

## “Attributes of the Gospel of Truth”

*April 30, 2017*

Colossians 1:3-8

### I. Introduction

In **Philippians 2:5**, Paul wrote “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:21**, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” Whether one considers Jesus’ humility and love in leaving heaven and coming to earth in human form with the set purpose to die on the cross for the sins of the world or whether one looks at Jesus’ statements and actions as He hung on the cross itself, Jesus set very high standards for His followers, for Christians. It is easy to say that Jesus was special and His steps are so unusual and demanding that a mortal couldn’t possibly walk in them. But as we read the Bible and consider other Christians, we see men and women, with the Holy Spirit’s help, doing their best to walk in Jesus’ steps.

In the Thursday night Bible study, we have just finished a 15-week study of the lives of persecuted Christians in the Middle East. We saw ordinary people who continue to demonstrate sacrifice, courage, joy, perseverance, forgiveness and faithfulness in the midst of homelessness and torture, rape, and murder. They give the credit for their attitudes to their faith and hope in God. In the prison epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, we see the Apostle Paul, who is under house arrest in Rome and chained 24/7 to his guards, show concern for other Christians, ignoring any difficulties that he was experiencing. Like Jesus, the Middle East Christians and the Apostle Paul model agape love—loving others sacrificially, putting the needs of others before their own.

Because of his love for others, a fellow worker of Paul’s by the name of Epaphras had traveled from Turkey to Rome to ask for Paul’s help in combating the false teachings that had come to Colossae. The Letter to the Colossians was Paul’s attempt to get things back on the right track.

Following the practice of correspondence in the ancient world at that time, Paul began with the salutation which we looked at last week. It was customary in a Greek letter of the time to follow the salutation with a few words of thanksgiving for the welfare of the recipients, and to pray for their continual wellbeing. This morning we'll consider Paul's thanksgiving for the Colossians as he lists attributes of the Gospel of Truth.

## II. Attributes of the Gospel of Truth

**A. It is received by faith.** Every one of Paul's letters, except Galatians, begins with thanks or praise. Here in Colossians, Paul gave thanks to **"God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."** Paul is emphasizing that God is the One who is owed thanks. Salvation, the Gospel of Truth, is, as **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, a gift from God. The Gospel of Truth is received by faith. Paul is thankful to God for the Colossian's faith in God. The Colossians are **"holy and faithful brothers"** who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Biblical faith means to be persuaded that something is true and to trust in it. Faith is not a leap in the dark. It rests upon historical facts; it is believing in God. Faith is defined in **Hebrews 11:1** as **"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."** Christian faith is more than intellectual agreement, it involves repentance and obedience. A true saving faith involves 3 things: 1) a turning to God; 2) a turning from evil; and 3) a commitment to serve God. Putting it a different way, true saving faith involves the mind, the heart and the will. With the mind we understand the truth of the Gospel; with the heart we feel conviction and the need to be saved. But it is only when we exert our will and commit ourselves to Christ that the process is complete. Faith isn't just acceptance of a body of doctrines. Faith isn't emotional concern about sin and eternity. Faith is commitment to Jesus Christ—making Him the Lord and Savior of one's life (**Romans 10:9**).

Everyone has faith in something. But faith is only as good as the object in which a person puts his trust. Some pagans worship a god of stone; other pagans worship money or status or possessions.

Any such faith is empty. A prevalent attitude today is, *“If you believe, you are safe.”* *“Just be sincere and it will all work out.”* But we are not saved by faith in faith. One isn’t saved by faith in a set of doctrines. Only faith in Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection is saving faith, as [Acts 16:31](#) says, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”**

**B. It results in love.** Back in Colossians, Paul then wrote **“of the love you have for all the saints.”** True faith results in a changed life. One of the visible fruits of true saving faith is love for fellow believers—turn to [John 13:34-35](#). [1 John 4:20](#) says, **“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”**

A true child of God will love fellow believers. Our love for fellow Christians is a reflection of Jesus’ love for us. This doesn’t mean that we are to feel the same emotional attachment toward everyone. True biblical love—agape love—is much more than an emotion. Agape love is a sacrificial service to others because they have need. We show godly love to someone when we sacrifice ourselves to meet that person’s needs. God doesn’t expect us to feel sentimental toward each other all the time, BUT He does expect us to serve one another—[Galatians 5:13](#) says, **“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”**

**C. It is grounded in hope.** The 3 great Christian virtues of faith, love, and hope appear throughout Paul’s writings. But as he wrote, **“The faith and love that spring from hope,”** Paul is saying that the Gospel of Truth is grounded in or based on hope. Hope isn’t a wishful thinking but a firm assurance in the future—turn to [Titus 1:1-2](#).

