

Colossians Ch1v1-8 - A New Beginning

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[0 : 00] The first eight verses together, let's read. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, grace and peace to you from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we've heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have for all God's people.

The faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven, and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you.

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

[1 : 23] Well, follow along with me, you can see the headings on the screen. Well, something wonderful and beautiful has happened in this city of Colossae, which is in modern-day Turkey.

The gospel has come to their town. Look at the end of verse 5. The true message of the gospel has come to you.

Well, where did they hear this gospel message from? Well, look at verse 7. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf.

Epaphras. It's a great name, isn't it? I think we should reintroduce it to children as they're born. I don't know any Epaphrases living today, but here we have him.

He lived in Colossae, and he heard the gospel from the Apostle Paul. He was on his third missionary journey, and he stopped in Ephesus.

[2 : 37] And as we read other scriptures in parts of Acts, we learned that the message from there spread out to other places. And it seems that Epaphras heard the gospel when Paul arrived.

And he believed it. And he couldn't contain it. And he had to teach it to his friends and to the community in which he lived.

Epaphras shared with the people in Colossae the true message of the gospel. Now, we're familiar with the word gospel.

We use it all the time. We've read it here this morning. And it simply means good news. And in this context, it's the good news of God's salvation through Jesus.

And we have a lovely summary of it in verse 13, if you just jump ahead to verse 13. Here, if you like, is the gospel in summary form.

[3 : 43] For he, that is God, has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, a kingdom of utter emptiness and hopelessness.

He's rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. And what is it about this kingdom?

Well, it's the kingdom of his Son in whom we have redemption. We've been set free from all our guilt and shame of the past and we receive the forgiveness of all of our sins.

A move from darkness into light. A kingdom without hope to a kingdom of redemption and forgiveness.

How wonderful and how beautiful is that? And so this is the message that Epaphras received and he has passed on to his community.

[4 : 56] And so a church was started in that city. Now the problem is there were other gospel messages that were also being taught.

Other so-called good news messages. And Epaphras is concerned that this new church in Colossae is going to get pulled away from the true gospel.

In fact, he sends a report to Paul to tell him what has happened. So if you jump ahead to chapter 4 verse 12. Epaphras has taken a journey it seems to Paul to tell him what is going on in the church and the help that they might need.

Chapter 4 verse 12. This is Paul writing to the church. He says, Epaphras who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus sends greetings.

He is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God mature and fully assured.

[6 : 07] So Epaphras has gone to Paul. he is concerned for them he is praying for them that they will be strong and he is telling Paul all the things that are happening. He gives a report and as Paul receives this report he now writes this letter to the church.

So let's go back to chapter 1 and verse 1 where it tells us that Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother.

This is who it's from he's writing to the church. And his whole message the message that he gives to the church can be summarised for us in chapter 2 and verse 6.

This is the big theme of the letter. He says to them So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord continue to live your lives in him.

He's saying to the church you started with Christ now I want you to continue on with Christ and to finish with Christ.

[7 : 23] You received him now continue in him. But there's something else he has to tell them verse 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

You see this is his message make sure that you keep to the true gospel. You started with Christ now finish with Christ.

Don't get sucked in by these empty philosophies and these human traditions that have nothing to do with Christ. Start with Christ and finish with Christ.

And this is the message to Carigaline Church as well. We start with Christ and we continue with him. Be careful of other so-called gospel messages that are just human tradition and empty philosophies.

So as Paul writes he's reminding us of the true gospel and it's all about new beginnings. Three things we're going to take from these first eight verses of chapter one.

[8 : 51] A new community to live in, a new priority to live by and a new reality to live for. New community, new priority and a new reality.

This is what happens when the gospel comes. First, a new community to live in. You see, it's the gospel that forms a new community of people.

Look how they are addressed. Verse two. To God's holy people in Colossae.

Now to be holy, well, we might think of people who are holy as those who are kind of, oh they're very saintly kind of people.

They stay indoors all day and wear dark clothes and pray on their knees and read their Bibles all day long. Nothing wrong with praying and nothing wrong with reading your Bible at all, but is that holy?

