

Saints and Faithful Brethren

Message from DVD Archive

By Ken Wimer

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Colossians 1
Preached On: Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Shreveport Grace Church
2970 Baird Road
Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

If you will, take your Bibles and look with me once again in Colossians 1. We began our study primarily at verse 1 looking at some of the background of the epistle and the author, Paul, a little bit of the context of why he wrote it. And as I said last time, Paul as of the writing of this letter had never visited this town himself, in fact, here in these opening verses, he talks about having heard of their faith. So here he is in prison and encouraged by the testimony of what he hears coming out of this particular town brought to them by this one Epaphras. Remember, I said that he must have traveled close to 1,000 miles to get to Paul, but he informed Paul of the state of the church in Colosse. Paul had preached in this region; he had preached in Ephesus which was just probably about 100 miles west of here; he had preached in Galatia which was northeast of here. So it wasn't that Paul was not acquainted with this region but he was encouraged by what he'd heard of their faith and love of Christ according to the truth of the Gospel. When he talks about their faith, he's not just referring to just any faith, he's talking about that faith that has Christ as its Object, as the Substitute, as God's Savior, as the Redeemer, as God's Righteousness, all of these that we rejoice in who know Christ.

But he's also, as we read later on in this epistle, concerned about false teachers. It should not surprise us that in our day we need to be wary of false teachers and as you read these epistles, one thing that comes clear is that false teachers aren't just out there in the world; wherever there is an unregenerate soul sitting in a congregation, it could be where the Gospel is preached, there is a false professor. And every time they open their mouth to speak in an unregenerate state, they are a false witness; every time they open their mouth to sing or read this Word and they don't have the revelation of Christ in them as He is in Truth, they're a false preacher.

We need to think in terms of even our own congregation, how some coming in, the LORD will bring in, and really the purpose is to test each one that is the LORD's. He did that back in Israel in the Old Testament, brought in false prophets who prophesied another god. Because you might think, "Well, why doesn't God just preserve this congregation pure?" Well, it's because He's purposed to expose men by their false profession, but also to magnify those that are truly the LORD's because wherever there are those that are the LORD's, when they hear of false doctrine or false teacher, they're going to be concerned. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I've mentioned to you

before about those times when God commanded the children of Israel to go through the house and clean out all of the leaven. Clean it all out. He did so in order to give an example of exactly what it is for us to take care, be wary, of even the least bit of leaven in doctrine or in practice, whatever it is that does not bring glory to Christ.

So that's the occasion of the writing of this epistle, but tonight I want us to dwell particularly on verse 2. And I know we're moving slowly here but I want us to dwell here on who it is that he addresses this epistle to. He says, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." Now you might sit there and think, "Well, how on earth is he going to preach an entire message just on that sentence." Well, as I began to study this, the LORD impressed this upon my mind: how it is that Paul addresses these fellow believers, he calls them "saints and faithful brethren in Christ."

You know, the term "Christian" has become so popular and vague today that it really has no meaning. Do you find yourself kind of pulling up when someone asks you if you're a Christian? You could be bearing a false witness by saying yes in our day. Did you even think about that? Because if you say yes, what you're telling them is, "Okay, we're one." Whenever somebody asks me that, I ask them kindly back, "Well, tell me what you understand a Christian to be and I'll tell you if I am one." That's not being hard, that's just being precise. "When you ask me if I'm a Christian, how do you understand that? Let's talk about it." That's important.

I'll tell you a word that you won't hear the world talking about or terms that you won't hear the world talking about and that is "saints and faithful brethren." How many times do you hear this world even talk about saints, what it is to be a saint? I remember a number of years ago when we were still meeting in homes up in the Highlands, and there was a lady that was invited by one of the members and she is well-known downtown but she came to our meeting during the mid-week and I was preaching on saints and just saying that word "saints," do you know the first thing she thought of? She thought I was going to be talking about those that had died and gone on and had been exonerated as saints by the church, made saints by the pope, the Catholics. I'll guarantee you when you say "saints," that's what people think. "Well, he's talking about somebody that's been beatified."

But no, this is an expression that pertains to those that are the LORD's. And it's an amazing term, an amazing expression, "saints and faithful brethren." In fact, and I don't want to leave you the wrong impression, I don't mind being called a Christian so long as it's in the sense of the Bible. Do you realize that the only time that word is used, I looked it up, there are three times in the whole of Scripture that the word "Christian" is used and in every case, I'll just show you this in a little bit, but in every case it was used by the enemies of the cross; the enemies of those who took a stand for Christ and His death that He accomplished.

