

Being a well-balanced Christian (Isaiah 42:1-9 & Colossians 1:1-14)

12-August-2018

So today we start a new series on the NT book of Colossians.

Please have your Bibles opened at the 1st chapter of Colossians.

Let me pray for God's help and guidance before we look at this chapter...

Vv1-2 - Greeting

Verses 1 and 2 begin with a greeting

[PowerPoint 1-Greeting]

V1 says that

The author is Paul

He describes himself as an Apostle of Christ Jesus

An Apostle is a person called personally by Jesus and sent out with a message
Jesus called His 12 apostles and sent them out to tell others about the Good
News of Jesus

Jesus also called Paul (then Saul) in Acts 9 - and sent Paul out to tell Gentiles
(non-Jews) the Good News of Jesus

The office of Apostle is not something that is earned or achieved - it is
something that is given by God - so Paul adds that it is by the will of God that
he is an apostle

He also gives Timothy (the young man that Paul is passing the baton on to) the
lovely title of our brother. He is a brother in Christ Jesus - part of Jesus'
family along with Paul and the Christians in Colosse

In V2

Paul writes to the saints (the holy ones) in Colosse - they can be called saints because they have faith in our Lord Jesus - which makes them set apart and holy and part of Jesus' family

He sends two greetings which are only available because of God the Father
 1st - Grace - God's free gift - God's undeserved favour on sinful humankind by sending His Son Jesus to fix the problem of sin and rebellion against God
 And 2nd - Peace - not peace as we would understand it today - the absence of war or conflict - but peace between God and humankind - which Jesus achieved on the Cross

Context

Before we go any further we ought to get the context and see why Paul is writing to the holy ones in Colosse

[PowerPoint 2-Map]

Colosse is in Asia Minor - 100miles (160km) east of Ephesus

[Explain the Map]

[PowerPoint 3-Context]

- Paul writes to people in Colosse - even though he has not met them personally (Col 2:1)
- But he has heard about them from his brother in Christ, Epaphras
- Paul himself is in chains (i.e. in prison) - Col 4:18
- Why is Paul writing to them?
- Col 4:12 tell us - **because Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for**

you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured

- This suggests there is a problem
- What problem?
- Colossians 2:8 tell us the problem - See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.
- People are trying to convince the saints in Colosse that they need other things as well as Jesus Christ - we'll discover what these things are in the coming weeks

So Paul is basically writing to encourage the Colossians to stand firm and know that Christ is ALL that is needed - and to not get derailed or off balance by false teachers trying to add to what Jesus has already achieved

Paul wants the Colossians (and us) to be well-balanced Christians

So how do we achieve that?

V3-4 - A DOUBLE COMMITMENT

First we are well-balanced - by a double commitment

[PowerPoint 4-Double Commitment]

Paul is always thankful for the Colossians double commitment!

See v3 & 4

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of **your faith in Christ Jesus** and of **the love you have for all God's people**—

There are two sides of a Christian life

A Christian must have ***faith in Christ Jesus*** - a personal faith - that Jesus died for them personally on the cross - to have their sins forgiven personally and believe that He was raised to life after 3 days - to offer eternal life

And the Christian must also put that faith into action - and ***love God's people***.

You see we could have a faith in Jesus that is so rigid and orthodox that shows no charity or love - as James tells us - faith without works is a dead faith

A Christian has a double commitment - a double loyalty - to love Jesus and love others. That's how Jesus Himself - summarized the commandments - Love God (JESUS) and Love others

[PowerPoint 4a-Challenge]

Challenge: Do we have that same double commitment - Faith in Jesus and love for others - Our Vision at St David's - is to love our community with the love of Jesus - this will look like - it being obvious we have faith in Jesus no matter what - and it will look like showing sacrificial love to others in our community - sacrificial love - gives of our time, our talents, our help - our money

[PowerPoint 4b-Challenge]

Challenge: Like Paul are we ALWAYS thankful for that double commitment of our church family - in having faith in Jesus and loving others?

