



Seven Reasons to be Thankful!

Nov 25, 2018

Holy Text: Colossians 2:1-8

- In our church-wide *Reading the Bible in a Year* effort, we just finished Colossians. There are so many wonderful exhortations in this epistle, I thought working through a letter to which the whole church is recently familiar would be a fun thing to do today!
- Colosse was a town situated in modern Turkey, about 100 miles east of Ephesus. It was close to Laodicea (Col 4:16), and may have been founded by Epaphras (Col 4:12). It was written by Paul (from Rome...a “prison epistle” like Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon) between 60-62AD to address heresies that had crept into the church: Gnosticism, Antinomianism, and Jewish legalism. As MacDonald notes:

The errors which existed in Colosse are still with us today. Gnosticism has reappeared in Christian Science, Theosophy, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unity, and other systems. Antinomianism is characteristic of all who say that because we are under grace, we can live as we please. Judaism was originally a God-given revelation, whose forms and ceremonies were intended to teach spiritual truths in a typical way, as the Epistle to the Hebrews and other parts of the NT show. This lapsed into a system in which the forms themselves were considered to be meritorious, and so the spiritual meaning was often largely ignored. It has its counterpart today in the many religious systems which teach that a person can gain merit and favor with God by his own works, ignoring or denying his sinful state and need of salvation from God alone.

In Colossians, the Apostle Paul masterfully counteracts all these errors by displaying the glories of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹

Our Text:

1. Our Text is a very simple, but extremely passionate, apostolic plea. From the NLT:

Colossians 2:1-8 (NLT) I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. 2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. 3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments. 5 For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I rejoice that you are living as you should and that your faith in Christ is strong. 6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. 8 Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.

2. Paul's ultimate desire was for the church at Colosse (and Laodicea, 4:16) to remain steadfast and not fall into false beliefs.

¹ William MacDonald, *Bible Believer's Commentary*, Introduction to Colossians, 1995.

3. He therefore exhorts them to 1) To be rooted and built up in Christ, 2) To be established in the faith, and 3) To abound (or overflow) with Thanksgiving.
4. Oh that we might be exhorted to the same!
 - To “rooted and built up” suggests a deep, biblical spirituality and connection with our LORD, as well as a firm foundation doctrinal truth. It intimates **mature** faith and **intentional** practice. One does not become rooted and grounded with shallow thinking and lack of discipline.
 - To be established (or confirmed) in the faith exhorts them to continue in what they have learned...a walking with Jesus over time that corroborates and authenticates their conversion and promotes their growth. The term suggests **strength!**
 - To abound with thanksgiving suggests hearts that are on **fire!** It implies sustained enthusiasm regardless of circumstances and a continual expression of joy based on the finished work of Jesus! MacDonald writes, “He does not want Christians to be coldly doctrinal, but he wants their hearts to be captivated by the marvelous truths of the gospel so that they in turn will overflow in praise and thankfulness to the Lord.”²
5. Much can be said on verse 8. Just know that this warning applies to every church in every age. Someone or some “thing” is always looking to spoil you or imprison you in something ungodly. The last thing the enemy wants is rooted and grounded, strong, Thankful Christians!

Reading the Exhortations: Seven Reasons to be Thankful (in the order laid out in Colossians)

1. Let us be Thankful for the Father, the Son, and the **Deliverance** of God! (Col 1:1-23)
2. Let us be Thankful for the Providence and Sovereignty of God in **Suffering!** (Col 1:24-29)
3. Let us be Thankful for the **Freedom** we have in Christ! (Col 2:16-23)
4. Let us be Thankful of the holy Call of God! (Col 3:1-5)
5. Let us be Thankful for the **Peace** of God and the Word of God (Col 3:12-17)
6. Let us be Thankful for the **Dominion** Plan of God (Col 3:18-4:1)
7. Let us be Thankful for the Great Commission of God (Col 4:2-6)

When was the last time you thanked God for His great salvation? For sustaining you during times of trial? For setting you free? For the call of righteousness? For peace? For His Word? For family, friends, church family, and the ability to work and gather His resources? For the privilege of sharing His gospel with others?

Let us finish this year with the attitude of Gladness and Thankfulness as we worship our LORD and strive to obey His Word! Let us be encouraged by the example of the pilgrim church, who...

“...continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 2:42-47 (KJV)

Amen!

² William MacDonald, Bible Believer's Commentary on Colossians 2:7, 1995.