

**“Faith of the Saints”**

**Colossians 1 v1-8**

**Scripture Ref:** *Col 4:2; Phil 1:19; Phil 4:6; 1 Cor 13:13;*  
*Col 1:23; Col 1:27; Titus 1:2; Titus 2:11;*

1. Today we begin a new study in Colossians...
2. If Revelation was “the revealing of Jesus Christ”
  - a. The Colossians is “The Centrality of Christ”
  - b. And if your thinking “is everything about Christ?”, the answer is – YES!
  - c. If Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be – who the bible says He is... then everything *must* be about Him.
  - d. (which, incidentally, is the root of the problem of man, we think everything is about *us*)
3. A little background...
  - a. This is a letter written by the Apostle Paul, aprx 60 AD, while he was in prison in Rome.
  - b. It is one of the *prison epistles*, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
  - c. The City of Colossae is in what is now known as Turkey, then the Roman province of Asia Minor. About 100 miles inland of Ephesus.
  - d. As far as we know, Paul never went to Colossae, but from biblical sources we can piece together a likely scenario...
4. During Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, there were two men that came to the faith – Epaphras and Philemon, both of whom became instrumental in the newly forming church.
  - a. From v7 we see that Epaphras shared the gospel in Colossae among other cities in Asia Minor (chapter 4 tells us he also went to Laodicea and Hierapolis)
  - b. Philemon had a church meeting in his home in Colossae, and he also had a slave named Onesimus, who ran away.
  - c. Paul, while in prison in Rome, met Onesimus, and led him to the Lord. He then encouraged Onesimus to return to Philemon, and he wrote Philemon a letter to encourage him to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ. (hence the epistle “Philemon”)
  - d. While there, Epaphras arrives to assist and minister to Paul. He also apparently discusses some issues in the church, to which Paul writes this letter that we have here.

- e. Paul then sends Onesimus and Tychicus back to Asia Minor with all four letters to deliver them to Ephesus, Phillipi, Colossae, and personally to Philemon.
5. What was the problem that Paul sought to address? Theological diversity. Why, that doesn't sound so bad... does it?
- a. Diversity is sort of a buzz-word for the last several years, and in many areas diversity is a good thing.
  - b. Look at the church, according to Paul in 1 Cor, some of us are hands, some eyes, ears, yet we are all fitted together into one body.
  - c. There certainly can be diversity in the body, and unity in faith.
6. The problem with diversity comes when we attempt to apply it to matters of truth, and doctrine.
- a. Back in Paul's day there were an abundance of teachings and philosophies woven throughout society
  - b. You had pagan astrology, oriental philosophy, mysticism, Jewish legalism, and Christianity.
  - c. And these 'diverse' theologies were creeping into the church doctrine and practice... and in this case, diversity was BAD.
7. Today we live in a time of conflict – and it is philosophical and spiritual in nature.
- a. Open our eyes we see it all around us...
  - b. (extreme example) Islam vs Christianity in the 10/40 window – division and violence between the two.
  - c. Here in the US - The divide between conservatism (which tends to have an evangelical base) and liberalism (secular progressive)
    - i. Conflict: abortion, death penalty, social services...
  - d. Mitt Romney is a Mormon, Tom Cruise is a Christian Scientist...
8. This is leading to a rise in what is called “syncretism”, the work of blending different religions and schools of thought into a system that is able to be embraced by a wider majority of people.
- a. An example – voodoo, which blends Western African shamanism, Caribbean witchcraft, and Christianity.
  - b. Today in US - Universal Unitarianism, Emergent church,
  - c. Billy Carter is working right now trying to bring together the liberal and conservative factions of the Baptist denominations...
9. The problem arises when churches begin to adapt aspects of man's philosophies, and combine them with biblical doctrine...
- a. and then peddle it to the congregation as a “new vision” or “new direction”.

- b. **Nothing new about it at all – it’s old as rocks – Paul had to address it in Colossae in 60 AD, and we are still dealing with it today!**

**10. If I had to sum up this book, I would say it like this: “Keep the main thing the main thing – JESUS CHRIST is the main thing!”**

- a. **Faith**
- b. **Preeminence**
- c. **Reconciliation**
- d. **Service**
- e. **Not Philosophy**
- f. **not Legalism**
- g. **not Carnality**
- h. **The New Man**
- i. **The Christian Home**
- j. **The workplace**
- k. **The outside world**

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 in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 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.

