

Colossians 1:1-8. "Gospel of Life".
Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday April 16th, 2023.

Colossians 1:1–8 [1:1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. [3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7] just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8] and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. (ESV)

Whenever we travel, problems inevitably arise. Situations regarding our own travel we tend to be able to handle. The difficult ones are the ones that happen back home. Perhaps our kids got into a jam, there is a difficulty at work or a friend got into a crisis situation. As much as we want to help, we are not physically there for assistance. What then can we do?

This was the same type of situation that happened to the Apostle Paul. In the first century, the Apostle Paul was a prisoner in Rome (Acts 21:17–28:31). A gentleman named Epaphras showed up in Rome because he needed Paul's help. Some new doctrines were being taught in Colossae and were invading the church and creating problems. So, Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians in order to refute these heretical teachings and establish the truth of the Gospel. What was the heresy that threatened the peace and purity of the Colossian church? It was a combination of Eastern philosophy and Jewish legalism, with elements of what Bible scholars call gnosticism (NOS-ti-cism). This term comes from the Greek word *gnosis* (KNOW-sis) which means "to know." (An agnostic is one who does not know.) The gnostics were the people who were "in the know" when it came to the deep things of God. They were the "spiritual aristocracy" in the church. To begin with, this heresy promised people such a close union with God that they would achieve a "spiritual perfection." Spiritual fullness could be theirs only if they entered into the teachings and ceremonies prescribed. There was also a "full knowledge," a spiritual depth, that only the initiated could enjoy. This "wisdom" promised to release them from earthly things and put them in touch with heavenly things (Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 103). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.).

Do we have any of this heresy today? Yes, we do; and it is just as deceptive and dangerous! When we strive for "spiritual perfection" or "spiritual fullness" by means of formulas, disciplines, or rituals, we go backward instead of forward. Christian believers must beware of mixing their Christian faith with such alluring things as yoga philosophy, transcendental meditation, Oriental mysticism, and the like. We must also beware of "deeper life" teachers who offer a system for victory and fullness that bypasses devotion to Jesus Christ (Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 104). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

Paul's answer for this heresy, and the deceptive teachings prevalent today is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The wonderful gospel is the reason for Paul's thanksgiving expressed in Colossians 1:1–8. Rejoicing at the report of their faith brought to him by Epaphras, the founder of the church at Colossae, he characteristically expresses thanks that the Colossians heard the gospel, and that it bore fruit in their lives. In Colossians 1:1-8, the Apostle Paul's shows how the Gospel of Life is 1) Received by Faith (Colossians 1:1–4a), 2) Rests in Hope (Colossians 1:5-8), and 3) Results in Love (Colossians 1:4b).

The Gospel of Life is:

1) Received by Faith (Colossians 1:1–4a)

Colossians 1:1-4a [1:1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. [3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus (and of the love that you have for all the saints), (ESV)

Following the practice of correspondence in the ancient world, Paul begins the letter with his name. Paul writes to the Colossians from prison, probably in Rome. According to Acts, Paul was arrested after Judaizers from Asia (western modern Turkey) incited a crowd against him, causing disorder in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27). They accused him of teaching against the law and defiling the temple by bringing a Gentile into it (Acts 21:29–30) Paul was the most important and influential person in history since our Lord Jesus Christ. His personality was the remarkable combination of a brilliant mind, a determined will, and a tender heart. Of Jewish ancestry, a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5), he was a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5). Paul was educated under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), one of the leading rabbis of that time. He was also by birth a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) and exposed to Greek culture in his home city of Tarsus. Such a background rendered him uniquely qualified to communicate the gospel in the Greco-Roman world. It was largely his efforts that transformed Christianity from a small Palestinian sect to a faith with adherents throughout the Roman Empire. The church would be blessed to have record of even one letter from such a man, let alone the thirteen found in the New Testament. (Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Col 1:1). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.)

- Many times in our lives we see our backgrounds or situations as hindrances to what God wants us to go. Regardless of our past sins or failures, God has uniquely equipped each and every believer for specific ministry. Learning the lessons of our past experiences and looking at our present situations, enables us to see the wonderful opportunities right in front of us that God has prepared us for.

