



An Introduction That Inspires

[1:1-8]

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“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father . . .” (1:1-8).

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Colossae. He was motivated to write this letter because a serious problem was facing the church. It was a false doctrine problem. It is referred to by biblical scholars as “the Colossian heresy.” The only way to determine what the heresy was is to begin with Paul’s solution and work backward, do a kind of biblical “Jeopardy.” But Paul was not so much concerned about us knowing what their problem was as he was in our knowing the answer. For the solution to their problem is also the answer to our problems as well. Paul had a marvelous way of slicing through all the personality problems and getting to the core of a problem. Their problem involved an incorrect attitude toward Jesus.

Jesus is the answer! When a person has a correct view of who Jesus is and what Jesus is now doing for us, then and only then can he get a good grasp on the solutions to his own problems. Jesus is the answer!

Paul stated three truths that the Colossians needed to know in order to accept the solution he offered to their problem. They needed to know who they were, what was expected of them, and how they had obtained this standing.

Who is this Jesus? Paul identified Him as the One in whom they had found salvation. Perhaps nothing could make us better understand who this Jesus is than to stop and remember what He has done for us.

WHO WE ARE (1:1-3)

We should identify ourselves with the Colossian brethren. What Paul said to them can be applied to us today.

How important it is to have a clear picture of yourself! Knowing who you are is essential. Surely one of the more important aspects of our personalities is our self-image, our own view of ourselves.

A young man went into the service of his country. As often happens, he got in with the wrong crowd. While he was often tempted to do what he knew to be wrong, he was able to resist. Someone asked him, “How can you resist temptation so well?” He told him that when he left home his mother said to him, “Son, remember who you are!” That reminder of who he was kept him from sin. Paul wanted the Colossian brethren to remember who they were: They were children of the King!

He identified them as “saints,” those who were sanctified, set apart for God’s service (1:2). Saints are not super-spiritual heroes. They are real people struggling with life on the front line. We say, “He’s no saint!” We have glorified the less than righteous. We should put the emphasis on righteousness where it belongs. These people were saints.

He also referred to them as “brethren” (1:2). In so doing, Paul identified himself with them. They were all part of one family. A certain amount of comfort is derived from the fact that we are in this together. A strong point concerning the Christian faith is that we are united as a family; we are together.

Paul was grateful for them. He was “praying always” for them (1:3). How wonderful to know that a respected brother in Christ is praying for you! These brethren knew that this brother in Christ acknowledged them as saints and brethren in Christ and was “always praying” for them.

WHERE WE ARE (1:4, 5)

What a marvelous person Paul was! He was a master at dealing with people. He saw the good in others and was ready to compliment the good.

Notice his compliments. First, he had heard of their *faith*: “Your faith in Christ Jesus” (1:4a). It was entirely possible that some of the brethren at Colossae did not know Paul. “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face” (2:1). Whether or not he knew them personally, he had heard about their faith centered in Christ. Consider the prominent place God has given faith in His plan.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Faith is not just a simple belief that Jesus existed sometime, somewhere; *it is believing that Jesus is the Son of God, therefore. . . .* This faith determines how we live. It motivates us to launch out into the deep. It demonstrates itself; it is the kind that others talk about.

He had also heard of their *love*: “The love which you have for all the saints” (1:4b). The only way faith can be shown is by love. I challenge you to demonstrate your faith in Jesus any other way than through your love (1 John 4:19-21). Christians demonstrated their love by loving the brethren: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor” (Romans 12:10).

Does your relationship to the brotherhood prove your faith in Christ? Do you know those whom Christ has loved and forgiven that you cannot? More specifically, does your relationship to an individual member of the body of Christ prove your faith?

He had heard of their *hope* of heaven: “The hope laid up for you in heaven” (1:5a). If anything should control our actions, this should. If anything should cause us to be careful with doctrine, this should. Perhaps, one explanation for the problems we are having in our society today is that we are not homesick for heaven. We are too satisfied here. We do not yearn to go to heaven. Paul could say, “For I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better” (Philippians 1:23). Are you homesick for heaven? An inheritance is ours. All of our life is preparation time for heaven. Are you making that preparation?

WHAT WE HAVE (1:5, 6)

How did the Colossian brethren arrive where they were spiritually? They arrived through the gospel: “Which you previously heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel” (1:5b). If hearing the gospel had given them such great blessings, surely they would not want to turn from such a gospel! Never underestimate the power of the gospel to solve your problems. Remember that Jesus is the answer!

The gospel is the same the world over (1:6a). What it has done for others, it can do for you. The gospel produces fruit in our lives if our hearts are tender (1:6b). Isaiah said, “So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). God’s Word is not powerless. Look at your life and see what the gospel has done!

CONCLUSION

Count your blessings. Think of who you are! Remember how you got where you are spiritually. Think of the power of the gospel to give you peace and lead you on to spiritual levels you have not yet attained. What a privilege it is to be a Christian, to be in Christ!