

**The Supremacy of Christ and the Fruit of Gospel Hope**  
**The Book of Colossians**  
**Part 1: Gospel Hope: Colossians 1:1-8**

**Scripture:**

**Colossians 1:1–8:**

*[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,  
[2] To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

*[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7] just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8] and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*

**Let's Pray**

**Introduction:**

As the elder council was preparing for Pastor Dan's sabbatical, we began to have conversations about what we would preach on while he was gone. And we asked ourselves, "*what do we feel like the church needs right now?*" And as we prayed and talked together one main idea and desire came to the surface. **The desire to magnify and lift high the name of Christ.**

Now, that of course is a desire of ours in everything we do, but we really felt like we wanted to be able to show how Christ is supremely greater and more valuable than anything in this whole world and beyond. Secondly, that we, as his people, are meant to live and flourish in Christ, as we put our full hope in him and his great work.

This led us to what we are going to be doing for the next 12 weeks which is series on the book of Colossians called "**The Supremacy of Christ and the Fruit of Gospel Hope.**" And it is our hope that as we do this that we all will see, treasure, and be transformed by some of the following truths that are present in this book:

1. Christ is better than all things and is in control of all things.
2. Christ has defeated all earthly powers and spiritual darkness.
3. Christ is our only real and solid hope for this life and the next.
4. As believers in Christ, the call on our life is to follow Christ and grow into his image

These will be things that you not only hear in today's sermon, but they will be the main threads that come back again and again, in different forms as we walk through this book.

**Colossians:**

With that said, let's start this morning by taking a few minutes to talk about the occasion and background of this book so we can better understand what Paul is trying to communicate to this church and to us.

**Author:**

The author of course is the apostle Paul who is more than likely dictating this letter to Timothy while he is in prison in Rome around A.D. 62.

**Recipients:**

He is writing to a church in the small town of Colossae. This is more than likely a church made up mostly of gentile believers, and it was started by one of Paul associates and possible converts Epaphras.

**Purpose:**

Though Paul had never physically been to this church we know from Col. 4:12 that Epaphras was with him in Rome, and during that time he likely shared with him the good things that were happening, but also that dangerous teaching was now threatening this church. This teaching includes:

- a) That you must follow a strict observance of human rituals and traditions to be truly spiritual. (Col. 2:8)
- b) That real spirituality is found in angel worship and visions. (Col. 2:18)
- c) That you must abstain from certain kinds of food and drink in order to be holy (Col. 2:20-21)

**To Sum it up: They were teaching that true spirituality, holiness, and godliness are found in something besides the person and work of Christ.**

In response Paul writes to this church to remind them of the greatness of Christ. To prove that he is greater and better than these false teachings, that he the supreme creator and ruler of all things, and to call this church to put their full hope in Christ and grow into the image of Christ.

**Today:**

So that is that basic background of this book, and with this information in mind we are now ready to jump into our text for this morning. And as we walk through these first set of verses, we are going to see Paul, even in a section of scripture where he is thanking God for this particular church, using every word to remind them and us of the supreme importance of Christ, and what I am calling **“gospel hope.”**

He will remind us of three big truths:

1. **Our only real hope is Gospel hope (V. 4-5)**
2. **Only Gospel hope produces lasting fruit (V.3-6)**
3. **Gospel hope should be our most passionate message (5b-8)**

So, let's begin by looking at our first point for this morning.

### 1. **Our only real hope is Gospel hope (V. 5)**

**Colossians 1:3-5:**

*[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,*

Epaphras has come to Paul in Rome and has not only told him about the dangerous teaching threatening this church, but he has also told Paul that despite this threat the believers in this church are full of faith. And not only are they full of faith, but their faith is being put into action as they are showing a real servant hearted and selfless love to all the saints in that region.

This is an amazing example of real genuine faith in action, and Paul wants them to know that he is thanking God for the great work he has done in them. For the visible manifestation of faith that has been witnessed by Epaphras and reported to Paul.

But then Paul does something that is very unique to this letter. **He takes their faith and love and sets them right on top of the foundation of hope.**

**Meaning, that their genuine faith in Christ and love for God's people is only possible because of hope.**

But the question is: **What kind of hope are we talking about?**

Now, it is important to realize that Paul uses the words faith, hope, and love often in his epistles a way to sum up the genuine Christian life.

