

COLOSSIANS 1:1-8: Transformed by the Gospel of Grace

→ *What are your thoughts heading into a study of the book of Colossians? Any favourite verses or passages? Have you studied it much in the past? What would you like to get from this series?*

THE BACKGROUND: Written by PAUL with help from TIMOTHY.

Written to the church at COLOSSE: the HOLY & FAITHFUL.

The Point: This is not just a theological TEXTBOOK, but a LETTER written to REAL PEOPLE, Christian pioneers in the early church.

→ *What do you think it would have been like to have been a Christian in Colosse in AD 61? How and where would you have worshipped? What scripture would you have studied? Who would have taught you? How would outsiders have treated you? What about all of that would have made Paul's letter to them so valuable?*

WHY WAS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

Epaphras had asked for help in dealing with FALSE TEACHING.

- * What had begun as a PURE Gospel, slowly began to be ADAPTED, DISTORTED, DILUTED.
- * Gnostics considered themselves to be 'THOSE IN THE KNOW.'
- * Taught Jesus was neither FULLY GOD, nor FULLY MAN. So, the key challenge was to the DEITY & LORDSHIP of Jesus.
- * Paul wrote Colossians defending the SUFFICIENCY, SUPREMACY & CENTRALITY of Christ.

→ *What would have been the influence of the various 'local' religions on the embryonic church? Jewish legalism? Greco-Roman mythology? Paganism? Would that have been a different experience for Greek converts or Jewish converts? What 'weaknesses' or vulnerabilities would false teachers have been looking to exploit?*

OUR CONTEMPORARY DANGER

Forms of SYNCRETISM (religious ideas mixed together) & Gnosticism have INFILTRATED religion & philosophy in our day.

Danger is, we take Biblical Christianity and add a bit of CONSUMERISM, insist on our own take on MORALITY & SEXUALITY, mix in our own POLITICAL ideology, and the next thing you know, the Gospel has been subtly TWISTED & CORRUPTED.

→ *What false teachings have attempted to sneak into the Christian church in the early C21st? What worldly philosophies or ideologies are hammering*

away at us? Do you think that any worldly thinking is challenging or even infiltrating your Christianity?

3 COMMENDATIONS for the Colossian Christians

1. Their FAITH in Christ Jesus
2. Their LOVE for one another
3. Their FRUIT-BEARING

→ *Why was it important for Paul to start his letter with some encouragement? Is this not good practice as we communicate? Why did he choose to commend those three things in particular?*

2 THOUGHTS FROM THE TEXT (v6)

1. The Pure Gospel is a POWERFUL FRUIT-BEARING SEED

- * Not any IMITATION, DISTORTION OR SUBSTITUTE, but the REAL DEAL: The message of amazing grace = Salvation by GRACE alone, through FAITH alone, in CHRIST alone.

- i) The Gospel is GOOD NEWS
- ii) The Gospel is TRUTH
- iii) The Gospel is UNIVERSAL
- iv) The Gospel is POWERFUL
- v) The Gospel carries inherent POWER of God the Holy Spirit
- vi) The Gospel is HUMANLY-TRANSMITTED
- vii) The Gospel is INCORRUPTIBLE, UNCONTAINABLE & IMPERISHABLE

Paul knew the Gospel stands and falls on one thing = JESUS CHRIST and so this letter is designed to DEFEND & UNPACK that Gospel.

→ *How is it helpful to think of the Gospel as seed? In what way does it resemble seed? How does that tie in with the Parable of the Sower? What about these verses: Mark 4:1-20, Isa 55:10-11, 1 Cor 3:6, 1 Pet 1:23?*

2. A true UNDERSTANDING of grace will CHANGE your LIFE

- * An understanding of SAVING grace will change your ETERNAL DESTINY
- * Understanding the POWER, DEPTH & FULLNESS of God's wonderful grace will change your LIFE

→ *How does really understanding the workings of grace change your life? How does it change the way you relate to others / deal with crises / make decisions? How does grace lead you into forgiveness, kindness or patience? What are the alternatives to leaning on grace and where do they tend to take you?*

GRACE Defined: Imparted POWER & ABILITY to do IN GOD'S STRENGTH
what we would ordinarily struggle to do IN OUR OWN.

- a) Grace is God's SUFFICIENCY (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- b) Grace is AVAILABLE, but we need to learn to DRAW on it (Hebrews 4:16).
- c) Grace is our CHOICE (Philippians 4:13)

→ *How do you make sure you're drawing on grace, rather than your own strength, efforts and good-intentions? What are the things that usually keep you from grace, that divine empowering or enabling?*

→ *How does life train us to be self-sufficient? Why does the Lord want us to be God-sufficient? How does grace come into that?*

RESPONSE

1. Which GOSPEL? *Have you inadvertently started to add something in? Do you need to go back to your 'first love' Is the Gospel in you bearing fruit, changing lives (your life)?*
2. Is GRACE winning in your life? *Do you habitually breathe in His grace or roll up your sleeves? Is a life dominated by grace producing fruit of peace? What would grace do in your circumstances right now?*