

## Where's your Hope?

(Colossians 1:1–8)

### WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO?

The word of truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, has come to humanity, and it is central to the Christian's Hope; true believers ought to produce 'spiritual fruit' and express their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and love for others.

#### 1) A WORD OF SALUTATION: To the "saints" and "faithful," from the Apostle Paul (by the will of God), and our brother Timothy (v.1–2)

- God sent Paul; His message is **God's** message and carries authority. An apostle of God = an extraordinary messenger!
- By "saints," Paul reminds them of their status as those who have been transferred to the "kingdom of His beloved Son" (later, v. 13)
- To call them "faithful" reminds them of their faithfulness to the gospel they have received.

***NOTE:** Colossians can help us distinguish between a **faithful** Christian and a **fictitious** one! The only criterion through which one's spiritual status is measured is Christ and Christ alone.*

#### 2) A WORD OF SUBLIME SINCERITY: Thanksgiving and praise for the continual work of God the Father (v. 3–8)

- The Occasion: Love and faithfulness of those who **believe** the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the "faithful" react with prayer and thanksgiving (v.3–4)
- The root or basis of faithfulness and love (v.5-6):
  - Hope laid up for you in Heaven (v.5)
  - Hope as expressed in the **Gospel of Jesus Christ** (v.5)
  - Faithfulness rooted correctly in Christ bears fruit (v.6)
- The first model of "faithfulness": **Epaphras** (v.7-8)
  - A messenger of the gospel (v.7)
  - A reporter of the situation in Colossae to Paul (v. 8)

***NOTE:** Paul will mention three models of "faithfulness" in this letter: Epaphras, Tychicus, and Onesimus (1:7; 4:7, 9).*

### APPLICATION: (Christians ought to...)

- Proclaim the word of truth in their own setting today (you must know the real from the fake)—but in *humility*, not arrogance.
- Help support one another to sustain and bolster their faith. No believer is alone in their faith. Are you connected or disconnected?
- Guard against putting any hope in the things of this world or in idols of the heart that hinder from producing fruit in God's kingdom.
- Do not just hear the Word. Faith is not just something to think about and discuss but something that is lived. Faith acts on what it believes.
- Live life with joy and thanksgiving, praying to God always at all times.
- Live life so that others may see Christ in us and learn what the Christ-filled life looks like. When we live as Christ, God is glorified in us.

**Note:**<sup>1</sup> Colossae's heretical poison (false teaching) was a deadly Judaic-Gnostic combination. Paul wrote to warn the Colossian Christians of these errors of doctrine and practice:

- He warned against ritualism: strict rules about permissible food and drink, religious festivals (2:16–17), and circumcision (2:11; 3:11).
- He warned against asceticism: an idea that the body is evil and that via self-torture or self-denial, exalted spirituality is possible (1:22; 2:20–23).
- He warned against trusting philosophy, knowledge, and tradition (2:4,8).
- He warned against trying to obtain secret knowledge (2:18; 2:2–3).
- He warned against the worship of angels (2:18–19).
- He warned against making Christ any less than the divine Son of God, Lord of the universe, and Head of the church (1:13–20; 2:2,3,9,10,17).

Paul recognized that the most dangerous element of this heresy was the deprecation of Christ, so he focused much of his attention on Christ's supremacy. **In fact, Colossians is the most Christ-centered book in the Bible.**<sup>1</sup> When we study Paul's epistles, we see that each has a dominant theme. For example, to name a few:

- ➔ In *Romans*, it is justification by faith.
- ➔ In *Ephesians*, it is the mystery of Christ and his Church.
- ➔ In *Philippians*, it is the joy that Christ brings.
- ➔ In *Colossians*, it is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Head of all creation and of the Church.
- ✓ **Accordingly, there is no writing better equipped to draw us upward than the book of Colossians.**
- ✓ **Christ is incomparable. Christ is all and all, and for the Christian, to live is Christ! (Phil.1:21)**

<sup>1</sup> Bruce B. Barton and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995), 137.