

# ***The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians***

## Christ in You, The Hope of Glory

### Colossians 1:3-5 | Giving Thanks and Hope

#### Colossians 1:1-2 | Paul Separated Unto the Gospel of God

In our last class, we learned Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word apostle is transliterated from the Greek word *αποστολος*, not translated. If it were translated, the English word would be "a sent one" or "a messenger."

In another letter, he said he didn't deserve to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God (1 Corinthians 15:9). In another place he said that before he met Jesus Christ on the Damascus road he was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious (1 Timothy 1:13), which is why he was not worthy to be called one who was sent by God. But he got mercy and grace from God, and the Lord, who came into the world to save sinners, Paul said "I was first in line to receive that grace." (1 Timothy 1:15). He was the pattern for all those who would believe after him, if he could receive everlasting life by believing in the Messiah, anyone could (1 Timothy 1:16).

Paul became **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**. Paul didn't choose his profession, it chose him.

The teaching in the New Testament moved from law to grace. Law diminished and grace increased.

In our dispensation of grace, no one enters the ministry or any profession *by the will of God*. While we should make plans for our lives that are in step with the Word of God, it is God who directs those steps. He does not choose them for us as he did in Paul's dispensation.

Not only was Paul an apostle, he was also *separated unto the gospel of God* (Romans 1:1), which means he was set apart or marked off from other apostles **by the will of God**. He differed from the twelve apostles. God set him apart for a specific purpose. We get a hint of that purpose in Acts 9:15,16. God revealed to the prophet Ananias, "**He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.**" Paul told Timothy "I am appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles (2 Timothy 1:11). This differs from the command Jesus gave to the twelve. They were to make disciples, baptize, and teach everything Jesus commanded. We never see Paul "making disciples" or being concerned with "baptizing." Paul did not teach the same message Christ taught in the Gospels. He taught a new message from Jesus Christ, a message that was given to him by revelation (Ephesians 3).

Both Paul and the twelve apostles announced the Gospel of God, and it always pertained to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The *gospel of God* was not a mystery and it was found and promised in the Old Testament prophets (Romans 1:2).

Beyond the Good News of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, a revelation given to Paul, which had never been shared before. It was new and unknown. Paul called it *a mystery*. The mystery was that the Gentiles would be in the same *body* as the Jews (Ephesians 3:6).

The Church/assembly of believers, which began in Acts 2, was made up only of Jews (Acts 2:46 *in the temple*). This church would later be joined by Gentiles who did not have to be circumcised or follow the Law of Moses (Acts

13:39; 15:20). This would have been shocking to the Jews. Prior to this new revelation, the only way a Gentile had any hope was to become a Jew, be circumcised, and follow the Law of Moses. But now, the Gentiles, who previously *were without hope and without God*, could be justified (made right with God) and come into the Church by belief alone, not by the Law (Ephesians 2:12; 3:6; Acts 13:38,39). With this newly formed *body of Christ*, *there would be neither Jew nor Gentile*. All are one in Christ, and that is called the grace of God.

**And Timotheus** (Timothy) **our brother**. Paul traveled with others and included others in the writing of his letters. We find Timothy's name in several salutations in Paul's letters: Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; and Philemon 1. Timotheus, or Timothy, was a **brother** "in Christ." Paul also refers to him as his *faithful son in the Lord*, and *my true child in faith*, also *my beloved child* (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). I think that gives us evidence Timothy was one of Paul's converts from Judaism to belief in the Jesus as the Messiah. Paul wrote two letters, specifically addressed to Timothy. While we could spend a great deal of time studying the life of Timothy, he was a trusted companion of Paul's and a loyal friend and brother.

Paul, and Timothy are writing to those who are *in Christ, the Church* in the city of Colossae.

## Colossians 1:3-5 | There is Hope

**We give thanks.** This is an appropriate passage for us to look at this time of year. Thanksgiving is only four days away. It is a day we are supposed to remember to give thanks. Sadly, that rarely happens. It is a time of partying, football, overeating, and an excuse to get drunk. Rather than thankful hearts lots of families are thrown into chaos.