[10 : 01] Well to be made holy, to be God's holy people, is to be made pure and right before God. This is what happens when we believe and trust in Christ.

jump ahead to chapter 1 verse 22. Well it's telling us because of what Christ has done, verse 22, he has now reconciled you to God by Christ's physical body through his death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

isn't that extraordinary? Isn't that amazing? That because of what Christ did, you now stand, if you are trusting in him today, you now stand before God as holy, blameless, free from any accusation.

God God cannot point his finger at you and condemn you for your sin. God's holy people.

But God's people are also a family people. You see, if we're God's people, that doesn't mean we just live in isolation, doing our own little thing as holy people.

[11 : 37] people. No, when God saves us, he saves us into a family. Look at verse 2 again. To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

You see, God's people are a family people. We're brothers and sisters. In other words, we're not living our lives in isolation and independence from each other.

We are dependent on one another. Look at the rest of verse 2. Grace and peace to you from God, my Father. Now, I don't have a different Father to you.

We have the same Father, Father God. We share in and have access to the same generous Father who gives his good and great gifts grace and peace to his children.

You see, we're not here as individuals doing our own thing. We are gathering together as his family. Now, all of this shapes how we view ourselves and how we treat each other.

[12:58] Maybe you're here this morning and you're thinking, well, I'm just a mess. I'm ashamed. If you could only see the things I've done this week, no way can you say I'm holy.

Or maybe you come reminding yourselves of promises that you made last week that, yes, I promise I'm going to pray and I promise it's going to be different this term and already this week you failed in the promises you made to yourself.

There's no way that I could be called faithful. Well, listen again to how the gospel has changed you if you are trusting Christ.

Listen to this, to God's holy people, faithful brothers and sisters. brothers. That is how God sees you and that is how we must see ourselves.

In fact, the gospel demands that this is how we treat each other. We treat each other in exactly the same way. We're gathered here this morning with no one thinking they are inferior and nobody thinking they are superior.

[14:23] we are the same family. We have the same father who has made us holy and faithful.

So we don't come in here this morning looking across at another seat and thinking they're awful people. Desperate.

You should have heard what they did. You should have heard what they said. No, we look at each other as God looks at us and treats us holy and faithful.

Now this family also has a double location. We have a physical location and a spiritual location. Again, maybe you picked it up already in verse 2 to God's holy people in Colossae. And we can say exactly the same thing, can't we?

[15:29] We are God's holy people living and located in Carigaline. That's what a church is. We're not living isolated individual lives.

We are a local gathering of God's people set apart to represent God and reflect God in Carigaline. This is who we are. We don't do our own thing. But more than that is our spiritual location. Look again at verse 2.

We are the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. To be in Christ is to be united to Christ. so that all that Christ has achieved is now ours to share in and to enjoy. That is why we can say we are holy and faithful because it's his holiness that has been given to us.

[16:27] It's his faithfulness that becomes our faithfulness. All that we have and all that we ever need is found in Christ. This comes all the way through the letter.

Let me just give you one little hint of what we are going to be seeing. Chapter 2 verse 3. Chapter 2 verse 3. In whom or in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

This is our spiritual location. We are in Christ. We have all that we need in him. So let's try and put all this together what we have looked at in the first couple of verses.

When we hear and believe the true message of the gospel, we are now God's holy and faithful family, children of the same Father God who generously gives us grace and peace. who have everything we could possibly need for our Christian life in Christ, gathered together to live out our lives in Carragalline.

[17:54] This is who we are. This is the new community. This is the true message of the gospel that we are to start with and to continue with and not move from.

This is the new community that we live in. Second, then, there's new priorities to live by. When we become part of God's family, there is a certain way to live. We have new priorities. Let's read verse 3 and 4.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people.

So the first priority is that we would be a people of faith in Christ. We've heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.

[18:59] Faith in Christ is where it starts and it is faith in Christ where it continues. As a family, we live each day by faith in the promises of God.

