

Colossians

The Preeminence of Christ [1:15-2:7]

The Supremacy of Christ [1:15-20]

- He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,
 - This section of the Book of Colossians has the composition of a hymn.
 - Some say that it should be broken up into two stanzas and others say three.
 - We will examine the entire section as a whole, without regard to the stanza breakdown.
 - The word “image” is εἰκὼν (eikōn) which can either mean that which represents something or that which is a manifestation of something.
 - The meaning here is manifestation indicating that Jesus is God, not merely a symbol of God.
 - Given the description of God as “invisible”, the best translation here is “visible manifestation”.
 - The word “firstborn” is πρωτότοκος (prōtotokos) which literally means one born first [Luke 2:7].
 - The word can also carry a figurative sense meaning prominence [LXX: Ps 89:27].
 - Jesus was clearly not the first human being born in the physical sense, Cain was [Gen 4:1].
 - However, in Psalm 2:7 the begetting of the Son is described as something already accomplished.
 - In verse 18 πρωτότοκος (prōtotokos) refers to Jesus as the first one resurrected from the dead.
 - In that same verse, Paul uses πρωτεύω (prōteuō = have first place) to refer to Jesus’ prominence.
 - Most expositors choose to view this word as meaning authority, stature or prominence here.
 - I believe this should be taken literally as describing the begetting of Jesus’ human soul and spirit.
 - This marks the beginning of the hypostatic union of the deity and humanity of Christ.
 - I believe this event necessarily precedes any creative event including the creation of the angels.
 - The use of the word “today” in Psalm 2:7 indicates that this event also marks the beginning of time.
 - The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem constituted the joining together of His soul and spirit with His body.
 - The phrase “of all creation” tells us that the begetting of the human soul and spirit of Jesus Christ occurred prior to the creation of everything else that exists apart from God Himself.
- With the result that by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth,
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
 - The word “for” is ὅτι (hoti) which can mean “for”, “because” or “that” and is used here to mean “such that” or “with the result that” as in 1 Tim 6:7.
 - This verse now has a much deeper meaning because Paul is not only telling us that Christ is the agent of creation, but that His humanity existed when all things were created, including the angels.
 - The phrase “by Him” is ἐν αὐτῷ (en autō) which literally means “in Him”, but is used here in the sense of agency and is correctly translated “by Him”.
 - The verb “were created” is ἐκτίσθη (ektisthē) which is an aorist verb meaning to instantaneously bring something into existence, not through some long, drawn-out evolutionary process.
 - The phrase “*both* in the heavens and on earth” is important here because it shows that Christ’s involvement in creation is not limited to the place of His incarnation.

- visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities
τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·
 - The phrase “visible and invisible” includes the physical universe and the spiritual realm.
 - This means the angels (including Satan) were created by Jesus Christ.
 - The demons are the result of procreation between fallen angels and human women [Gen 6:1-4].
 - God is Spirit [John 4:24], but He is the Creator, not part of the creation.
 - The phrase “whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” is a description of the invisible part of creation, specifying a hierarchy within the angelic realm.
 - Most commentaries look at all of these words as describing classes within the angelic realm.
 - A closer examination of the words produces a slightly different understanding.
 - The word “thrones” is from θρόνος (thronos) which is never used in the N.T. to describe a person (human or angelic), but rather a place of authority.
 - The word “dominions” is from κυριότης (kuriotēs) which means “ruling power” or “dominion” and describes a realm of authority, not a person.
 - The word “rulers” is from ἀρχή (archē) which means “ruler” and used is in the N.T. to describe a person [Rom 8:38; Titus 3:1].
 - The word “authorities” is from ἐξουσία (exousia) which means “authority” and is used in the N.T. to describe a person [Rom 13:1; Titus 3:1].
 - My conclusion is that Paul is describing two ranks of authority within the angelic realm (thrones or dominions) and two classes of angels (rulers or authorities).
 - This means that Jesus Christ not only created the angels themselves, but He also established the authority structure within which they operate.
 - This includes the realm of the fallen angels, although that authority structure has no doubt been corrupted by their unrighteous natures.
- all things have been created through Him and for Him
τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται·
 - The phrase “all things have been created” sums up everything mentioned in this verse.
 - The verb “have been created” is ἐκτίσται (ektistai) which is a perfect verb meaning something completed in the past with present ongoing results.
 - The phrase “through Him” tells us that the creation came about through the capabilities of Jesus Christ – His wisdom, His strength, etc.
 - This means that Jesus Christ was not a foreman, but the master-workman of the creation project.
 - The phrase “for Him” has deep and far reaching implications.
 - The Greek εἰς αὐτὸν (eis auton) actually means “to Him” or “unto Him”.
 - The implication is that Jesus Christ is the goal to which all of creation tends.
 - The underlying idea is that the whole purpose for the entirety of the creation is to bring glory and honor to the Son of the Father’s love.
- He is before all things, and by Him all things came into existence and remain in existence.
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,
 - The word “before” in the phrase “He is before all things” is πρὸ (pro) which could be positional (in front of) or temporal (prior to).
 - The usage here is clearly temporal.
 - This verse reaffirms the statement that Jesus Christ is the “firstborn of all creation” [v. 15].

