

Col 1:1-8 (NIV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, {2} To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. {3} We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, {4} because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints– {5} the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel {6} that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth. {7} You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, {8} and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

51-01-01b-The Life of the Gospel

prayer, Christian lifestyle, community, hope

Col 1:1-8

The Gospel is a new way of thinking for a new way of living.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

–[The Star Trek TV series used to start each week’s episode with the familiar phrase, “*Space, the final frontier.*” That sounded exciting, but there is a more pressing need than the conquest of *outer space* ... it’s our need to conquer *inner space*.] Millions in the inner space of our planet go to bed hungry every night and many of the world’s children never reach adulthood because of the ravages of curable diseases and malnutrition. Bitter wars rage between nations, as do civil wars within nations. In our own country crime, addictions, and family breakdown are symptoms that indicate a morally eroding culture. The disease-process behind all this is rooted in the inner space of the human heart. Our ultimate conquest should be to find and apply God’s remedy to heal the human heart of sin and selfishness, because as Prov 4:23 (NKJV) says about the heart, “...out of it spring the issues of life.”

–The Gospel goes to the very heart of humanity’s problems: the need for release [“forgiveness”] from sins. But it’s more than pardon, it’s a release from an old pattern of living into a new way of life.

–Repentance means “*a change of mind*” but if it doesn’t lead to a “*change of lifestyle,*” it’s not true repentance. HOM.idea.

–The *Epistle to the Colossians* gives us a thorough understanding of this new way of living that Gospel thinking gives to us. After he greets the Colossian Christians, Paul begins by describing it as....

### **I. A Life of Community, v.3-4**

A. Mutual prayer, with gratitude = the glue that welds Christian relationships together:

1. Praying for others is an investment of time and emotional energy that endears to you the people you pray for.
2. Where there is *disagreement*, gratitude can disarm hostility.

B. Mutual faith, in Christ = the common ground of relationship within God’s Kingdom (Our *common trust* in the King who said, “I will build My church” shows us how denominations are only temporary tools that God uses for His permanent plan.)

C. Mutual love, for “*all the saints*”= caring for an extended family

beyond our personal preferences (*Birth* gives us relatives we didn't choose; *new birth* does the same and says, "love them!")

**TRANS:** Christian community is a powerful statement to a world riddled with alienation. Division among Christians is a sign and symptom of departure from Gospel thinking. The Gospel is a new way of thinking for a new way of living, and part of the life of the Gospel is a life of community....

## II. A Life of Hope, v.5

- A. The Gospel is a way of thinking based on lasting truth–
1. A battle for our thinking: relativism vs. absolutes [Relativism sells consumer goods, absolutes buy a good character. Relativism says, "Follow popular trends." Absolutes say, "Follow principles of truth."]
  2. Paul calls "*the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.*"– for Christians, the Gospel is not a belief among other beliefs, but an Absolute truth that measures all other relative truths.
- B. A Gospel lifestyle is "*faith and love*" which "*spring from...hope*"–
1. Much of the chaos in people's lives is because they feel there is no hope for the future– **Jer 29:11**, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Hopelessness is a major cause of suicides and of relational violence).
  2. Our hope is "stored up" for us "*in heaven*"–
    - a. Not just a hoping so kind of hope, but an expectation of reality [**Edgar A. Poe's poetry** is saturated with a mixture of *hoping so* and *doubting so*, and it reflected the deep despair in his life.]
    - b. Not an uncertain confidence, but one based on a strong reasons for trust. (*Christ's Resurrection* proved that His Cross worked: both sin & death were defeated!)
    - c. Not just an earthly hope, but one anchored in eternity.

**TRANS:** [**Longfellow's poem**, "The Old Clock on the Stairs," depicts an old courthouse clock watching the coming and going of humanity as time passed. The clock's pendulum says at the end of each stanza, "Forever – never! / Never – forever!" What this clock is really saying unfolds in the last three stanzas:

From that chamber, clothed in white,	And in the hush that followed the prayer,
The bride came forth on her wedding night;	Was heard the old clock on the stair,–
There, in that silent room below,	"Forever – never!
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;	Never – forever!"

All are scattered now and fled,  
Some are married, some are dead;  
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,  
"Ah! when shall they all meet again?"  
As in the days long since gone by,  
The ancient timepiece makes reply,–  
"Forever – never!  
Never – forever!"

Never here, forever there,  
Where all parting, pain, and care,  
And death, and time shall disappear,–  
Forever there, but never here!  
The horologe of Eternity  
Sayeth this incessantly,–  
"Forever – never!  
Never – forever!"

Earthly hopes of success and happiness *never* last. *Never here!* Our hope in the Gospel, our hope in Christ's atonement for our sins and His defeat of death through resurrection, this is a hope that last *forever*. *Forever there!* The life of the Gospel is a life lived in that hope.

## III. A Life of Growth, v.6

- A. The Gospel faith that spread "*All over the world*" is that of the Church *universal* [*catholic*] (it contains the simplicity of the *Apostle's Creed* and the Trinitarian truth of the *Nicene Creed*)
- B. How do we know Gospel faith is alive?
1. It's "*producing fruit*" both spiritually and numerically [**Some fruit** only grows *underground* and will only be seen later.]
  2. It's "*growing*" both in strength and in size [**Trees** not only mark their growth with bark rings, but increase the strength of their trunks, which in turn provides a base of support for growth in the branches.]
- C. How do we keep Gospel faith healthy? (a dual responsibility)
1. "*God's grace in all its truth*" is His job: a constant outflow...
  2. Once we've "*heard it and understood*" it, our job is to keep on listening and learning about it: a constant inflow...

## CONCLUSION:

–The Gospel of Christ is the "Good News" that God's Son became one of us to die in our place so that sins could be forgiven and new birth experienced. God's purpose by this Gospel is to save us. It not only change our way of thinking. It is to change our way of living to one of "love in the Spirit," as this passage describes.