

20220713 Colossians 1:1-6 Understanding the Grace of God in Truth

We should never be distracted from truth nor attracted to falsehood. In this book, the Apostle Paul is writing the church in Colossae, urging them to focus on what is truth. Colossians is like those warning alarms on our newer Toyota. They give a ring every time the car is drifting into another lane. In fact, the car will turn the wheel by itself back into the right direction. However, it is we ourselves that need to do the turning when we hear the alarm bell go off.

This was a group of Christians in a thriving church that was threatened by a temptation to be drawn away to something other than Jesus. I grew up in a church that was wonderfully orthodox in its teaching, but over time, the teaching became the focus of worship instead of Jesus. It was a strange. It's hard to think that the idea of study and knowledge of scripture can itself get in the way of our devotion and worship of Jesus.

If all you have is Jesus, you have all that you need. Paul wanted this church to stay the course. He wanted them to know that all that they had was Jesus and all that they needed was Jesus. There were a couple of belief systems in Colossae that kept encroaching on the gospel. (Jewish legalism - Having to keep the laws of Moses to be saved). Also there was some of it was Gnostic Mysticism. That was a belief that Jesus really didn't come in the flesh. It also had to do with "special knowledge" that they claimed to have about the Lord that intimated that others didn't have it. The other thing going on was asceticism. That's where you deny yourself comforts and treat yourself harshly. That's just legalism.

Gnostic mysticism came from the Greek word "Gnosis" that meant knowledge. They believed that anything spiritual was good and anything material was evil. And since the material was evil, Jesus COULD NOT HAVE COME in human form. They believed Jesus looked physical, but he really wasn't because that would have been evil. They thought that lesser beings created the material universe. When John wrote 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John he was addressing this heresy.

We know that Paul had never gone to Colossae, but he was in Ephesus for 3 years and during that time the people in Colossae heard the gospel. While he was in Ephesus, we think that Epaphras came from Colossae, heard the gospel, accepted it, and he returned to Colossae where he started a church. So around 61 AD, Paul wrote the letter to straighten out the problems.

It is sort of divided into 4 parts: Personal, Doctrinal, Practical, Relational

Chapter 1 – Personal intercession – Paul would have an introduction followed by a prayer.

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

Their Faith in 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.*

⁹ *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

100 miles due east of Ephesus. It is called Colossae.

v.1 Paul starts by calling himself an “apostle”. That is something unique to that time. There are no “apostles” at this time. It is a matter of concern when churches try to somehow say that we have people with that kind of authority in the church. When I write a sermon it does not rise to the level of being a piece of scripture. Apostles were appointed and sent by God for a specific time period. They were people who had personally seen Jesus and his ministry (other than Paul himself). Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus the same way I am a pastor that was called not of men, but of Jesus. Paul then tells how he is thankful for them.

V.2 To the “saints” and “faithful people”. I want to remind you that each of us that is a believer is a “saint”. That means we are “set apart” to God. You and I have been set aside for His spiritual service.

Grace and peace be to you. Remember that we've learned that we must know the grace of God before we experience the peace of God. Grace is so wonderful because it is not performance oriented, rather it is a free gift that we have the opportunity to receive. And, we can walk in grace or miss it all together.

v.3 Thanksgiving is such an important part of a joyful Christian life. I've said before and I'll say now, "Grateful people are joyful people, and ungrateful people are not joyful people." Gratitude really will affect your attitude.

Even as I am writing these words, it is 5:17 in the morning and I stopped my writing to give thanks to the Lord for the very air in my lungs. It is a new day. It is a gift from the Lord, and I need to treat the day with awe, respect, and thanksgiving. Paul then says that he is "always praying for them". We talk so much about prayer, but we spend so little time doing it. I think maybe it's because we're so task-oriented. It's like we feel if we take the time to pray we won't have time for the "important stuff", whatever in the world that might include.

V.4-5 We see a familiar listing of the three Christian virtues. My dad used to tell me to live by the 7 virtues (4 Greek virtues¹ + the 3 Christian virtues). The Christian virtues are faith, hope, and love. Paul was so delighted from the moment he heard of their faith in the Lord. It probably astonished Paul somewhat that he had not even been the one to bring them the gospel. As I mentioned in the forward, it had been the work of Epaphras who had come over to Ephesus to visit while Paul was preaching the gospel there. Remember he lived in Ephesus for about 3 years.

The hope we have is an *elpida* kind of hope. That is an expectation of something good. You know, we as believers should always have an expectation of something good, and never should we be dreading some "bad that is to come". Much of this has to do with having a real understanding of the sovereignty and goodness of God.

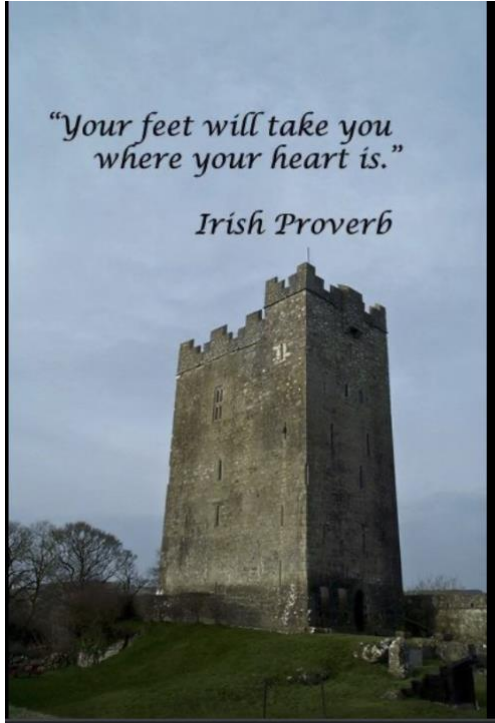
"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

—Jeremiah 29:11

"He has caused us [to be born again](#) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you."

—1 Peter 1:3-4

¹ 4 Greek virtues: Prudence, Courage, Temperance, Justice,



Our “hope” for what is laid up for us in heaven should encourage us on to have great fruit in our lives. Remember on Sunday, Judge Buddy talked about the duties and responsibilities we have as citizens of heaven. We are to be hopeful. We are to be encouragers. We are to be positive. We are to see the glass as half full. These are not delusional attitudes. These are Holy Spirit attitudes.

So much of how we live out the abundant life revolves around our mind set. That means that our attitudes and the things that go on in our minds will determine where our feet go. One of you sent me a beautiful meme on Sunday that says it so well. “Your feet will take you where your heart is.”

So, this evening, let me ask you a question; where is your heart? If you’re worn and weary (and I know many are with the heat), let’s have a reboot tonight and count our blessings. We need to count our many blessings and name them one by one.

Let’s go back and remember the words of Paul from Philippians chapter four.

⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

We just can’t do this enough. Let’s take a few moments here at this Wednesday night meeting, and let’s voice some of the great blessings of God in our lives. When we do this, we too can be like Paul and find ourselves praying more and rejoicing for the hope that’s laid up for us in heaven. Fruit will come forth and we’ll be exactly the men and women we’re supposed to be.

V.6 When we are living in the right kind of way, our lives will bring forth fruit. You heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. **DON’T MISS THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH.**