
Colossians 1:1-8, *Love, Faith, Hope, and Truth!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: This is a letter from the Apostle Paul who was chosen by God to deliver to those of the faith a very important message: *Continue to be faithful for our Lord Jesus Christ so God continues to pour out His grace so we can have peace in abundance.* The key is to always give thanks to Christ, and to have gratitude for who He is and what He has done for you. Our trust in Christ should show up as gratitude and a life lived out well. We can easily do this when we see what lies ahead for us in Heaven. What we have and what we will have are astonishing, our joy now as well as our hope to come in eternity. The Good news of the Gospel must make an impact on us so we can make a response. It changes lives, a complete change from the inside out, because of His Truth. And, this message of the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ continues to go out to the entire world! The message is hastened when we love God and His people and desire the lost to be reached as we obey His commands and call. We can have assurance that God is kind to us and will continue to be so and use us when we are kind to others too. You can also be Christ's faithful servant, and help further the Kingdom and glorify Christ! Because His great love is in you, His wonders can be displayed through your life. For these are the calls He has given! And, we are not alone in this; we have His Holy Spirit to enable and empower us!

Contexts and Background:

Paul has kept tabs on this church and has mentored some of its leaders; therefore he has a heart and concern for them. Epaphras probably told Paul at Rome about the problems in this Colossian church and thus encouraged him to write this letter of reprimand. Paul shows his care and prayers and gratitude for what this church had done and meant to him. He affirms them by being pastoral and letting them know firmly where they have strayed. This church was struggling with the fact that Christ was supreme and enough.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Paul.* In letters then, the writer's name was expected at the start; Paul was the sole author and mentions Timothy's name to give himself credence. Paul's thrust and motivation was not just his passion and character, but his realization of the debt he owed Christ and his response of overwhelming gratitude. If we focus only upon ourselves, we will fail badly. We must be like Paul and willfully keep Christ as our head, for He already is (Acts 9:1; Rom. 1:1; Philp. 3:4-14; Col. 4:18).
- *Apostle.* Means one who is sent with authority; in Paul's case, sent by the Holy Spirit and commissioned by Christ Himself. Paul was not one of the original twelve; his apostleship was unique, thus he needed to give an explanation of who he was. There are NO apostles today in the biblical sense. If someone says he or she is one, they are either deluded or extremely prideful (Acts 1:21-26; Rom. 1:1-7; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4)!
- *Christ Jesus.* He is our Lord and Savior, and source of our faith, hope, and love because of Christ's substitutionary death. For us, we are declared righteous and holy in God's sight. In addition, the work of the Holy Spirit continues to be available for empowerment in our daily lives.
- *Timothy.* He was Paul's assistant as well as a church planter and pastor himself. He was from a godly family and knew the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul pours his life and wisdom into him, showing an example of godly mentoring and discipleship (Acts 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
- *Brother.* As Christians, we are together in community. Paul had a strong sense of community, togetherness, and cooperation; when we love one another, we prove and exhibit Christ (John 13:34-35; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 2:10; 3:14-16).

- *Holy*. Meaning set apart for God's service and pleasure and responding with what God has given with faith and application. Christ as our Redeemer is the One who makes us **holy**. He sets us apart for a reason and a purpose—for our lives have meaning and value (Eph. 1:1; Heb. 2:12-18).
- *Faithful*. The result of our gratitude for being in a special spiritual union with Christ as Savior and Lord (Eph 1:3).
- *Colosse*. See background article.
- *Grace and peace*. A standard form of Greek and first century Jewish greeting with a play on words; *greeting* is "charein" and *grace* is "charis." Paul was yearning for them to have favor by God and a triumphant life that would please Him (John 4:2; 14:27; 20:19; Luke 1:28; Gal. 1:3; Eph 1:2).
- *Give thanks/thank God*. This means *being grateful*: "exordia." It was the custom to give thanks to the gods in Greek culture. Paul switches the emphasis to the One we should honor. This is not just to be a conversational expression, but rather the overture of this Epistle. Having an attitude of gratitude is essential for our faith and practice no matter what we have been through or have lost. Being thankful also helps us to see hope, and to forgive and live and have joy by which we display God's goodness. Without gratitude, we are ungrateful people—ingrates; this is an insult to God and as a result, we will live a self-inflicted, miserable, hopeless life no matter what we have or could have; thus God's goodness that is to be shown through us is veiled by our contempt (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:14; Eph. 1:6; Philp. 1:3-4; Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15-17; 4:2).
- *Pray for you*. This is not a superficial statement or just an instinctive response; this is a prime duty and call for all those in Christ—to seek Him and to intercede on the behalf of others. It is also an act of worship when we hold others up in prayer, as it honors Christ (Matt. 6:7, 33; Acts 16:25).
- *Faith in Christ*, Paul answers the main debate in Colosse in this prayer, which was whether Christ's grace was sufficient or if other aspects needed to be put in too. The answer is: *Christ is enough!* "Christ alone by faith alone." The other aspects, such as "works," are merely the result of His working in us (Rom. 1:16; 10:4-17; James 2:14-26).
- *Faiths...Hope...Love... together are central* and crucial gifts of God, aspects of the resulting new life we have in Christ, who is the source of these virtues. This is called a trilogy of virtue, as this helps creates our joy because we see, internalize, and live out our faith in Christ. This is also a favorite expression of Paul (Rom. 5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 1:4; 2:8; 1 Thess. 1:3, 7-8; 5:8; Heb. 10:22-24; 11:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 22).
- *Faith...springs from our growth and intimacy in Christ*. We are given faith and we make more. This trusts, rests, and looks to God for what He has done.
- *Love*. This is a fruit of faith and shows our authenticity, which allows us to serve. It lives in the present as it looks outward to others (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 13; 1 John 3:14; James 2:14).
- *Hope*. This is not wishful thinking; rather, it is our full confidence and assurance in Christ that leads to greater trust and faith and deeper love. Hope is a prime reason for us to be grateful. It also anticipates and looks forward to the future (Rom. 5:2; Gal. 5:5; Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:3).
- *Because of the hope*. This alludes to God and His sovereignty. This is also our security, as we have the great loving and creating God in us. Why would we prefer our own limited, feeble ways and thinking (Eph. 1:4; 2:8)?