Lest anyone doubt his authority, Paul describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is not simply a messenger, but an official representative of the One who sent him. What he writes in this letter is not merely his opinion, but God's authoritative Word. The office of apostle included several elements. Primarily, an apostle had to know Christ personally and have witnessed the resurrection (Acts 1:21–22). Paul had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1) and, therefore, had witnessed the resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). Further, Paul's message came from divine revelation with no human intermediary (Gal 1:15–17) Paul did not become an apostle through his own efforts. Neither was he nominated for the position by any human organization.

He is **an apostle of Jesus Christ**. (Gk. *Iēsous Christos*) (1:1; Matt. 1:1, 18; Mark 1:1; John 1:17; 17:3; 1 Cor. 1:2–10) Strong's #2424; 5547: "**Jesus Christ**" is **not** the first and last names of Jesus, as people are commonly named today. **Jesus** is His human name, whose **meaning relates to His mission to "save" us** (see **Matt. 1:18**). **Christ** is a **description of His office**: He is "**the Anointed One**," anointed by God to be our **King, Prophet, and High Priest**. (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1997). *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Col 1:1). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.)

Paul was an apostle by the will of God. **God, having chosen him long before, brought His sovereign choice to realization with that most striking of conversions on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–9)**. It **climaxed in his being set apart for missionary service by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2)**. (Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 188). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

Paul, as was his custom, mentions a co-laborer who was with him when he wrote: Timothy our brother. (**Timothy is also included in the introductions to 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon, being noted as the companion of Paul**.) **Such a reference does not indicate co-authorship of those epistles. Peter is certainly clear that the epistles bearing Paul's name were written by Paul (2 Pet. 3:15–16)**. Therefore, **those linked with Paul in his introductions are not joint authors of the letters. Their names probably appear alongside Paul's so as to indicate to the congregation that they too preach and teach the one true gospel** (O'Brien, P. T. (1998). *Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 44, p. 3). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.)

Paul addresses his readers in verse 2 as the saints and faithful brothers/brethren... at Colossae. **Paul formally introduced himself to the Colossians** because he had **never visited Colosse**, and he had **most likely never met most of the Christians there** (Kuschel, H. J. (1986). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (p. 112). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.). **Paul most likely wrote this letter between 60–63 A.D.** It was **written about the same time as the letters to Philemon and Ephesus**, and it has **much in common with both epistles. The church at Colossae** was likely established **during Paul's third missionary journey as he ministered for three years in Ephesus**. It **apparently got its start during Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus** (A.D. 52–55). During this time, **a Colossian named Epaphras** probably traveled to Ephesus and responded to Paul's proclamation of the gospel (cf. Acts 19:10). **This new believer returned to his hometown and began sharing the good news of Christ, which resulted in the birth of the Colossian church (Col. 1:7)**. (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2289). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

- **Don't think because you don't make your living from the gospel that you are not employed in full time Christian ministry. Too often, people discount the impact that they can have because they don't have a title. It is usually far more impressive when a saint of God just speaks and lives out the word of God. It sends a message that Christianity is more than just a religion, it is a transformational truth for all people.**

The Saints and faithful brothers/brethren are not two distinct groups; the terms are equivalent. And [kai] could be translated, "even." *Hagios*, which translates **saints**, **refers to separation, in this case being separated from sin and set apart to God. Faithful notes the very source of that separation—saving faith. Believing saints are the only true saints. "Faithful" (pistoi) has the primary referent in the sense of believing. It may, however, also imply the secondary sense of loyalty to Christ, a quality especially appropriate for a church under fire** (Vaughan, C. (1981). *Colossians*. In F. E.

