

Colossians 1.1-8 (After Acts 19.1, 8-20)

Clint Le Page

Main Point – The Gospel of Christ leads to growing faith, hope and love.

Where do you turn when you feel empty or weak, or lack the strength to change your circumstances?(**SLIDE**)

Is it to Netflix, a good book or a game, to escape?-----

Or maybe you keep looking to yourself, or to reminiscing over your past achievements, or to some positive thinking mantra – ‘you can do anything you set your mind to, be anything you wanna be’

Where do you turn for fulfilment and life and fulness?-----

So many people look to themselves, or new pleasures, new ideas, new ways of doing things.-----

Even as Christians we can feel Christ hasn’t satisfied us, so we turn to something else.----

So often when we feel we’re going without we can forget what we do have.

And we turn to other things or other people for meaning and fulfilment.

But what we’ll see in this letter Colossians is, the one we need to turn to – the One we need to stay focused on.(**SLIDE**)

And never forget what we have in him, in Christ.-----

For we have everything in Christ; everything we need; ALL we need.-----

And we’ll be exploring what that means and looks like over the next 3 months.-----

I’ll cover 4 points today: Why, Who, What and How?(**SLIDE**)

Why’s Paul writing?

Who’s he writing to?

What is he thankful for?

How does it relate to us?

So first, Why’s Paul writing?

Paul is writing to this young church he’s never been to, full of new believers.

And he wants them to know ALL they have in Christ & keep focused on him and stay devoted to him.

In the face of false teaching and temptations, he wants them to never move on from Christ, but know that living the best life happens in Christ.-----

To give you a taste, look at ch**1v18**, Christ will have the first place, or supremacy, in everything.

V19, the fulness of God dwells in him.

We get reconciled to God through him, v20.

Paul wants them all to grow to maturity, in him, **28**.(**SLIDE**)

To know that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him, 2v3

Look at the key verses in **2v6-7**.(**SLIDE**)

he wants them to continue in Christ, and be rooted and built up in him.---

That’s why he writes.-----

For **2.11**, we get filled in him, we get fullness in him.

We get everything in Jesus.

And Paul wants them to know that.

God wants us to know that, through this letter.-----

There are some teachers who would draw the believers away to follow Greek philosophies or Jewish legalism; or seek spiritual experiences beyond Christ.

But that will all fail.

Paul wants this young church to know all the treasures in the Gospel.

What they have now, and will have, because of the Good News of Jesus.

And it impacts everything; their lives, their church, their families, work, and their world.

The Gospel impacts us, or it should, in every way too.-----

Why’s the letter written?

So that every Christian who reads it will know they have everything in Christ, all that matters, and stick close to him.-----

Second question, Who, briefly, Who is the letter written to?(SLIDE)

Firstly though, we’re told in v1, the letter comes from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus.

That means this letter comes with God’s authority, because Paul was appointed by the resurrected Christ, to be his spokesman. [Acts9.15]

Timothy is a secondary author, and isn't an apostle.-----

Paul is writing to the saints, the Christians, the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Colosse.(SLIDE)

Colosse is a town in Asia Minor, 150k's inland from Ephesus in modern day Turkey.

It was located near an important East-West trade route, and at this time it's not a big city, but growing and prosperous.

Paul writes to the Christian church there.

He hadn't been there on his missionary journeys; Paul didn't plant that church.

But as we read in **Acts 19**, he had been in nearby Ephesus, and stayed there for two years.

V9 said, taking the disciples, [Paul] conducted discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

It seems that those who heard the Gospel there included Epaphras, mentioned in v7.

We assume Epaphras trusted in Christ, and Paul disciplined and trained him.

And then Epaphras became a dearly-loved, faithful and fellow servant in Gospel ministry.

And Epaphras went, or was sent back to Colossae, to share the Gospel n' plant a church.(SLIDE)

He 4v13 reveals he also planted churches in nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis.-----

The letter of Philemon reveals that the church in Colosse, or at least one of its congregations, met in Philemon's home.-----

Epaphras has then returned and updated Paul, which prompted Paul to write to the Colossians.-----

He's likely written during his two-year house-arrest at the end of Acts 28, in about 60 AD – just 30 years after Christ's resurrection.-----

Thinking about Epaphras please notice that Paul didn't do all the Gospel ministry himself, he trained others who served.

He trained others in Gospel ministry, and who went to their hometown, or elsewhere to share the Gospel, and **plant churches**.-----

I'm so encouraged that Bundy has sent out people to 3 church plants in our short history.

We as a church, and a denomination, need to keep doing that.-----

Does God want you to take the Gospel to somewhere or some particular people?-----

Maybe it's even at your workplace or school or family?-----

So who is Paul writing to?

These faithful, firmly committed Christians.

