***Pastor-Teachers and Faith

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-064***

I hope you brought your Bible with you tonight. If so, please turn to the book of Colossians. We're looking at Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," segment number 42.

**A Spiritual Maturity Structure**

We have seen that Epaphras was the pastor-teacher of the church in Colossae. He had traveled to Rome to visit Paul, who was in prison. Epaphras gave a good report about the grace orientation of the Colossian Christians in the face of the temptation to turn to Jewish legalists, and to follow the heretical false teachers who had moved in upon them. Epaphras had learned doctrine from Paul, and had been faithful to his duty and mission in teaching the Colossian believers. The Colossian saints, by the grace system of perception, were, therefore, able to store a great body of doctrinal truth in their human spirits. Consequently, from that reservoir of doctrine, the Colossians developed a spiritual maturity structure in the soul which had matured to the super-grace level. That was particularly important in that society, in that city, at that particular point in time, in the Roman Empire, because it was an influential place, and gradually the Empire of Rome was being influenced more and more by the doctrinal orientation of salt-and-light Christians such as were in Colossae.

They did not develop that on their own. They didn't even have Bibles. The New Testament was still in the process of being written. What they had depended upon was that they had a teacher who had been instructed by the apostle Paul, and who knew what his job was, and consequently he performed it for those believers. But that's still the same way today. You have a completed Bible, but you're not going to make a great deal of progress in that Bible on your own, until you have had considerable instruction of the frame of reference of Scripture itself; and, for the basic concept of grace, and how it applies from salvation to rewards in heaven.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

Now, the Christian families in Colossae, because of the instruction from Epaphras, were able to teach doctrine to their children and thus to prepare them to live in the image of God and to serve him with divine good works through the Holy Spirit. This is one of the great failures of the local church today. They don't understand that their ministry is first of all the youth. We still have these crazies among us who think that having a Christian school is secondary. That having the Berean youth clubs is secondary. That having Training Union Sunday school classes for young people is secondary. But when you finally get to be a grace-Oriented Christian, you understand that each generation is the product of the generation before us and all those verses I read to you this morning concerning parental responsibility, not a one of those verses can be fulfilled if the local church pastor-teacher has not been training the parents, the adults in that congregation to be able to teach their children.

**Children**

The reason we have such offensive children today is because we have deficient parents in spiritual activity. And those parents are so deficient that if we step up to bat as we should and we correct the kid for something he's doing that he should not do. The parents take it as a personal offense and suddenly they disappear. You look around the service, where are they while they're having their little nose out of joint, they're having their little pettiness. We won't apologize for the fact that we're going to do everything we can to make a lady and a gentleman out of your children. When we brought in our school uniforms last year, one parent wrote us a letter and he objected to the boys wearing ties in the upper grades for whatever reason. And he said, I am your client, and you should listen to us. Unfortunately, the letter went to the principal.

It had never got to me. Had it gotten to me, I'd have written him back or called him on the phone and said, Mr. So-and-so, I would've called him by his real name. I would've said so-and-so, Mr. So-and-So, you are not our client. You don't pay us enough to be our client. You are the beneficiary of a lot of us who pour money into bring Christian Academy, not the least of which are these teachers who work for sub-level salaries to their capacity and their skills because they are called to serve God. So they put their mission first. You are nothing but the beneficiary. You are not our client, not unless you start paying us a whole lot more than you pay us now. And he might have jerked his kid out. And so very often we restrain ourselves for the blessing of the child, but it is our duty.

It is our calling to try to inform parents so that they may inform their children. So that they find that their kids grow up and at least they have had a chance to be something significance, to be something significant spiritually. They may choose not to do it, but at least they will have had a chance. So when we correct you, thank us for it and thank God for the fact that we are there watching out for your children and that maybe we might require something of them that's a little more gentlemanly and ladylike than you care to do, but at least thank God that we're moving them in direction of their personal dignity. All this gobble gook psychobabble about self-esteem that the world talks about from that religious atheist who began the whole system of psychology, Fraud. I mean Sigmund Freud, that is pure human viewpoint nonsense, and it doesn't work.