Let me just show that to you. In Acts 11:26, and it was given by the Judaizers, and to me that shows exactly how much Satan has blinded men today because they take a word or term that was back in the early church, a term of hatred, to call somebody a Christian was

a derogatory term, and today it's popular. I think about that every time I see a van or a car go by with a fish symbol on it. That thing has become so popular. Do you realize where that even started? It started with the Greek letters that pertained to "Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and written in Greek, if you look at it, it looks like a fish. And it was a symbol that was put upon the walls of the catacomb; it was a special code, if you will, for those who were suffering persecution for Christ's sake and it was a code that no one understood. When they saw it, they didn't understand it. It was a symbol of martyrdom and I see these cars flying by and vehicles flying by with a fish symbol on it and a big old four-wheel drive, someone just come out from mudding and there's a fish symbol on it. It has nothing to do with identifying with Christ and His Gospel. Now, the day may come when it does. Do you suppose if they really started making an issue of those that called themselves Christians today and had fish symbols on their vehicles, how many would be driving around with them? That would be the first thing to go. People would rather protect themselves. But right now it's popular but it wasn't always so.

If you look in Acts 11:26, it says, "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch." This is talking about Barnabus that went and sought Saul of Tarsus. A lot of people don't realize it but it had been nearly 14 years from the time that the LORD first crossed his path there on the road to Damascus and when Barnabus went and sought him. Fourteen years. "And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Now, when it says they were called Christians, we're going to see that what this means is a derogatory term.

Look over in 1 Peter 4:16. It says here, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." Alright? So there's an identification with Christ that brings suffering. I'll guarantee you, the message that most people today believe and call themselves Christian by that message, there is nothing offensive about it. "God loves you. He has a wonderful plan for your life." What's offensive about that? "Christ died for you. Won't you just give yourself to Him?" There's nothing offensive about what religion calls a Christian today. In fact, it's a very popular thing because people use it to try to show love and get people in and people feel part of something. There is no suffering there. But in Peter's day, you know, it meant identifying with this Jesus of Nazareth, this One that was crucified, that was slain.

But coming back to our text here, what about this appellation here that's given by Paul? "Saints and faithful brethren." You know, this is an in-house term. You've got little names that you call ones that you love and every once in a while maybe someone else will be around and you'll call your wife that or you'll call your child that and people kind of look funny and say, "Oh, is that what you call her?" It's a term of endearment. This here is a term of endearment. It's not to be just used any old way where he says, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse."

You know, as I thought about that term, have you ever referred to yourself as a saint? It's not something that you boast about or tell somebody, "Oh, I'm one of the faithful brethren." It just doesn't ring proper. We know ourselves to be what we are, sinners by

nature. In fact, it's easier to call ourselves a sinner saved by Grace than it is to call ourselves a saint and yet do you realize that in God's eyes because of the work of the LORD Jesus Christ this is how God sees you? As holy. Just as holy as His Son. And faithful. Faithful. Again, not any faithfulness in yourself but faithful because of Christ's faithfulness.

So let me just dwell in the time that we have tonight on these two terms, these two names. Saints, what does it mean? It means to be holy. Not in degrees of holiness as if this is something that you're working out and progressively becoming holier. Are there any degrees to holiness? You're either holy or you're not. This whole notion that somehow that regeneration, we inherit now a holiness or a holy nature that somehow then becomes progressive, causes us to be progressively more holy is completely foreign to Scripture. Some of the old writers talk about progressive sanctification in the sense of the more you go on in life, the more you go on in this walk, the less you sin. I'll tell you, the more I go on in this walk that I trust the LORD has led me in, I have to say I see myself more and more daily as a sinner. Whatever notion I had of goodness in myself, it fades. It fades in Light of Who God is, Who Christ is.

So it must mean here when he says, "To the saints," it must be referring to a holiness that is completely outside us. You hear me say that quite often but this is why. If you look inside you for any type of holiness, you'll find none. If you're taught of the Spirit, you'll find nothing but corruption and deadness. That's what we are in this flesh. That's that nature that we have in Adam.

