

“GIVE THANKS FOR THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL”

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

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INTRODUCTION

Christians ought to be **thankful** people and **praying** people! Our hearts should rejoice especially at the salvation of souls and the growth of Christian brethren. But all of that is possible due to the coming of the Gospel and its bearing of fruit and growth throughout all the world and in the lives of believers in the local church. All of that happens when faithful servants of God, like Epaphras, slaves of Christ and beloved, carry the gospel to those who need to hear it. Thanksgiving is an important emphasis of Paul in this letter to the Colossians as may be seen from 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; and 4:2. Paul here shows that he practices what he preaches!

In this passage, we celebrate the Gospel—the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. This Gospel is all we need; we need no improvement, and certainly no counterfeits!

REJOICE/GIVE THANKS OVER THE GOSPEL AND FOR THE FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE OF FELLOW BELIEVERS!

- I. THANKSGIVING IN PRAYER DIRECTED TO GOD THE FATHER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (3)
 - A. His Deity
 - B. His Fatherhood
 - C. His Son, and us as sons (see v. 2)

- II. THE GOSPEL HAS COME! (5, 6)
 - A. The Nature of the Gospel (5, 6)
 1. Good news—salvation message
 2. “Word of Truth”; “in truth”
 3. The Grace of God
 - B. The Coming of the Gospel (6)
 1. It has come to the Church of Colossae—and to us.
 2. It has come to “all the world.”
 - C. The Growth of the Gospel (6) [verb and participle in present tense—stress on continually]
 1. Internally—bearing fruit [cf. Genesis passages “be fruitful and multiply”]
 2. Externally—growing [both in the local church and through the world]

- III. THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL IN THE LOCAL CHURCH (6b-7, 4, 8)
 - A. The coming of the messenger—Epaphras (7)
 1. Founder and Pastor of the church
 2. *Beloved* of Paul and Timothy and of the church
 3. Fellow *slave* of Jesus
 4. Faithful minister/servant [word from which we get “deacon”] of Christ
 5. Representative of Paul—on “our behalf.”
 - B. The Hearing of the message—“the day that you heard it” (6b)
 - C. The Understanding of the message (6b)
 - D. The Faith in the person promoted in the message—and the continuing faith (4a)

- E. The resulting love for the saints—people of God (4b; 8).
 - 1. The result of love for God in Christ
 - 2. Shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (8)
- F. Such faith and love are strengthened and promoted by the Objective HOPE of the saint (5).

- 1. Explanation of “hope.”

Hope does have a very powerful and beneficial effect upon faith and love. We must first truly understand the nature of NT “hope.” Hope is not wishing thinking; rather it is “a fervent yearning, confident expectation, and patient waiting for the fulfilment of God’s promises, a full *Christ-centered* (cf. Col. 1:27) assurance that these promises will indeed be realized. It is a living and sanctifying force.”

- 2. Reservation of hope—“laid up for you in Heaven.
- 3. The impartation of hope—“previously heard in the gospel.”

CONCLUSION

Read I Cor. 13:13. “Faith, hope, and love.”

Faith in Christ is based on the past finished work of Christ and results in salvation.

Love for the saints “operates in the present and results in service.”

Hope of heaven “looks to the future and results in *sanctification*” (I Jn. 3:1-3).

The Gospel is still “the power of God unto salvation.” It has transformed the world!

It still bears fruit and grows.

Concerning the successful spread of the gospel, some students of worldwide missions have concluded reasonably that by the end of the first century when the last of the apostles had died the number of Christians worldwide had reached about half a million (H. 51). Hendriksen also quotes Justin Martyr to the effect that “there is no people, Greek or barbarian, or of any other race, by whatever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of the crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things.” About 50 years later Tertullian stated, “We are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill your cities, islands, camps, our palace, senate, and forum. We have left you only your temples” (H. p. 51).

Paul was one of the most successful of all gospel preachers. He committed his entire life to the Gospel preaching and ministry, reasoning with and pleading with Jews and Gentiles (II Cor. 5:20-21). When present he worked hard in preaching and teaching and visiting and counseling, but also with his hands so as not to be a burden on people. He was like a father or mother with their children. When absent he did not forget his flocks, for he would write letters to them, send emissaries to them, and when able revisit them. Always he would pray for them. His success is seen in numerous passages, among which are the following:

- 1) All of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).
- 2) The word of God grew and mightily increased (19:20).
- 3) The imprisonment and problems happening to him only succeeded in furthering the Gospel work (Phil. 1:12-13).

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But, have you responded to the gospel? Are you changed and bearing fruit—esp. faith, love, hope?

Do you thank God, the Father of the L J C for His powerful gospel and for fellow Christians?