

The Essential Changes of New Life

Series: Jesus ...Changes Everything (Colossians)

Brad Bailey – April 23, 2023

Intro

Out of respect for **being fully transparent**... I want to tell you that **this past Monday morning I stood before the honorable Judge Mark Young at the SM Courthouse**...and he told me that **I was looking at potentially 3 to 4 weeks time**...I was allowed to **temporarily return** home...where **naturally I thought about the consequences of such time away**... and then the very next day... I received a call... that **I had been set free by the court.**

The **case had been settled**...and **I was free**... free **from jury duty.**

Some of you look disappointed...just jury duty.

For me ... facing a month of time and becoming free of that...was a big deal.

And it makes me think of how big the news of the Gospel is...the news of being set free from the judgment that brings death...and the freedom to live forever.

When one realizes that his death had been a sacrifice... and his resurrection proclaimed life beyond death... it changes everything.

This is part of what we find in **the Book of Colossians**... continue in **a series**...about how Jesus changes everything.

Let me again offer **a brief background**...

After the resurrection of Christ... the **scope of what was at hand** filled those first lives... they couldn't be contained...and hundreds were accepting the news...and claiming him as their Lord.

And then comes a **remarkable conversion**...that of a religious leader named "Saul, who was also called Paul." [1]

Paul was the one **God chose to send into the wider world**... particularly the Roman ruled world that had come to rule over a vast portion of the known world. Rome had **extended it's reign into Asia**... it what is now **modern day Turkey**...and the major city of **Ephesus was now it's major center.**

Paul was there for **over 2 years**... during which time a man **Epaphras**' began to serve alongside him...and then **went back to his home town of Colossae** and shared the good news... and a new local church community was formed there.

Let me just pause here and say that **God may put it in your heart** to go to **your sphere** of relationships... even your **home town**... and share about Christ.

Often God does this. He calls us back to our former cities to minister to our own people. You may have a different idea of what God wants you to do with your life. But Jesus may say to you what he said to a man in Mark 5:19:

Mark 5:19

Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.

In any case, the apostle Paul didn't plant the church in Colossae. Epaphras, his coworker, planted the church. But **Paul had a fatherly concern** for the church and cared about how it was doing. So he begins his letter...

Colossians 1:1-2

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.”

There is something **subtle but quite significant** in these simple words... he **refers to them** as those who are **“in Colossae”** but also **“in Christ.”**

He identifies them with two realities... two dimensions of life...one is the location they live in... but the other is the life that they now have in Christ.

As we focused on last week... he **concludes this section... explicitly describing** the reality of two kingdoms.

Colossians 1:13-14

For he has **rescued us from the kingdom of darkness** and **transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son**, who **purchased our freedom** and forgave our sins.

What is at hand is nothing less than being rescued from a kingdom of darkness. This world is ruled in darkness. Darkness represents **that which is outside of God....**outside of the source of everlasting life and love.

In such darkness...**we cannot see who we really are...** and we live in a world in which **every vain claim to power and authority will rule over us.**

But through the death and resurrection of Christ... **God has rescued us.**

When Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice... he **bore the consequence** of **our separation** from God...and **acceptance of his sacrifice for us** becomes a means by which we can be reconciled to God. **And when he rose from death... he declared that God still rules over created life.**

Jesus brought nothing less than **that which offers liberation... a release to all who have been held captive** by the powers that rule this world... with a **call to now “enter” ...to become a part of... the eternal Kingdom under God.**

There's been a **transition of authority** in their lives.

And **all who receive this transition... are living in a subversive position** in this world. We live **amidst this kingdom...but under the authority of another kingdom...** the kingdom of God.

They are **“in Colossae”** and **“in Christ.”**

Just as we live **in Los Angeles** and **in Christ**. If we receive Christ...and become united with Christ... we live amidst this kingdom while actually being a member of another Kingdom. [2]

And the reality is such a position...is that **nothing has changed... and everything has changed.** Life may look the same around us... but within us something has changed.