So, will I trust that all I need for my Christian life is found in Christ? Or will I go looking elsewhere? Will I trust that when God calls me holy and faithful, I am holy and faithful, even when I don't feel it? Will I trust what God says about me is true? Will I trust that what God says about gathering together is best for me, even when I think other things are more important?

You see, faith isn't just a ticket into heaven. It's not just where we start. Faith is about trusting God's promises to us, promising or obeying his word.

It's the way God's family live. Our second priority is love for others.

[20 : 20] He reminds them of the love you have for all God's people. love. You see, love isn't a choice. It's a command. Love isn't something I do when I feel like it or when it suits me or when I think the other person deserves it.

No, love is a command from God to his family, love one another. In fact, it's not a selective love, it's actually an all-inclusive love.

Did you pick it up in verse 4? The love you have for all God's people. You see, we are a family of brothers and sisters, so we don't get to choose which members of the family we love and we don't love.

And I recognise that that's hard, isn't it? because like our families that we may live in, we fall out with each other and it's no difference within the church family.

Brothers and sisters can have fallings out. Sometimes there's arguments and disagreements.

Sometimes people will frustrate you. Some people will let you down.

[21 : 39] And the easiest way to respond and say, oh well I've been hurt by them. And the response is not to love. Perhaps not by being vindictive, but by just taking the position, well I'm just going to avoid them, I'm not going to talk to them anymore, I'm not going to engage, not going to send them messages.

But that's not love. Love is seeing each person as God sees us and treats us, remember who we are in verse 2? We are holy.

We're holy in his sight. God treats us as faithful brothers and sisters. And that's what we're to do with each other.

Love doesn't hold grudges. Love doesn't hold sin against each other. Love forgives. Love continually moves out to one another.

It gives and it gives and it gives because we're family. Never saying it's easy, but this is our priority.

[22 : 56] So faith and love are the way we are to live. But sadly, and I think we can all identify with this, our faith and love can very often grow cold.

instead of a burning fire that's easy to live out, it just fizzles down to little spark or a flame. How do we reignite our faith and our love?

Well, look at the third priority. The hope to come. Look at it in verse five. It's talked about the faith and love and he says, now this faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you've already heard in the true message of the gospel.

Here we have motivation which sets our faith and love on fire. It rekindles us and gives us motivation and encouragement to live as we should.

God has stored up for us an eternal glory, hasn't he? Verse five. Heaven awaits all his family.

[24 : 15] His children have a glorious future. One writer explains our hope like this. This is a quote.

There is total shalom. That is a sense of sheer well-being. Every need is met. Every longing is fulfilled.

Every goal is achieved. Every sense is satisfied. We see him. We are with him. He holds us and hugs us and whispers this is forever.

forever. This is our hope. This is the glorious hope that death has been defeated. And I need reminded of this and you need reminded of this.

You see, faith will mature and love will grow as we begin to speak the gospel hope into each other's lives. As you tell me the gospel hope, hope and remind me of what's to come, it encourages me to keep on in my faith because one day I will receive the goal of my faith, our eternal home.

[25 : 37] And as I tell you and as I share with you the gospel hope, it will encourage you to keep on loving all God's people because one day we will experience the fullness of love because we will be with Christ and like Christ.

So this is our priority as a family. We're to tell each other not what the weather is like, what you can do.

You can talk to each other about the match yesterday and who played well and who didn't and where you're going to be and what you're going to do. but please can I encourage us that we would speak gospel hope to each other?

Because when we do, it will mature our faith and it will cause our love to grow. That's why we're here today.

That's why we gather on Wednesday. We come to talk to each other over tea and coffee to remind each other of the true message of the gospel.

[26 : 47] These are the priorities that we live by. So a new community, new priority and a new reality to live for.

You see, the true gospel not only forms a new community of people who have new priorities to live by, the gospel reveals a new reality in which we live for.

It gives us a purpose, it gives us a meaning for waking up every day. The gospel is effective. It has a power to change and transform our lives and the lives of others both locally and globally.

power to power. This is the gospel we have. It is a gospel of power. Look at verse 6.

