"THE POWER OF THE TRUE GOSPEL"

Colossians 1:1-8

4/17/2016

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-2

Two key phrases: "the word of the truth of the gospel" (v. 5)
"the grace of God in truth" (v. 6)

***All we need is the truth of the Gospel!**

When the true gospel goes forth, its power accomplishes the following:

I. THE TRUE GOSPEL RESULTS IN THANKSGIVING TO GOD (v. 3)

II. THE TRUE GOSPEL CHANGES LIVES (v. 4, 8)

III. THE TRUE GOSPEL PROVIDES UNSHAKABLE HOPE TO THE SOUL (v. 5)

IV. THE TRUE GOSPEL SPREADS WORLD-WIDE (v. 6)

V. THE TRUE GOSPEL PRODUCES FRUIT ON ITS OWN (v. 6b)

VI. THE TRUE GOSPEL MUST BE TOLD to others (v. 7)

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What are some messages that people falsely claim are the gospel?

1. God wants to make us rich.

Some preachers today say that the good news is that God wants to bless us with loads of money and possessions—all we need to do is ask! But the gospel is a message about spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3): God sent Jesus Christ to die and rise again for us so that we would be justified, reconciled to God, and given eternal life with God (Rom. 3:25-26, 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18-21). Moreover, the Bible promises that Christians will not have material prosperity in this life, but tribulation (Acts 14:22), persecution (2 Tim 3:12), and suffering (Rom. 8:17), all of which will one day give way to unspeakable glory (2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18).

2. God is love and we're okay.

Some people think the gospel is that God loves us and accepts us just as we are. But the biblical gospel confronts people as sinners facing the wrath of God (Rom. 3:23, John 3:36) and tells people about God's radical solution: Jesus' sin-bearing death on the cross. This gospel calls people to an equally radical response: to repent of their sins and trust in Christ for salvation.

3. We should live right.

The gospel is not a message that tells us a live a better life and so make ourselves right with God. In fact the gospel tells us exactly the opposite: we can't do what pleases God and we can never make ourselves acceptable to him (Rom. 8:5-8). But the good news is that Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves: by living a perfect life and bearing God's wrath on the cross he has secured the salvation of all those who turn from their sin and trust in him (Rom. 5:6-11, 8:31-34).

4. Jesus came to transform society.

Some people believe that Jesus' mission was to transform society and bring justice to the oppressed through a political revolution. But the Bible teaches that this world will only be made right when Jesus comes again and ushers in a new heaven and new earth (2 Thess. 2:9-10, Rev. 21:1-5). The gospel is fundamentally a message about salvation from the wrath of God through faith in Christ, not the transformation of society in this present age.

(The above material has been adapted from Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever, pages 80-90)

http://9marks.org/answer/what-are-some-messages-people-falsely-claim-are-gospel/

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1-2

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V. 1

"Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ" -

Paul, as in all his epistles, identifies himself and makes reference to his apostleship to lend authority to the words he is about to write (Note: The Colossian believers had heard about him but never met him "face to face").

Apostle = "sent one"; "commissioned one" Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ in that he was sent by Jesus and for Jesus (Acts 9:15 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

"By the will of God" - Paul was not a self-appointed apostle - His mission was the desire of God.

Paul's addition of the phrase: "By the will of God" is meant to distinguish himself from other false apostles who either appointed themselves into the office or were appointed by men (cp. Gal. 1:1; II Cor. 11:13). Paul, on the contrary, was appointed by God!

"And Timothy our brother" - Timothy is apparently Paul's amaneuensis, who penned the Epistle as Paul, under divine guidance, dictated it.

V. 2

"Saints" - lit. holy ones; sanctified ones; Every believer has a holy sanctity imputed by Christ.

"Faithful" - those who are "full of faith" and evidence such faith by steadfastness.

"Brethren in Christ" - only by virtue of our spiritual union with Christ are we brethren. All who have been "born again" into the family of God have the same "Father" - God; wear the same name - "Christian"; anticipate the same "home" - heaven; and inherit the same blessings - SEE Col. 1:12-13.

"Which are at Colosse" - Though the believers are "in (en) Christ" spiritually, they are literally "in (en) Colosse" geographically.

Colossae was:

1) A commercial city - located about 100 miles from Ephesus (near Hierapolis & Laodicea). Colossae was an important trade route, a meeting point for the East & West.