V5-HOPE OF HEAVEN

Second - we are well balanced if we are thankful for and hang on to - the hope we have stored up in Heaven - v5

[PowerPoint 5-Hope of Heaven]

Now normally we think of hope - as a desire for a particular thing to happen

Like - I hope it doesn't rain today - we're not certain whether it will or not

But for Christians - our hope of Heaven is a certain hope

Because of Jesus' resurrection and the fact that He is ALIVE in Heaven now

A Christian's hope is a certain hope of everlasting life - living with God forever

Paul says in v5 - 2 things spring from this hope - ***faith and love***

Our faith can be a strong faith - because no matter what is going on in our life - we have the certain hope of a better place to go to one day

And that then frees us up to love more - because we see that that hope of heaven is available to anyone who puts their faith in Jesus - so it should and must encourage us to love others into a faith in Jesus as well

[PowerPoint 5a-Challenge]

Challenge: Do we have that certain hope of Heaven? We should if we believe in Jesus' death and resurrection - we're going to Heaven. It's guaranteed. There's no need to doubt that fact! And don't let anyone tell you is not guaranteed!

[PowerPoint 5b-Challenge]

Challenge: What are we doing with that certain hope we have? Is it helping us to be more faithful to our Lord Jesus - being thankful what He has done - and helping us to want to obey God's word and commands?

[PowerPoint 5c-Challenge]

Challenge: Is our certain hope of Heaven - inspiring us to love those who doubt this hope or who haven't got this hope - so they don't miss out on Heaven? It should?

V5-8 - THE GOSPEL

Third - we are well balanced if we are thankful for the Gospel - v5-8

[PowerPoint 6-Gospel]

What is the Gospel?

EU-AGGELION - is the Greek Word

EU - Good (Eulogy, Euthanasia)

AGGELION - Message/News (Angel=messenger)

So Gospel = Good News of Jesus - that He has fixed sin and death - and brought us back to God

We get evangelism from this Greek Word

It was Epaphras who first brought the Gospel to the Colossians

And notice he is described in v7 - as a fellow servant and faithful minister

Anyone who ministers in any ministry - is a servant of Jesus - he/she is not a boss but is serving the people he/she is ministering too

Once we start thinking we're a boss - we lose our humility and misunderstand our calling

What's happening with this Gospel - according to Paul?

Well he says - in the same way that the Gospel came to Colosse

It's actually going out to the whole world

As Isaiah 55:10-11 says:

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

We should never underestimate the power of the Gospel - and hold on to the promise that God's Word will always accomplish what God intends

The Core of the Gospel is the Grace of God - it's God's free gift of Jesus

So we need to watch out for things that try to add to that free gift

Things like:

- Legalism - like insisting Christians can't drink alcohol or dance or watch movies
- Ritualism - like insisting on a certain way of baptism - or insisting on a certain format for our church service as the only way it can be done
- Mysticism - like elevating the experience of the Holy Spirit above what Jesus has done - and then putting people down because they haven't experienced such things - as though they are an inferior Christian
- Intellectualism - like insisting that Christians need to have formal theological training - and looking down on people who haven't

[PowerPoint 6a-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we thankful for the Gospel and the faithful ministers who bring the Gospel to us?

[PowerPoint 6b-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we sharing the Gospel?

[PowerPoint 6c-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we praying for the Gospel to bear fruit in our own country and overseas?