We'll pick it up at the end of verse 5. The true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

[28 : 09] As the true gospel is heard and believed, people are declared by God to be his holy people, to be his brothers and sisters in Christ.

The gospel seed is bearing fruit. When that word is planted, something takes root and something begins to grow and there is fruit.

the word that is explained and taught is powerful and effective. It leads to a brand new beginning. That's what happens at Rock and Rooted.

That's what happened to over 50 children. Yesterday, on Friday afternoon and evening, the powerful gospel went out.

Seeds were planted. wanted. You see, we don't make the gospel powerful. It already is. We simply declare it and God does his work by his spirit in the lives of those who hear.

[29 : 18] But it's not just bearing fruit in individuals coming to faith. It's growing, we're told. Not just new life, but there are new churches.

Have a look at chapter 4 verse 12 again with me. Here we get an insight to what has happened. We have already seen that Epaphras heard the message. He told it to the people in Colossae.

And then in verse, let's read verse 12, Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and those at Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were two other little towns very close by.

So Epaphras has been there to proclaim the good news as well. And there are churches in those places. You see, our reality is so often based on our experience.

[30 : 34] Perhaps we don't expect anyone to believe the gospel anymore. I mean, it's an ancient message. Who needs to hear it and who will even listen? Maybe we don't expect anyone to believe it.

We don't say anything because we've come to think the gospel is powerless. But look what it says in chapter 1 verse 6.

The same way the gospel is bearing fruit and growing. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he says this, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

This is our new reality. The gospel is powerful. The gospel is bearing fruit and growing.

But not only is it powerful, there is a gospel expansion taking place, both locally and globally.

[31 : 48] That's the message of verse 6. It's growing throughout the whole world. just as it has been doing amongst you. The gospel is at work in the world.

In Paul's day and all these centuries after, it continues to take effect. Here in Ireland and across Europe, there are gatherings of God's holy people, just like us today meeting now.

Holy people, brothers and sisters in Christ, in a particular town or city. family. I spoke to our partner Mickey this week.

He shared of one lady in a very difficult situation, sharing with her the good news of Jesus and praying and trusting Jesus, but having to keep it quiet for fear of what her family might do. the gospel taking effect. I got a message from Raj, my friend in India this week, talking about the pastors that he had recently visited in Bhutan and Nepal, representing hundreds of small village churches.

[33 : 02] They've heard and believed the gospel is growing. In 1979 in Iran, there were an estimated 500 local believers.

Today, there are hundreds of thousands. Andy shared with us last week that 40 are attending his church in Sheffield.

In China, one of the most closed and restricted countries in the whole world, the estimated number of believers are 68 million.

in house churches. The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world. This is a reality.

But it's not just a local global expansion. It's a local one too, verse 6, as it was amongst you.

[34 : 02] The gospel was bearing fruit and growing in the church at Colossae. This new community, who were living out their new priorities, had this beautiful and wonderful reality of gospel fruit and growth.

And this is what Carigoline Baptist Church is called to live for. This is our vision. This is our truth.

This is why we wake up in the morning, because there is a gospel message to tell.

and when it is told and when God works, it leads to new communities with new priorities and new realities. God's holy people gathering as brothers and sisters in Christ, encouraging each other with gospel hope, resulting in fruitfulness and growth.

You see, our gathering here today is a reminder of fruitfulness. Every one of you who is a Christian has a story to tell of God working in your life.

each one of us can tell how God is working in us, making us more mature, of churches being planted in the surrounding areas.

[35 : 28] It's a reality. Live by it. So here we have our introduction to the church at Colossae, which reminds us of who we are, God's new community, living lives of faith and love, and speaking gospel hope, and as a result, seeing fruit and growth throughout the world and in our own lives.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for the true message of the gospel, for its power, for its effectiveness to change and transform.

form. We thank you that if we believe, we thank you for that gift of salvation. And we ask if we do not believe, that you would give us faith that we might trust you, that we too might become part of your holy people, part of your family, living a new way.

Father, please would you use us through this week in all that we do individually and corporately together to share of your good news. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.