- Jesus, the God-man in hypostatic union, pre-existed everything in the created worlds.
- The phrase “in Him” is ἐν αὐτῷ (en autō) which is the same as in v. 16 and literally means “in Him”.
- Verse 17 is a summation of verses 15 and 16, so this should be translated “by Him” here as well.
- The phrase “hold together” is a perfect of the verb συνίστημι (sunistēmi) which means to “unite”, “exist” or “put together in an organized manner”.
- The perfect tense is the key here.
- Paul is saying that Christ is the agent by which all things came into existence and continue to be in existence and that the creation was done in an organized manner.
- Paul is saying that Christ is the agent by which all things came into existence and continue to be in existence and that the creation was done in an organized manner.
- Jesus Christ did not stop working when the creation was complete – He sustains this universe and will continue to do so until it is time to destroy all of it [2 Pet 3:7, 10].
- He is also head of the body, the Church:
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·
 - The word “head” is κεφαλὴ (kephalē) which can refer to a body part or, figuratively, a leader.
 - It is clear that Paul intends for this to be understood figuratively as a body part, but is also highlighting Christ’s leadership over His Church.
 - The word “body” is σῶμα (sōma) which can refer to a human or animal body or be used to describe a group of people.
 - Once again, Paul intends for this to be understood figuratively as a body, but is also referring to a group of people.
 - The word “church” is ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) which refers to an assembly or congregation.
 - This is not a reference to a local church, but rather to the assembly of all born-again believers throughout the world as well as those who have already departed through physical death.
 - The phrase “the Church” is in apposition to the phrase “the body” meaning that they describe the exact same group of believers.
 - The “body” brings into view the “organic” nature of the assembly of believers whereas the “Church” tends to emphasize organizational aspects.
- and He is the beginning, the firstborn from physical death,
ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,
 - The word “beginning” is ἀρχή (archē) which we saw in verse 16 can mean “ruler”, but the basic meaning of the word is “first” which can indicate rulership or being first in time as it does here.
 - The word “firstborn” is πρωτότοκος (prōtotokos) which we saw in verse 15 and is used in a temporal way here as well.
 - The idea of being “born” from the dead is a reference to resurrection.
 - The phrase “from the dead” refers to being taken out of the place of physical death.
 - Paul is describing the attaining of a resurrection body that is not subject to physical death.
 - The Bible records examples of people being raised such as Lazarus [John 11:1-44], the son of the widow in Nain [Luke 7:12-15], Jairus’ daughter [Luke 8:41-42; 49-55] and the saints at Christ’s resurrection [Matt 27:51-53].
 - However, none of these people received their resurrection bodies at that time.
 - Jesus Christ is the only person who has ever been clothed in a σῶμα πνευματικόν (sōma pneumatikon) [1 Cor 15:42-44].

- so that He (and only He) might come to have first place in everything.
 ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
 - The Greek word ἵνα (hina) introduces a purpose clause here.
 - This reveals God’s purpose in making Jesus head of the Church, the beginning, and the firstborn.
 - The verb “will come” is γένηται (genētai) which already implicitly defines the subject as “he”.
 - By explicitly adding the word αὐτὸς (autos) which means “he”, Paul is adding a strong emphasis.
 - To convey this emphasis, this could be translated “He (and only He)”.
 - The verb γένηται (genētai) is in the subjunctive mood and should be translated “might come”.
 - The verb “to have first place” is from πρωτεύω (prōteuō) which means to “be first” or “hold the highest rank”.
 - Paul uses this word to clearly describe Christ’s preeminence over all things.
 - The phrase “in everything” necessarily eliminates any exceptions.
 - The plan of God calls for Jesus Christ to be preeminent over everything, visible and invisible.
- For *the Father* was pleased to opt for all the fullness *of Deity* to dwell in Him,
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι
 - The phrase “it was the *Father’s* good pleasure” is the translation of the verb εὐδοκέω (eudokeō).
 - This verb can mean “to be well pleased” or “to take delight”.
 - It can also mean “to choose something because you consider it to be good” [Luke 12:32].
 - This second meaning seems to better fit the message being conveyed here.
 - Note that the phrase “the Father” is in italics indicating that it is not in the original text.
 - It is obvious from the context (v. 20) that God the Father is the subject of the verb here.
 - The phrase “all the fullness” is πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα (pan to plērōma) which is the exact same phrase we find in Col 2:9.
 - This helps us understand that “fullness” in this verse is talking about Christ’s deity.
 - This verse, along with Col 2:9, explains that the hypostatic union did not somehow diminish the deity of the Son of God.
 - Jesus Christ is the God-man – a joining together of undiminished deity and sinless humanity.
 - This verse goes further to give us some insight into the Divine Decrees – in eternity past God the Father determined that God the Son would be the unique member of the Trinity that would take on bodily form to be the Savior of helpless mankind.
- and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself
 καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν,
 - The phrase “through Him” makes it clear that reconciliation to God must come through the person of Christ.
 - The object of saving faith is the Savior Himself understanding that He paid the price for our sins.
 - The verb “to reconcile” is ἀποκαταλλάσσω (apokatalassō) which means “to transition from hostility to a friendly relationship”.
 - This tells us that, as a result of the fall, lost mankind is at enmity with God.
 - The phrase “all things” is explained by the end of the verse to be things on earth and in heaven.
 - Clearly God does not need reconciliation to Himself, so this refers to all created things.
 - The phrase “to Himself” could refer to God the Father or to Jesus Christ.
 - Given that the Father is working to reconcile all things through the Son, it makes more sense for this to be a reference to the Father.

