



Title: The word of truth (Colossians: week 1)

Text: Colossians 1:1-8

Speaker: Brad Evangelista

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Colossians 1:1-8

Intro: Paul never visited the city of Colossae, but was very familiar with the church there as it was planted by Epaphras, who came to the Lord through Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians around A.D. 62 while under house arrest in Rome (Acts 27-28). The issue he is addressing has been an issue of much discussion amongst scholars. Unlike some of his other letters like Galatians and Corinthians, the reason he is writing is harder to detect. Most likely, he is addressing a kind of folk religious mix of Judaism and some super spiritual equivalent of a new age guru who is leading people into the error of thinking that they have some special religious experience or level because they have some higher understanding.

A few things are important to note:

1. You never know the fruit the may come from your witness for Jesus. Paul didn't plant this church, Epaphras did. Little did Paul know probably at the time all that would come out of his association with Epaphras in Ephesus.

2. No church is insignificant to God. Colossae was not a major or important town. It was not a cultural hub. Basically it was in the sticks. The point is that churches and people, no matter how seemingly ordinary, are important to God.

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

- **The importance of Apostleship.** Paul was an apostle because of his encounter with and commissioning by Jesus in Acts 9. Apostles had special authority in the early church, and there are no more today. Apostolic authority died with the Apostles. Through their authority we get the 27 books that comprise the New Testament. Each of these books is either written by an apostle or by the close associate of an apostle. The word "apostle" literally means "sent by Christ" and in this sense refers to the 12 disciples who saw the resurrected Lord, plus Paul, who saw the resurrected Lord, and Jesus' brothers.

2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- **Paul's expectation of grace through his letters.** In each of his letters he begins with "grace to you" and ends with "grace be with you." There is something to this. It indicates the expectation that Paul has that his letters are a conduit of God's grace to his readers.
- **Understanding the comprehensiveness of grace.** When Paul uses the word "grace" he means much more than just the forgiveness of sins, as glorious as that is. He has in mind not just past grace to forgive sin, but present grace to empower holy living (Titus 2:11) and future grace to preserve us God's people.

*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,*

- **We always thank God.** Paul had an issue to address with the Colossians, and his correction is coming, but it is telling that he begins with appreciation and gratitude for what they are doing well—and there is much that they are doing well in! We should first see and recognize and laud the good in one another. There is a cynicism that can grip church culture, and it really comes from insecurity.

- **No fruit, no root.** Paul, even though he has never met the Colossians, was well aware of their faith and love. Faith and love are intangible things, so we can conclude that Paul knew of their faith and love because it translated into good deeds. Fruit and good works of course do not save us, but they must be present to some measure as an indication of the authenticity of our salvation. This is one of the great themes of the book of James, that faith without works is dead.
- **Hope laid up in heaven—the ground for faith and love.** This is very important for us to see. Yes, they had faith and love, but it was because of their hope in heaven. This tells us two things. First, that faith and love do not come from within us, but from God. Secondly, we only are truly released and freed to give our lives away in faith and love to this world when our hope lies elsewhere—namely, in the God of heaven.
- **Chain of heavenly hope:** (Rom 5:1-5; Rom 8:18-25; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Heb 10:32-39; Heb 13:12-14)

6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—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.

- **The Gospel—this all-powerful piece of news.** (Romans 1:16; Romans 10:13-15)
- **How do we know we if we are saved?** Fruit. (Mark 4:1-25 – Parable of the Sower)
- **Is it wise to examine whether or not we are truly saved?** YES! → 2 Corinthians 13:5

SUMMARY OF COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

1. Living from the hope of eternity with Jesus makes us more useful in this life, not less.
2. The way God saves is through the Gospel.
3. True salvation will bear fruit.