

Sunday, December 29, 2019—Colossians 1:3-8 The Faith, Love, & Hope of the Colossians

Introduction/Review

- Thus far we have had three messages expounding upon two verses from the text of Colossians 1.
 - Colossians 1:1 Paul’s Unique Apostleship
 - Colossians 1:2 Are We Saints?
 - Colossians 1:2 Grace & Peace: God’s Attitude Toward the World Today
- This morning my intention is to finish Paul’s greeting by looking at verses 3 through 8.

Colossians 1:3

- **We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,**
- Who is the “we” that is giving “thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?” Given that this verse is still part of Paul’s greeting, in context it must be Paul and Timothy from verse 1. Paul and Timothy were actively expressing gratitude and thanksgiving for the Colossians.
- How were they doing this? By “praying always for you.” The word rendered “you” in English in verse is 2nd person plural pronoun and is therefore referring to everyone mention in verse 2. So, Paul and Timothy gave “thanks to God” by “praying always” for the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ” where are at Colosse.”
- Colossians 1:9—notice that Paul stats a second time that he and Timothy did not “cease to pray for you.” Next Sunday, when we begin expounding upon Paul’s prayer for the Colossians, I will say a bit more about the issue of praying without ceasing. For now, I just want you to see that Paul practiced what he preached.
 - I Thessalonians 5:17
 - Romans 12:12
 - Philippians 4:6
 - Telling another believer that you are praying for them is a great source of encouragement. That is what Paul is doing in this greeting.

Colossians 1:4

- **Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints,**

- How long had Paul and Timothy been “praying always” and giving “thanks to God” for the Colossians? Since they first heard of their faith in Christ Jesus. So, upon hearing of their faith in Christ Paul had not stopped praying and giving thanks for the Colossians.
 - Colossians 2:1—recall that Paul has never physically been to Colosse or meet the Colossians in person. Therefore, his knowledge of this “faith in Christ” came to him via the reports of others.
- The Colossians had love for “all the saints.” The most natural reading of this passage is that the Colossians loved all the members of the body of Christ, even in other assemblies outside of Colosse. There is nothing in the context to suggest that the Colossians loved only Jewish believers as some have defined the word “saints.”
- Paul’s prayers of thanksgiving for the Colossian in verse 3 commenced upon hearing of two things in verse 4 namely their “faith in Christ” and “the love which ye have to all the saints.”

Colossians 1:5

- **For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;**
- Verse 5 records a 3rd thing that Paul gave thanks for on behalf of the Colossians, “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Heard and believed Paul’s gospel the Colossians were possessors of a heavenly hope.
 - Colossians 2:12
 - Colossians 3:2
 - Philippians 3:20
 - Ephesians 2:6
 - II Corinthians 5:1
- The future destiny and hope of the body of Christ is laid up for us in heaven. We are a spiritual people with spiritual blessings that God is going to use for his glory in the heavenly places. The Colossians had heard/learned of their heavenly hope “in the word of the truth of the gospel.” This hope is part and parcel of Paul’s gospel.
 - Ephesians 1:13-14

Colossians 1:6

- **Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:**
- Paul's gospel with its heavenly hope had come unto the Colossians. They believed it. It produced love in them for all the saints and furnished them with an understanding of their heavenly hope i.e., it brought forth spiritual fruit in them.
 - Romans 15:16-20—on his three Apostolic journeys Paul had spread the gospel of the grace of God throughout the known world of his day. Later, writing the book of Colossians at Rome under house arrest, Paul could say that “truth of the gospel” (v. 5) had come unto the Colossian “as it is in all the world.”
 - I Corinthians 9:16-17—Paul has faithfully discharged the “dispensation of the gospel” that had been committed into him.
- Through the preservation of God's word Paul's gospel come to us. When we believe it, fruit is brought forth in us as well. Because God promised to preserve that which he inspired our ability to know “the grace of God in truth” is not diminished in the least.

Colossians 1:7

- **As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;**
- In the context, the indication is that Epaphras was the “faithful minister of Christ” who brought taught Paul's gospel to the Colossians.
 - Colossians 4:12—Epaphras is from Colosse. He is with Paul in Rome when the epistle was written.
- Given that Paul never visited Colosse himself, it seems reasonable to infer that the church was established there via converts from Paul substantial ministry in the province of Asia.
 - Acts 20:31—Paul spent three years teaching in Ephesus the capital of Asia.
 - Acts 19:8-10
 - Acts 19:14-17—the working of God in Ephesus was well known throughout the province of Asia.
 - Acts 19:26—Demetrius says that Paul's ministry in Ephesus reached “throughout all Asia.”

- Therefore, we conclude that the church in Colosse was established through Paul's mighty ministry in the Roman province of Asia.
- Colossians 1:7—presumably, Epaphras got saved under Paul's ministry in Ephesus who then carried the contents of Paul's preaching to Colosse. Paul calls Epaphras his "dear fellowservant."

Colossians 1:8

- **Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.**
- Not only was Epaphras the chief evangelist in Colosse he was also the one who "declared" to Paul in the situation with the assembly there. Put another way, it was Epaphras who first caused Paul to hear of their "faith in Christ" and love "to all saints" in verse 3. It was the totality of Epaphras' declarations that promoted the writing of this epistle.

Parting Thoughts

- When others hear of this assembly what is the nature of the report? What are we collectively as an assembly known for?
 - The church that preaches with the Bible teaches.
 - One-anothering
 - Love to all saints
 - Grace & Peace
- We get to determine that in large measure by how we treat each other.