- having made peace through the blood of His cross;
εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,
 - The verb “having made peace” introduces the explanation for how reconciliation came about.
 - Reconciliation is possible through Christ because He made peace through His death on the cross.
 - The phrase “through the blood of His cross” describes the death of Jesus on the cross.
 - He could not bring about reconciliation through His suffering or His good deeds – Jesus had to die for our sins in order to reconcile man to God.
- through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
[δι’ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.
 - The phrase “through Him” is included in some texts and not in others.
 - Text criticism favors including this phrase here, but regardless it is clear that the rest of this verse is describing the “all things” reconciled through Him.
 - The phrase “I say” is not in the original text.
 - Including this phrase here almost makes it sound like this is Paul’s opinion rather than the word of God.
 - The phrase “whether things on earth or things in heaven” tells us the extent of reconciliation.
 - Jesus’ death on the cross was necessary to reconcile all things to God – mankind, spirit beings, and the creation itself [Rom 8:19-22].
 - We do not understand the full ramifications of the cross for spirit beings (angels and demons).
 - Note that this verse does not mean that all things *are* reconciled to God, but reconciliation was made possible through the death of Christ on the cross.

Reconciliation through Christ [1:21-23]

- And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in thinking, engaged in evil deeds,
Καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθρούς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς,
 - The phrase “although you were” is derived from a pronoun and a participle of the verb εἰμί (eimi).
 - The word “although” is included in the translation to complement the word “yet” in verse 22.
 - The word “formerly” is ποτέ (pote) which means “at some time”, “once”, “formerly” or “ever”.
 - The usage here is to indicate that what follows pertains to the way things were in the past.
 - The word “alienated” is from ἀπαλλοτριῶ (apallotrioō) which means “excluded”, “estranged”, or “alienated” [Eph 2:12; 4:18].
 - The meaning here is alienated from God.
 - The word “hostile” is from ἐχθρός (echthros) which means “enemy” or “hostile” [Gal 4:16; Jas 4:4].
 - The meaning here is hostility of mind.
 - The word “mind” is from διάνοια (dianoia) which means “understanding” or “a mode of thinking” [Luke 1:51; Eph 4:18; 1 John 5:20].
 - This is not the brain, but the content of thoughts.
 - The phrase “engaged in evil deeds” describes the outward result of the hostile thinking.
 - This could also be translated “in the deeds of the evil ones”.

