

The Centrality of Christ in Faith, Love and Hope

Colossians 1:1-8

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

2. To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

3. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

4. because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—

5. the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel

6. that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and



growing throughout the whole world— just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

7. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

8. and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Introduction:

I used to work for an advertising agency. Behind the counter of our printing company was a sign. The sign was just three words. It read; "Price, Quality, Speed" underneath was written; "Pick Any Two." Most customers wanted all three; cheap price, great quality and to have the work done speedily. But, the customer who wanted speed and quality could not get a cheap price. The customer who wanted a cheap price and quick speed could not get good quality. It just wasn't possible. You could not connect all three.

It was a great sign because it was so true in the business we were running!

If you were to hang a sign in front of the church at Colossae, there would also be three words. But the sign would read; "Faith, Love and Hope, and You Can Choose All Three." The church in Colossae was bearing fruit and growing. They had all three. *Faith and Love were springing from Hope.*

What was their source of hope?

The Centrality of Christ in Faith

The church in Colossae was characterized by a growing faith. They heard about Christ and the message of salvation from a man named Epaphras. By faith the Colossians believed and a church was established. Their faith was centered in God and sprang from the hope of the gospel message. Living all of life in relationship to God was what satisfied their hearts.

When we live by faith, we don't always get what we want. But when the focus of our faith is God, what we do get is God! Perhaps that is the challenge of faith, *that God becomes our greatest desire.* When we live by faith we don't always have financial success. If we are sick, we sometimes aren't always healed. But what we do get is *God's presence in our life.* Our lives are blessed with the

personal presence of God! That is the blessing of faith and there is nothing greater. **When we have God, we have everything.**

Has your faith been tested by a particular trial or temptation? The challenges that we face can lead us to a greater depth and strength in Christ. **It is important that we move toward God with the needs of our heart.** God can enable us to find our satisfaction in Him.

The Centrality of Christ in Love

The church in Colossae was characterized by a deep love for others. Their love was having an impact that went beyond their church to others as well. The love of the church in Colossae was a "love in the Spirit." (vs 8). God's Spirit was at work in their hearts. It was not a love that is natural to the human heart. It sprang from the hope that was stored up for them in heaven.

During this time Paul was in prison and the church was experiencing persecution for their faith. Believers were being imprisoned and their homes

confiscated. Anyone who came to help them or visit them would be in danger of losing their life or

possessions as well. The book of Hebrew's talks about this situation and describes the love of fellow believers for one another; *"you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering.*



Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possession"(Hebrews 10:32–35). Their hope stored in heaven motivated their love for one another.

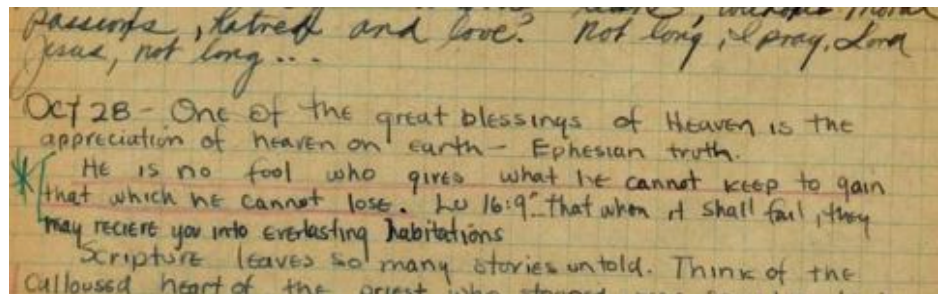
One author has summed it up this way "It was heavenly-mindedness that broke the power of worldly love for furniture and houses and security, and freed them to risk their lives in love. It is not heavenly-mindedness that hinders love. When Christians fail to love, it is not because they have fallen in love with heaven, but because they are still in love with the world".

God's love enables us to act in the best interests of others. Love seems easy when we are around people who think and act like us. Love seems to thrive when we get along well and things go smoothly. But the true test of love is in the situations where there are hurts and misunderstandings. When someone lets you down and disappoints you, where does the ability to love come from? When someone hurts you or makes you feel like garbage, what resources do you draw from to reach out in love? Is there someone or some situation that is making it difficult for you to love? Love that is produced by God's spirit can enable us to reach out and respond appropriately in time and manner. And when we mess up we can honestly admit our guilt and fault. It can break the hopeless cycle we get ourselves into when we are only concerned with our own interests and rights.