2) A declining city - Probably due to the paganism, worldliness, and false religion, "the city of Colossae slipped into a 'second-class' city." "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

3) A needy city - (i.e. for the gospel) Epaphras was saved at Ephesus (Philem. 19) through the ministry of Paul (Acts 19 & 20). He was apparently the man burdened for those people, and the one who was instrumental in starting this church (Col. 1:7)

4) A predominantly Gentile city

5) A confused city - Many religious hucksters abounded . After the truth reached Colossae, Satan planted his false teachers there to confuse etc.

The false teaching at Colossae "was a deceptive combination of many things: Jewish legalism, Oriental philosophy, pagan astrology, mysticism, asceticism, and even a touch of Christianity. There was something for everybody, and this was what made it so dangerous" (Wiersbe, Colossians, p. 13).

The heretics at Colossae were teaching that Jesus Christ was only part of a total religious system or philosophy. They taught that the secret to a "deeper life"; "spiritual perfection" or "spiritual fullness" was to practice certain formulas, disciplines or rituals.

Such philosophy fails to give Christ the preeminence! (SEE Col. 1:18) (cp. Wiersbe, p. 13).

Is Christ merely one among many answers, authorities, etc.? Should we dilute Christianity by trying to make it harmonize and syncretize and mix with man-made philosophies? Many are doing this today. Perhaps not with the intention of denying Christ, but they are dethroning Him and robbing Him of His rightful place of pre-eminence (Wiersbe, p. 18).

You need the truth found in this Epistle "lest any man should beguile you" (2:4); "lest any man spoil you" (2:8) or "judge you" (2:16).

There are many similarities or parallels between the Ephesian & Colossian epistles (both written about the same time). "However, the emphasis in Ephesians is on the church, the body of Christ; but the emphasis in Colossians is on Christ, the Head of the body."

Since what we believe (our faith) determines how we behave (our actions;, lifestyle), Paul's Epistle can be divided into two major sections - chapters 1-2 are doctrinal; chapters 2-4 are practical.

"Grace be unto you and peace" -

The word order is significant. No one receives the peace of God unless they first of all receive the grace of God.``This wish by Paul for grace and peace to be upon the Colossian believers suggests that even Christians need a continual supply of grace and peace.

God not only gives saving grace but living grace (i.e. grace to live the Christian life).

He not only provided peace with God (Rom. 5:1), but to his trusting children, He dispenses the peace of God (Phil. 4:7).

Note: The only source for grace and peace is God (the Father & Son). No religion or religious person can provide divine grace & peace.

***All we need is the truth of the Gospel!**

When the true gospel goes forth, its power accomplishes the following:

I. THE TRUE GOSPEL RESULTS IN THANKSGIVING TO GOD (v. 3)

Continual thanks & prayers ascended up to Heaven by Paul for what God did for these people.

Do you ever thank God when you hear of people being saved? Though Paul did not personally lead these Christians to Christ, he was rejoicing in their salvation. The reason being that he loved God and loved God's work no matter which vessel or instrument God used to accomplish it.

Like Paul, we should be thankful for what God does in the lives of others.

II. THE TRUE GOSPEL CHANGES LIVES (v. 4, 8)

V. 4

The false teaching that spread through Colossae was that true spirituality was achieved through external reforms; "these false teachers tried to change people from the outside, by means of diets and disciplines" (Wiersbe, p. 14).

Whereas the Bible teaches that true spiritual growth comes from within.

You don't change the inside of yourself by reforming on the outside; rather you let God change the inside and the outside will change as a result of internal changes.

V. 4 & 5

Note: "Faith...love...hope" - this trio of virtues are seen together in I Cor. 13:13; Rom. 5:2-5; Gal. 5:5-6; I Th. 1:3, 5:8; Heb. 6:10-12, 10:22-24; & I Pet. 1:21-22.

"Faith in Christ" - the object of your faith is all important!

"Love . . . to all the saints" - the word "all" shows this love to be -

1) Unconditional -
2) Impartial -

"Love" (agape - cp. v. 8) - This supernatural, unselfish attitude only comes to the one who has faith in Christ. This love only comes from God (I Jn. 4:7).

v. 8

The Colossian's love was produces by the Spirit and was real objective proof of the genuineness of their faith, and the reality of their salvation.

The little book of 1 John makes this abundantly clear! Those who are saved will love other believers!

1Jo 3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1Jo 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

1Jo 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1Jo 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1Jo 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

1Jo 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

1Jo 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

1Jo 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1Jo 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

1Jo 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

1Jo 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1Jo 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

1Jo 4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

III. THE TRUE GOSPEL PROVIDES UNSHAKABLE HOPE TO THE SOUL (v. 5)

The virtues of faith and love (v. 4) were in the lives of the Colossians "because of (or by means of; through - "dia") the hope" that they had (v. 5).