But when you fill a soul of a child with God's point of view, it works every time. So Paul was beside himself with joy as he sat and listened to the report from Epaphras because he knew that not only were the adults being cared for, but that meant that the next generation of children who were going to influence their society and the Roman Empire after that were going to be there in great numbers. And indeed history teaches us that following the end of the apostolic period, and the influence of the apostles and the churches, they establish that Rome moved to its next 100 greatest years of its history. And not the least of it was that increasingly Christian doctrine was prevailing in the Empire and in the minds of people. Now, Paul proceeds to reinforce the Christian doctrine, which Epaphras has taught the people and to commend him publicly before them for his faithfulness to church age truth because Epaphras had it was because of Epaphras that the Colossian Christians were not ignorant ninnies in spiritual things like the average church person is. Somebody came up this morning said, you have to tell me, I want to know who that preacher is and what he said.

Well, I told him if you ask me, I'll tell you. I have to see your banquet ticket first but I'll tell you. Paul did not need in effect to visit the Colossian church congregation whom he had never met. He didn't need a visit them to teach the word the man Epaphras, their pastor-teacher was doing the job in a very commendable, noble way. So the Colossians were indeed fortunate to have Epaphras as their PT because he was studying the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They had that, and furthermore, he was compiling the doctrinal understanding that had been given to him by Paul as the Scriptures were written and in effect as a result of his visit, one of the prison epistles, Colossians was written. Because in this book, Paul simply picked up the issues, the specific questions that Epaphras brought relative to the situation that was facing the Colossians Christians. And Paul discussed that in the process of clarifying these things to them. Another book of the Bible, the New Testament, was written and another big another piece of church age doctrine was consolidated. So in Colossians 1:7, "just as you learned it from Epaphras."

What did they learn? Well, what was in the previous verse: "The grace of God in all the truth," that it conveyed to them. And it was conveyed to them by Epaphras. Now, he proceeds to describe this teacher that they were so fortunate to have in two ways. He calls them, first of all, our beloved, the word beloved (dear) looks like this in the Greek Bible is the word "agapatos" (ag-ap-ay-tos'), A G A P A T O S. This word you can see immediately is related to the love word in the Greek language of agape love. And therefore you recognize that this is a mental esteem love. So he is speaking about a mental esteem that he has for this man Epaphras. Epaphras is a dear brother in Christ to Paul who shares Paul's visions and now in prison sharing Paul's hardships. He is also called a beloved fellow bond servant. This word is sun (soon), this is a Greek word that means with, and then it has attached to it "doulas" (doo'-los) for the word "sundoulos" (soon'-doo-los), S U N D O U L O S. The word "doulas" means "slave." So it's a co-slave. It refers to a fellow slave. Epaphras was a slave of Jesus Christ along with Paul as indeed we all are in position whether we act like it or not.

The pastor-teacher that is being focused on here and being called a beloved fellow slave in terms of the mission of being a pastor-teacher and teaching the Word of God is stressing the fact that every pastor-teacher is by calling a slave of Jesus Christ. And a slave is told what to do. And the pastor-teacher's job is very clear. Unfortunately, it's not so clear with many congregations, therefore they allow the pastor-teacher to be dragged off from his calling or they allow themselves to have a pastor-teacher that they should not have. The big church in town whose public bulletin board as I drove by the street again this past week and saw what verse they were going to preach on. And again, it was a gospel message that was going to be conveyed to the congregation that morning to see how many folks would come out into the aisles. How many folks would come down join the congregation and they'd have a wonderful day of doing God's work. But all the Christians are going to go home starved for the Word of God. They're going to have nothing.

