

Colossians 1:3-8 The Gospel in Christ

1

Introduction

This passage covers Paul's response to the Colossians faith in the Gospel. It also covers the great hope of the Christian and the source of hope which is the Word of God. As this passage is studied, note how it lays a solid foundation against false teaching—the great threat which the Colossian church was facing and which the church of every generation faces.

2

Colossians 1:3-8

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷ as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

3

The Gospel is Received by Faith

Colossians 1:3

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.

Paul admires the Colossian's true and continuing saving faith, which had separated them from sin to God. Notice that he gives **thanks to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Paul recognizes that God is the One who is owed thanks, because salvation in all its parts is a gift from Him (Eph. 2:8–9). **Always** should be considered in relation to the preceding phrase, **we give thanks to God, not to praying ... for you**. Paul was not always praying for the Colossians. Rather, whenever he was praying for them, he always expressed his thanks to God.

4

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Pistis (**faith**) means to be persuaded that something is true and to trust in it. Far more than mere intellectual assent, it involves obedience. *Pistis* comes from the root word which means “obey”. The concept of obedience is equated with belief throughout the New Testament (cf. John 3:36; Acts 6:7; Rom. 15:18; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:17). The Bible also speaks of the obedience of faith (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

5

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Saving faith is carefully defined in Scripture and needs to be understood because there is a dead, non-saving faith that provides false security (James 2:14–26). True saving faith contains repentance and obedience as its elements.

6

Object of Faith

Colossians 1:4

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

What makes faith valuable is its **object**. In contrast to the contentless faith so prevalent in our culture, saving faith has as its object Christ Jesus. The relationship of faith to Jesus Christ is expressed in the New Testament by various Greek prepositions. Acts 16:31 uses the preposition *epi*, which suggests resting on a foundation. In Acts 20:21, *eis* is used, with the meaning of “to find a dwelling place in,” “to go into,” “to abide in,” or “to find a home.” Here **in** translates *en* and has the connotation of coming to a place of security and anchor. With Christ as its object, our faith is as secure as a house on a solid foundation, or a boat safely at anchor.

7

Gospel Faith Results in Love

Colossians 1:4

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Faith and love are the two basic or foundational qualities of life for true Christians. In fact, they form the one great commandment of God.

1 John 3:23

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Genuine faith does not exist in a vacuum but results in a changed life. One of the visible and strong fruits of true saving faith is love for fellow believers.

8

Gospel Faith Results in Love

Colossians 1:4

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Paul gives thanks that the Colossians love all the saints. Their love was nonselective. 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.

That does not mean we are to feel the same emotional attachment toward everyone. True biblical love is so much more than an emotion; it is sacrificial service to others because they have need. We show godly love to someone when we sacrifice ourselves to meet that person's needs.

9

Hope of the Gospel

Colossians 1:5

because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

Paul is thankful not only for the Colossians' faith and love, but also for their hope. Faith and hope are inseparably linked. We believe, and so we hope.

Paul describes that hope as laid up for you in heaven. The word translated "**laid up**" means "in store," or "reserved." Peter speaks of "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4).

10

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Our hope in heaven:

- It is the hope of being raised from the dead and being given a new and perfect and glorious body—a body just like Jesus Christ.
- It is the hope of the Lord's return and of being with the Lord Himself forever.
- It is the hope of entering the veil of heaven and of living there forever.
- It is the glorious inheritance we are to receive from God as sons and daughters of His.

11

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All this "hope" hinges on one critical point - the Gospel. It is only in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sins that we have any hope in heaven and any reward there.

Notice that they had heard and had responded to the gospel. The Colossian believers had placed their faith in Jesus and His payment for sin.

Notice that the gospel is proclaimed to be the "**Word of the Truth**". It is not the ideas of men, but the Word of God who is Truth!

12

The Gospel Reaches the World

Colossians 1:6a

which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world,

The gospel is also universal; it **has come to you, just as it has in all the world**. Christianity was not just another of the local sects of the Roman Empire. It was not 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.

Revelation 5:9-11 tells us that there will be those in heaven from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The message of the gospel is universal for all people!

13

The Gospel Bears Fruit

Colossians 1:6b

and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

The gospel is not a stagnant system of ethics; it is a living, moving, and growing reality. It bears fruit and spreads. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is living and active." When the gospel is received and believed, it results in fruit.

The gospel produces fruit both in the internal transformation of individuals (fruit of the Spirit), and also in the external growth of the church. The two concepts are interrelated. The spiritual growth of individuals will lead to new converts being won to Christ.

14

The Gospel is Rooted in Grace

Colossians 1:6b

and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Grace is the very heart of the gospel. It is God's freely giving us the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, which we do not deserve and cannot earn. Christianity contrasts sharply with other religions, which assume man can save himself by his good works. Nothing is more clearly taught in Scripture than the truth that "by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8–9).

Paul describes saving grace as **the grace of God in truth**. The phrase **in truth** carries the sense of genuineness. It is truly **the grace of God** in contrast to all other religions. God is freely, sovereignly merciful and forgiving. We can do nothing to earn our own salvation; God saves us freely by His grace.

15

The Gospel's Effect is Reported

Colossians 1:7-8

as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Epaphras brought the good news of God's grace to the Colossian church. They learned it from him. Paul often referred to himself as a *doulos* (**bond-servant**) of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Titus 1:1). By referring to Epaphras as his **fellow bond-servant** (*sundoulos*), and calling him a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf, Paul connects Epaphras' ministry with his own. Epaphras was Paul's representative at Colossae, backed by his authority and that of the Lord Jesus. While Paul was imprisoned, unable to go to the Colossians, Epaphras ministered to them on Paul's behalf. He also informed Paul of the Colossians' **love in the Spirit**, a report that no doubt brought great joy to Paul's heart. Paul was thankful for the gospel, and for the Colossians' reception of it.

16

So What ...

God gives us the wonderful **privilege** and **responsibility** of being His agents in proclaiming the gospel of His grace.

May we be faithful to share with others the gospel that has meant so much to us.