As he writes in Galatians 5:5-6:

*[5] For through the Spirit, by **faith**, we ourselves eagerly wait for the **hope** of righteousness. [6] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only **faith** working through **love**.*

Ephesians 4:1-5:

*[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism,...*

But again, there is a distinct difference between these passages and Colossians 1:3-5. Colossians is the only letter in all of Paul's epistles that makes faith and love **dependent** on hope. As he writes in Colossians 1:4-5:

*...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*

But this is more than just a mere feeling of hope. The hope that Paul is talking about is **“our future hope of an eternity with Christ,”** or as one author writes, **“the totality of blessings that await the Christian in the life to come.”** So, this hope is an **“eternal hope.”**

And Paul is telling us that this **“eternal hope”** is not something that we or the Colossians have earned, but it is something that Christ has **“laid (stored) up for us in heaven.”** Not only that, but this **“eternal hope”** is something that Christ has freely given to us through his finished work on the cross, **“the gospel.”**

As he writes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 5 **“Of this (eternal hope) you have heard (received it) before in the word of the truth, the gospel,...”**

So, ultimately the kind of hope that Paul is talking about is **“Gospel Hope.”**

**So, before you get too confused, what does all that mean?**

The Colossians Christians, who are facing dangerous teaching that is telling to get them to put their spiritual hope in their religious works, are now being told by Paul that their only real hope for this life and the next is a Christ exalting eternal or future hope. And that hope has and can only be secured for them and us through Christ's death, burial and triumphant resurrection. **This is the essence of gospel hope.**

**And as we will learn, only this Christ exalting, blood bought, gospel hope can produce real, lasting, and eternal change in the lives of believers, and in the world.**

**I hope you see the importance of this in our day.**

We are living in a time of what feels like consistent upheaval and unrest. And we, as Americans, seem more divided and polarized in our opinions, desires, and solutions to our current problems than ever before.

In fact, if I just took a poll of where each person in this room stood on the issues facing our country right now, we would get a myriad of polarizing answers that are all over the social and political spectrum.

But if you are a Christian here today, I want to ask you to stop and ask yourself this question, **“where is your hope?”**

Is it in a vaccine being developed for the Corona virus? Is it in president Trump fighting back the evils of a big government who is trying to take our rights away? Is it in achieving the racial equality that we know should exist, but unfortunately doesn't? Or is it in putting your opinion on a social media site in the hope that it might make a difference?

**Now I whole heartedly believe that the issues facing our country are important and need to be addressed.**

But in order to address these issues in a Christ-exalting way, in order to see real change in our lives and in the world around us, we need to start by remembering that our hope is not found in this world. It is not found in politicians, vaccines, the constitution, protests, or in any other human institution.

**Instead, real, lasting, and eternal hope is found in Christ alone and the eternal blessings and riches that he has secured for us. “The only real hope is gospel hope.”**

And when we rightly understand that our only real hope is “gospel hope,” it becomes clear that only this kind of hope can produce the **lasting change that we so badly desire in ourselves and the world. This brings us to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point:**

## **2. Only Gospel hope produces lasting fruit (V. 3-6)**

*[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,*

Now, this might just be me geeking out, but I love how the apostle Paul centers this idea of “gospel hope” right in the middles of these verses. And then the implications or fruit of that “gospel hope” grow out from it on both sides.

And according to Paul there are three things that grow out of this “gospel hope.”

### **Faith in Christ:**

By “faith in Christ” Paul means a blood-bought, Christ given belief in his finished work that ultimately submits to him and his lordship.

This is so important to remember. Faith in Christ is not something that we as Christians muster up, nor is it something that we can produce on our own through some sort of religious activity. **Instead real genuine saving faith is something that is bought for us and given to us through the finished work of Christ and the eternity that he has secured for us.**

As Paul famously writes in Ephesians 2:8-9:

*[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Just as the Colossians were being tempted to make religious duties the grounds for their salvation, we are also tempted to believe that somehow we can do things to make ourselves right with God.

We can go to church, put a bible verse on our Facebook, hang out with the right people, or not hang out with the wrong people. We can be the right political party (**whatever that is to you**), and even take the right social stances.

In all of these things we can be tempted to think that our views and activities somehow make us more righteous or holy than other Christians.

**But Paul’s emphatic statement to us and this church is that true saving faith can only come from the eternity securing, resurrecting power of Christ on our behalf, and from nothing else.**

### **Genuine saving faith comes through Christ alone.**

The second fruit of “gospel hope” is genuine Christian love.