People who are 'in Christ', v2, united to Christ by his Spirit, part of God's family.---

And if we have turned from sin and trusted in Christ, we are also, in him, and what's said in this letter, really does relate to us.-----

Our third question is, What? What is Paul thankful for in vv3-8.(SLIDE)

'We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have for all the saints'.

Whenever Paul prays for these people he's never met, he always thanks God for them.

For as v8 reveals, Epaphras has come to him and told him about them.

Notice, Paul is not praising or thanking them, he is thanking God, for what God is doing in their lives.-----

Paul thanks God for their **faith**, their faith in Christ Jesus, **v4**.

You may hear it said today, that 'you've just got to have faith'.

George Michael sung, 'You gotta have faith, faith, faith'.

But a faith that everything will work out in the end, is baseless.-----

The question is, Faith in what?-----

For it is who or what our faith is in, that matters.

The Colossians' faith is 'in Christ Jesus', he is the object of their faith.

And the object of your faith n' trust is what matters.

Preacher Charles **Spurgeon** illustrated the importance of faith's object in the 1800's by telling of **two men in a boat on a river**.

Caught in severe rapids, they were being swept toward a waterfall.(SLIDE)

Some men on the shore tried to save them by throwing them a rope.

One man caught hold of it and was pulled safely to the shore.

The other, in the panic of the moment, grabbed hold of a seemingly more substantial log that was floating by.

That man was carried downstream, over the rapids and was never seen again.-----

Faith represented by the rope linked to the shore, connects us to Jesus and safety.

He is the only one that can save you.-----

Faith is a personal trust in and commitment to Jesus Christ; a personal trust in and commitment to Jesus Christ.

It involves a person's mind, emotions and will.

With the mind we understand the truth of the Gospel, with the heart we feel convicted of our sin and the need to be saved.

But it is only when we exercise the will and commit ourselves to Christ that the process is complete.

Faith is commitment to Jesus Christ, leaning your whole weight upon Him.-----

We're all on a flimsy boat heading toward a deadly waterfall.

Who's going to save you?-----

Where is your faith n' trust placed?-----

Put it in Jesus!-----

And if you have, be thankful, thankful every day, for what he's saved you from!-----

Not only does Paul thank God for their faith, but also for their **love**, their love for all the saints, their fellow Christians.

And **v8** says they have loved in the Spirit.---

Because when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we receive the Spirit;

and What's the first fruit of the Spirit?---- Love.(**SLIDE**)

Seeking and sacrificing-for the good of others before ourselves.-----

So the love Christians show one another is something we do by God's Spirit.---

It's God-empowered therefore God deserves the thanks and praise.-----

But did you notice how that faith and love comes about?-----

Faith in Christ and love for others comes, because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. Paul says, you've already heard about this in the word of truth, the Gospel.-----

Normally we think, I think, logically, we put our faith in Jesus, then we have a hope of heaven and love people now.---

That is true. Christian life begins with trusting Christ.---

But here Paul's saying hope has resulted in their faith and love.-----(**SLIDE**)

Here he's saying when know you have treasure laid up for you in heaven, it'll change the way you live now.-----

When you have a joyful and confident expectation of heaven, it motivates constant faith and costly **love** now.-----

Remembering a glorious inheritance awaits, **v12**, strengthens our faith in Jesus; it helps us hang-in there, trusting him in the trials, and temptations, now.-----

And their **hope** has enhanced their love for those with whom they'll share eternal life with?---

Knowing they will see Jesus one day, motivates them to do what he asks now, loving one another.

We need to meditate more on the life to come, and consider how that should affect the way we live now.-----

We live in a buy now, pay later society, we expect everything now and we expect to wait for nothing.-----

The Christian is willing to pay the cost now, and receive it later.-----

What makes Christians willing to make such sacrifices?

Hope. Hope, based on faith that the future holds something far better than the present.

And all of things has come from the Gospel.

See that in **v5**, we have a sure hope of eternal life because of the Gospel.

The faith, love and hope have all come from the Gospel, spring from the Gospel.

That good news that Jesus lived, died, rose again to save us, and he rules.-----

v5 calls it the word of **truth** – we'll hear more about this in the coming weeks.

But God's word is true, and when we believe it it's life-altering; life-changing.-----

And we need to keep on believing it.

You might have become a Christian many years ago – you need to keep believing this now, and this week, this year

Not just accepting certain truths with your head, but it's a conviction n; commitment – a heart thing too.-----

The end of **v6** speaks of truly appreciating God's grace.

The truth of the Gospel is that God saves us by his grace; it's an undeserved gift.-----

So when we appreciate God's grace, we experience it and really know it.----

'Appreciate' can literally just mean understand or know.

Yet knowing Christ isn't just receiving information, but recognising him as the Altogether Lovely One, and delighting in him.

Suppose you've never **tasted honey**.(**SLIDE**)

You know it's sweet because you've heard it is from reliable sources.

