

THE GOSPEL...*The Believer's Foundation*

Colossians 1:1-8

Colossians is a book about the **unsearchable riches of Christ**. What it means to be “*in Christ*” and for “*Christ to be in you*.” **Ephesians** can be labeled the epistle portraying the *Church of Christ*. **Colossians** emphasizes the *Christ of the Church*. **Ephesians** focuses on the **Body...** the **Church**. **Colossians** focuses on the **Head...Christ**. The theme of the book of **Colossians** is the *supremacy* and *all-sufficiency* of Christ. Like **Ephesians**, **Colossians** is neatly *divided into two sections*. The **first two chapters** are **doctrinal...chapters 3-4** are **practical**.

Paul's purpose is to show that **Christ is preeminent...first and foremost in everything...**and emphasizes that the Christian's life should reflect that priority. Because believers are **rooted** in Him...**alive** in Him ...**hidden** in Him...and **complete** in Him, it is utterly inconsistent for them to live life **without** Him. Clothed in His *love*, with His *peace* ruling in their heart, the believer is *equipped* to make Christ *first in every area of life...Lordship*.

Colossae was once a populous center of commerce for that region. It was famous for its *glossy black wool*. But by the time of **Paul**, it had been eclipsed by its neighboring cities, **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis** (**Colossians 4:13**) and it was on the decline.

Although the **Colossians** had not yet succumbed, an encroaching heresy was threatening the predominantly *Gentile Colossian church*. The heresy was a religious system that combined elements from **Greek philosophy** (**Colossians 2:4, 8-10**), **Jewish legalism** (**Colossians 2:11-17**), and **Oriental mysticism** (**Colossians 2:18-23**). This heresy involved a *low view of the body* (**Colossians 2:20-23**) and probably nature as a whole. *Circumcision, dietary regulations, and ritual observances* were included in this system, which utilized *asceticism* (self-denial and abstinence), *worship of angels as intermediaries*, and *mystical experiences* (New Age mysticism) as an approach to the spiritual realm. Any attempt to fit **Christ** into such a system, undermined His Deity, and His incarnation and redemptive work.

Paul's predominant purpose is to refute this threatening heresy that is devaluing Christ. **Paul** knows that a proper view of Christ is the antidote for heresy. So, the key to the book of **Colossians** is the **preeminence and supremacy of Christ**. The believer is complete in Him *alone...*and *lacks nothing* because...

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

~Colossians 2:9

Christ is *supreme* both in **creation** (**Colossians 1:15-18**) and in **redemption** (**Colossians 1:19-23**). And this majestic passage in **chapters 1** and **2** builds a positive case for Christ as the most effective repudiation of the heresy that is exposed in **chapter 2**.

I. THE GREETING: (vs. 1-2)

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother (vs. 1)...

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...In all but his two earliest epistles (**I and II Thessalonians**) and his personal letter to the **Philippians**, **Paul** began by designating himself as an **apostle**. Even though he wasn't one of the **original 12 apostles** who were with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry...nevertheless, he did see the risen Christ (**I Corinthians 9:1; I Corinthians 15:8-9**), and he did possess special miraculous powers given to authenticate apostles (**II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4**). He isn't simply a *messenger*, but an *official representative* of the One who sent him. What he writes in this letter is not merely his opinion ...it is *inspired by the Holy Spirit* and is *God's authoritative Word*.

Paul was the most *important* and *influential* person in history since our Lord Jesus Christ. His *personality* was the remarkable combination of a *brilliant mind*, an *indomitable will*, and a *tender heart*. The Church would have been blessed to have record of even one letter from such a man...let alone the thirteen found in the New Testament.

And Timothy our brother...**Timothy** was with **Paul** as he often was. **Paul** spent much time *disciplining Timothy* and wrote two of his last letters to him.

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father (vs. 2)...

Paul addressed the **Colossian** believers as **saints and faithful brethren in Christ**. This phrase marks them as *holy people, chosen and set apart for God*.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father...**Paul's** characteristic greeting...**grace and peace...**emphasized his wish for them to receive *God's favor* (grace) and a *blessed life* (peace).

II. THE GRATITUDE: (vs. 3-5)

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints (vs. 3-4)... Giving continual thanks to God was characteristic of Paul's prayers. Here he's giving thanks because he had heard from Epaphras about their *saving faith in Christ* and their *love* for each other.

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel (vs. 5)... Their *faith* and *love* came from their *hope*.

This trilogy of virtue...*faith, hope, and love*...is the heart of the *word of truth*, which is the *Gospel*.

- *Faith* is the soul looking *upward to God*.
- *Love* looks *outward to others*.
- *Hope* looks *forward to the future*.

Faith...means *to be persuaded that something is true and to trust in it*. It is far more than *intellectual assent*...it involves *obedience*. Biblical faith isn't a leap in the dark. It's *based on fact* and *grounded in evidence*.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

~Hebrews 11:1

Faith gives *assurance* and *certainty* about *unseen realities*. Our *faith* is supported by *convincing evidence*, both from *Scripture* and from the *testimony* of those Christians who have gone before us.