And naturally **we may wonder...** what type of change we should expect.

We may wonder **what type of difference** should this new life in Christ make... or what difference is it making?

And that is a **vital question**.

Why does this matter?

Maybe you are exploring what difference Jesus really makes in life. And you want to know if it's just another claim of religious superiority... or if there is something unique... is it about something more truly transforming? There may be different things associated with what is called Christianity... and you want to know what it's really about.

Or maybe you have accepted Christ...as Lord of your life... but at times you wonder about the type of change you have experienced. You **may fresh clarify about what really matters...** and what you should expect from the new life.

Because the truth is... **expectations really matter. Your level of contentment is always related to what you expect....and what you expect always arises from your understanding of what something actually is.**

As I have said about marriage... the most important factor in satisfaction in marriage is often missed. It's not communication or conflict resolution or compatibility... as important as each of those may be... the most important factor in satisfaction is expectations.

(How many can't answer what marriage is.)

> And this is **true of life...**and this is **true of new life "in Christ."**

And Paul begins with great affirmations... because of what he sees... and what he sees are three workings that arise from life in Christ.

Colossians 1:4-6

⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, ⁵ which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

⁶ This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

Here Paul is affirming them... he is talking about **changed lives...** bringing change to lives everywhere... just as it had brought change to their lives.

And what is that change?

Your Faith in Christ Jesus

Your Love for all of God's people

Your Hope of what God has reserved for you

Faith Hope Love... These are what Paul spoke of as **the vital working** of God... that which emerges from the grace of God in the human life.

Faith Hope Love... These are **not simply something Paul happens to see...** they were **what he has come to look for [3]...**

And as he writes to those in another letter to another community...in Thessalonica... **1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8**

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by **faith**, your labor prompted by **love**, and your endurance inspired by **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.

...Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on **faith** and **love** as a breastplate, and the **hope** of salvation as a helmet.

And in one of the **most familiar chapters** in the Bible... about love...to those in Corinth he says:
1 Corinthians 13:13

These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Here he is encouraging them in the **role of spiritual gifts**...that God gifts everyone with **various supernatural gifting**... but he concludes... what is most foundational and fundamental... for everyone... faith, hope and love. and the greatest of these is love.

As the Scriptures tell us... God IS love... and so it is that faith and hope are that which serve and support love... and without love... they are empty. [4]

And the main point is that these three qualities are what are most essential... what arises from this new life at it's core. [5]

Faith Hope Love...

These words have come to **take on rather generic meanings.**

These three words can be found together on **posters and T-Shirts**... because they beckon something positive... inspirational.

So it helps to get a better hold on what Paul is referring to.

What Paul is speaking of....is **that which arises from grace.... which he expresses in the next verse...**

Colossians 1:4-6

⁴ For we have heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and your **love** for all of God's people, ⁵ which come from your confident **hope** of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

⁶ **This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.**

In verse 6... Paul connects everything to grace.

Change comes **the day we hear and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.... when we know and understand grace.**

The faith... hope... and love...Paul sees is that which **arises from grace.**

We need to realize that we live in a world in which everything has it inherent consequences. Physically... fo every action there is an equal and opposite reaction... and for every choice we grace the consequences. But something has come from outside this world...that meets us...and it is grace... grace from God.

Such grace can be defined as...

Grace (of God) – the divine disposition and power to bless, bestow gifts, or otherwise act favorably toward those created; enabling the recipient to do and to be what he or she cannot do and cannot be if left to his or her own means.

As the Bible says elsewhere [6],,,

Romans 5:1-2 (GNT)

Our Lord Jesus Christ... brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live.

These workings of faith, hope, and love are **not merely vague versions** these qualities...**but that which arises** from the grace of God that comes in Christ.

