

COLOSSIANS

ALIVE IN CHRIST

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**24 UNDATED DEVOTIONS
THROUGH THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS**

Paul starts Colossians with his normal greeting, but this is not just an ordinary ‘Hello!’ Rather, it’s packed, as always, with big thoughts about God and the local church.

In verse 1, we’re reminded that the letter to the Colossians isn’t a few quick spiritual thoughts from a Christian leader, but it’s an authoritative letter. It has the authority of an apostle. The word ‘apostle’ originally meant someone who was ‘sent out’ on the authority of another – in this case Jesus Christ himself! To listen to Paul the apostle, then, is to listen to Jesus Christ speaking, which is itself undergirded by the will of God. This is the reason that the New Testament local church was devoted to the teaching of the apostles (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:33), which, in turn, is a pattern for us as well. Final authority in any church resides not in pastors or denominations, but in the authoritative teaching of the apostles – preserved for us in Scripture.

In verse 2, we’re given a vision of what the local church is. Of course, our day-to-day experience of the local church may go up and down, and be more or less encouraging at different times. But here we’re taught to look at our local church through the lens of what God has made it. According to this verse, the local church is a community of people:

- who are named by their relationship with Christ (‘in Christ’)
- who are defined by God as blameless and set apart (‘holy’)
- who live their lives by faith (‘faithful’)
- who have been made into a family (‘brothers’)

Wow! What a community to be a part of!

Lastly, at the end of verse 2, Paul reminds us of the Father’s great blessing given to every local church: grace and peace. These summarise the great blessings of the gospel. The Father’s grace and peace are enough for all the sins, shortcomings and failures of his church.

REFLECTION

- 1. What’s encouraging about the Bible being the final authority in the local church?*
- 2. Do you look at your local church from God’s perspective?*
- 3. How do you see the Father’s grace and peace at work in your church?*

Spiritual leaders must pray. We see that all through the Bible with prophets, priests and kings, and Paul has definitely learnt that lesson as well. These verses, as do all Paul's letters, show us a man who prays. The thing that's excited Paul here, and caused him to thank God, is the church's faith, hope and love. In his mind, this is the inevitable impact the gospel makes in any believer or church. Faith, hope and love are the vital signs of the gospel's power working in our lives. Paul's great concern in this letter is that the Colossians hold on to this gospel – and so keep on living in faith, hope and love.

'Remember the gospel of Christ!' Paul is effectively saying in verses 5–6. This gospel holds out a real and powerful future hope to a world without any hope. In 1:27, we read that it is nothing less than Jesus Christ himself and the glory that we get with him. This hope-filled gospel is initially likened to a powerful life-giving seed that produces transforming effects in our lives – and 'All over the world' (v. 6). The good news about Christ isn't useless or weak, but it has life-giving power and gives hope across the whole world. We need to hold on to this gospel tightly.

According to verse 7, the good news had come to the Colossians not from Paul but from Epaphras. Here we get a good description of what their gospel minister is like. He is:

- 'our dear fellow-servant' – leaders are called to serve people (a closer translation is in fact 'slave') and not to exalt themselves
- 'faithful' – leaders are called to have long-term stickability and commitment
- a 'minister of Christ' – leaders are to be committed to the cause of Christ, and not to be distracted from him

We need to be thankful for committed leaders like this who have brought us the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's not take them for granted!

REFLECTION

- 1. How is your faith, hope and love at the moment?*
- 2. What impact has the gospel had in individual believers that you know?*
- 3. Think of a leader who has been faithful to you and give God thanks for them.*