Gaebelein (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 172). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.). AS **brothers/brethren the Colossians**, as are **all true believers**, are **one spiritual family** **despite differences** in background, race, or any other purely human **considerations** (Anders, M. (1999). *Galatians-Colossians* (Vol. 8, p. 277). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

The reason for their unity as a spiritual family is the same for all believers: Believers are "in Christ". **People say:** "You **can't** be in two places at once" sounds a warning about letting one's schedule become too busy. Yet **Paul suggested that Christians at Colosse do just that. They must live both "in Colosse" and "in Christ."** **The first refers** to a geographic location—a place to farm, raise a family, and conduct business. **The second refers to a spiritual location, to be placed in Christ's care and control.** This relationship "**in Christ**" signals **the transfer believers took when they came to God for mercy and forgiveness—they migrated from death to life, darkness to light, and the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God. How can we be two places at once? As Christians, we must serve God responsibly wherever we live. The Bible calls us** stewards and caretakers of this world for God. **Christians are also called to grow closer** to the Savior, to practice and enjoy our new life as children of God and citizens of heaven. **We must have both feet in two worlds** (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1995). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (p. 145). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)

Grace to you and peace was **the greeting Paul used** to open **all thirteen of his letters.** "**Grace**" is the **undeserved favour of God, his kindness** to those who merit his **wrath and condemnation.** **Human sinfulness** means that we are entitled to feel the weight of divine anger against sin, but **God in his grace** has sent his Son into the world to live and die in the place of sinners. **Peace follows on naturally from grace.** **Because God is gracious,** it is gloriously possible for those who have offended him to be reconciled to him. **Paul's readers in Colosse** had already experienced the **grace** of God in their lives. Had this **not** been the case, they would **not** have been Christians at all. **But for those God saves us by his grace, he also keeps us by his grace.** **The help that Christians receive to live for God each day is gracious help...** **In effect, Paul expressed a heartfelt longing** that the God who had been gracious to the believers in Colosse at the outset of their Christian lives **would continue** to sustain and help them **in the future** (Arthur, J. P. (2007). *Christ All-Sufficient: Colossians and Philemon Simply Explained* (p. 21). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.).

Though he admires their true and continuing saving faith, which had **separated** them from sin to God, Paul certainly does **not** begin by flattering the Colossians. In **verse 3, he notes how he and his companions always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** **He recognizes that God is the One** who is owed thanks, because **salvation in all its parts is a gift from Him (Eph. 2:8-9).** **Always** should be considered in relation to the preceding phrase, to **thank God, not to pray for you.** Paul was **not** always praying specifically for the Colossians. Rather, **whenever he was praying for them, he always expressed his thanks to God.** **The church at Colossae was healthy** in many respects. It had a living faith, an indiscriminate love for all Christians, and a solid hope of life eternal through the gospel. **These virtues** are solid ground for **genuine thanksgiving.** (Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 199). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

- **We tend to have a mistaken fear of pride** in thanking God for others to their **faces.** **Sometimes we worry** that someone may **mistake** our praise for flattery if we **thank people to their face** for what God is doing through them. **The practice** however not only looks for God's hand working in people's lives, it is also **an encouragement to them** that God is working through them resulting in positive results.

The reference in **verse four** to their **faith** (*Pistis*) it describes **how one is persuaded that something is true and to trust in it. Far more than mere intellectual assent, it involves obedience. Faith** (*Pistis*) **comes from the root word *peithō* (“obey”). The concept of obedience is equated with belief throughout the New Testament** (cf John 3:36; Acts 6:7; Rom. 15:18; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:17). The Bible also speaks of the obedience of **faith** (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 16:26). **Biblical faith is not a “leap in the dark.” It is based on fact and grounded in evidence.** It is defined in **Hebrews 11:1** as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” **Faith gives assurance and certainty about unseen realities. Faith is essential in order to please God** (Heb. 11:6), and it is **only in Christ that genuine faith lives. We can be assured of true faith in others when we see the fruit of regeneration in their lives** (Gal. 5:22–23).
(McNaughton, I. S. (2006). *Opening up Colossians and Philemon* (p. 19). Leominster: Day One Publications.)

