

THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL

Colossians 1:3–8

³ We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷ as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

—Colossians 1:3–8

Read Colossians 1:3–8

The gospel—or story of Jesus—is powerful! It is so powerful that Paul wrote, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16). This is great news: the gospel is the story of Jesus, the Son of God, sojourning on earth, experiencing the full gauntlet of life, living absolutely righteously, proclaiming the nature of and way to God, then dying for the sins of mankind, and rising again three days later, having conquered sin and death. This reality, if received and believed, is able to save and transform any person.

In writing to the Colossians from his prison cell in Rome, Paul was reminding this fellowship of the power of the gospel in their own lives. It was through the gospel

that the Colossians became saints who loved all the saints. It was through the gospel that the Colossians became recipients of an eternal heavenly hope. It was through the gospel that the Colossians had become spiritually productive and had come to know by experience the great grace of God.

Like the Colossians, we need to be reminded of these colossal truths. It is always good to take time to ponder anew the radical effect that the gospel of Jesus has had in and on our lives. There are two great dangers all believers are susceptible to when they forget the power of the gospel. The first danger is that we can become vulnerable to intimidation and fear. We begin to put the responsibility for our relationship to God on our own efforts and on our own righteousness. This misplacement will leave us insecure, seeking ways in which to qualify ourselves to God through self-effort, self-achievement, self-improvement, and a whole host of self-focusing things.

The other danger is that we can become conceited. We forget the person we were before Christ and don't realize the person we would be without Christ. We tend to think that we had something to do with our salvation. Either we tend to think that we were already so righteous that God had to accept us, or we conclude that some work we did, or attribute we possessed, qualified us to God. Not only does this cause us to lose appreciation for the work and greatness of Jesus, but also can prejudice us toward other believers, and even to sinners who have yet to hear the gospel.

When we take time to consider the power of the gospel, we are reminded that the best within us is all due to the work of Jesus Christ. This leaves us in humble awe and appreciation of Jesus. It frees us to love others because He first loved us. It increases our faith as we think about how He was willing to go to death in order to ransom us from the clutches of sin and

death and assure us an eternity with Him in His kingdom. It causes us to be spiritually productive because we point others to Jesus and not to ourselves or our works. We also experience the wonderful grace of God which has come to us through the fullness of Jesus Christ spilling over onto us (John 1:16).

Before you start your lesson this week, take a moment to ponder all the blessings the gospel has brought to your life. May the Holy Spirit allow that fresh appreciation for the gospel to permeate your heart as you study Colossians 1:3–8.

1. Use Colossians 1:3–4 to comment on the following:
 - a. Paul's disposition toward the believers in Colossae

 - b. Paul's prayers for the Colossians

 - c. What Paul had heard about the Colossians

2. From Colossians 1:5–6, remark on what Paul says about:
 - a. *The hope*

 - b. *The word of the truth*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Thanksgiving is a consistent theme throughout Paul's letter to the Colossians. It is mentioned numerous times—at least once in every chapter (1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15–17; 4:2).³

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

For Paul, the sure sign of grace at work was the fact of a loving community created out of nothing; of a love not restricted to those with whom one has a natural affinity, but which extends to all the saints.⁴

—N. T. Wright

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul said that the gospel was bearing fruit in all the world. The Word of God is the only seed that can be planted anywhere in the world and bear fruit.⁵

—Warren Wiersbe

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The gospel message does not center in a philosophy, a doctrine, or a religious system. It centers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.⁶

—Warren Wiersbe

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The name Epaphras means *devoted*. His life reflects his character as he was devoted to bringing the gospel to the people of Colossae.

c. *The grace of God*

3. According to Colossians 1:7–8:

a. Who was Epaphras?

b. What had he done?

4. What is your greatest takeaway from Colossians 1:3–8?