They are like vital signs of new life.... when assessing if a person is alive... there are three main vital signs - the body's temperature, pulse (heart... and blood pressure), and respiratory rate. These three are sometimes referred to as TPR for short. Together they are signs of life and it's vitality... that you look for. Paul is looking for the vital signs of spiritual life... and they are faith, hope and love. These are what we should look for... **what we should expect.**

As we take a moment to consider what these speak of... it's important to recognize that **Paul never spoke of these as a test....** And that is not the spirit in which to hear them. Rather... Paul is simply recognizing these as that which reflects a new life of freedom... of being liberated...the outworking of grace.

And we may wonder ...how much...should I expect of these?

Again... I don't think there is some specific level.

The point is that these are the outworking of knowing God's grace...so the point is to desire these dynamics... to want more... and to pursue knowing God's grace more deeply.

If I look at my life and **rather than faith hope and love...I see fear, despair, and hate...** it should lead me back to grace.

Let's quickly consider these...

The Essential Changes of New Life

FAITH - trust in Christ as God's source of grace and guidance

Faith is essentially trust. This faith is not that of mere propositions we are willing to consent to [10]... or religious platitudes... but speaks of a very real trust It is the initiating work that enables a new life to begin. Faith opens the door of the soul to receive Christ and all that he has for us. [7]

As Max Dunnam describes [8]...

“Faith is the door; faith is the hinge on which the door swings; faith is the key that unlocks the door; faith is the impulse to open the door when the knock comes; faith is the willingness to invite the guest in; faith impels surrender which allows the guest to become master of the house.” - Max Dunnam

Faith in Christ reflects a freedom from the vain trust that we have had in other entities...including the Roman Empire or any other Empire or any source that claims to have a power that rules. Today...many people have lost their faith and trust in the entities they once trusted in.

Many may contend for a particular political party...but they don't really trust in any of them to serve with openness and honesty...and fulfill their promises. Many are deflated by cynicism. And the same is true of the trust people have had for their employers... their religious leaders... and nearly every authority in this world. And many speak of learning to just trust in yourself... but that may be more safe than sound. [9] That is why the more naturally competent you are... the more that real faith can be challenging.

It means that God's grace has given me a new position with God...and a position of acceptance I don't deserve but so deeply need. Such faith...and trust... gives me **an entirely new life and identity...**

I am now "In Christ" **in contrast to every other way of trusting what I am "in."**

It means that I put more trust in being "in Christ" than being in any other position this world offers me to be in... more than being in any position of **wealth... gender...ethnicity... power.**

> I am **free from all the vain claims to define me.** I am defined by God's grace and guided by God's promises.

And in this way ...it is a subversive freedom... a subversive trust.

HOPE - confident expectation of eternal salvation

This is part of new life in Christ brings because **Jesus revealed the reality of a new dimension to life.** He revealed that there is **a living and everlasting God** who rules over this **world given to decay and death.**

This is **not the hope of mere wishful thinking...** the way we speak about something we **just want to be true...** like saying "I hope I win the lottery" or "I hope that there's no traffic on the 405." No... **this is the hope that arose when God said he was sending one who would save us ... and then Jesus declared that he had come to save us... and then he was crucified and rose again... and became a transforming power in this world.**

As the apostle Peter who was at the center of it all described...

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. - 1 Peter 1:3-4

An inheritance is something that **one knows already exists...**and is **waiting for them.**

It is a "living hope" because it is **anchored in the past**—Jesus rose from the dead (Matthew 28:6). It **continues in the present** because—Jesus is alive (Colossians 3:1). And it **speaks into our future** because Jesus promises eternal, resurrection life (John 3:16; 4:14; 5:24; Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 15:23).

The term he uses for "hope" means "an eager, confident expectation" ,,that which is energizing, alive, and active in the soul of the believer. [11]

It means the grace of God has met me in this world... and our **temporal circumstances no longer define life.** It means we are **free from expecting this world to satisfy ...** and free from being **driven to squeeze from it** more than it can offer... free from trying to grasp at this world in vain.