Please turn to 2 Timothy 1

Any definition of faith is also incomplete without a consideration of **its object. In contrast to the contentless false “faith”** so prevalent in our culture, **saving faith** has as its object **Christ Jesus. The relationship of faith to Jesus Christ** is expressed in the New Testament by various Greek **prepositions**. Acts 16:31 uses the preposition *epi*, which suggests **resting on a foundation**. In Acts 20:21, *eis* is used, with **the meaning of “to find a dwelling place in,” “to go into,” “to abide in,” or “to find a home.”** Here **in** translates *en* and has **the connotation of coming to a place of security and anchor. With Christ as its object, our faith is as secure as a house on a solid foundation, or a boat safely at anchor. Their faith was in Christ. They trusted Christ; committed themselves to Christ, and had a vital spiritual connection with Christ. Their faith was Christ-centered; they rested in Christ, and they were anchored in Christ.** (Hindson, E. E., & Kroll, W. M. (Eds.). (1994). *KJV Bible Commentary* (p. 2454). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

Notice the similarities of Paul's instructions to the Colossians with his instructions to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:3-9 [3] **I thank God** whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as **I remember you constantly in my prayers** night and day. [4] As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. [5] I am reminded of **your sincere faith**, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother **Lois** and your mother **Eunice** and now, I am sure, dwells in **you** as well. [6] For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God**, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, [7] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of **power and love and self-control**. [8] Therefore do **not be ashamed** of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by **the power of God**, [9] **who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace**, which he gave us **in Christ Jesus** before the ages began, (ESV)

Illustration: **Charles Spurgeon illustrated the importance of faith's object** by telling a **story of two men in a boat. Caught in severe rapids**, they were being swept toward a waterfall. **Some men on shore** tried to save them by throwing them a rope. **One man** caught hold of it and was pulled to safety on the shore. **The other, in the panic of the moment**, grabbed hold of a seemingly more substantial log that was floating by. That man was carried downstream, over the rapids, and was **never** seen again.

Faith, represented by the rope linked to the shore, connects us to Jesus Christ and safety. Good works apart from true faith, represented in the story by the log, leads only to ruin.

The Gospel of Life:

2) Rests in Hope (Colossians 1:5-8)

Colossians 1:5-8 [5] because of the **hope laid up for you in heaven**. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6]which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7]just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8]and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. (ESV)

After expressing thanksgiving for the Colossian Christians' maturity in Christ, Paul presented the reason for their growth. It was their hope. The Greek word for "hope," *elpis*, refers to confident expectation, not wishful thinking. **The Colossians have hope because of their union with Christ** (v. 27). This means they are **free from corruption and death** and are **qualified to participate** in Christ's life, resurrection and glory. **Paul reminds them that their hope of a glorious future does not come from a religious philosophy (2:8), but from God.** Therefore, they do not need to accept the demands of false teachers (Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Col 1:5). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.). **Hope provides the basis for Christian growth** since the most basic elements of faith toward God and love toward others grow out of hope. In reality, **without hope there is no reason for faith or love, and everything is directed to ourselves and our world** (Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 196–197). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

Paul describes that hope as laid up for you in heaven. *Apokeimai* (laid up) means "in store," or "reserved." **Peter speaks of "an inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). **The writer of Hebrews** speaks of "laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (Heb. 6:18–19). **Hope is the Christian's anchor chain, connecting he or she inseparably to God's throne. All believers are promised a glorious eternity in heaven with God. We are confident that what we hope for is stored (or "laid up") there, and that we will one day receive it. That confidence, in turn, gives us stronger faith in God and a deeper love for others.** (Barton, B. B., & Comfort, P. W. (1995). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (p. 149). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.)

In Paul's explanation now in verse 6 we can come to comprehend that the gospel is also universal. It has come to you, as indeed in the world. **At the time when Paul wrote** this (seemed like) a wild exaggeration, for **the Church** as yet consisted of tiny handfuls of people, almost unnoticed in the great empire which itself was only a fraction of the world. But **Paul sees in these the promise** of a world-wide community, and takes care here, as elsewhere (e.g. Rom. 1:13, 1 Thess. 1:8 f.), to impress on his readers that they **form part of this great whole** (Scott, E. F. (1930). *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*. (J. Moffatt, Ed.) (p. 16). London: Hodder and Stoughton.).