There is very little **thanks** given today. You won't find it on social media. There you will find selfishness, narcissism, greed, and a combative spirit. It seems that on social media everyone feels that they have to comment on everything. Everyone has an opinion and their opinion is the only correct one.

Instead of shooting back, what if you said, "It is good to hear from you and I am thankful for you." They may not know how to respond. What if you said to your kids, "I'm thankful for you." Or, to your spouse, "I am thankful for what you did." "Thank you for cooking that meal."

Notice Paul said that he and Timothy **give thanks to God...Praying always for** the Colossians. They are verbalizing their giving of thanks. We can pray for others, and then we can tell them that we prayed for them! What an encouragement that would be

They had prayed for the Colossians ever **since they heard of their faith in Jesus Christ, and their love for all the saints**. We should pray for other Christians. They need our prayers. We need their prayers! It is our faith in Jesus Christ that gives us all our commonality. When we have our faith in common with others we have a bond that is inseparable. Paul had likely never met these Colossians, but there is a bond of like-mindedness that cannot be joined together in any other group, and one that cannot be separated.

These Colossians had **love for all the saints**. I take **saints** to be those who were saved at Pentecost and due to the ministry of Peter in Jerusalem. They were poor and persecuted. Paul would often take a collection for those poor saints. The Colossians showed love, and it was no doubt exhibited through their financial gifts.

## Colossians 1:5

Paul and Timothy prayed for the Colossians. Their prayers were dedicated to the Colossians' steadfast faith in Christ, their compassionate love for all saints in Jerusalem, and their future everlasting hope in the heavenly realm. That hope of everlasting life comes from the **truth of the gospel**. That promise of everlasting life was the Colossian's hope, and it is our hope. Beloved, we have an eternal hope of heaven waiting for us.

That hope is only apprehended because of the gospel: *Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The good news of Jesus Christ's sacrificial act, shedding His blood to forgive our sins, and triumphing over death through His glorious resurrection, has given every believer since Pentecost the promise of eternal hope.

But that is our heavenly hope. We need hope day by day too. How can we be assured of that hope? We can find the answer in the Psalm of David (37:1-7). He is addressing Israel specifically, but he lays out principles of hope that transcend all dispensational ages. In verse one, David's words are poetically translated in the KJV, *Fret not*. We might use the more mundane phraseology, *don't worry*. Either way, we get the point. David goes on in the Psalm to tell us how we can have hope for today:

- 1. Trust in the Lord.** Don't put your trust in worldly things. Believing a temporal *thing* will give you hope will be a severe disappointment. Everything on earth fails; money, toys, health, politicians, or anything in this world. When trust is placed in God, it is in the right place.
- 2. Delight thyself in the Lord.** The Hebrew word for delight means fellowship or communication. To have hope in this world, there needs to be regular open communication with God. Like you would have with a friend or a loved one. When there is no communication, a friendship, or a relationship will break down. To delight in the Lord means spending some time with Him. That can be easily accomplished by reading His word and praying.
- 3. Commit thy way unto the Lord.** The Hebrew word for commit is *galal*. It is an amusing word in that it can be translated literally as *to roll*, or it can be translated as *to wallow*. The word "**way**" can be translated as *journey*. Maybe a contemporary way of putting it is *Wallow in your journey of life with the Lord!* Or, how about this? *Don't wallow in the things of the world, wallow in the Lord.* And then trust Him.

Finally,

- 4. Rest in the Lord.** To **rest** is literally *to be silent*. If I may put it a bit more crudely, *Trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit your way unto the Lord, and then shut up*. David goes on to write, **and wait patiently for Him**.

Will hope come in our lifetime? Maybe, maybe not, but we can have joy in knowing God is always faithful to His promises. Let the hope of this world be in God's timing. It is the **truth of the gospel** that gives us hope for today and for tomorrow. Whenever or however God works, we will not be left hopeless.