sense.
          - b) Paul wanted them to be united. To be bound together in purpose and in affection.
        - ii. That they would be fully assured that they understand and know the gospel.
          - a) People who are always unsure of their standing before the Lord are in a particularly dangerous position with reference to false teachers.
          - b) Notice that this assurance occurs in the understanding. It is something internal.
        - iii. That they would truly know (experientially know) Jesus Christ.
          - a) Notice that Paul says "genuine knowledge" (epignwsij) instead of simply "knowledge" (gnwsij).
            - This might have something to do with the particular struggle in Colossae, a form of proto-gnosticism.
            - This might simply emphasize the difference between intellectual assent and true, experiential knowledge.
          - b) There is a world of difference between "head knowledge" or "Intellectual knowledge" and true, powerful, experiential knowledge.

**ILL:** The difference between knowing history and knowing your best friend.

## D. Why is Paul so concerned about this?

1. Because discouragement opens them up to deception. V. 4

- a. We may have no idea what is going on in someone else's life. Perhaps a word of encouragement or an act of encouragement will be used of God to keep someone firmly grounded in the faith on a particular day.
- 2. Because Paul is personally invested in their spiritual growth. V. 5
  - a. This is great! Paul genuinely cares about the Colossians.
  - b. This is important!
    - a) We often forget that ministry is more than a job.
    - b) We often forget that ministry is heart work.

### **III. Conclusions**

- A. The sheep that wander from the fold are the most susceptible to the wolves.
  - 1. Very often, the sheep wander out of sheer discouragement.
  - 2. What can we do to help?
- B. You must know that you know just as much as you know what you know. You know?
  - 1. The pursuit of encouragement in Christ is the pursuit of joy in Christ.
- C. You must remember that your focus should be on Jesus, not on each other.
  - 1. Our goal is true knowledge of God's mystery, and Christ is that mystery!
- D. We must, as a church, be committed, not only to orthodoxy, but also to true congregational affection.
  - 1. Orthodoxy is super-important.
  - 2. Encouraging the hearts of true believers is also super-important.

Closing ILL: VBS this year. What an enormous blessing for me to see how much fun the kids had at VBS this year. It was so great to see joy on their face (and to be a little frightened by how much they wanted to see me get a pie in the face). My prayer for them was that as their hearts were encouraged, their faith would be strengthened. I pray the same thing for all of us. May the Lord fill our hearts with genuine joy in Christ so that our lives would ever and always be  
To the Praise of His Glory,  
Amen.