

Colossians 2:4-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/col/col-2/colossians-24-5/>

The unity of spirit binds all believers across all geography and time. Paul is fighting from a distance to help ensure the loud and present voices of the day do not drown out the unifying work of Christ and His Gospel.

In Colossians 2:1-3, Paul lays out his purpose in writing to the Colossian believers, which culminates in the conclusion that following Jesus is the key to one's best life. He also emphasizes his care for those he has not met face-to-face and the special endeavor (Paul calls it "struggle") he is undertaking to communicate the message of Jesus to them.

Here Paul says, *I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.* This infers there is a competing narrative and Paul is concerned that the Colossians will be taken in by it.

The only other time in Scripture the word *delude* (Greek, "paralogizimai") is used is in James 1:22, "But prove doers of the word and not just hearers who delude themselves." This is about something that has a ring of truth to it but does not provide the full picture (hearing the word is right but is incomplete without doing). There is a reason the *arguments* are *persuasive*. They may sound like truth but are actually perversions, delusions.

So, what are the persuasive arguments and what specifically is the delusion? Paul does not say, but he leaves some hints. The first is in connection with the previous verse that really hammered home the idea that following Christ is the path to living life to its fullest. Perhaps the false *persuasive argument* is that there is another path that is more desirable. It could be that someone is telling the Colossians that Jesus is the path to material prosperity, which could be a reason Paul emphasizes that the true and lasting wealth to be obtained is spiritual wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Paul also warns the Colossians not to fall into worldly "philosophy" or "traditions of men." This could include both Greek philosophical thought as well as religious traditions that have displaced their underlying spiritual purpose (Colossians 2:6-8).

Another possibility for the false teaching Paul opposes is found in the verse that follows: *for even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am present with you in spirit.* This, coupled with Paul's vehement admonition in verse 1 that he is struggling for those he has not met face-to-face, suggests the *persuasive argument* might be something along the lines of, "Why should you listen to this person whom you've never met? He has never been here. He does not know you."

It seems likely that Paul's opponents would use a combination of the two. There is likely a false doctrinal teaching making its way around Colossae, and the false teaching is being bolstered by the argument that Paul is not present and does not really know what is going on/what is best for the Colossian community. Perhaps Paul's letter was written to reinforce the ministry of Paul's ally Epaphras, and Paul is establishing his authority in order to provide the needed aide (Colossians 1:7).

Paul, in echoes of Chapter 1 and verse 2 of Chapter 2, is reinforcing the idea that the true binding agent between persons is love (*spirit*) rather than proximity (*body*). Paul says in Chapter 1 that the gospel is at work throughout the world and believers are united in that endeavor (including him and the people in Colossae). Paul's spiritual unity with them is much more important than the physical distances between them.

To reiterate this point, Paul says that being with the Colossians *in spirit* allows him to rejoice *to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ*. The word for *good discipline* is the Greek word "taxis," which means "order" or "arranging." Paul is praising the Colossians for living a life of proper alignment with God. The letter, then, is a plea to not leave that alignment for the *persuasive arguments* of those who would deceive.

Paul lauds the Colossians for *good discipline*, the right practice/perspective, and for the *stability* of their *faith in Christ*. He commends them for choosing the right path and for choosing it consistently. Paul is not waiting to see if they are lured by the false teaching. Rather, he is engaging proactively to encourage the Colossians to stay the course and avoid falling for this false teaching.

As the letter to the Colossians progresses, Paul will continue to lay out the case that this is the right path, it is best for all involved, and the Colossians abandon it to their own peril.

Biblical Text

⁴I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. ⁵For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.