

Message #3**Colossians 1:3-8**

The Apostle Paul had never been to Colossae. He had never visited the city, he had never seen most of the people (2:1), and he was responsible for many churches. Paul was obviously a man who took a personal interest in any true church of God and even though he hadn't visited the church physically, he deeply cared for it spiritually.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING CAN CONTINUALLY BE OFFERED TO GOD IN BEHALF OF GOD'S CHURCHES, WHO HAVE RESPONDED TO GOD'S TRUTH AND ARE DEVELOPING IN GOD'S TRUTH.

The Colossians were responding to God's truth and Paul was thankful.

Although Paul was not on the front lines of the theological battle in Colossae, he was on his knees in prayer for the church in Colossae.

In the original text, **verses 3-8** are one long sentence, the main theme being "we are continually thanking THE God."

HEADING #1 – A prayer of thanksgiving to God is being personally offered. **1:3**

There are seven facts we may observe about Paul's prayer for the Colossian church:

Fact #1 - His prayer was pastoral.

Fact #2 - His prayer was plural. **1:3a**

Fact #3 - His prayer was persistent. **1:3b**

Fact #4 - His prayer was paternal. **1:3c**

Fact #5 - His prayer was perpetual. **1:3d**

Fact #6 - His prayer was personal. **1:3e**

Fact #7 - His prayer was positive.

Even with the doctrinal problems and lifestyle problems, he still thanked God for this church. Let us be swift to intercede for our brothers and sisters in Christ and offer thanks for them.

HEADING #2 – A prayer of thanksgiving to God had its practical reasons. **1:4-5**

The participle "since we heard" is casual, introducing reasons why Paul thanked God on behalf of this church. The tense of the participle indicates the action of hearing was prior to thanksgiving. Paul had legitimate reasons why he could thank God, as Dr. Curtis Vaughn said in his commentary, "The content of the thanksgiving is determined by the condition of the church" ... (p. 173). He thanked God after he heard something for which he could thank God.

Reason #1 - Paul was thankful because he had heard of the Colossians faith. **1:4a**

It was a specific faith for which Paul could give thanks. It was a faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul would not have been thankful if the Colossians were trusting in their works, or religion, or their education or philosophy; but he could thank God when he learned they had trusted in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is not some “leap in the dark,” it is a faith based on truth and historical fact (**1:5, 6**). Paul had learned, through Epaphras, that the Colossians had trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation, and that was certainly something for which he could thank God.

Reason #2 - Paul was thankful because he had heard of the Colossians love. **1:4b**

The Colossians had one of the great N.T. proofs of salvation, a love for all the saints.

There are times when there must be a doctrinal separation (I Cor. 10:20-21).

There are times when there must be a personal separation from certain people (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:11; II Thess. 3:14), and from worldly things (Rom. 12:1).

The truth is when such separations are made, it does demonstrate the highest level of love for God and for others, for it is the kind of love that loves one enough to say you are wrong and we love you enough to stand against you.

Reason #3 - Paul was thankful because he had heard of the Colossians hope. **1:5**

The great Christian trilogy of Christianity is faith, love and hope (I Cor. 13:13). Faith looks upward toward God; love looks outward toward others, and hope looks forward toward the future.

Paul was thankful to God because he knew these Colossians were heading toward heaven and he knew their faithfulness would bring them, as Curtis Vaughn said, a “glorious reward” (Vaughn, p. 175).

Paul is very careful to qualify the hope as being true hope based on THE Gospel. The hope was not just an imaginative or speculative hope, it was a true hope based upon the good news that Jesus Christ died for the sins of mankind and whoever believes in Him is guaranteed heaven. The proof is His resurrection. The hope of heaven is based on the truth of the Gospel pertaining to Jesus Christ. Our future is not based on fiction, but on fact.

HEADING #3 – a prayer of Thanksgiving to God does have a powerful source. **1:6-8**

The source of faith, the source of love, the source of hope is the Gospel. The thing that produced the faith, the thing that produced the love, the thing that produced the hope was the preaching of the Word of God. Our faith is developed, our love is developed and our hope is developed by hearing the truth of God. The power of God is in the Word of God. The more you come and hear the Word of God, the more faith, love and hope you will have, the more you will grow and develop.

Fact #1 - The Gospel was personal and local. **1:6a**

God’s Word personally touched the lives of the people in Colossae and a church was established in that city. Notice carefully, the Gospel came to them; they did not come to the Gospel.

This is God's pure grace in sending His Gospel to a heathen city that does not deserve it.

Fact #2 - The Gospel was universal and fruitful. **1:6b**

The participle "bearing fruit" is middle voice, indicating that God's Word has the ability in and of itself to bear fruit. It is the Word of God, nothing more and nothing else that only has the power to produce faith, love and hope. It is the Word of God that will cause increase. When a church stays focused on giving a clear understanding of the truth of God, it will always be a fruit-bearing church. The power is in the Word.

Fact #3 - The Gospel was taught by one loyal and faithful. **1:7-8**

The Colossians were first taught the Gospel by a man named Epaphras. According to Bishop Moule, Epaphras was the first pastor of the Colossian church and the first martyr of the church (Moule, p. 69).

- 1) The truth of the Gospel originally came to Colossae not through a big-name speaker, but through a faithful resident who had a heart for God and the people.
- 2) The faithful servant who founded the church was not too proud to go to Paul to ask for help.

(Reality #1) - Epaphras taught the Colossians. **1:7a**

Nothing will ever replace the God-ordained method of learning His Word—some faithful man must teach it (II Tim. 2:2). Epaphras, for the Colossian church, was that faithful man.

(Reality #2) - Epaphras was a beloved bond-servant. **1:7b**

Epaphras was bound to the same objectives, the same work of Christ that Paul was bound.

(Reality #3) - Epaphras was a faithful servant. **1:7c**

Epaphras had a deep perspective of Pauline theology. He taught the pure grace of God and he ministered the truth of Jesus Christ in the same accurate manner Paul did. The preposition "behalf" indicates that Paul considered Epaphras to be taking his place in the Colossian church.

(Reality #4) - Epaphras was a factual informer. **1:8**

He had a pastor's heart. He dealt with the negative, but he also praised the positive.

Can you thank God today because you know you are growing in your faith, in love and in hope? Is the Word of God bearing fruit in your life? Is God's truth ringing in your soul? Psalm 95:7-8 says today if you hear this voice, do not harden your heart. The Colossians didn't, how about you?