Our world is grasping for hope...and becoming more hopeless.

There is a sense of meaninglessness... a sense that there is no real purpose.

We have **tried to place too much hope in governments... in people... in our work... in what money can provide.**

But we can have a living hope ... that connect this groaning world to what is to come... with signs and wonders of our inheritance.

... And when we really **understand grace... we become rooted in grace** towards others.

When we understand that God's love has given us a new life with Him.... **love for others begins a new work in us.**

LOVE - unselfish care for others growing out of God's love

As we are created by God... there are the vestiges of love in every human love... but in this closed world ...such love does not appear to ultimately rule... it is power that rules by ways of war and greed.

But through God's ultimate grace, we are restored in relationship with God...the source of all love...and that love is at work in us.

And it is far more than mere feelings... such a love is the power to care beyond fair.

Our ability to love is not bound by merely what is fair... but by what is good.

It is that which transcends the mere transactional nature of giving to get... and flows from the power to give and bless others regardless of what they deserve. [12]

1 John 3:16 (GNT)

This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others.

In the movie The Last Emperor, the young child anointed as the last emperor of China lives a magical life of luxury with a thousand eunuch servants at his command. "What happens when you do wrong?" his brother asks. "When I do wrong, someone else is punished," the boy emperor replies. To demonstrate, he breaks a jar, and one of the servants is beaten.

It was striking picture of injustice in it's rawest form.

But there is something more striking in that which reverses the pattern,

Jesus reversed that ancient pattern: when the servants erred, the King was punished.

And we are the servants.

CLOSING

God wants us to hear today that these are the workings that really matter most.

If the whole thing called the **Christian life... has become blurry...** these are what we should focus ourselves on.

If you have faced **discontentment** ... remember that contentment is most **often connected to expectations...**and expectation are most connected what we believe something is for.

Today... God may be freeing you up to shed false expectations... and embrace faith, hope, and love as that which you take hold of.

God wants to remove some weight... like removing some big outer coats...and finding freedom to wear these...

Faith – a change in trust

Hope – an inheritance that is now ours

And love – the freedom to give from what we have been given.

PRAY

Resources:

Notes:

1. Acts 13:9 describes the apostle as “Saul, who was also called Paul.” From that verse on, Saul is always referred to in Scripture as “Paul.” Paul was a Jew, born in the Roman city of Tarsus. He was proud of his Jewish heritage, as he describes in Philippians 3:5: “Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee.” So zealous and devout was he that persecuting Christians was the natural way for him to show his devotion. He chose to use his Hebrew name, Saul, until sometime after he began to believe in and preach Christ. After that time, as “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13), he used his Roman name, Paul. It would make sense for Paul to use his Roman name as he traveled farther and farther into the Gentile world.

2. As Rich Nathan notes: “Paul loves this phrase “in Christ,” or “in Christ Jesus.” He uses it 170 times in his letters. Christians are said to be in Christ many, many more times that Christ is said to be in us. It’s true than to become a Christian, Christ’s Spirit has to enter your heart. But just as importantly as Christ entering you is you entering Christ. You live in Christ; Christ is the atmosphere, if you will; Christ is the environment. Christ is the constant influence in a Christian’s life. Everywhere we go, whatever we experience, we Christians are always united with Christ. We’re joined to Christ. We’re connected to Christ. We live in a Christ-drenched, Christ-satiated, Christ-filled world. You may be down in the dumps, or on top of the world; if you are a Christian, you are in Christ. You may be over the hill, or under a pile, out of your mind or in a funk beside yourself in prison, or at a spa, but you are in Christ.” Rich Nathan - Distinguishing Marks of the Christian Mind (April 18-19, 2009)

3. Other key examples of Paul referring to these three qualities:

Galatians 5:4-6 (NIV)

Some of you are trying to be made right with God by obeying the law. You have been separated from Christ. You have fallen away from God’s **grace**.⁵ But we long to be made completely holy because of our **faith** in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we wait for this in **hope**.⁶ Circumcision and uncircumcision aren’t worth anything to those who believe in Christ Jesus. The only thing that really counts is faith that shows itself through **love**.