And one man this morning said, I used to go to a church where they had a history of pastors, and they had all the pastors in the long line in foyer of these men who had carried on the work in the past up to the present one. He said his big portrait was up there to, all from one end to the other. The man said my whole history of association there was listening to the gospel being preached and very little instruction in the Word of God. It was only until I grew up and became aware of the fact that I was being robbed every Sunday. But here are these great men posted on the wall of that institution.

I guarantee you there were no Epaphras on that wall because it is not the nature of that particular denomination to be feeding the flock. So here was the job that God has given to pastor-teachers and that particular church here in town with his big congregation and his big checkbook has an evangelist for a pastor-teacher. He's not a pastor-teacher. It's obvious from what he said. He's an evangelist and he has no business being in that pulpit every Sunday robbing people of their rightful heritage, of being instructed in the Word of God. But you start telling that to your church friends, especially where they had the big numbers. Remember, you always find who is true and who is following God by the big numbers. If you have a big congregation, that's where God speaks. That's why God speaks through the Roman Catholic Church. They have so many, right?

This is why God speaks through the Mormons because they have so many people that proves it doesn't it. Don't get trapped by that number game. This is what the average person falls into because he's ninny mini spiritually. He's a ninny in doctrine as I showed you this morning. Usually the truth is found in the minorities. The majority is almost always wrong. So that particular church, my heart goes out to it every time I go by it because it's filled with sincere people who come on that Sunday to find something with God and he tells them stories and he tickles their fancies and other parts of them and then they go home and say, gee, we had a wonderful time in church, and they have nothing. They go home denied what is their right to be fed upon the Word of God.

It is the great disgrace when a pastor-teacher cannot honestly stand up before all the world and say, as Paul did, as he left the ministry at Ephesus and went on to Jerusalem, Paul could say he was guilty of the blood of no man because he had delivered to them the full counsel of the Word of God. I gave you the full instruction of doctrine. Anybody whose life is botched up. Anybody whose life is wasted when it to the JSC it's going to be your fault. You chose to botch it. You knew better. You knew the Word of God. You had doctrine to guide you. So the pastor-teacher is a slave. He is assigned by God the job of spending his life digging out doctrine from the canon of Scripture, which in our day is completed and then to deliver it via his special teaching gift ability to convey spiritual truth which he received at the moment of his salvation to convey it an understandable form so that the people of God can grow spiritually. Titus 1:9 puts it this way, "Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." Here he is speaking about what he in verse seven calls the overseer, which is a pastor-teacher.

He is responsible to hold fast the faithful word, the truth of God, which is in accordance with the teaching. Who's teaching? The teaching of Scripture so that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Not to give you a challenge. Not to give you an inspiration. But because he's a clever pulpiteer. Our brother who spoke to me this morning about the great line of faces on the wall of the great preachers of that church said the one thing that none of them were, were expositors. They were all inspirers. They were all inspirational speakers. The one thing they were not were expositors of Scripture and very little of that. You see, that's why they built a congregation that was bigger than could ever gather in that particular church at one time. They couldn't possibly gather. They had the congregation that's so large, which only meant that most of the people never did go to church.

Why should they? What were they going to get there that was going to be crucial to their eternity in the Judgment seat of Christ (JSC) that they were going to face? It's only when the Word of God is being taught that it's crucial. So the pastoral ministry today is unfortunately filled with runaway slaves who do their own thing in the local church ministry. They're not doing God's thing. In Titus 1:10-11, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision – they who must be silenced because they're upsetting whole families and thus undermining the youth teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sorted gain." Do you know what sorted gain is? That's King James English for "dirty money." They're making themselves rich and they're playing their personality types. The church that my young brother was referring to were all personality types in the pulpit.