- **When we look at the promises of God and see beyond our immediate sphere of here and now, we see that we are a part of something** not only global but historical. **The gospel was and is the good news for the whole world. The gospel transcends ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries (Rev.**

7:9–10). The diffusion of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire foreshadowed its spread throughout the world. It is a message of hope for all people in all cultures. The true church, the Body of Christ, is made up of people from all over the world (cf Rev. 4:9–11).

The gospel is not merely a stagnant system of ethics; it is a living, moving, and growing reality. It is bearing fruit and growing/spreading. Hebrews 4:12 says, “The word of God is living and active.” When the gospel enters a divinely prepared heart, it results in fruit (Matt. 13:3–8). It possesses a divine energy that causes it to spread like a mustard seed growing into a tree (Matt. 13:31–32). Peter says it brings spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:2). Growing and fruit-bearing are simultaneous. There is inward growth and outward expression. The outward extension of the gospel never stops. (Hindson, E. E., & Kroll, W. M. (Eds.). (1994). *KJV Bible Commentary* (p. 2455). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

Please turn to 1 Thessalonians 1

The gospel has both an individual and a universal aspect. Paul tells the Colossians he is thankful what the gospel had done among them since the day you [the Colossians] heard it. Paul describes the effect of Epaphras’ preaching in Colosse in terms not of an emotional reaction, nor even of people ‘accepting Christ into their hearts’, but of hearing truth and understanding it. The task of the apostolic herald is to announce truth: the word here translated ‘understood’ indicates that the response sought is an intelligent thinking through and recognition of that truth. (Wright, N. T. (1986). *Colossians and Philemon: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 12, p. 58). InterVarsity Press.)

Paul expressed it like this to the Thessalonians in 1 Thes. 1:

1 Thessalonians 1:6–8 [6] And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, [7]so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. [8] For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. (ESV)

- **Paul is grateful they believed the gospel message when Epaphras shared it with them. As the Gospel transforms an individual's life, the witness of that life produces fruit, including new converts. So as the gospel produces fruit in individual lives, its influence spreads. (cf. 1 Thes. 1:6-8)**

Back in Colossians 1:6, Paul describes saving grace as the grace of God in truth. The phrase in truth carries the sense of genuineness. It is truly the grace of God in contrast to all other claimants to the true gospel. God is freely, sovereignly merciful and forgiving. We can do nothing to cause our own salvation; God saves us freely by His grace. (Eph. 2:8–9). Salvation didn't come to the Colossians because of their attachment to a complicated series of intermediate spirit emanations, or their adherence to a set of demanding rituals, or their adventures into the realm of ascetic experience. Those were the experiences the false teachers said were necessary to be truly saved and spiritual. Paul says, “No, it’s just grace.” Jesus died for us, and he offers us life. That truth, when adequately understood, takes root in our heart and bears fruit (Anders, M. (1999). *Galatians-Colossians* (Vol. 8, pp. 279–280). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

That we are all recipients of God’s grace in salvation is reflected in the way Paul often referred to himself as a *doulos* (slave/bond-servant) of Christ (Rom. 1:1; Phil.

1:1; Gal. 1:10; Titus 1:1). **By referring to Epaphras in verse 7 as his beloved fellow servant** (*sundoulos*), **and calling him a faithful minister/servant of Christ on your behalf, Paul connects Epaphras's ministry with his own.** Epaphras was Paul's representative at Colossae, **backed by Paul's authority and that of the Lord Jesus.** **While Paul was imprisoned, unable to go to the Colossians, Epaphras ministered to them on Paul's behalf.** We need to remind ourselves of the **abhorrence of the status of slavery in the Roman world,** the paradoxical embrace of the term of being a **minister/servant of Christ** for one's relationship to King Jesus by the apostle Paul in its **denotations of submission, obedience, and devotion to Christ,** and therefore the **revolutionary subordination at work when the early Christians began to see themselves now as slaves of Christ** (e.g., Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 7:21–23; Rom 1:1; 6:16–20; Eph 6:6; Phil 1:1) (McKnight, S. (2018). *The Letter to the Colossians* (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.; p. 103). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.).

