

<b>Series:</b> Colossians	<b>Reference:</b> <i>Colossians 1:1-14</i>	<b>Title:</b> Live Your Belief	<b>Date:</b> 12.27.2020
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
Today we begin a short series in Colossians. In this introduction we glean that we live what we believe to be true of Jesus, and ask, are we growing deeper in Christ & having Him flow out to others?			

Paul was primarily a church planter, not just an evangelist, and a church planter has to be an evangelist. He desired to see local churches established, reproducing Jesus in a given area. Paul hadn't planted the Colossian church, but it was a direct result of his influence. In *Acts 19:10* we see his 3 years in Ephesus, about 100 miles away, had a direct effect on Colosse. He'd worked hard to plant churches reaching this Roman province of Asia where Colosse was located. It could be that Epaphras planted the church, but we're not sure. However, it seems he had great influence on the church there.

This is why the Vineyard is categorized as a church planting movement, and not a denomination. We seek to plant kingdom minded churches devoted to God's mission for God's glory across the world. Local bodies of Christ ministering the gospel to their local communities.

The Colossian Church was mainly Gentile, although, a great Jewish influence was present. We see this influence by the festivals, new moons & Sabbaths followed in Colosse. We also know Antiochus the Great had transplanted 2000 Jewish families to the region earlier in history.

This letter is positive, but Paul is addressing some infant heresy arising in the Colossian Church. He's politely & lovingly nipping it in the bud by preaching clear Truth to them - it's a good pastoral letter. *It may've been the beginnings of Gnosticism (since that fully developed later), or maybe Antinomianism (a belief that Christians are released from following the Moral Law due to grace). Both regarded the physical world as something strictly evil, that people needed some 'special knowledge' to be truly spiritual. There may've been an element of astronomy to this errant belief, since many in the ancient world believed in rudiment elemental spirits which had to be controlled by an elite priesthood who read the stars. But, we can see from the letter there were probably a few issues people faced.*

Firstly, there was a strict asceticism, a severe self-discipline in avoidance of all forms of indulgence, which drive people to live by rules/laws in order to gain a special spiritual knowledge. Secondly, some may've been governed by the idea that it didn't matter what a person did in the physical body, since the physical body was only evil anyway. Sins of the flesh aren't recognized in light of what they deemed more important spiritual matters, much like modern America - Gnostic Dualism is currently seen in our sexual ethic where physical biology doesn't matter as male & female, but it's just what I feel I am internally which matters. For instance, Ellen Page wants now to be called Elliot Page despite her obvious biology as a female. Thirdly, there was a belief that Jesus was just not enough, the Gospel was too simplistic, and had to be added to in order to really

know God. All of these were dangerous ideologies eating away at the foundation of the Gospel.

We live what we believe to be true of God. If the physical world was only evil, that would eat away at the humanity of Jesus. If the Gnostic belief was true, Jesus was just a spiritual emanation from God & couldn't be our physical sacrifice to overcome death & sin. There was a belief that when he walked he left no footprints. If Jesus didn't have power over the rudimentary things of this world, how can you trust him as Lord? These problems made it important to address these errant beliefs.

The controversy isn't perfectly clear. Yet, we can see, Paul goes to great pains from his prison cell to write a lofty view of Christ's divinity going all the way back to creation indicating Christ's sovereignty over all things material & spiritual. There's also a great emphasis on Christ's real humanity. In these two things Paul rescues Jesus as both able to save by his physical death & establishes Him as Lord over all things spiritual & material. He also rescues the physical world from being purely evil by stating Jesus as God was *directly involved* in the creation of the physical world. Paul reassures them, Christ is their only hope & foundation, and in these beginning verses, moves them to a deeper experience & knowledge of Him.

We live what we believe to be true of Jesus. So, is your relationship to Jesus deepening & flowing out to others? Paul begins saying...*1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2To the holy & faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace & peace to you from God our Father.*

Paul sees the Colossians as individuals, family in faith, saved by grace, using familial words as brothers & sisters. An intimate communication between Apostle, *one sent out, a church planter*, to individual loved believers. He confesses his own dependence & obedience to Christ as one sent by God's will, following Jesus, a model to these people. Viewing himself as one who acts on the behalf of Jesus without compartmentalizing his life. Everything about himself, and what he expects of others, is wrapped up in being a citizen of God's kingdom.

Paul's aware of their attachment to local community. These people were brothers in Christ in Colosse, with a special call to be the hands, feet & voice of Jesus to that local community. The message they give is important surrounded by competing philosophies. They were holy, called out & faithful to live as Jesus did before that community. Paul prays *Grace & Peace* to these people facing a philosophical battle in loving others into the Kingdom. They, like us & Paul, must rely on God's grace daily, developing a peace which can withstand the arrows of life.

He continues...*3We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus & of the love you have for all the saints - 5the faith & love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven & that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit & growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it & understood God's grace in all its truth. 7You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.*

They needed to remember we see everything in it's truest light when we view everything in the light of the Biblical God. Their view of the gospel & its truth are therefore extremely important.

As a little girl my friend lived in the northeast. Being fairly remote they had to drill a well 107 feet down until they heard gurgling & water gushed to the top. That was more than 60 years ago, the water still runs as clean & clear as it had done from that day. They had tapped into an underground river 107 feet below the surface.