The fact that we know (for certainty) that we will be with Christ in glory encourages us to put more faith in Him and to love Him more.

Our hope is the source for our faith and love.

Have you ever noticed that people who are anticipating future happiness are more cheerful and loving? (EX: upcoming wedding; Friday's at work, etc.) EX: watching children just before Christ or a family vacation. The bright prospect that awaits them transforms them. So it is for the Christian.

"The hope which is laid up" - The believers' "hope" is Christ and all the spiritual blessings that are linked to Him. The key blessing being eternal life - Titus 1:2 - "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

Such a hope we have not seen with our eyes, but it is "laid up" or stored up on reserve in Heaven. Such a gift awaits the child of God; and such a gift will never be taken off of "Heaven's shelf" or our "name tag" removed from it!

"Whereof (regarding this "hope") ye heard before (previously) in the word of the truth of the Gospel."

In other words, such a guaranteed hope was originally heard and believed by the Colossians by the true gospel message (which they learned from Epaphras - v. 7).

But apparently some religious tricksters (2:4); some worldly philosophers (2:8); some legalistic Judaizers (2:16); some mystical angel worshippers & vision seekers (2:18) and some ascetic body neglectors (2:20-23) were causing some of the Colossians to doubt the sufficiency of Christ and to stumble.

The Christian's hope is not here today and gone tomorrow. It does not drift with the tides of life. Rather, God calls it an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. (Heb. 6:19).

Those outside of Christ have no hope.

> I Thes. 4:13 - "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."
>
> Ephes. 2:11-12 - "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

IV. THE TRUE GOSPEL SPREADS WORLD-WIDE (v. 6)

The true gospel not only came to the Colossians, but god said that it had also come in "all the world" - God never intended His gospel to be a "white man's religion" nor to be limited to America. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). . . "go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Mt. 28:20). The Gospel was right on course in Paul's day,; it was spreading globally.

V. THE TRUE GOSPEL PRODUCES FRUIT ON ITS OWN (v. 6b)

"And bringeth forth fruit" - present tense, middle voice, participle - meaning that the Gospel is continually producing fruit on its own or by itself. God's gospel alone changes lives! Salvation alone transforms!

Nothing outside of the power of the Gospel is needed to reconstruct a broken life; nothing outside of God's salvation is necessary to rehabilitate those who formerly were drowning in debauchery.

The heresy that was spreading around Colossae was that something else was needed to produce victory over the flesh. To such a false teaching, Paul responds in the book of Colossians.

"The Gospel is essentially a reproductive organism, a plant whose seed is in itself" (Lightfoot, p. 135; cited by Vaughn, Colossians, p. 24).

The critical test also has the words "bearing fruit and increasing (growing by itself") (cp. NASV).

The gospel not only produces real life altering fruitfulness, but it causes such fruitfulness to flourish, to grow, to increase! As a person matures in his understanding of Christ and His salvation his productivity for the Lord will also increase.

"Since the day ye heard of it" - Fruitfulness begins on the very day one hears and believes the Gospel. [There is no delay for fruit to begin sprouting out of the life of a new convert. Since the holy Spirit is the one who produces such fruit (Gal. 5:22) and since He comes into the life of a person the moment he believes, the Spirit also immediately produces His fruit. Especially the fruit of love (Col. 1:8)]

"Knew the grace of God in truth" -

"Knew" - & - to directly come to know something; to fully know; to personally recognize.

"in truth" = i.e. the grace of God as it truly is; to not know the grace of God in truth is to not know the grace of God.

There is only one true message. It is that Christ is sufficient for eternal life and abundant life!

VI. THE TRUE GOSPEL MUST BE TOLD to others (v. 7)

Epaphras was no apostle. He was simply an ordinary layman whom God used to evangelize the cities of Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae.

"Ye also learned of Epaphras" - Ye learned from Epaphras. Epaphras diligently told the true gospel to the people of Colossae.

"Fellow-servant" (sun & doulos) - a slave together with God's slave, Paul.

"Faithful minister" (diakonia) - a household servant.

CONCLUSION:

In Colossians, you will find key words such as "fullness"; "perfect"; and "complete."

Over 30 times Paul uses the little word "all" to stress the complete sufficiency of Christ. In Colossians, Christ is declared to be pre-eminent, all powerful, and our only authority. The Christian does not need to look elsewhere to have his needs met.

Nothing outside of Christ and His Word is needed. No "additives" to the Christian life are required. Jesus can do it all! and only Jesus can do it all. He is our all! He is our very life! (Col. 3:4).

Paul's only gospel message was "Christ, and Him crucified." (SEE I Cor. 2:1-5).