**Overseers**

Their pulpiteers and they got up and people waited for the show. Here it says they do that because it enriches them. Some of them are very bold, some of them very open. Some of the TV evangelists make no bones about the fact that if you send your money to them, God will give you multiplied money in return. No greater lie could ever be found that God never works like that. He doesn't return you more money because you gave it to him. He gives it to you out of his grace and out of his kindness and he blesses you for what you give to him. Notice Titus 1:16, "They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny him being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

Now what kind of a description is that of an overseer? What kind of a description is that of a pastor-teacher? A guy who professes to know God because he's got an ordination certificate. Because he's got some theological training. But by their deeds they deny Christ and so God the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul says they're detestable. They're disobedient and they're worthless for any good deed, for any divine good production. Now that's very sobering to think that vast churches, highly successful by business standards and by the world's evaluation are viewed by God as detestable, disobedient, and worthless. And these personality types always have certain little features that you can almost always tell. One of the main features is that every time they have their picture, they look like a grinning baboon. They always have a big mouthful of teeth smile. No matter what picture, no matter what publishing, the grinning baboon is always there. That's why I've learned not to trust anybody who smiles.

Go ahead: smile. Everybody got serious. The pastor-teacher is a slave. He is a slave to God's Bible teaching authority, and he is the authority for instruction in the local church. He is God's slave to be that authority. And his job is never done in preparing and delivering spiritual phenomenon. It's never done. One of my family members one time said, who knew what preparing for Sunday meant and who was a college student said, I don't know how you do that. What you do before you ever get to the pulpit on Sunday is like writing a term paper every week with all the research and everything that goes with it. And ministers who have our tapes know that. I had the sad call again, Dr. Danish, where are the revelation tapes? Do you have them? I need them now. He doesn't have the background, but boy does he learn off our tapes and does that prepare him to have a base to go for his own studies so that people far distant from us are benefited by the study that's been done here?

The pastor-teacher is a slave. He is God's teaching authority in the local church for the purpose of preparing himself and delivering spiritual phenomena to the people of God. So the pastor-teacher who faithfully studies and delivers the word to God, that's the good guy in the local church ministry. And those who do not attend the instruction on Sunday or who ignore the instruction they receive or who deal him misery in one way or another, they are the bad guys. Not the guy who listens to God. Not the guy who studies. Not the guy who delivers. You have no idea how much a pastor-teacher who seeks to be faithful to God and to do his job, how much he gets beaten up. How much discouragement, how many mean words, and indications are directed toward him directly and indirectly to try to dissuade him from doing the main job.

He has more than he can do. He has more than he can cope with, and the temptation is to go to the secondaries as if that's going to count once he enters the presence of God's judgment. The pastor-teacher therefore we should understand needs our constant prayer by the congregation so that he will not react with indignation to the ignorance, to the neglect, to the abuse of negative Christians who strike back at him or drop out because they have been told the mind of God and that makes them look bad.

Hebrews 10:28-31, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." A man goes out and picks up six on the Sabbath Day two or three people said, I saw him do it, and Moses takes him out and executes him violation of the Sabbath law. Verse 29, "How much more severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the son of God and is regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant," the new covenant, the New Testament. "By which he was sanctified, and as insulted the Spirit of grace?"

This book was written to Jews who were Christians who were going back to the Old Testament ways. Jews who thought they lived under features of the Old Testament law and the writer says, under the Law of Moses, people were executed when two or three witnesses testified to what they were doing, that was a violation of the Law of Moses. It was that severe. Now, what do you think is going to happen when you insult the grace of God? When you insult the Spirit of grace. And you do that by treating Jesus Christ with contempt to regard what he did, which is what liberalism does as being an irrelevancy and to want to wipe out Jesus Christ as the supreme preeminent person of the universe.

Verse 30 says, "For we know him who said vengeance is mine, I will repay, and again, the Lord will judge his people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And that is a very sober statement and should give us pause for great consideration. To offend and to abuse the source of your information of the word of grace is to put yourself in the position where God is going to put his judgment upon you. What will he do? He'll turn you lose to do what you want to do.