### ***1 Praying always for you***

**11. I find it so encouraging that Paul prayed always for the saints at Colassae, and he didn’t even know them – had never gone there!**

- a. **But he had heard of them, he cared for them**
- b. **And he knew that the key to the strengthening of the work there was based in prayer!**

*Col 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;  
Phil 1:19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,*

*Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*

since we heard of your faith in **Christ Jesus** and of your **love** for all the saints; because of the **hope** which is laid up for you in heaven

## **2 Christ Jesus**

**12. Here is where the faith of the Christian diverts from any other philosophy...**

- a. **Our faith is not based on an idea, or a pattern of living, or a system of practices...**
- b. **It is based solely on one thing and one thing only – the PERSON of Jesus Christ!**

**13. And encompassed in this person – are the triad of *faith, hope, and love***

*1 Cor 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

- a. **Faith is acting on what we believe to be true**

because of the **hope** which is laid up for you in heaven

*Col 1:23 hope of the gospel which you heard,*

*Col 1:27 Christ in you, the hope of glory*

*Titus 1:2 hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began*

- b. **Hope is what our faith is based in – not “I hope that it is true”, but “I confidently await what I know to be true”**
  - i. **Buying a lottery ticket “I hope I win”**
  - ii. **VS having bought the ticket, and watching your numbers come across the screen, “I am going to the lottery office to get my money”**
- c. **And Love – *for all the saints* – which is the natural response of our relationship with Christ – His love flowing through us towards one another.**

of which you heard before in the **word of the truth** of the gospel,

## **3 Word of truth of the gospel**

**14. Everybody has faith in something, but faith is only as good as the object of our faith.**

- a. **When we place our faith in money, or position, or philosophies – these things can and will fail us.**
- b. **Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in the one Person that is eternal, will never fail, and is the supreme ruler of all heaven and earth.**

the **word of the truth** of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in **all the world**

#### **4 For all the world**

15. And this word is for all the world... If you had to give a gift to every person on the planet, what would it be?
- Food? People like different things...
  - Clothing? People in Iceland have different needs than people on the equator
  - Even money... A native in the rain forest has no need for money
  - And – each of these gifts are tangible, they will either be used up, or wear out.
16. Marlon Brando – lauded as the greatest actor, had all you could want – even had his own island in Tahiti –
- his daughter committed suicide,
  - his son spent ten years in prison for killing a man, and recently died at 49 after a long struggle with alcohol and drugs...
  - During his son's trial, he said that the most valuable things to him were his children.
  - What good is the \$20M estate to them now?
17. The one gift that every single human being needs is the gospel message, with its gift of eternal life!

and is **bringing forth fruit**

#### **5 Brings forth fruit**

18. And it is the only seed that can be planted anywhere in the world, and bear fruit!
- and the beautiful thing about this message, it is the message of the grace of God.

*John 15:8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the **grace** of God in truth

#### **6 Grace**

19. Two words that go together – grace and mercy
- Mercy is God not giving me what I deserve
  - Grace is God instead giving me what I do not deserve

**Titus 2:11** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men

- c. **You see it's not our goodness that saves us, it's Gods grace**

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

## **7 Discipleship**

**20. Paul had entrusted Epaphras to teach these things to the saints**

- a. **To serve them by faithfully ministering the true doctrine of Christ to them**
- b. **Interesting – already we see three of the key areas that we are focusing on this year – Prayer, Evangelism, Discipleship**
- c. **Guess what – we'll see more!**

**21. The Faith of the saints in Colossae - For me, it helps me to de-mystify the bible and the early church.**

- a. **IOW – We might view the history and what went on as some super-spiritual time that God moved and everyone was super Christ-like...**
- b. **And – that was 'then' – you see. Things were 'different' then.**
- c. **This is now. We can't be like they were, or live out our faith like they did.**

**22. HELLO - Reality-check – These people were people just like you and me. Sure Paul saw Christ and was a "A" apostle. But he was also a man, just like you and me.**

- a. **He had struggles, he depended on the same God and the same Holy Spirit that exists today.**
- b. **These men and women that were involved in the ministry with him Timothy, Epaphras, the other saints in Colossae – they were just like me and you.**
- c. **They had lives, jobs, families, problems, struggles...**
- d. **And yet God moved through them, and accomplished great things through them.**

**23. Today the city of Colossae is a mound of dirt. The church is long gone, the people, if not mentioned here, would be long gone from memory.**

- a. **But – God used them. They are not forgotten by God.**
- b. **Their work and ministry paved the way for you generations of Christians to come behind them.**
- c. **Just like me and you.**

## ***Colossians 1 v1-8***

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