But that's a very different kind of knowledge from the knowledge of honey's sweetness you get when you take a big mouthful, and fall in love with its taste.-----

Have you known and tasted God's goodness, have you tasted his grace?-----

Do you appreciate it?-----

So Paul is truly thankful that the Gospel has resulted in changed lives for the Colossians.

But look at how he puts in in v6 – it's been **bearing fruit** and growing, among them and all over the world.

That isn't meant to be taken literally, it's a figure of speech.

He means all over the Roman world.

People are becoming Christians "everywhere".

The message of Christ is saving and changing peoples' lives all over.-----

The Gospel bears fruit when the church grows in number, when people are saved by the Gospel, and it grows and bears fruit when the Gospel produces inner transformation; growth in faith, love and hope.-----

Paul will say more about this growth in the next section.

But for now, every time Paul prays for them, WHAT is he thanking God for?

For the Gospel that's bearing fruit in their lives, in faith and love and hope.-----

Finally How? How does this relate to us?-----

Well as Paul has often thanked God for the Colossians' faith, love and hope, the Gospel bearing fruit in their lives, with growing maturity.(**SLIDE**)

I like wearing Christian T-shirts, and I saw this and was thinking that I might not only want this one t-shirt, but he wants me to live-it.-----

Would Paul n' Timothy thank God for those same things if they knew us and saw us at Bundy?-----

Would Paul thank God for those things if he visited your growth group this year?-----

Your family?---- Or if he knew you personally?-----

Are you showing similar fruit?--- A growing faith, real love, enduring hope?-----

Some people who profess to be Christians seem faithless, loveless or hopeless?-----

Are you convicted of an area that needs to change?-----

We've likely all met people who claimed to be Christians, but don't show it in their actions, in lives of **love**.-----

They have a loveless profession, an orthodoxy without charity; a questionable faith.----

Maybe you know or you're even related to someone like that?-----

Are you seeking the good of others before your own?-----

Or maybe you seek the good of your nuclear family only, but not really any other brothers or sisters?-

Does God want you to grow more like the Colossians in this way?-----

Another area of application is in our **thankfulness**.

Paul thanked God for their faith and love, yet I wonder if too often we're thankless people.

I see it in my own heart; and even my own prayers.-----

We're happy to ask God for what we want, or for what others need.

Don't be a Christian who is only asking your heavenly Father for things.-----

Don't forget to thank him for all he has and does give us.-----

And the example of Paul reminds us to not just be thankful for what God is doing in our lives, but in the lives of others.-----

Or when we pray for our missionaries, we could thank God for their faith, and love.

And thanking God for such things helps us to keep our perspective on God's priorities, not fleeting earthly n' material things.-----

Let's be people who joyfully give God thanks often, especially for what he's doing in the lives of others, by the Gospel through his Spirit.-----

Look for the Gospel fruit seen in the lives of brothers and sisters here, and give thanks!

I can be more thankful in my prayer times, and maybe you can be too?-----

I'm sure all us could benefit from growing in faith, love and hope, and thankfulness.

But **How can we change**, how can we grow?-----

We can't simply tell ourselves to change.

Paul has given us the answer, the answer is the Gospel.(**SLIDE**)

For it is knowing; grasping the Gospel, which will result in hope and faith and love.

So we must sink our roots down deep into the Gospel.-----

Maybe you need to start reading through the Gospel of Luke or John, or read slowly through a book like Romans, Ephesians or Colossians.

Reflect upon the life & eternal glory that awaits you cos' of Christ.-----

Maybe you could ask someone from Bundy if they'd read the Bible with you, so you can discuss how you're going in your faith, love, and hope, and be encouraged in that?---

Andy will also run some 1-1 bible reading training later in June.-----

We will change as we turn to see the glory of God in Jesus.

And we see the glory of Christ as we hear the Gospel, so keep speaking the Gospel to yourself.

As the 20th C London preacher **Martyn Lloyd Jones** once said, most of our unhappiness in life is due to the fact that we are listening to ourselves instead of talking to ourselves.---

We need to say to ourselves, even when we don't feel it:

God is all I need, God is all I need so I can trust him in this and not be anxious.

God has loved me in Christ, so I can love others

My hope and inheritance with Jesus waits for me in heaven, so I will live for that now.-----

Change takes place, growth takes place, growth in our faith, love and hope, as we keep reminding ourselves of and relying on what Christ has obtained for us both now & in the future.

Change will take place as we see God's glory, goodness and grace in Jesus, and as we speak of God's grace to our hearts and cry out for his Spirit's help.-----

The Gospel of Christ leads to growing faith, hope and love.-----

And as we grow by grace, we'll have much to be thankful for, and much to thank God for in the lives of our brothers and sisters.-----

When you leave today, what do you want others to be able to thank God for, in your life?---

Let's pray