

26th Sept 2021

FBC ONLINE

“What Are You Known For?”

I said in my devotion on James in Thursdays announcement that I so appreciate being able to read God’s word and know that it is truth. I can trust what it says and I can trust what it says about God and I can trust what it teaches us as a church. Colossians is no exception to that.

Think about the challenges we, the world is facing right now. Not just referring to Covid related matters. The doubts, the anxieties, fears and insecurities these uncertainties can create, Colossians, as it did for the early church, reminds us we need to never be in doubt who is in control, who is supreme and sovereign. We can look for answers and securities in all sorts of places, and we might find temporary reprieve, but outside of Jesus there is no answer.

In the verses we’re about to read, Paul is commending the church for what they are known for. That is, despite what these Christians were facing, there disposition was one of confidence in Christ. So Paul says they were *known for their faith; known for their love, and known for their grace*.

Through these verses I believe God asks us: what are you known for? Now as I ask the question what are we known for, it is not about meeting the expectations of others, but is about what others see when they look at us and on us. And as they do, do they see Christ, in us, “the hope of glory”

Let’s go to the beginning verses of Colossians 1 where we see Paul encouraging and motivating the church, notice what he says...

(READ Col. 1:1-8)

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 have 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.

Woh Paul! I can just imagine at the end of the service after this letter had been read out there’d be people saying to each other, bro, did you hear what the Apostle Paul said, about us?

To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ... We always thank God for you, we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people...you truly understood God's grace.

Known for their faith; known for their love, known for their grace.

What are you/we known for?

Known For Their Faith

We always thank God...for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus (3-4a)

Mark Twain said that "faith is believing what you know aint so." If that is the case with our faith, then it will not survive the first challenge.¹ Faith is knowing and being known for what is, so!

Background: Epaphras had gone back to Paul in Rome and told him the church is dealing with this, fighting that issue, dealing with that difficult situation, but told Paul that their faith remained strong in Jesus. And so what an encouragement for them.

We're all vulnerable to doubts, criticism and disappointment from unmet expectations. But faith, doesn't rise and fall dependant on these things or our circumstances, because the object of our faith is Christ. This doesn't mean that faith ignores hard times, sin and sickness and being so heavenly-minded that we are outside of reality. No! This is faith knowing that in all things Christ is Lord. Christ is in control! Being over heavenly-minded is not our challenge, being worldly-minded is!

So Paul says you're known by your faith. Paul didn't assume that they knew this for themselves, that's why he wrote it in his letter. Today he might have made a quick call, flicked off an email or texted!

Some of us find it hard to encourage, and I wonder if that's because we've rarely been encouraged. Our default should always be, to lift each other up. "when I pray for you, I thank God for you (NAME) *because of your faith in Jesus*". You can't imagine what that does for someone's spirit. *One thing to be known for faith and another to be encouraged in our faith!*

¹ Garland, David E. "Contemporary Significance" In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Colossians and Philemon*. By David E. Garland, 60. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1998.

Known For Their Love

...we have heard of the love you have for all God's people (v.4b)

Their faith was expressed in their love for others. This was their public reputation. Their love for others, **said**, they had faith in Christ (see also v.8). Bible says: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14).

Love is only love when others are involved, and to love, is a reflection of our gratitude for salvation and an appreciation of his grace. And Paul said to the church, *you guys are doing it*.

To love, is not optional, we love because to not love is to not obey a basic command, and to not love is to ignore Christ's work of the cross.

"By this all men **will know** that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). This means the world assesses the genuineness of our following Jesus by our love for each other. That's a high calling isn't it! We love because he does, and he says to.

Known for understanding God's Grace

...you...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 (v. 6b-8)

When a bible college student was asked how he would minister to people different from him, he responded, "I wouldn't. They have to change to my point of view, because I am right."² FYI, that's a misunderstanding of grace!

When Paul says they truly understood God's grace, I take that to mean they were so grateful, so impacted and so thankful for God's grace, it was evident in the way they loved each other, in grace, with grace. They were known for their grace. **But wait there's more**. They learned grace from Epaphras. Imagine that. This means we can teach other grace.

This was a church that *came to terms with* God's grace. **Grace received, grace understood, grace shared**. That's a church that we could be thankful to God for! I am certain that as we grow in our appreciation and understanding of God's grace, as we encourage one-another, as we love, genuinely, as we grow our faith in God, we will be known for faith, love and grace.

² Garland, David E.

Communion

As we come to communion now, let's do so examining our hearts before God, confess our sin, receive his forgiveness, get right with God. What has God the Holy Spirit shown you this morning as we've talked about confidence in Christ, that expresses itself in your faith, love and grace, and you ask of yourselves, **"what are you known for?"**

As we receive the bread and the cup this morning let's reaffirm our confidence in Christ, let's do so trusting God's word, trusting that Christ died for us leaving us this ordinance where he says as often as you meet remember me.

1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.