So what is this holiness? Well, it is to be justified. That word "justified" means "to be declared righteous; acquitted of all guilt by not an imparted righteousness that's put in you by the Spirit but an imputed righteousness." That's very important. You'll never read in Scripture any notion of what some men call an imparted righteousness. Now, John Wesley and some of these men that were free-will preachers, that's what they believed. They believed that. In fact, John Wesley called imputed righteousness, imputed nonsense. That's exactly his term that he used and he believed that what made a person just before God was the Spirit of God, a nature of righteousness in each one like a seed and then letting it grow.

So that's where Methodism came from. When you talk about Methodism, they used to have holiness meetings. That's what they called them, holiness, the Haystack Meetings, if you go back and read about some of this, where they would join these little clubs. And it started on college campuses where they'd get together and pray through and they felt like just those moments of prayer, if you could just dedicate yourself more to prayer, dedicate yourself more to Scripture reading, little by little you would see the sin nature go away and this seed of righteousness would grow and like a tree, pretty soon consume your being. That was the notion that they had and anybody that denied that or denounced it as being a false notion, they would go against. They were against. They would be bitterly opposed to.

But, dear friends, the Gospel of the LORD Jesus Christ stands against any such notion of righteousness in a man. No, our righteousness, when the Scriptures talk about our righteousness, it's the LORD our Righteousness. Where is the LORD? He's seated upon the throne having come and lived and died and risen again. And when God gives His Spirit to one that Christ has redeemed, that heart is drawn to Christ. It's outside of ourselves. The Spirit draws our heart to Christ and to that work of righteousness that He accomplished.

But I'll tell you, it's a sad thing when many today kind of give lip service to the doctrine of imputed righteousness. In fact, they really believe it's insufficient. I had a man tell me that not too long ago. He said, "If all your preaching is imputed righteousness, you're missing it." I'm telling you one thing: when I read this book and read the Scriptures, I don't see anything other than the imputed righteousness of Christ which gives me a perfect standing before God by which I can be called a saint. In fact, this person with whom I was conversing on this, when he indicated to me that he felt.... and I have to say, I used to preach this so I know. I used to preach a twofold nature in man where there's an evil nature but then there's the righteous nature because that's what I had been taught. I had been taught that now we've got this dual nature in us. But you stop and think about it: if there is that righteous nature within me in addition to what Christ accomplished there at the cross and it's really that righteous nature that God looks to to declare me holy or to say that I've been made holy, I'm above all men most miserable because I don't know as I've ever had a holy thought.

That's what I asked this man, I said, "You're telling me that this nature in you is just as holy as God? Tell me, have you ever had a holy thought? Can you ever say that you have ever prayed to God's glory without any aspect of this flesh ever being attached to it?" And he just got quiet. I don't want to stand before God based upon an imparted righteousness, so called, I need an imputed righteousness. I need one that has been declared by the Judge Himself that when He looks at me, all He sees is His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ. That's the righteousness that the Scriptures speak of. Before God, imputed righteousness is the only righteousness by which we're considered righteous before God.

I'll repeat it and you go to this Word and you'll find it to be so. Imputed righteousness, that is, when Christ died, and this is what the Gospel is. 2 Corinthians 5:21. God in one simultaneous act took the sin of His people and laid it upon His Son. That sin had to be punished. I ask you: did He punish the sin or didn't He? Scripture says He took it away. He took it away. And what did He put there in return? In the same simultaneous act, it says that He made us to be "the righteousness of God in Him." He put to our account the very obedience of Christ.

That's what this word "saint" means here. We're saints by justification and that imputed righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ. Now, you say, "Well, how do I know I'm a saint?" Well, you could say that we're saints by the sanctification of the Spirit, by the setting apart of the Spirit. That's how it's manifested but when the Spirit is given to us, it's not some other righteousness. You see, I heard a man say this recently in a message, he said, "Well, at the cross, what did Christ guarantee? Our righteousness." You see, they've

slipped little words in here. "He secured our righteousness but it's when the Spirit puts that righteous nature in you that you actually become righteous." Well, that's not what I read in Scripture and as I've said, is there anyone who would honestly testify that any righteousness in them is what makes them holy before God? Would anybody like to testify to that here? I'd like to hear it. I'd be flabbergasted to hear it.