When Israel kings would not listen to their prophet, God said, fine. I'll give you a prophet who is under a demon spirit. I'll let him lie to you and you can go ahead and believe him. And so God sent these prophets. They lied to the king. The king believed them. He wouldn't believe God's person and boy did it come down on his head. He suffered the consequences. You're going to insist on cutting yourself out from the things of the Lord from access to information in the Word of God and anytime you're not in this room, you've missed it. You can count on it. You've got a big piece of blind spot that you've lost. And there it is, it's gone. And when that's necessary that is necessary. But it is tragic when it's needed. When you find you think that you have other things that are more important, you are treating with contempt the person of Christ because you're treating with contempt that which is the only way to worship him by learning his worthiness through doctrine. When you learn doctrine then you know how worthwhile God is.

The pastor-teacher is responsible of course to Jesus Christ alone who really knows what he thinks and how he does his job. He's not responsible to people with carnal opinions who only want to silence him because he is irritating them with the doctrine that he is preaching to them. So the pastor-teacher has a big problem too. He has a great occupational hazard not to become Samuel and to be discouraged like Samuel did when the people wanted a king, until God says, Samuel, they're not taking this out on you. Get your eyes on me. They haven't rejected you, Samuel. They've rejected me. They think they're rejecting your opinion but they're rejecting Me. Romans 8:31, "What then shall we say to these things: if God is for us, who is against us?" So, just as I do, so you do in your ministry because you will also take the gaff from people that you have served well, and they will give you the back of their hand because you have irritated some part of their sin nature within them. And when they do it, remember that the back of the hand is to Jesus Christ, never take it personally.

The pastor-teacher, as indeed you are in your area of ministry – we're all in a very frightening position of responsibility before God. So much is riding on that pastor-teacher for so many. Acts 20:28, "Therefore," the apostle Paul on departing from Ephesus said to the pastor-teachers of that city at the Sea Shores, he was about to board the ship "beyond guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers," which is another term for pastor-teacher, "to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood." You must be on guard that you do your job of instructing that you do your job at serving. It is so refreshing to walk around this campus and we see people who are just going about their business, serving God in some particular way and nobody has to be pleading with them. Nobody has to be reminding them. Nobody has to be making announcement. They know the need. That's all they need to know. They know the need. They look at the need. They look at themselves. I can fill that need. They go and do it. There's a lack here. They look at themselves, I have the means to fill that lack. They do it. And the book of Hebrew 6:10 says, you may count on it that God is not unmindful to forget your labors of love.

So, if people are against you, what difference does it make? If people never thank you. If people never find out what difference does it make? The thing that counts is that God knows, and he will never forget. And some of you who don't think you're in a public light in the terms of local church ministry, when you get up to the JSC are you ever going to be surprised of the rewards that are awaiting you there. Simply because when there was a need you saw you could do it, you did it. That is the way of the Super grace Christian. And it is a frightening position that we are all in that when we have that kind of a situation, God help us that we don't follow through. What a great loss. Paul was clearly proud of the humble servant heart that drove Epaphras in his life. He served God by serving Paul at that point in time. Paul was God's man on the line of combat and Epaphras was clearly not a conman seeking to enrich himself by fleecing the sheep. You should not pass it off very lightly.

There's a great deal of fleecing the sheep within the professional ministry. And in some ways you're even inclined to be taught that in seminary. When I graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary the week of graduation, they passed out a form. They asked several things about you because people called into the seminary for a teacher, for a pastor-teacher, for some instructor. And so they place churches in contact with their graduates and one of the questions they asked was, how much money do you require? Now how can you answer that question? They shouldn't have even asked that question. Shouldn't be on the form. How much money do you want from any group that would hire you for a Christian spiritual ministry? And I had to put on it, Whatever God decides. Don't ask me, ask Him. As a seminary they should have known that.