- yet He has now reconciled you in His incarnation through *spiritual* death
 νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου
 - The words “yet ... now” are νυνὶ δὲ (nuni de) which begin this phrase to highlight a contrast with the way things once were.
 - This new reality is true for these believers.
 - The phrase “He has ... reconciled you” is the active verb ἀποκατήλλαξεν (apokatēllaxen).
 - Some good manuscripts have the passive verb ἀποκατηλλάγητε (apokatēllagēte) here.
 - The passive verb would be translated “you have been reconciled” which reads well in context.
 - In either case, Christ is the one who brings about the reconciliation through His death.
 - The phrase “in His fleshly body” is actually “in the body of His flesh”.
 - The body is mentioned as a clear reference to Christ coming in the flesh.
 - The phrase “through death” is διὰ τοῦ θανάτου (dia tou thanatou).
 - Because His human body is mentioned here some assume this is talking about His physical death.
 - However, the text does not in any way specify that physical death is in view here.
 - We know from the fall in Genesis and John 19:30 that this is Christ’s spiritual death on the Cross.
- in order to present you in His sight holy and blameless and beyond reproach –
 παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ,
 - The phrase “in order to present” is παραστήσαι (parastēsai) which means “to place beside”.
 - The meaning here is to present something to someone [Rom 12:1; Eph 5:27; Col 1:28].
 - The word “before” is κατενώπιον (katenōpion) which means “in front of” or “before”.
 - This is not time related as we saw in verse 17; this is locative – in His sight [2 Cor 2:17; 12:19].
 - The word “blameless” is from ἄμωμος (amōmos) which means “unblemished” or “blameless”.
 - We are not blameless, but by God’s grace we can be seen as blameless [Phil 2:15; 2 Pet 3:14].
 - The phrase “beyond reproach” is from ἀνεγκλήτος (avegklētos) which means “irreproachable”.
 - This quality is mentioned as a qualification for office in a local church [1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6-7].
- since indeed you persevere in the faith firmly established and steadfast,
 παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ,
 - This conditional clause is εἴ (ei) plus a present active indicative verb which makes it a first class conditional – if and it is true.
 - This should be translated “since”, but what follows tells us that this is temporal, not positional.
 - The word “indeed” affirms the assumption that the audience is continuing in the faith.
 - Because these believers are walking by faith, they are being sanctified by God so that they are found to be beyond reproach.
 - The word “continue” is from ἐπιμένω (epimenō) which means to continue in an activity [Rom 6:1].
 - It is most often used in the N.T. to refer to staying in a particular place [1 Cor 16:7-8], but here it is used of believers who persevere in the faith.
 - The phrase “in the faith” is a reference to ongoing faith.
 - This is similar to the way Peter used the word faith in 2 Pet 1:1 where he was referring to the full content of our walk of faith, not saving faith.
 - The phrase “firmly established” is from θεμελιόω (themeliōō) which means being place upon a firm foundation – i.e. grounded in the truth.
 - Here it is in the perfect tense describing a past completed action with present ongoing results.

- The word “steadfast” is from ἐδραῖος (edraios) which means “standing firm”.
- Having been placed on a firm foundation of God’s eternal truth, the believer is to stand firm in the midst of this fallen world around us [1 Cor 15:58].
- and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard,
καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε,
 - The verb “moved away” is from μετακινέω (metakineō) which means “shift” or “remove”.
 - This is not a physical shift, but a mental shift away from the hope of the gospel.
 - The word “hope” is from ἐλπίς (elpis) which means “confident expectation”.
 - The gospel gives us a confident expectation that we will receive the promises of God.
 - The gospel is the good news we have received from God.
 - This includes the promise of eternal life for all who believe in Christ and every other promise of God.
 - The phrase “that you have heard” eliminates any excuse for not knowing the good news.
 - Having heard and believed, the Colossians simply need to continue in that faith.
- which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven,
τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν,
 - The word “proclaimed” is from κηρύσσω (kērussō) which means “make known” or “announce”.
 - This word is often translated “preach” as well [1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 1:19; 4:5; Gal 2:2; 2 Tim 4:2].
 - The phrase “in all creation under heaven” refers to the widespread proclamation of the gospel.
 - We recognize this as a figure of speech because we realize that not every person on the earth heard Paul preach the gospel.
- and of which I, Paul, was made a servant.
οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος.
 - The phrase “of which” is the neuter pronoun οὗ (hou) which refers back to the word gospel.
 - The whole impact of the gospel described in this passage – reconciliation, temporal sanctification, hope, etc. – is in view here.
 - The word “minister” is διάκονος (diakonos) which means servant.
 - Paul describes himself as a bond-slave (δοῦλος, doulos) of Christ [Rom 1:1; Titus 1:1], but a servant of the gospel.

The Mystery of Christ [1:24-27]

- Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf,
Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν,
 - The verb “rejoice” is χαίρω (chairō) which means to be in state of happiness/joy.
 - This word does not necessarily include an outward expression of inner joy, but that certainly may take place [Luke 13:17; 15:32; 19:37-38].
 - The word “sufferings” is from πάθημα (pathēma) which means suffering or misfortune.
 - This word includes the inner, soul response to the misfortune suffered, not just the outward experience itself.
 - The phrase “for your sake” is literally “for you”, but the word ὑπὲρ (hyper) can mean “on behalf of” or “for the sake of”.
 - The idea being communicated is that Paul’s had suffered for the benefit of the Colossians [v. 25].

