

Good News: Faith, Love, Hope, and Knowledge

What's the Big Idea?

Paul tells his readers that the gospel—the good news about Jesus Christ—yields true faith, genuine love, real hope, and knowledge of God to live in a way that honors him.

What's the Problem?

We often don't experience the faith, love, hope, and knowledge of God that he desires for us because we fail to center our lives on the gospel.

What's our Response?

God calls us to turn to him in faith, asking him to fill us with a knowledge of his will so we would live in a way that pleases him.

Memorize

For he has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Greeting-Colossians 1:1-2

Paul and Timothy write this letter to the church in the ancient city of Colossae, located in modern Turkey. Although Timothy is listed as an author, this letter bears the distinctive marks of Paul as its primary author. The many first-person references in the epistle confirm this (e.g.: 1:24-26; 2:1-4; 4:7-11; 4:18).

Paul describes himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. An apostle is literally a "sent one," a person sent with a mission. Paul uses this term in a specialized sense to refer to someone with unique authority from God himself as a result of seeing the risen Christ (see Acts 9:1 ff; Acts 26:12-18).

Paul writes to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae. This description of the Colossians affirms their identity as saints, which literally means "holy ones," because of their faith in Christ. It also affirms their loyalty to Christ by describing them as "faithful brethren."

Thanksgiving-Colossians 1:3-8

Paul and Timothy thank God for the Colossians for three reasons: their faith in Christ, their love for all God's people, and the hope they can expect in heaven someday because of their submission to the gospel. Hope in the New Testament is not the wishful thinking we're used to (e.g.: "I hope it doesn't rain today"). It refers to a confident expectation, something that's certain.

Paul ties the Colossians' hope to the gospel, which he describes as the word of truth. Paul also describes the gospel as constantly bearing fruit and increasing around the world and in the lives of the Colossians. Make sure to point out to your group that the gospel has the same power today to bear fruit in our lives and wherever it spreads around the world.

Paul reminds the Colossians of how they've learned the gospel from Epaphras, and he lets them know that Epaphras has brought back a good report to him about the Colossians' faith. Note Paul's enthusiasm for his readers, even though he's never met them personally.

Prayer-Colossians 1:9-14

Paul responds to the good news of the Colossians' faith by praying for them. Even though he's never met them, he's been praying for them constantly. Paul focuses his prayer on the Colossians knowing God's will so that they may live in a manner worthy of the Lord. Then Paul fleshes out what it looks like to live this way: they'll please God in all respects, bear fruit in every good work, increase in the knowledge of God, have his strength to be steadfast and patient, and express joyful gratitude to the God who made it possible for them to experience a glorious, eternal inheritance.

Paul ends his prayer by reflecting on how God qualified his people to share in this inheritance. It happened as a result of God rescuing us from the domain of darkness and transferring us into Christ's kingdom. Paul notes that in Christ we have redemption, meaning that God pays the price for us to be restored into right relationship with him. This price is the death of his Son, in whom we also have the forgiveness of our sins.

What Are the Questions?

Launch

Has there ever been a time in your life when you did something wrong and expected to be punished for it, but received grace instead?

Explore

Read Colossians 1:1-2

1. Who is the primary author of this letter, and how does he describe himself?
2. How should Paul being an apostle shape the way his readers receive this letter?
3. Who is Paul writing to, and how does he describe them?

Read Colossians 1:3-8

4. Why does Paul give thanks for the Colossians?
5. How does Paul describe the gospel in this section?
6. What role did Epaphras play in the Colossians' lives?

Read Colossians 1:9-14

7. What do you observe about Paul's heart for the Colossians in verse 9?
8. What is the focus of Paul's prayer for the Colossians?
9. What happens as a result of knowing God's will according to verses 10-12?
10. How does knowing the will of God form a foundation for each of the things Paul mentions in verses 10-12?
11. What does verse 11 say about the purpose of the power that God gives us?
12. What do you think Paul means when he describes the Father as the one who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light?
13. What do verses 13-14 say about how God secured this inheritance for those who trust in his Son?

Apply

14. How does it encourage you if you're a follower of Christ to know that the gospel is constantly bearing fruit and increasing in your life and around the world, bearing the same fruit of faith, love, and hope that it bore in the Colossians' lives?
15. In what specific way do you need to trust the gospel to bear fruit in your life?
16. In what ways can you cooperate with God's desire to fill you with a knowledge of his will so that you can experience the benefits Paul talks about in verses 10-12?
17. In what practical ways does it change your life to have God rescue you from the domain of darkness and transfer you to the kingdom of his beloved Son, providing you with redemption and forgiveness of sins?

What Are the Answers?

1. Paul. He describes himself as an apostle by the will of God.
2. Paul's readers should receive this letter as an authoritative word from God.
3. Paul writes to the Colossians, whom he describes as saints and faithful brethren.
4. Paul gives thanks for the Colossians because of their faith in Christ, love for all God's people, and the hope they have because of the gospel.

5. He describes the gospel as the word of truth, as a message that is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world as well as in the lives of the Colossians.
6. Epaphras preached the gospel to the Colossians.
7. He prays for them faithfully, even though he's never met them. He wants them to know God's will.
8. Paul prays the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God's will.
9. As a result of knowing God's will, God's people walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, please him in all respects, bear fruit in every good deed, increase in the knowledge of God, receive his power, and joyously give thanks to God for the inheritance they receive as his people.
10. Knowing God's will provides the information for his people to walk in a manner worthy of him and please him in all respects. It's the wellspring for bearing fruit in every good work (see John 15:4-5). It provides the basis for increasing in the knowledge of God. It's also the wellspring for receiving God's strength. It brings a response of joyous thanksgiving because it causes us to see how wonderful God is and all that he's done for us.
11. God strengthens us with power so that we would be steadfast and patient in the things he's called us to.
12. The Father has made it possible for those who trust in his Son to receive a boatload of eternal blessing ("the inheritance of the saints in Light").
13. God the Father secured this inheritance for his people by rescuing them from Satan's domain and transferring them into Jesus' kingdom, a kingdom through which they have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.
17. Allow the group to discuss.