Vv9-14 - Prayer for Spiritual knowledge, obedience and maturity

Request, Reason and Result

Fourth - we are well balanced Christians if we have spiritual knowledge and are obedient and mature

[PowerPoint 7-Spiritual Knowledge]

That's what Paul prays for in verses 9 to 14

Paul's prayer follows a simple pattern of:

Request

Reason

Result

Paul's prayer is especially impressive since he had never visited this church

The simplicity of the gospel message and its liberating power with its emphasis on the grace of God is under attack by false teachers

So Paul's **request** in v9 is to:

Ask God to fill them with the knowledge of God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,

Paul is combating the spiritual elite in Colosse who laid claim to a secret and deeper knowledge and mysterious relationship with God and spiritual beings. Paul's saying - You want to talk about knowledge ... I'll talk about real spiritual knowledge - not something reserved for some spiritual elite club... but something available to help every Christian grow and be fruitful

Wisdom that comes from the Spirit ... different than the wisdom of the world

Understanding things from God's perspective

Next Paul gives the **reason** for his prayer request in v10

So that they may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way

So the purpose of having spiritual wisdom is to understand what God's will is - and once we understand God's will - which is for us to be obedient to His Word and His rule - we can then live an obedient and worshipful life

A very simple standard for knowing God's will and living a life pleasing to Him - is to follow the example of how our Lord Jesus lived

And the **results** of living a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing Him will look like:

- a. Bearing fruit - doing vine work as we are attached to Jesus the vine - we will grow ourselves, we will share the Gospel of Jesus with others - we will love others
- b. It will look like - Increasing our knowledge of God and His Son - by reading our Bibles, joining together in Bible Study/Growth Group - studying the Bible, praying, and sharing our Biblical knowledge

- c. It will look like - Being strengthened with God's power - the emphasis on power in the Christian life is not to perform miracles or special signs ... but rather to manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the difficult people or difficult circumstances that we face day to day ...to put up with those things we cannot change - having patience and endurance When we are faced with irritating circumstances, or difficult people, it takes power to remain patient and longsuffering. Our natural tendency is to get upset, to scream in impatience, or to become resentful and angry. It takes power to resist these when we feel them rising within us. Every believer has that power, and the sign is that they lead quiet, cheerful lives, that hang in to the end. That is what is meant by endurance. The word is best translated "stick-to- it" People who have this quality don't quit. They hang in there with their relationships, despite the pressures of their work or their circumstances. Endurance is a word that relates primarily to circumstances. The second word, translated here "patience," is really "longsuffering," a willingness to wait and not pay back in kind. It has to do with willingness to forgive and refusing to take revenge. And we don't do all this with some type of stoic stiff upper lip ... like a sour old Christian who is just trying to hang in there until God calls us home to glory ... NO ... it's done with an attitude of joy and thanksgiving
- d. And the 4th result - will look like - Worship - *"giving thanks to the Father"*

What do we have to be thankful for? Paul tells us to be:

A) Thankful for our Inheritance: We inherit a place in God's eternal family and inherit a place in Heaven

b) Thankful for Deliverance: We are delivered from the darkness of sin and evil - no more bondage; no more fear

c) Thankful for Victory: We are brought into the Kingdom of light - through faith in Jesus - the light of the world - no more loneliness - no more feeling like an outsider - no more feeling unwanted or unloved

d) And thankful for Redemption: We are bought back from the punishment of our sins which is death and are given forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. No beating up ourselves about our sins; no shame, no guilt

[PowerPoint 7a-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we praying for ourselves and our church family to be filled with the knowledge of God's will and spiritual wisdom?

CONCLUSION:

So to conclude then we are a well-balanced Christian when

[PowerPoint 8-Conclusion]

- We have the double-commitment of faith in Jesus and loving people?
- When we have the certain hope of Heaven because of Jesus' resurrection which makes our faith stronger and our love for others stronger?
- When we are thankful for the Gospel (Good News) of our Lord Jesus
- And when we are growing in spiritual knowledge and are obedient to God and mature in our faith

Paul has basically given us a beautiful prayer - which he's praying for the
Colossians

So our final challenge today then - our homework if you like - is - are we praying
for these things for our church family?

The Apostle Paul is - what about us?

[PowerPoint 8a-Challenge]

How about we pray these things today -

My challenge is for us to write a prayer for our church family - based on Paul's
prayer - and you can send it to me and I'll publish it next week

Let's pray...