- and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the Church,
καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ ... ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία,
 - The phrase “in my flesh” is a reference to Paul’s physical body, not his sin nature.
 - Paul suffered physically in his service for the Church [Acts 14:19; 16:22; 2 Cor 11:24-28].
 - The phrase “I do my share” is ἀνταναπληρῶ (antanaplērō) which means “take one’s turn in filling up” or “supply on behalf of someone else”.
 - The complete NASB translation of this Greek word is “I do my share ... in filling up” with the last part coming later in this verse.
 - The phrase “on behalf of His body” uses the preposition ὑπὲρ (huper) just as we saw before.
 - Paul’s sufferings are for the entire body of Christ.
 - To make his statement perfectly clear, Paul restates the equivalency of Christ’s body and the Church which we saw in verse 18.
- in supplying a necessary part of Christ’s afflictions.
ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ
 - The phrase “in filling up” is the remainder of the translation of ἀνταναπληρῶ (antanaplērō).
 - The word is used only here in the N.T. and carries the meaning of “supplying”.
 - The phrase “what is lacking” is from ὑστέρημα (husterēma) which means “need”. “lack”, “want”, or “deficiency” [1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 8:14; 9:12; 11:9; Phil 2:30; 1 Thess 3:10].
 - Looking at these other Pauline uses of ὑστέρημα (husterēma) we see in each case that he is describing a necessary part of something which could be supplied from multiple sources.
 - The word “afflictions” is from θλίψις (thlipsis) which means “distress”, “tribulation”, or “affliction”.
 - It is very important to note here that this word is never used of Christ’s sacrificial death.
 - So Paul is not saying that Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross was insufficient in any way.
 - Instead, Paul is referring to the afflictions which Christ suffered during His life.
 - Those afflictions continue even after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension as He suffers whenever His body (the Church) suffers [Acts 9:4 cf. Isa 63:9].
- Of the Church I myself became a servant according to the stewardship from God
ἧς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ
 - The phrase “Of *this church*” is the pronoun ἧς (hēs) whose nearest antecedent is ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia) in verse 24 which we know refers to the universal Church.
 - The phrase “I was made” is ἐγὼ (egō) plus the verb γίνομαι (ginomai) which means “to become”.
 - The verb is already a first person singular, so ἐγὼ (egō) is added for emphasis.
 - The word “minister” is διάκονος (diakonos) which we saw in verse 23 meaning “servant”.
 - Paul was a servant of the gospel (to unbelievers) and the Church (to believers).
 - The word “stewardship” is from οἰκονομία (oikonomia) which means responsibility of management or “stewardship”, but can also refer to a plan, arrangement or “dispensation”.
 - Here this word is describing Paul’s role as a steward of the Church [Eph 3:2] who was given the awesome responsibility of preaching about the mystery regarding this dispensation [Eph 3:9].
- given to me for your benefit, to make the word of God fully known,
τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ,
 - The phrase “bestowed on me” is a participle of δίδωμι (didōmi) plus the dative of ἐγὼ (egō) which literally means “given to me”.

- The phrase “for your benefit” is εἰς ὑμᾶς (eis humas) which means “for you”, but in context clearly implies a benefit for the audience.
- The phrase “so that I might fully carry out” is from πληρώω (plēroō) which means “make full”, but can mean to “fulfill” or “complete” [Rom 8:4; Rev 3:2].
- The phrase “the *preaching of*” is not in the original text and has been added to try to explain in what way Paul completed the word of God.
- Paul’s stewardship involved the writing of N.T. books which included explaining the mystery of the Church as well as preaching the whole counsel of the word of God to many people in many places.
- *that is*, the mystery which has been sealed up from the *past* ages and generations, τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν
 - The phrase “that is” is not part of the original text.
 - The translators included these words here to help us understand that “the mystery” is in apposition to the phrase “the word of God” from verse 25.
 - The word “mystery” is μυστήριον (mustērion) which can mean “secret”, “concealed”, or “unrevealed”.
 - Paul’s explanation here is the key to the N.T. usage which is “something previously unrevealed”.
 - The phrase “which has been hidden” is a participle of ἀποκρύπτω (apokruptō) which means “hide from”, “conceal”, or “keep secret”.
 - My preferred translation is “seal up” [Dan 12:4].
 - The phrase “from the *past* ages and generations” denotes the times and people of the past.
 - The word “past” is not in the original text, but makes sense given the context.
- but has now been revealed to His saints, νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ
 - The word “manifested” is from φανερώω (phaneroō) which means “reveal”, “disclose”, or “make known”.
 - That which was sealed up has now been unsealed which is best translated “reveal”.
 - The phrase “to His saints” is important because God had revealed many things to His people, but the doctrine of the Church was unknown to them until revealed through the N.T. authors.
 - The teaching about the Church is directed toward believers.
- to whom God purposed to make known what is the abundance of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι τί τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
 - The word “willed” is from θέλω (thelō) which means “wish”, “desire”, “want”, or “will”.
 - Here this word is an expression of God’s will in terms of His purpose in revealing the mystery of the Church [John 1:43].
 - The phrase “to make known” is from γνωρίζω (gnōrizō) which means “make known”, or “reveal”.
 - Paul uses this term here to explain that God’s purpose in unsealing the doctrine of the Church is so that it will be known by His saints.
 - The word “riches” is πλοῦτος (ploutos) which means “wealth” or “abundance”.
 - The word “glory” speaks of the shining forth of the perfect attributes and character of God in the revealing of this mystery.