Again ...Paul says that none of these arise apart from grace. From grace... comes the work of faith...hope...and love.

Romans 5:1-5 – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by **faith** into this **grace** in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the **hope** of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

These qualities are also referred to in these texts... of which the latter is expressed by Peter.

1 Peter 1:3-5, 22

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through **faith** are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere **love** for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.

4. "Faith, hope, and love have been referred to as the three divine sisters. We can think of them as three beautiful sisters joined together hand in hand, swirling around as in a dance.

Eventually, faith and hope vanish from the scene and love is left dancing alone forever. This picture may appear odd until we realize that faith and hope were there to help love on her way, until she was mature enough to be alone." - *From What's So Important about Faith, Hope, and Love?* October 08, 2017 by: Mark Jones - [here](#)

5. There are of course other qualities which could be described as important if not vital. Some have notes that the first epistle (letter) of John (1 John) is written to speak of such "vital signs" (...which is the title we have when preaching through it.). However, some of those qualities are related to faith, hope, and love...(belief in the deity of Christ relates to faith in Christ) and some are specific to those being written to (ie ability to reject false teaching) We must also consider the wider "fruits of the Spirit" which Paul describes: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

6. It is notable that grace is what came distinctly and in all its fullness in Christ. As John described: "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...*"¹⁶ *Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.* ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" - John 1:14, 16-17

7. Matthew Henry said, "Faith opens the door of the soul to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him."

Richard D. Patterson notes:

"In viewing the many emphases of faith throughout the Scriptures, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, one thing is certain: faith is a basic and necessary quality of the believer. ...Such was expressed and maintained long ago by the prophet Habakkuk: "The righteous one will live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4b). So important was this text that it was cited three times in the New Testament, twice by Paul (Rom. 1:17: Gal. 3:11) and once by the author of Hebrews (Heb. 10:35-39). In Romans 1:17 Paul emphasizes as did Habakkuk that the person who is justified by faith is the one who truly lives. Moreover, Paul "emphasizes that man's right standing before God is not based on works (cf. Eph. 2:8), not even those of the law (cf. Gal. 3:11), but only on genuine faith." – From <https://bible.org/article/faith-hope-and-love>

8. Dunnam, M. D., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1982). Galatians / Ephesians / Philipians / Colossians / Philemon (Vol. 31, p. 330). Thomas Nelson Inc.

9. "There is no other way by which Jesus Christ can come into our hearts than by what the New Testament calls 'trust,' which we have turned into the hard, theological concept which too often glides over people's minds without leaving any dint at all—'faith.' ... There is no trust without, complementary to it, self-distrust. the underside of faith is self-distrust, and you must empty yourselves before you can open your hearts to be filled by Jesus. That being so, this self-distrustful trust is the beginning of everything. ... So faith is the basis of everything; the first shoot from which all the others ascend." - Alexander MacLaren noted [here](#)

10. Hebrews 11:1 gives this clear definition of faith: "*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*" ...and Hebrews 11:6 gives us the life application of it. It states, "*and without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*"

11. Paul sees "hope" as a concrete, objective inheritance secured for us in the future. (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:12-14; Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet.1:3-5. 8) John got a glimpse of the future and it is described in the book of Revelation; "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:3-4. Living hope also enables us to live without despair as we encounter suffering and trials in this present life: "Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16–18, CSB).

12. The emphasis on imitating God's love is also highlighted in these texts:

Ephesians 5:2 (NLT)

Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us
Or as the Message paraphrase expresses this...

Ephesians 5:2 (MSG)

"Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with Him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of Himself to us. Love like that." '

So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love." 1 Corinthians 13:3b (MSG)