What many attribute to a holy nature is really the Spirit of God indwelling us. That's what God gives us. The Scripture says that God gives us his Spirit as an earnest and his Spirit comes in and dwells in this heart and rules and reigns over this sin nature, what I've inherited from Adam. I consider that nature dead. When Christ died, that old man died. It was crucified with Christ and the Spirit now causes me to live according to his Glory, but that Spirit is given because God has already declared me to be righteous in His sight by the work of His Precious Son.

I would encourage you, I know maybe you've been brought up under this sort of teaching and I've been doing a lot more studying on it since I've been hearing recently a lot more of this kind of talk. But I do believe that the Scriptures talk to us about the Spirit indwelling. That's Who regenerates us, it's the Spirit. That's Who illuminates us, it's the Spirit. That's Who teaches us. That's Who guides us. It's His Spirit. It's the very Spirit of Christ. But to say that somehow some righteous nature has been imparted to me and it's like a seed in me that cannot sin and can grow, I have to say honestly before God, if that's it, I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is because I know by the Spirit of God myself to be just the opposite, just unclean, undone. But being the Holy Spirit, He directs my thoughts. He directs my will. He directs my affections to Christ, my righteousness.

Do you know what this teaching on so called imparted righteousness does? It gets you looking inward for some graces. It gets you looking away from Christ because then if I believe that somehow my standing with God depends upon some righteousness in here, what am I doing? I'm trying to fan it. I'm trying to find it. I'll tell you, if it was in here, you wouldn't have to fan it. You wouldn't have to find it. You would walk even as Christ walked. You would live even as He lived.

Do you know what I believe they are confusing? They're confusing what takes place in glorification. When Christ comes again and I am transformed into His image, then I can say I will have been given a righteous nature. Why? Because the sin nature will have been completely taken away. But until then, what's my plea? Christ my righteousness. How do I plead Him? The Spirit of God being my Teacher.

Oh, there's a lot more that could be said there but I have to move on. Let's go on to the second expression here where it says, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ." Faithful brethren. This is a term also that needs some explanation. We need to dwell here a little bit. What is it to be a faithful brother? Well, the word "faithful" comes from the word "faith," so it speaks to those who have faith. How do you have faith? Well, it's a Gift of God. It's a Gift of God so when he calls them "faithful brethren," he's referring to those to whom Christ has been revealed in truth. Alright, that's what you need to think of. Think of the word "faith." They have been given faith. There is a Substance. It's not just

like you hear people say, "Keep the faith, brother." You know, what faith? There is a Foundation to faith that the Spirit gives and that's Christ. It has Christ as its object.

If you look over in John 1, so when he's talking about "faithful brethren," he's talking about those that the Spirit of God has taught. Taught of Christ. Christ is their hope. Christ is their righteousness. Christ is their redemption. Christ is their all. He's their justification. Their sanctification. Their all. In John 1:12 it says, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Now, natural minds have read this verse for years and misinterpreted it. They say, "Well, see, there it says you have to receive Him." Well, read it again. It says, "But as many as received Him." The "but" there is in contrast to those who didn't. You see in verse 11, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." These are people that had the Scriptures, had the Word, and yet missed Christ. That could be somebody sitting right here. They have this Word but never bowed to Him. Never bowed to Him.

Well, "as many as received Him," thankfully there are those that did receive Him but why did they receive Him? It says, "to them gave He power." That word means "authority." The reason they received Him is because He gave them the authority "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." That's why they believe. That's why they have faith. That's why they know something of Christ in truth. It's because it was given to them.

And it says here in verse 13, "Which were born," you see, it's being born again but, "not of blood," it's not a matter of being born of parents that are believers, "nor of the will of the flesh," it's not you deciding it, "nor of the will of man," it's not going to be because somebody prayed through, "but of God." Alright, so faithful in that sense, having faith.

But secondly, faithful because they trust Christ. I know the Scriptures speak of trusting in Him, I know there are terms of believing on Christ, but all of that, it's like one lady that was dying and a preacher came and didn't have his Bible and he was quoting some Scripture to her and he was quoting that passage where Paul talked about being persuaded in 2 Timothy 1:12 it says, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." But when he was quoting it to her, he said, "Well, remember what the Scriptures say. I know in whom I have believed." And the lady stopped him and said, "Oh, don't put an 'in' in there. I don't want anything between me and my Savior. I know Whom I have believed."