- The phrase “among the Gentiles” is significant here because God had previously revealed His truth through the prophets of Israel.
- This revelation regarding the Church is of particular importance to the Gentiles who now have equal status in their worship of God.
- which is Christ in you, the confident expectation of glory.
 - ὅ ἐστιν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης·
 - The word “which” is a singular neuter pronoun referring back to the word “mystery”.
 - What follows is a description of important elements of the nature of the Church.
 - The phrase “Christ in you” is a powerful statement of one of the key distinctions of the Church [Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 13:5].
 - The people of Israel were led by the pre-incarnate Christ through the cloud and the fire, but they were never indwelt by Christ.
 - The word “you” is a plural which refers to all of the believers in the church at Colossae which was made up of both Jews and Gentiles.
 - This clearly states that Christ indwells all believers, regardless of their ancestry.
 - The word “hope” is ἐλπίς (elpis) which means “confident expectation”.
 - As believers, we should have confident expectation that God will fulfill His promises.
 - The word “glory” is from δόξα (doxa) which means “splendor” or “greatness”.
 - Here this is a description of ultimate glorification for believers.

Wisdom and Maturity in Christ [1:28-2:5]

- We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, ὄν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νοουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ,
 - The word “we” here refers to Paul and Timothy.
 - As believers, we also should proclaim Christ.
 - The word “proclaim” is from καταγγέλλω (kataggellō) which means “make known in public to be broadly disseminated” [Acts 17:23; Rom 1:8].
 - The word “admonishing” is from νοουθετέω (noutheteō) which means “counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct” [1 Thess 5:12, 14; 2 Thess 3:15].
 - The phrase “every man” uses the word ἄνθρωπος (anthrōpos) which means “human being” as opposed to ἀνὴρ (anēr) which is also translated “man” and refers to an adult human male.
 - The word “wisdom” is from σοφία (sophia) which refers to knowledge which has become ready to be applied to life [Rom 11:18; Col 4:5; James 1:5].
 - Paul here is speaking of true wisdom which can only come from God, not the fake “wisdom” of this world [1 Cor 1:19-24; James 3:13-17].
- so that we may present before God every person mature in Christ.
 - ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ·
 - The phrase “so that” is ἵνα (hina) which is used to introduce a purpose clause.
 - Paul and Timothy’s teaching and admonishment was done with a goal in mind [1 Tim 1:5].
 - The phrase “may present” is a subjunctive of παρίστημι (paristēmi) which means “bring before”.

- There is no direct object given here, but the idea is the same as in Col 1:22 [see also Eph 5:25-27].
- Once again the phrase “every man” uses the word ἄνθρωπος (anthrōpos) which means “human being”.
- The word “complete” is from τέλειος (teleios) which means “perfect”, “complete”, or “mature”.
- Given the context of teaching and admonishment, the meaning here is spiritual maturity.
- The phrase “in Christ” is too important to be overlooked here.
- It is only because of the spiritual assets we have due to our position in Christ that we are able to grow to maturity in the faith.
- Furthermore, the maturation process involves growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2 Pet 3:18].
- To this end also I work very hard,
εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ
 - The phrase “For this purpose” is literally “to this” or “for this”.
 - Given that verse 28 ended with a purpose clause, this could be translated “To this end” as well.
 - The word “labor” is from κοπιάω (kopiaō) which means “work hard” or “toil to the point of exhaustion”.
 - This word means that a lot of effort is involved [Luke 5:5; Acts 20:35; 1 Cor 4:12; Phil 2:16].
- striving according to His operating power, which powerfully operates within me.
ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει.
 - The word “striving” is from ἀγωνίζομαι (agōnizomai) which means “fight”, “compete” or “struggle” [1 Cor 9:25; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7].
 - This echoes the idea of κοπιάω (kopiaō).
 - The word “power” is from ἐνέργεια (energeia) which means “operating power” or “power in action” [Eph 1:19; 3:7; 4:16; Col 2:12; 2 Thess 2:9].
 - The word “mightily” is ἐν δυνάμει (en dunamei) which means “in power”.
 - This “power” is functional power.
 - The verb “works” is from ἐνεργέω (energeō) which is a cognate of ἐνέργεια (energeia).
 - This word means “power put into operation”.
- For I want you to recognize how great a determined effort I have on your behalf
Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναί ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν
 - The verb “to know” is from οἶδα (oida) which means “know”, “understand”, or “recognize”.
 - Here Paul wants the Colossian believers to recognize the work he is doing for them.
 - The word “struggle” is from ἀγών (agōn) which means “fight”, “competition”, or “struggle”.
 - This is the noun form of the participle which is translated “striving” in v. 1:29.
 - The phrase “on your behalf” is literally “for you”, but the word ὑπὲρ (huper) can mean “on behalf of” or “for the sake of”.
 - We translated this “on your behalf” back in v. 1:24.

