

Sermon or Lesson: Colossians 1:3-4, 7-8 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Having Faith That Produces Love And Then Inspiration

INTRO: When you come to church regularly each week, do you realize that the status and corresponding manifestation of your faith are having an impact on people around you - whether good, or bad, or neutral? Even if you sit in the same seat, say nothing to anyone else, do nothing to draw attention, and leave quietly, nevertheless you have an impact upon people around you. Perhaps to you, the impact that you perceive to exert may appear to be non-existent. But God expects that each of us are to respond appropriately and actively to the "Word of Truth" (v.5), which God then expects should have a positive impact upon the people around us. So, having a negative response or a neutral response by default produce results that are contrary to what God intends to be occurring within groups of believers. At minimum, negative or neutral responses are a lacking or an absence of positive impact upon people around us - a positive impact that should be there but is not.

Let's study a true-life example of the proper fulfillment of what God expects concerning this matter.

READ: Colossians 1:3-4, 7-8, with vv.5-6 for context

[Note: Verses 5-6 are featured in the next sermon-or-lesson in Colossians chapter 1.]

BACKGROUND:

- - From the authority directly given to him by God, Paul is writing authoritatively to the believers in Colosse, as well as to all believers today. (v.1)
- - To those persons who are holy and faithful believers in Christ, God the Father extends to them His grace and peace. (v.2)
- - It is the will of God that believers read, study, learn, and fully implement in their lives the teachings in the Book of Colossians. (vv.1-2)

[Lesson Question: Describe exactly what Paul and Timothy are thankful for (v.3), and then describe the corresponding implications.]

SECTION POINT: Having faith in Jesus as the Christ can produce an accompanying dynamic of having "love... for all the saints" that is empowered extraordinarily by the Spirit of God - if believers collaborate appropriately with the Spirit.

- - Following next after the opening salutation, apostle Paul and his assistant Timothy state what their response has been to a report about the "brothers in Christ at Colosse". (v.2)
- - They heard from Epaphras, a fellow minister, of the faith and of the love that the Colossian believers have. (vv.7,4)
- - This faith is in Jesus, the "Christ", the "Messiah", the "Anointed One" foretold in the Old Testament that would fulfill the means by which righteousness is made available to save us corrupted humans from the consequences of eternal punishment for our sins.

(v.4, Strong's Greek #5547; Strong's Greek #3323 - John 1:41; Strong's Hebrew #4899 - Daniel 9:25,26; Isaiah 53:5,11-12; cf. Luke 24:44-48; Romans 3:10,20-22)

- - As a product of this saving faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Colossian believers also have "love... for all the saints" - a Spirit-empowered love for fellow believers that prevails among them, despite their sinful shortcomings and their differences. (Colossians 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

- - Thereby, this love is a manifestation of the Spirit of God in the lives of the Colossian believers. (Colossians 1:8)

- - By implication, this "love in the Spirit" (v.8) is manifesting so extraordinarily because the Colossian believers are collaborating with the Spirit of God, willingly cooperating with and yielding to the desires and the leading of the Spirit of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

- - As such then, this "love in the Spirit" (Colossians 1:8) is to be active, practical, and proper:

- - - - it is to be actively utilized continuously by believers among themselves; (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:7)

- - - - it is to be applied in practical ways within the various circumstances that arise among believers; (cf. James 2:14-17)

- - - - and it is to be implemented properly - always in an appropriate godly manner, that aligns with sound interpretation of Scriptures. (cf. James 2:8-9)

[Lesson Question: Describe what effect this phenomenon was having on Paul and Timothy, as ministry workers.]

SECTION POINT: Having faith in Jesus as the Christ, accompanied by having "love... for all the saints", are commendable and a source of inspiration and encouragement for ministry workers.

- - By implication, this faith and this love of the Colossian believers was heartening and inspiring for Epaphras, "a faithful minister of Christ", because he was reporting to Paul and Timothy this information about how the gospel "has been" "bearing fruit among [them]". (vv.7,6)

- - This faith and this love of the Colossian believers was also commendable, because Paul and Timothy were "always thanking God" when they were praying for the Colossian believers. (v.3; cf. v.2:5)

- - And "since the day [they heard] about" the Colossian believers, Paul and Timothy did "not stop praying for" them, because the gospel was "bearing fruit" and thereby growing them in the faith. (vv.9,6)

- - The faith and the love of the Colossian believers were inciting the giving of thanks by Paul and Timothy to God.

- - The faith and the love of the Colossian believers were also inciting Paul and Timothy to pray for them without ceasing. (v.9, Strong's #3973)

BIG IDEA: Having faith in Jesus as the Christ is intended by God to thereupon produce having love for all the saints, which then will produce inspiration and encouragement within ministry workers.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - Do you have faith in Jesus, as the Christ, to save you from the consequences of eternal punishment for your sins, through His suffering and death on the cross (Romans 3:20-25a)? If not, what are you waiting for(?) - the wrath of God to come upon you? (Romans 1:18)

- - For those of you who are true believers in Jesus Christ, do you have a "love in the Spirit" (v.8) "for all the saints" (v.4) that is consistently active, practical, and proper? Or instead, do you supposedly have this kind of love in the Spirit but in reality only when things are going to your advantage or liking, and otherwise you are short-tempered, or abrasive, or caustic, or demanding, or critical, or impatient?

- - What effect or impact is your faith having on the ministry workers who are over and around you?

- - Are you a source of inspiration, and encouragement, and exhilaration for ministry workers around you? Or instead, are you contributing to discouragement and drudgery within ministry workers around you?

- - Are your faith and love commendable? Or instead, are your faith and love worthy of disregard or even reproach?

- - Do your faith and love incite other people to give thanks to God? Or instead, are they desperately pleading with God to provide relief from you?

- - Do your faith and love incite other people to pray for you without stopping? Or instead, are they praying against you without stopping?

- - When other people hear a report about you, do they hear a report of commendable faith and love that you have? Or instead, are they hearing a report of your sinful activities or words?

- - Do you pray for other brothers and sisters in Christ, like Paul and Timothy are, as stated here in verse 3? Or instead, are you finding fault or criticizing other believers?

- - Do you thank God for other brothers and sisters in Christ, like Paul and Timothy are, as stated here in verse 3? Or instead, are you ignoring other believers, perhaps from a natural casual mindset? Or, are you avoiding thinking about other believers, perhaps because you do not particularly like them? Or you do not like to pray or to pray longer?

- - Does your faith produce in you "love... for all the saints" that is empowered by "love in the Spirit"? And in fullness? If not, then the Word of God implies here in Colossians chapter 1 that there is something significantly lacking or perhaps even wrong with your faith. So, now what are you going to do about that?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Is it possible to have a false "love in the Spirit" (v.8)? Explain. (clue: 1 John 4:1)

- - Is it possible to have and extend genuine "love in the Spirit" (v.8) "for all the saints" (v.4) without audibly speaking words or being conversational? Explain. (clue: John 3:16a)]

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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