He also informed Paul, as verse eight notes, of the Colossians' love in the Spirit, a report that no doubt brought great joy to Paul's heart. Paul was thankful for the gospel, and for the Colossians' reception of it. This is "God's love" which, according to Rom. 5:5, "has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"; it is the mutual love implanted and fostered within them by the indwelling Spirit and uniting them in a living bond. (Bruce, F. F. (1984). *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (p. 44). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

- **God gives us the wonderful privilege and sobering responsibility of being His agents in proclaiming the gospel of His grace. May we be faithful to share with others the gospel that has meant so much to us.**

Illustration: 5729 Moody's "Saints" Stayed In Church

In sharing the Gospel truth, the most loving thing to convey is that it is a message for all people, including the saints of God. At a church where D. L. Moody was invited to preach, he was warned that some of the congregation usually left before the end of the sermon. When Mr. Moody rose to begin his sermon, he announced, "I am going to speak to two classes of people this morning: first to the sinners, and then to the saints." He proceeded to address the "sinners" for awhile, then said they could leave. For once every member of the congregation stayed to the end of the sermon (Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1288). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.).

- **We often miss some of the most important gospel lessons if we predominantly think it is just a message for someone else and not something to impact our own lives.**

Finally, and only briefly, the Gospel of Life:

3) Results in Love (Colossians 1:4b) **Back to the end of verse 4:**

Colossians 1:4b [4] (since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus) and of the love that you have for all the saints), (ESV)

Genuine faith does not exist in a vacuum but will inevitably result in a changed life. One of the visible and strong fruits of true saving faith is love for fellow believers (cf John 13:34–35). **"Love" (agapē) is the fruit of faith and the proof of its genuineness** (cf. Gal 5:6; James 2:14ff.; 1 John 3:14). The Greek word denotes **caring love, the love that counts no sacrifice too great for the one loved.** (The verb built on the same root is used in John 3:16.) **The Colossians' love was expressed toward "all the saints," that is, all the people of God. Such love bespoke the warmth of their fellowship and the depth and breadth of their brotherly concern.** Perhaps the apostle was **contrasting** the

broad good will of the Colossians with **the narrow exclusiveness of the heretical teachers** (Vaughan, C. (1981). Colossians. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 174). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.).

- **True biblical love is so much more than an emotion; it is sacrificial service to others because they have need. We show godly love to someone when we sacrifice ourselves to meet that person's needs.**

Please turn to John 13

True godly love is illustrated in John 13. Verse 1 tells us that **Jesus** "having loved His own who were in the world, **He loved them to the end.**" **He then showed what that love meant** by washing the disciples' feet (vv. 4-5). **God does not expect us to feel sentimental toward each other all the time. He does expect us to serve one another** (Gal. 5:13). **He summarizes the exaptation and evident result in John 13:**
John 13:34-35 [34]A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**" (ESV)

A true child of God will love fellow believers. **Faith in Christ purges** us of our selfishness and affinity for sinners and **gives us a new attraction** to the people of God. **Our love for fellow Christians** is a reflection of His love for us. **It is also obedience to His command** to "love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). **Genuine belief** in the truth, **hope in God** and **experiential love** for other believers characterizes every true believer. **We are saved by faith; we have hope in God, and we are transformed to love.**

(Format Note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1992). *Colossians* (pp. 11–23). Chicago: Moody Press.)

Closing Hymn

Prayer Room Invitation

050 Benediction

May our Lord who has laid up for you a hope in heaven where moth and rust **cannot** destroy, **Keep you strong to the end**, so that **you will be blameless on the day** of our Lord Jesus Christ. **In His name we Pray. Amen.** (cf. Col. 1:5; Mt. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:8)