- and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not met me in person,
καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί,
 - The phrase “and for those who are at Laodicea” tells us that Paul had a burden for those believers.
 - Remember, Paul was writing this letter to the believers in the church at Laodicea as well [4:16].
 - The phrase “personally seen my face” is literally “seen my face in the flesh”.
 - This is an idiom describing a face-to-face meeting.
 - This verse indicates that Paul had not been to either of the churches at Colossae or Laodicea.
 - Nonetheless, Paul worked hard for these believers and others whom he had never met.
- so that their hearts may be encouraged, having been united in love,
ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν συμβιβασθέντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ
 - The word “that” is ἵνα (hina) which is used to introduce a purpose clause.
 - Paul is explaining why he exerts such a determined effort on behalf of these believers.
 - The word “hearts” is from καρδία (kardia) which does mean “heart”, but is not referring to the blood pumping organ here, but to the center of thinking, feeling, volition, desires, etc.
 - The phrase “may be encouraged” is from παρακαλέω (parakaleō) which can mean “urge”, “implore”, “exhort”, “encourage”, or “comfort” [Rom 12:1, 8; 2 Cor 1:4-6; 12:8; Eph 4:1; 1 Thess 3:2, 7].
 - In context, either “comforted” or “encouraged” would seem to fit the best.
 - Given that no difficulty or affliction is mentioned, “encouraged” is probably the best translation.
 - The phrase “having been knit together” is from συμβιβάζω (sumbibazō) which can mean “prove”, “conclude”, “instruct”, or “bring together” [Acts 9:22; 16:10; 1 Cor 2:16; Eph 4:16; Col 2:19].
 - This is a plural masculine participle which is not referring to their hearts, but rather to the people themselves who are all part of the body of Christ.
 - The phrase “in love” is talking about ἀγάπη (agapē) love which is an integrity based love that does not demand worthiness of its object.
- and that they obtain all the spiritual wealth that comes from the full conviction of understanding,
καὶ εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως,
 - The phrase “attaining to” is εἰς (eis) which means “to”, but is used in a myriad of ways.
 - This begins the first of two εἰς (eis) clauses, the second one being translated “resulting in”.
 - This εἰς (eis) clause gives the second purpose for Paul’s hard work on their behalf.
 - The second εἰς (eis) clause explains the desired outcome of full assurance.
 - The word “wealth” is πλοῦτος (ploutos) which we saw in v. 1:27 to mean “wealth” or “abundance”.
 - Here this is referring to spiritual riches, not financial prosperity.
 - The phrase “full assurance” is from πληροφορία (plērophoria) which means “certainty” or “full assurance” [1 Thess 1:5; Heb 6:11; 10:22].
 - The word “understanding” is from σύνεσις (sunesis) which means “comprehension” or “understanding” in having a full grasp of a topic.
- the outcome being a full knowledge of God’s mystery, namely, Christ,
εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ,
 - The phrase “resulting in” is εἰς (eis).

- This begins the second εἰς (eis) clause which explains the desired outcome of full conviction [Rom 6:16, 19, 22; 15:18].
- The phrase “true knowledge” is from ἐπίγνωσις (epignōsis) which means “full knowledge”.
- This is a deeper understanding than simple γνώσις (gnōsis).
- The phrase “that is, Christ Himself” is Χριστοῦ (Christou) which simply means “Christ”.
- This word is in apposition to “mystery” which means that Christ is the mystery.
- Some manuscripts include “both the Father and” here, but text criticism favors omitting that text.
- The NET Bible translates this “namely, Christ” which better captures Paul’s emphasis.
- in whom are stored up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 ἐν ᾧ εἰσὶν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι.
 - The word “hidden” is from ἀπόκρυφος (apokruphos) which means “kept from” or “hidden”.
 - This is a cognate of ἀποκρύπτω (apokruptō) which we translated in v. 1:26 as “sealed up”.
 - The meaning here is not “hidden away from sight” but rather the idea of being “stored up”.
 - The word “treasures” is from θησαυρός (thēsauros) which means “repository” or “treasure”.
 - Here it speaks of that which is stored up, so “treasures” is a good translation.
 - The word “wisdom” is from σοφία (sophia) as we saw in v. 1:28.
 - The word “knowledge” is from γνώσις (gnōsis) not ἐπίγνωσις (epignōsis) as we saw in v. 2:2.
- I say this so that no one will deceive you with misleading persuasive arguments.
 Τοῦτο λέγω, ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζεται ἐν πιθανολογίᾳ.
 - The phrase “I say this” is a reference back to what Paul had just written in the previous verses.
 - This includes “full conviction of understanding” which results in “full knowledge of Christ”.
 - Once again we find a purpose clause here.
 - Paul’s ultimate purpose in working so hard for these believers was that they grow in their faith so as not to be easily led astray by false teachers.
 - The verb “will delude” is from παραλογίζομαι (paralogizomai) which means “deceive” or “delude”.
 - This is describing a deception [Jas 1:22].
 - The phrase “persuasive argument” is πιθανολογία (pithanologia) which means “persuasive speech”.
 - This is a hapax legomenon, but is similar to χρηστολογία (chrēstologia) in Rom 16:18.
 - The idea is an argument with a false conclusion being presented that seems logical on the surface and can be quite convincing to those who do not have a firm understanding of the truth.
- For even though I am physically separated from you, nevertheless I am with you in spirit,
 εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῆ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι,
 - The phrase “even though” is εἰ καὶ (ei kai) which literally means “if even”.
 - This combination forms a first class conditional meaning that the statement which follows is true.
 - The phrase “I am absent” is ἄπειμι (apeimi) which means “I am away from”.
 - This is presented here in direct contrast to the phrase “I am with you” [1 Cor 5:3; 1 Thess 2:17].
 - The phrase “in body” is literally “in the flesh” and is given in contrast to “in spirit”.
 - By “in the flesh” Paul is describing physical presence.
 - The phrase “I am with you in spirit” does not mean that Paul was transported spiritually to Colossae.
 - Paul means that he has constantly kept the Colossian believers in his thoughts and prayers.