The Centrality of Christ in Hope

The faith and love of the Colossians was motivated by the hope that is reserved for them in heaven. Their hope was in Christ and what He had done for them. The following true story helps illustrate the powerful difference this type of motivation makes in how we live.

Jim Elliot was a missionary who left home and comfort to reach a remote tribe of natives in Ecuador with the gospel. Many were surprised at what he had done. He was gifted in many areas and people thought he was throwing away his life. After making contact with the people he hoped to reach, he was killed with a spear that was wrapped in one of the gospel tracts that had been earlier dropped by plane. Because of what happened people said it was a mistake and that he wasted his life. But earlier, Jim Elliot had written in his journal the following words. He wrote, "**He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.**" His faith and love sprang from the hope that is stored up for him in heaven. He



knew that no matter what happened, he would spend eternity with God and experience all the blessings of what Christ had accomplished for him. This was something that no one could take away.

Our hope stored in heaven is able to give us a proper perspective on our present life. A heavenly perspective does not mean that we do not value this present life. Rather, with a proper perspective we are able to live life to the fullest in faith

and love as God intended. God's unchanging word assures all who believe that **their hope is secure in Christ and what he has done for them.**

We have God's word on it.

The Word of Truth, the Gospel.

What is the gospel that is bearing fruit and growing all over the world (vs. 6)? What is it that transformed the hearts and lives of the Colossians and resulted in faith, love and hope?

The word *Gospel* means "Good News" The Gospel is good news that Jesus has solved the problem of sin through His life, death and resurrection. Sin is the bad news of the human condition in rebellion

against God. Unfortunately, when the Bible details all the bad things about the human condition, people sometimes respond in either denial or anger. ***They miss the good news!***

I read recently of a young man who rebelled against his father and left home. He didn't come back until after his father had died. The day came for the reading of his father's will. The family gathered and the lawyer began to read the will. Everyone was surprised that the will detailed all the ways the

boy had rebelled. As the boy sat and listened to the account of his evil, he got up in anger and left the room. Nobody heard from him for about three years. Eventually he was found. He was finally told that his father's will, after detailing all his waywardness, had also bequeathed him a very large sum of money.

He missed the good news because he couldn't stand to hear the bad news.

The Gospel as well is good news because it shows us the love God set against the dark background of human rebellion. "Even while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God cares about the situation we are in. He cares enough to speak the truth in love. But he doesn't just stop with the problem. He tells us of His solution. He tells us how we can have restoration and harmony and how we can be brought back into fellowship with Him.

God also takes the initiative to work in hearts and lovingly draws people to Himself. ***Have you sensed God's work in your heart?***

It is a step of faith when we first understand our lost condition and respond in belief and repentance. And we continue to live by faith. The good news is that right now, whatever you are facing, pride, weakness, hopelessness— there is hope in Christ. To all who come to

Him in faith, Jesus promises, "Let not your hearts be troubled for I am with you".

Jesus' promise is for both now and eternity. Through the Gospel, the gift of God's



undeserved favor and eternal life is revealed. This is where hope begins. Realizing and receiving this hope can encourage us in our faith and love everyday.

May God draw us closer to Himself as a church and help us to live in the hope of the gospel each and everyday.

Lets pray,

Dear Lord,

Enable us to set our affections on Jesus and the hope that is laid up for us in heaven.

Please break our hearts from desiring comfort and pleasure more than you.

Help us to set our hearts and minds on the things that are above, not on the things of the earth.

Through your love, grant us patience and humility.

Please lead us in faith.

Help us to live by faith and not by sight, especially when the things we see can be so strong and hard to figure out.

Enable our faith to be centered in You and not on other things.

Please lead us in love.

Enable us to look out for the interests of others...even when it means denying our own needs.

Help us to take time to listen and to pray. By God's grace, bear in us the visible fruit of love and faith.

Enable us to center our hope in you.

*We pray in Jesus name,
Amen*