A sure hope leads to faith and love. Faith, love and hope are inseparably linked. We believe, and so we hope. Turn to [1 John 3:1-3](#). A result of hope for the future is the willingness to sacrifice the present for the future. The world wants what it wants now. The Christian has a different perspective.

A Christian is willing to forgo the present glory, comfort, and satisfaction of this present world for the future glory that is his in Christ Jesus. Instead of living for instant gratification, a Christian has hope, based on faith, that the future holds something far better than the present. Paul wrote in [Romans 8:18](#), “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Moses is an example of one who, for the future hope, gave up the glories in the present—[turn to Hebrews 11:24-27](#).

Like Moses, believers look for a hope—a firm assurance that is in heaven. As [Philippians 3:20](#) says, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” We serve the Lord, making sacrifices here to lay up treasure in heaven. Like Jim Elliot, a missionary and martyr to the Auca Indians, we have the hope, the assurance that “*he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*” The hope we have is the source of faith and love.

**D. It is for the whole world.** The Gospel of Truth is for the world, it isn’t just some local cult or teaching, Paul wrote, “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit.” The Gospel penetrates all ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries. Jesus said in [Mathew 24:14](#), “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” [Revelation 7:9](#) says, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” The true church is made up of people from all over the world.

**E. It bears fruit.** Paul also said that the Gospel of Truth bears fruit. The true Gospel changes—transforms—lives. People that previously had no hope of life after death are changed when they make Jesus their Lord and Savior. This is one kind of fruit. But after one becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live within and gives the fruit of the Spirit from [Galatians 5:22-23](#). As people are converted and then bear fruit, others are drawn to Christ and more fruit is produced.

**F. It is transmitted by people.** Although salvation is solely by God's grace, like He did with Epaphras, God uses humans to transmit or teach the Good News that Jesus saves. The Gospel of Truth is transmitted by people. **Romans 10:14** puts it this way, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" In **Acts 1:8** Jesus told His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

### **III. Conclusion**

So here's the question: "What kind of thanksgiving would Paul include in a letter if he were to write a letter to you?" Have you received the Gospel of Truth, the Good News of salvation by faith? Remember, faith is not a mental agreement to a body of doctrines, no matter how true those doctrines may be. Faith is not an emotional concern for sins in your life. *Faith is a commitment to Jesus Christ.* How committed are you to Jesus Christ who said in **John 14:6**, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"? Is He your Lord as well as your Savior?

We live in a culture that strives to force Christians to conform to the views and beliefs of those of the rest of the world. Even some so-called theologians teach that the many different faiths or beliefs are just different paths to the one ultimate goal of heaven. One theologian wrote, "*Christian doctrines are merely opinions that may or may not be affirmed according to individual preference, or depending on whether they speak to personal felt needs.*" We need to make sure we are committed to God and His Word and not something or someone else.

Paul wrote that true faith results in sacrificial love. Is sacrificial love seen in your life? Are you ready to help others even when it's not convenient? Do people know you are a Christian by your love? Or have you adopted the world's philosophy of "it's all about me"?

1 Peter 3:15 says, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” What kind of hope do you have? Is it a wishy-washy hope or is it a firm assurance kind of hope? Can you say along with Job in Job 19:25-26, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”? When troubles or setbacks come your way, does your faith become stronger and love deeper because of your hope in God and His promises? Is your Christian life the kind that encourages others as you go through your day-to-day struggles?

What about the fruit of the Spirit? Are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” seen in your life? In other words, if a private detective were to follow you around for several days, would he find enough evidence to prove that you are a Christian or not?

Finally, God has given us the wonderful privilege and serious responsibility of being His agents or ambassadors in proclaiming the gospel of His grace. Among other things, we have the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Do you? When was the last time you talked to someone not from Tabernacle about Jesus Christ?