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HIM.
COLLOSSIANS 2:10 NOV

A new creation focus through Colossians ...

Paul's Struggle

The battle for the mind is an intense one. Satan, the prince of the power of the air and the spirit working inside the minds of those who are disobedient, also throws every possible temptation in every possible way at the saints of God. He works inside the mind; he works through mass media, mass propaganda, and mass education; and he tries to take advantage of every weakness of the flesh that still has a hidden harbor in the life of the Christian. Men like the apostle Paul will work on themselves, and then labor intensively on behalf of others to assist in winning this war for

the mind. For example, the apostle, after describing the beatings, the lashings, and the tribulations in the external realm connected with getting the gospel out to all creation, noted: "Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak," he empathized, "without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" (2 Corinthians 11:28,29). He was not exaggerating when he spoke to the Colossian brethren about "presenting *every man* perfect in Christ." He was not engaging in hyperbole when he spoke of "striving" according to God's power to carry out this purpose.

▲ **The struggle** — Jesus spoke of how the good shepherd would leave the ninety-nine safe sheep to go after the one that was lost, setting the tone that what is important is the salvation of each person. Thus the apostle Paul, in his labors, was concerned about the eternity of each member of each congregation rather than just having some numbers occupying seating space. "For I want you to know," he sincerely adverts, "how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are Laodicea [which was a town located near Colossae], and for all those who have not personally seen my face" (Colossians 2:1). Paul describes his labors for the brethren — his personal time with them, his sending other teachers and preachers to work with them, and his prayers on their behalf — as *struggle*. He was aware of how intense and how constant the battle was for the soul of each of the brethren, and used this graphic word to describe his actions on their behalf.

▲ **The complete picture** — The apostle describes what he desires for each of the brethren in the congregations, "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2,3). In the midst of all the negative and destructive things that happen in the lives of Christians who have to live in this wicked world (but not be "of the world"), Paul's earnest desire was that the heart of each be encouraged. This is hugely important, because fighting off discouragement is one of the biggest battles taking place in the mind of the followers of Christ. He further adds that those hearts are to be knit together in love. Where real love is, there is also real encouragement. The use of the word *knit* gives a clear picture of how intertwined the lives and interests of the brethren in the family of God are to be. He additionally comments on their attaining to spiritual wealth — being rich in the important and eternal things.

All this springs from what the apostle terms "the full assurance of understanding." The experience of teaching the principles of God's word — seeing how they transform the lives and eternities of those so taught, — brings the confidence that the provisions God makes for the victories of the saint through His marvelous mercy and grace are absolutely true and not ever to be set aside. It is a struggle, but what a wonderful fight in which to be engaged!!

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JAY WILSON