### **Genuine Love:**

Paul writes in Colossians 1:3-4:

*[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of **the love that you have for all the saints,***

We are hearing so much right now about how we need to come together and love one another. How we need to unite as a nation and serve one another. **And I will tell you that I totally agree with those sentiments and ideas.**

**But I totally disagree with how that should and will happen.**

You see, the world will tell us that we should just be able to muster up a form of love for people because they are our fellow humans or that we should humbly serve one another and unite together because everyone is basically the same.

But when you live with a world view devoid of “gospel hope” it is impossible to view people this way.

**Because apart from a great work of Christ on our behalf to open our hearts and minds to the magnificence of our triune God, we will always live in a system where people see themselves as better than others based upon age, value to society, achievement, gender, and even race.**

This happens because people have forgotten their creator who is ruler and sustainer of all things. As a result, we are prone to a pride that somehow believes that we have earned our standing in this life instead of realizing that the only thing we have earned apart from Christ is death. As Romans 6:23 says:

*[23] For the wages of sin is death,...*

**Hear this:** We live in a broken system that by itself can only produce death, not love.

So then where does this humble, selfless, and people uniting love come from.

According to Paul, this kind of love, the kind that he sees being lived out by the Colossian church, is only made possible by the finished work of Christ that saves us, produces faith in us, **and then overflows into genuine Christ-centered love for his people and the world.**

This is exactly why Paul writes these opening verses the way he does. He wants the Colossians and us to understand that the saving faith and selfless love that they have (**V. 4**) are only made possible through the eternity, life, and righteousness that Christ has secured for us in and through his work, the gospel (**V. 5**).

So apart from the gospel taking root in our hearts as Christians and in the world there can be no genuine experience of a selfless love. **Only “Gospel hope” can produce genuine love.**

The third fruit of “gospel hope” is **transformation.**

**Transformation:**

Colossians 1:6 says:

*[6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,*

Paul is saying to this church, **“I want you to know that this “gospel hope” that you have heard from Epaphras is doing something. It has and is doing a transformational work in you and in the world around you.”**

It’s important to note here that when Paul says that the gospel is bearing fruit or transforming the world, he is saying this at a time when the number of Christians in the Roman empire were small. Meaning, he wasn’t witnessing a huge societal shift as a result of the gospel.

But what Paul was seeing were the beginnings of the great changes that were to come. And he probably remembered the words of Jesus when he spoke of the kingdom this way in Matthew 13:31-32:

*[31] “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. [32] It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”*

In the same way, we may look at our lives and society as a whole, and at times feel like we see very little change. And it is very easy to try to run to the latest self-help fad or to jump on the latest social justice issue because we believe that something other than the gospel itself is needed to transform us and the world.

**Like the Colossians we are being tempted with the false idea that change can happen apart from Christ.**

But Paul’s words bring us back to the sobering reality of what he sees and what we should know is true. Real and lasting change and transformation are only possible through the gospel. It is the gospel that saves, it is the gospel that secures, and it is the gospel, and only the gospel, that can transform people and the very foundations of our society.

So,..... if our only real hope is **“Gospel hope,”** and only **“Gospel hope”** is able to produce lasting fruit and change, then:

### **3. Gospel hope should be our most passionate message (5b-8)**

*Of this (eternal hope) you have **heard** before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7] just as you **learned** it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8] and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*

Paul is reminding the Colossians that they heard and learned the gospel from Epaphras, and it was and is this hearing of the gospel which God used to bring salvation and transformation to them and the other churches throughout the Roman world.



It wasn't protests, it wasn't political debates, it wasn't Facebook rants or snarky memes. It was and is the gospel of Christ's eternity securing death, burial, and resurrection. **It was Gospel hope lived and preached.**

Now again, are there real issues facing our nation and world that we need to discuss and deal with? Absolutely.

But before we jump into political solutions or discussions about the legitimacy of protests, masks, social distancing, and vaccinations, **let us first remember that these discussions can't transform lives. Only Christ can.**

And so I believe Paul's message to us is clear: If we want real change both in our lives and in our world, we must re-center our lives and our conversations both in our homes, our workplaces, our communities, and online on the **only message that saves, and the only message that transforms.** The message of Christ, our one and only **"Gospel Hope."**

**Because he is the only real hope for this life and the next.**

**Let's Pray**