The Colossians had tapped into the well of Living Water springing up in their lives in *faith & love*, manifested in word & deed. Paul was thankful they'd tapped this source. He's hearing stories, not only of faith, or what they believe, but also of their practical loving actions. Care of others. We live what we believe, and these people, like you guys, have shown, the Word of Truth had rooted itself in their hearts & was coming out in how they lived. Paul noticed.

The tendency when we hear the '*Word of Truth*' is to relegate it only to the simple gospel message of the death & resurrection of Jesus, saving us from sin & death. Boiling the whole Gospel down to *John 3:16*, pushing hope off to the future, regarding the greater things of the Gospel as not having come yet. Get saved, go to church, build my life, is all that becomes important, because we're not swallowing the whole story & purpose. But the Christian life's far more than salvation fire insurance.

Paul launches into a picture of Christ as sovereign over all creation later in chapter one. The *Creator & Sustainer* of everything, Scripture teaches a final restoration of all things. But we also remember the teachings of Jesus which call for action now, in proclamation of His message & loving action towards others - issues of justice, mercy, poverty, the environment, etc... Furthermore, we must also remember the loving judgments of Jesus. Those judgments on our lives calling us to purity, releasing us from the effects of sinful behavior & reflecting His holiness now. The Kingdom's here now, we are sent ones, called out ones, to proclaim & exhibit Jesus to our neighbors.

Paul reminds them, this Good News isn't only growing, but bearing fruit all over the world. Lives & societies change when we meet Jesus. If life hasn't changed, reevaluate how you view Jesus. Because what you believe is paramount to fostering a living active relationship with Him. The Colossians were changed by the Truth of God's grace, which had come via the mouth of Epaphras.

Here's a question, could this living well of Truth bubbling up in you effectively change others? Could your loving actions & grace-filled speech be a part of changing you & others? Those who pursue Christ, produce those who pursue Christ. Those who continue to run after Christ, stand firm in Christ. We strive to be rooted in Grace, living it out before our community. Realizing the power of action & speech in Christ & how far it can go. I preached a sermon once at a Baptist Church in a small Texas town, Farmersville, population 182. A week later my grandmother, jokingly perturbed, called & said thanks a lot! She was jokingly perturbed. Apparently, the Pastor immediately quit his position at their church as a result of the sermon to plant a church in a more remote part of Texas! It seems, God had used my words to affect a bunch of country bumpkin, pick-up driving, cowboy boot wearin', Texans that I'll probably never meet. I continue to trust,

God uses my past actions & words to affect Indonesian Muslims as we were missionaries there. People I'll never meet, and who knows how far God will take that?

The Church needs good faithful servants to bring others the Gospel. God working through us, and Paul sees that in the Colossians.

He continues...*9For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you & asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom & understanding. 10And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord & may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance & patience, and joyfully 12giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness & brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

In the movie *The Green Mile*, there's a big prisoner who has a weird ability to affect things & heal people? The guards realize this & take him in the middle of the night to the warden's house whose wife was ravaged by cancer. She's far gone, swearing, angry & wanting to die. This great big man took a hold of her & sucked the sickness right out of her. Her color returned, her sweetness returned, she got up & kissed him with gratitude. Then they returned to the jail where the other evil guard was waiting to make things difficult. It ends with the large prisoner breathing the cancer into that evil guard. Mercy/justice, love/evil, light/dark, condemned/freed - all these dualities revealed in the story.

The Colossians, like us, had asked God for nothing. We were turned away from Him, hostile in word & deed to the Kingdom of God. He grabbed us by his grace & sucked the cancer of sin right out of us. He took it upon himself. I know the illustration breaks down at some point, but He reserves judgment on those who won't turn, and in the end justice will be done - but even with them He's patient, not wanting anyone to perish. Every careless word, rape, beating, false imprisonment, hateful attitude, murder, husband who's cheated on his wife, anything destructive has & will be paid for or punished. That's the hope of the Gospel, and the Colossians had taken hold of this. They'd understood it from Epaphras & had grown, but they needed to ripen further.

The Christian life's dynamic. Prayerful, devoted more to listening to than speaking at God. Devoted to asking for discernment, and power to live it out. A life shared with others. A life of constant change, growing & deepening in His knowledge. A life which seeks God's wisdom, or the elementary principles of life, and then understanding, how to live them out. God's ways aren't ours. Paul knows, we need continual growth to live these principles of the Kingdom out before our own community.

He prays they'd be people bearing fruit in every work, growing in knowledge, strengthened by God's power for endurance & patience, with endurance to withstand every circumstance (*not destroyed by stress, or calamity*), having patience with people (*spiritual stamina*). The joyful life, rooted deeply in Jesus, springing up in loving action because we've been brought from the *Kingdom of Darkness*, to the *Kingdom of Light*. It was normal in the day for a conquering king to take all the people of a city they'd just overtaken back to their land. The Colossians would recognize this terminology. God's

conquered the kingdom of evil in the world & is moving them & others into his Kingdom - a rescue operation.

This rescue means four great things - A transference from Darkness to Light, from Slavery to Freedom, from Condemnation to Forgiveness, a transference from the power of Satan to the power of God.

We live what we believe to be true of Jesus. Is your relationship to Jesus deepening, maturing, growing & flowing out to others? Do you understand what's happened to you? Does Truth drive you to be about Jesus in everything you do? Are you growing closer to Him, pouring that out on others in practical loving action? Or, are you hanging onto a false ideal, destroyed by every little stress or calamity? Are you holding onto religiosity or Jesus? It would be a sad thing for us to have to say Christianity kept us from Jesus.