That's what it is to have faith, dear friends, it's a trusting of Christ just as He's revealed in the Word; just as He's revealed in the Gospel. If you look in Colossians 1:4, Paul alludes to this, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." Well, what is it to have faith in Christ Jesus? It's to have that Spirit-given knowledge of who He is. It's not just to believe that He came, lived, died, and rose again, and ascended on high like so many do. It's to know Who He is, why He came, what He accomplished by His death, and where He is now.

Someone asked me one time, "How do you present the Gospel to somebody?" I said, "Well, ask the five questions: who, what, when, where and why." Who is the LORD Jesus Christ? You talk about getting right into the Gospel, that's Who it's about. It's Him. Why did He come? Why did He come into this world? Throw that question out to people and hear what their answers are but then direct them to what this Word says. What did He accomplish when He came? Did He just lay down His life as a general payment hoping someone would believe? No, it was an actual payment of God's justice, that God might be just and Justifier. For whom did He come? That's a good question to ask people. For whom did He come? And where is He now? Where is He now? Well, He's seated in glory. He ever lives to intercede. Is He up there wringing His hands hoping that someone will believe and just hoping that someone will get it together? No. He's interceding. His very presence, His blood shed, is an evidence before God the Father to be merciful to those that He loves. Why? Because Christ paid the price. That's the Gospel.

So there's a rest in Christ, trust of Christ, trust in Christ just as He's revealed in the Word. But I would also add here, thirdly, that to be faithful brethren there is a consistent and ongoing perseverance. It's not how you begin, it's how you end. There are many that have professed Christ and yet, it's like that seed sown, after awhile the birds come and take it away, things come and choke it out. There is no enduring in this message. After awhile, they can't stand the persecution.

I've had some that have shown great excitement about the message of Christ initially. They think, "This is the best thing I've ever heard in the world." You don't pamper them, you don't socialize, you don't invite them to lunch, you just say, "Well, sit down and listen like everybody else." Give it a year, give it two years, what happens? Pretty soon interest begins to dwindle. I've had people get upset at me because I don't call them every week when they're not in the service. I don't do that. Now, if somebody's sick, let me know, I'll be the first to come. But I'm not counting heads. I'm not trying to figure out who's here and who isn't. But I do know this: that those that are the LORD's, there is going to be desire to be where His Gospel is preached. There is going to be desire to be with His people. There's going to be a hungering, a yearning. There is going to be a humble listening of this Truth of the Gospel at Christ's feet. A desire to grow. But for many, after awhile they become interested in other things and the next thing you know, pretty soon in their minds they think, "Well, I don't even know what the fuss was about initially. I think I'll just go back and join what I left." A lot have done that but not those that are faithful.

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." You know, that word "faith, faithful," it's used as a metonymy. I know this is a word you may not be used to but it's using some attribute to explain something else. For example, when you talk about the military, don't you refer to the brass? Everybody understands when you're talking about the brass, you're talking about the military. When they say someone is sitting on their laurels, do you know what a laurel is? I had to look it up. A laurel is a wreath that was used to crown somebody to honor them. Okay? It's a plant but it's used to signify a glory, someone's glory. So we're always used to using certain terms for another, okay?

Well, that's the way it is with faith. What is faith when it says "the faithful"? It's nothing but a description of Christ Himself. That's how the Scriptures use it. It's a reference to Christ. It's a reference to the very Substance of faith; to what the Scriptures reveal about the person of Christ.

Let me just show you this over here in Acts 6:7 and then I'll be done. In Acts 6:7 it says, "And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the Faith." That's what it means to be faithful, it's to be obedient to the truth as it is in Christ. You know, you're faithful whenever you hear somebody take the LORD's name in vain and it strikes you in your heart and you think, "I've got to say something." You're faithful when you hear and see people caught up with idolatry and things that just completely deny our LORD Jesus Christ and having the Spirit of Christ in your heart, you say, "You know, I've got to speak to that person and warn them, exhort them."

You know, it's not talking about a walk without sin. If that were the case, I could not be called faithful because I know myself daily, I say it to my shame, how much even if it's never said across the lips but in the mind and heart, how much I have struggled with this flesh. But to be called faithful not because of any faithfulness in me but because of the revelation of Christ. To be called a saint not because of any righteousness in me but because of the righteous of the LORD Jesus Christ. I'll tell you, that I can own by God's Grace and I pray you can as well.