- rejoicing to be aware of your good discipline and the unwavering strength of your faith in Christ.

χαίρων καὶ βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν.

- The word “rejoicing” is from χαίρω (chairō) which is the same word we saw in v. 1:24 meaning a state of happiness/joy.
- These believers were a source of joy for Paul.
- The phrase “to see” is from βλέπω (blepō) which means “see” but can also mean “know about”.
- Paul was well aware of the spiritual growth of these believers.
- The phrase “good discipline” is from τάξις (taxis) which means “orderliness” [1 Cor 14:40].
- Here this word speaks of proper organization within the church which is the result of discipline.
- The word “stability” is στερέωμα (stereōma) which means “firmness” or “steadfastness”.
- This word is used only here in the Bible, but is similar to the word for “firm” in 1 Pet 5:9.
- This word is used of military forces that are strong and committed to the battle.

Our Walk in Christ [2:6-7]

- Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, live out your life abiding in Him, Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε,
 - The word “Therefore” tells us that a conclusion is being drawn here.
 - Paul gives an exhortation to these believers based upon their spiritual growth.
 - The word “received” is from παραλαμβάνω (paralambanō) which means “receive alongside”.
 - The Greek word λαμβάνω (lambanō) means “receive” – the παρα (para) prefix adds emphasis.
 - The phrase “Christ Jesus the Lord” is found only here in the Bible.
 - Paul states it this way to emphasize that Christ is the Lord of all who believe in Him.
 - The word “walk is from περιπατέω (peripateō) which means “walk” but is most often used in the N.T. as an idiom for “conduct one’s life”.
 - Because the context is temporal, the phrase “in Him” is not describing positional truth, but rather the “abiding” that Jesus and John spoke about [John 15:4-7; 1 John 2:6, 27-28; 3:6, 24; 4:13].
- having been firmly rooted and now being edified in Him and established in the faith, ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει
 - The phrase “having been firmly rooted” is from ριζόω (rhizoō) which means “firmly rooted” or “fixed”.
 - This is a perfect passive participle of ριζόω (rhizoō) describing a past completed action by an outside agent (God) with present, ongoing results.
 - This “being rooted” is “in Him” which indicates that these believers have been firmly rooted in Christ – a very important event that occurred the moment they placed their faith in Him.
 - The phrase “being built up” is from ἐποικοδομέω (epoikodomeō) which means “build upon” or “edify” [1 Cor 3:10, 12, 14; Eph 2:20; Jude 20].
 - The Greek word οικοδομέω (oikodomeō) means “build” and the ἐπ (ep) prefix adds the dimension of building on top of something already built.
 - This “being edified” is also “in Him” which indicates that these believers who have been firmly rooted in Christ need to continue to grow in Him [2 Pet 3:18].

- The word “established” is from βεβαιῶ (bebaioō) which means “confirm”, “establish” or “strengthen” [2 Cor 1:21; Heb 2:3; 13:9].
- The phrase “in your faith” is τῇ πίστει (tē pistei) which means “in the faith”.
- This is not the faith of the individual believers, but “the faith” as in the content of what we believe.
- just as you were taught, *and* excelling in thanksgiving.
καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε, περισσεύοντες ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ.
 - The word “instructed” is from διδάσκω (didaskō) which means “teach”.
 - The edification of these believers and their strength in the faith is the direct result of teaching.
 - The word “overflowing” is from περισσεύω (perisseuō) which means “abound”.
 - This word can carry the meaning of going above and beyond as in “excel” [1 Thess 4:1, 10].
 - The phrase “with gratitude” is ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ (en eucharistia) which means “in thanksgiving”.