Faith rest on the *past work of Christ*...*love works in the present*... and *hope anticipates the future*. Even though *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Hebrews 11:6)...and *"hope does not disappoint us"* (Romans 5:5)...*"the greatest of these is love"* (I Corinthians 13:13). Paul commends the Colossians for a *love* that extended to *all the saints*, or *all the believers everywhere*.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

~John 13:34-35

Apparently there were *no divisive cliques* at Colossae, such as those that *fractured* the *Corinthian* church. Christ's love not only *drew* the Colossians *to Himself*...but also *to each other*.

Keep in mind...*true biblical love* is so much more than an *emotion*. It's *sacrificial service* to others because they have need. We show *godly love* to someone when we *sacrifice* ourselves to *meet* that person's *needs*.

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven...Laid up means *in storage* or *reserved*.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

~I Peter 1:3-5

Christ is the essence of this *hope*. Without Christ's *resurrection and victory over death* (I Corinthians 15), His *ascension to heaven* (Acts 1:10-11) and His *present intercession there on behalf of believers* (Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1), there would be no *hope*.

Faith and *love* are grounded on *hope*...the *confidence* we have in what God will do in the future. This *confidence* leads to a greater *trust in God* and a *deeper love for others*. This *confident expectation* is based on everything God *has promised*...*heaven, eternal life, His return, a new heaven and a new earth*, etc. It's this *confident expectation* that influences the believers' *world view, values, and behavior*.

Hope is a *willingness to sacrifice the present for the future*. The true believer is *willing to forsake the present glory, comfort, and satisfaction* of this present world for the *future glory* that is his *in Christ*. It's the contrast of the *"buy now, pay later"* mentality.

III. THE GOSPEL: (vs. 5b-8)

Of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel (vs. 5b)...The Word of truth (Ephesians 1:13; II Timothy 2:15; James 1:18) is the *Gospel*!

The Gospel...Gk. *euangelion*, literally means *good news*. We derive the English word **evangelize** from it. It was often used in **classical Greek to speak of the report of victory brought back from a battle**. The Gospel is the *good news* of Jesus' *victory* over *Satan, sin, and death*. It is also the good news that we, too, can triumph eternally over those enemies through Him.

Paul then thanked God because the **Gospel** was spreading throughout **all the world**...it's *universal*. Christianity wasn't just another of the *local sects* of the **Roman Empire**. It wasn't merely one more *cult* like the others at **Colossae**. It *was and is* the *good news* for the whole **world**. The Gospel transcends *ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries*.

Which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth (vs. 6)...

Constantly bearing fruit and increasing...As a tree *bears fruit* and *grows in size*, so the **gospel** produces *spiritual fruit* in believers' lives and *spreads* to *reach* and *influence* others. It produces **fruit** both in the *internal transformation of individuals*, and also in the *external growth of the Church*.

Heresies, such as the one **Paul** will address at **Colossae**, are *local* and *harmful*...but **truth** is *universal* and *helpful*. One of the unmistakable characteristics of the true **Gospel** is **God's grace** in all its **truth**. **Grace** is the very heart of the **Gospel**.

Some preach a different gospel...which is really no gospel at all.

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ."

~Galatians 1:6-7

A *false gospel* is a *gospel of grace plus something...grace plus works...or faith plus works*. But the true **Gospel** is one of *grace alone*.

"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."

~Romans 11:6

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

~Titus 3:5-7

Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf (vs. 7)... The **Colossians** learned the **Gospel** from **Epaphras**, who apparently founded the *church* at **Colossae**. **Paul** called him a **beloved fellow bond-servant**, a humble description from a great apostle...and a **faithful servant of Christ**. A testimony to his diligence in fulfilling his faithful calling.

Although *salvation* is solely by God's **grace**...He uses humans as channels of that **grace**.

"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."

~Acts 1:8

And he also informed us of your love in the Spirit (vs. 8)...Not only did **Epaphras** carry the *good news* of Christ to **Colossae**, but he also brought back to **Paul**, while he was in prison in **Rome**, the *good news* about their **love in the Spirit** for Christ.

Because believers are in the **Spirit** and the **Spirit** is in them (**Romans 8:9**)...the love that these **Colossians** had for **all the saints (vs. 4)** stemmed from the *indwelling Holy Spirit*. That's why when believers are *controlled by the love of the Spirit*...they will *manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- The **Gospel**...doesn't contain the **Word of Truth**...it is the **Word of Truth**. Therefore, it is the foundation for all...our **faith**, our **love**, our **hope**.
- As a believer, our life should reflect the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ. That He is preeminent...*first and foremost in everything* in our life.

- **Positionally**, as a believer we are called a **saint**. We therefore, need to put into **practice** the trilogy of **faith**, **love**, and **hope**.