

Colossians 1:1-8

This morning we begin our study of the book of Colossians. We are calling it “The Christ” because there is no question that the theme of Colossians is Jesus.

1. The apostle Paul is writing to a church he had never personally met
2. They were planted likely by someone who encounters the gospel in Ephesus 100 miles away
3. They didn't have mature leadership and they had no New Testament to guide them.
4. And now, they get a letter from Paul himself.

What did Paul write about? We could come up with a list of 100 different things that matter...but Paul really could only think of one. Jesus Christ!

READ/PRAY

v1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. 3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Paul himself is thankful to God for this church and he prays for them regularly! What does he know about them that would move him to be so thankful? 3 main things.

I. They had Faith v4a

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus

Paul is thankful first and foremost for their faith in Christ.

Paul addresses them in verse 2 as saints.

1. That word saint means “holy ones.”
2. How can we possibly be holy? Only by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
3. THE GOSPEL

They had faith. They were converted!

II. They had Love v4b

and the love which you have for all the saints;

Paul addresses them in verse two as saints, but also faithful brethren.

1. Saints is a vertical title. Faithful brethren is a horizontal one.
 - a. The Great commandments:
 - b. Saints...Love God
 - c. Faithful brethren...Love others.
2. They are faithful to one another. Brothers. Sisters. Loyal. Loving
 - a. John 13:34-35 *34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*”
 - b. 1 John 3:10 *By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*

They had love for, not just their fellow church members at Colossae, but all the saints. All the saints.

1. We get so easily bogged down, pre-occupied, and distracted by our little world that we fail to remember that Christ's body is global!
2. This is really a crisis situation!
 - a. Not just our forgetfulness that the global church is an equal part of the body and is to be loved
 - b. But that the church in America is so oblivious to the rest of Christ's body!
 - c. When one part of the body hurts, we all hurt...and it is hurting like never before!
3. David Curry addresses the need for an increased love for all the saints in a June 18th USA Today Column. He writes,

*"the leadership of the American church, with its superpastors and megachurches, is whistling through the graveyard. The beast that we have created, which relies on upbeat music and positivity to attract donors to sustain large budgets, leaves little room for pastors to talk about the suffering of global Christians. Like most of the culture, the American church is more concerned about college entrance scandals and "Game of Thrones" than persecution. Inoculated by entertainment and self-absorption, they are completely detached from the experience of the global church. The American church is feeding itself to death while the worldwide church is being murdered."*¹

4.. Hebrews 13:3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

III. They had Hope v5

5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven,

Notice that Paul doesn't mention hope of a prosperity filled retirement. He doesn't mention hope of comfort and ease in this life. He doesn't mention hope of tomorrow. He specifically mentions the hope laid up for them in heaven.

1. This was a very forward looking hope. An eternal hope rather than a temporal one.
2. This is where their hope was found.

1 Corinthians 15 is known as the resurrection chapter.

1. It begins with the gospel message of Christ's resurrection but very quickly moves to the future and final resurrection of all believers in Christ!
2. This is where their hope was.
 - a. We cling to and focus on the past resurrection
 - b. They clung to the past resurrection but but kept their eyes and hearts focused on the future resurrection
 - c. Where they focused made all the difference
 - d. This is the point Paul is trying to drive home in 1 Corinthians 15.

¹The complete article referenced can be found online here: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2019/06/18/nigerian-kidnapping-christians-shows-american-church-must-act-column/1445442001/>

1 Corinthians 15:19 *If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*

1. What Paul is saying here is that the life he chose to live, would be a pitiable, foolish life, if there was no resurrection.
2. Think about the life Paul lived.
3. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 *Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

Paul says: If the dead are not raised – if this life of risk and sacrifice and suffering and persecution is my only life – I am a pitiful fool.

1. Paul preached faith in the death, burial, and past resurrection of Christ for salvation
2. But, it was Paul's focus and hope in the future resurrection that kept him going in the midst of so many trials...AND NOT ONLY KEPT HIM GOING, but pushed him into them!
3. *“Without a hope for resurrection and everlasting joy with Christ we all tend to treat this life as a place where we have to squeeze out as much pleasure as we can and take as few risks as we can. Because there is nothing else. But if Christ is raised, and if trusting him means that I will be raised with him, then this life is just a brief prelude to eternal life with Christ and ever-increasing joy with him.”*

John Piper

4. If this is true those who hope in the future resurrection and take big risks for Christ are not fools.
5. The fools are those who live for this life and play it safe.

Now, let us be honest this morning. If a 3rd party were to watch us, listen to us, and get to know us, **where would they say our hope is?**

1. Is it in this life? Or the life to come? (your time, your money, your energy)
2. Is it on earth? Or is it in heaven? (your time, your money, your energy)
3. What do our visions, our dreams, our goals, and our plans center on: the temporal or the eternal?
4. I did not ask if our goals were good, wholesome, or helpful...I asked where they are rooted and centered? Here or there? Now or later?
5. What are you living for, planning for, and hoping for? It makes a difference.

This church at Colossae was characterized by faith, love, and hope.

Conclusion: What about us? What about you? This hope, as well as their faith and love, is rooted in the gospel.

3 Responses to the gospel

1. Hear! *of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel*
 - a. They had heard the gospel.
 - b. Paul asked elsewhere, how can they believe if they never hear?
 - c. Jesus said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear!
 - d. Have you heard the gospel?

2. Understand

6 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;

- a. Understanding...it is not enough to hear the gospel, it must be understood.
- b. Do you understand this morning?

3. Learn

7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

- a. Learning...sometimes in order for it to be understood, it has to be learned!
- b. Not a fast food religion.
- c. Sometimes you have to wrestle, strive, and work out your salvation with fear and trembling and that is ok
- d. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it!

It is our hope that as we have already celebrated baptism, as we have sung, as we have prayed and preached the gospel, and now as we take communion together that you have and will hear the gospel, understand it, learn it...and come to know Christ if you do not yet know Him.

Do you know Him?

1. Do you have biblical faith in Christ?
2. Has that faith produced a love in you for all the saints?
3. Do you have hope and do you live like it?

If not, we want to encourage you to turn, trust, and be transformed! Would you consider Christ as we turn our attention to the Lord's table.

PRAYER/COMMUNION

When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

Pray

1. Bread

- a. Jesus lived a sinless spotless perfect life
- b. *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.*
- c. Take it

2. Wine

- a. Jesus died the death our sin deserves
- b. *you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*
- c. Take it

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