- *In heaven.* This is our ultimate future hope and residence. This refers to the future rewards and motivation for those who are righteous—righteous only by receiving Christ’s righteousness (Acts 1:10-11; Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:16-19; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 1 John 2:1).
- *All over the world.* This is *hyperbole metaphor* expressing a hope for the future, as at this time the Gospel was contained to the Roman Empire. But the point was to refute the charge that Christianity was just a local sect or ethnic or cultural fad with no power or future; rather, the Gospel is transformational and cross-cultural. Even then the Gospel was spreading—as it continues to do so—and we are called to come on board (Col. 1: 23; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; 16:19).
- *Gospel/good news.* This means victory as in “God delivers,” and that salvation is from, and only from God, and Christ as Lord. This refers to the person and Work of Christ, how He delivered us out of sin and into our new life. It is by His life and sacrifice that we have the Kingdom and abundance of life here and forevermore. This also refers to how God delivered Israel out of bondage as proclaimed at Sinai (Rom. 10:9-10; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; Heb. 2:3; 4:6).
- *Bringing forth fruit.* In context, we are farmers of God’s provision and gifts. He gives us the seeds to make the crops. How are they doing? Budding, drought, bumper crops, do they need water, care cultivation, fertilizer? Are you being the weed killer to your own fruits (Gen. 1:28; Hos. 10:1; 14:7-8; Matt. 13:3-8, 31-32; Luke 8:11; John 14-15; Rom. 1:13; 15:30; Gal. 5; Phil. 1:11, 22; Col. 1:10)?
- *Truth.* The Gospel contains the knowledge of who, why, and what concerning Christ, and it is true-Truth. Paul sets the record straight of any confusion. It is not bound to or by any human reason or tradition and can’t be corrupted, but we can misrepresent it. We must never do that (Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18).
- *Epaphras.* A shorting of the name Epaphroditus, a Greek declension of "Aphrodite" (the Greek goddess of love). He was the Colosse church planter and mentee of Paul who perhaps never visited this church. Thus, Paul is pastoring, mentoring, leading, and encouraging Epaphras, and through this letter, he uses his apostle leadership role to spur them on so Epaphras can in turn lead his church more effectively. Since this was a common name, there could have been more than one Epaphras (Acts 1:7; 19:10; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 11:15; Phil. 2:25; Col. 2:1; 4:7, 12; Philemon. 23; 2 Pet. 2:1-19).
- *Your love in the Spirit.* Referring that the Holy Spirit is the source and flow of our Christian love and thus is an action, attitude, and application—not just a feeling. So, we can have an impact in our relationships, church, neighborhood, and world beyond our imagination, past our fears and hurts—all because of Christ. As Christians, we have no excuse not to love or have joy no matter what our situation is (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Faith...Hope...Love...Truth and Fruit. Do you have these? Are they working well? For the secret of being a contented, successful, happy Christian is our absolute trust and confidence in Christ! And God is the One who gives us what we need. The question is, *are we grateful for it? Do we have confidence and hope so we persevere in our commitment and production of faith? Are we living out what He pours in us so it pours out through us?* So what is pouring from you? The question Paul is seeking to get across to both this church and the church now is the question the Holy Spirit has for you: *is the work of the Spirit and God’s love being exhibited in you?* The answer will be in your fruit and joy. These key words are definitely a call of God for us to internalize, adhere to, and put them into action so they are externalized. These gifts turn into virtues and character by our application of them. If these are not being produced, then there is a real critical problem that will cause a discontent with God and result in emotional bondage, discontent, and broken relationships. We are all called to bear fruit and if we do not, something is very wrong in us. Either we are not regenerated, or we are in disobedience. When we have joy in and gratitude for Christ,

we will produce fruit, and these key words, *and be joyful*, will have joy for others too. If we do not have joy for others, then we have unforgiveness in our hearts, and these virtues will not be flowing.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever written or delivered a very important message? How did you feel about it?
2. What does it take for you to continue to be faithful for our Lord? What gets in the way?
3. How does the fact Jesus will continue to pour His grace on you and give you peace in abundance inspire you?
4. Are you Christ's faithful servant? Are you helping further the Kingdom and glorifying Christ? Is His great love in you so it is also being displayed through you?
5. What is the key to being faithful?
6. Why is it important to always give thanks to Christ? How has having gratitude for Who He is and what He has done for you helped you in daily life and in faith? How can it do more?
7. How does seeing what lies ahead for us in Heaven motivate you in life and faith?
8. What does it mean to you that Jesus sets you apart for a reason, that your life has a purpose, a meaning, and value?
9. How has the Good news of the Gospel made an impact in you? How have you then made a response?
10. How would you describe *Faith...Hope...and Love*? What do you need to do to develop more in these areas? What would your life, church, and relationships look like if you did?
11. How has God been kind to you? What will you do to continue to be kind to others? How can God use you more when you are kind to others?
12. Why and how should your trust in Christ show up as gratitude and a life lived out well? What can you do to have more gratitude? What will your life look like in so doing?