But it is not unusual for churches to discover that that pulpit personality they have up there with a mouthful of teeth smile is making his own way and becoming enriched over the period of years. 1 Timothy 3:3 says, not concerning the PT, "Not addicted to wine or pious, but gentle uncontentious free from the love of money." That is a rare quality, very rare quality among Christians to be free from the love of money. And if you have it, consider yourself fortunate and blessed of God. Titus 1:7 says, "For the overseer (pastor-teacher) must be above reproach as God's steward: not self-willed; not quick tempered; not addicted to wine; not pious; and, not fond of sorted gain." He's not going to play for the money. His motivation is to fulfill his mission and his rewards are in heaven. He's not looking for temporal things.

The only reason a pastor-teacher should be interested in temporal things and should be interested in getting great access to temporal things is to have the means to meet the needs of the ministry. What did Paul do with his temporal things? Accumulate a retirement fund for himself. You know he didn't. He used his funds to see that the missionary enterprise was carried out and that the salaries of the people he worked with were paid. But the apostle Paul wants the Colossians to do is to listen, to believe and so to learn from Epaphras. Stay with their qualified and serving teacher, their right pastor-teacher. Now that Epaphras will not take this letter back to Colossae. He will stay for a while, but the letter will go on ahead of him. Tychicus will carry it to them. And when Epaphras comes on the scene, the people should be ready to receive him as one of the great servants of God and one who bears authority that is quite clear that comes from God and that they should be happy to have.

**Faith**

Now the other thing to observe that Paul says in Colossians 1:7, "Just as you learned about the grace of God," and all that it connotes and the whole system of growth to spiritual maturity, "from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave who is a faithful." This is something else about him. The Greek word is "pistos" (pis-tos'), P I S T O S. Pistos means "true to the Word of God." It means committed to one's divine mission. It connotes consistent in doing his job and doing it right. So if Epaphras, Paul says he is a faithful and then he uses the word servant and this time he uses a different word. A previous word was slave. This one is "diakonos" (dee-ak'-on-os), D I A K O N O S. This word connotes "an administrator." This focuses on one's work. The doulas slave focuses on what he is. This focuses on his performance and what it means and is translated at in other places in Scripture as minister. Romans 13:4, "For it is a minister of God to you for good." This is referring to government. It is a minister of God to you for good. "But if you do what is evil, be afraid for it does not bear the sword for nothing. For it is a minister of God and Avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil." This is the word minister in terms of a citizen who is subject to the proper authorities of government.

Now that becomes very tricky when that government is a fraud or that government is a tyranny. It must be changed, but it has to be changed without rebellion. Ephesians 3:7, "Of which I was made a minister," Paul talks about the new doctrine of the church age, he said, "of and the doctrine of the grace of God" in the age of the church of which "I was made a minister (a "diakonos"), "according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of his power." Paul was an administrator of this whole new age of the grace of God. So this is applied to somebody who is an administrator and also it has another little connotation to it that we see in 1 Peter chapter five. It has the connotation that this word diakonos is applied to someone who renders a voluntary service for the basis for the benefit of others. 1 Peter 5:1-2, "Therefore I exhort the elders," the pastor-teacher, "among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also the glory that is to be revealed. To be shepherds," that's what a pastor is, "to the flock of God." That means feed them among you, "exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God and not presorted gain, but with eagerness."

Here again is the word indicating that the pastor-teacher is under the compulsion of a voluntary service for God, not for what's in it for him, but for what's in it for the people of God. And he is this Paul says in the in Colossians, he is a faithful administrator of Christ referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not the administrator devoted to some human organization. Epaphras clearly had his eyes on the Lord and so he served to the Lord's glory. He was not a hound dog for praise. He was not looking for somebody's glory and praise and he was not serving when people patted him on the back and didn't when they didn't. Any teaching or method of Christian service contrary to God's grace, method is false. That's man's way of human viewpoint. What Epaphras did was that he served God's way and he served unto Christ. And of course, all of you have to do the same thing.

You're not going to get the recognition. You’re not going to get the nice treatment. You won't get the benefits that perhaps you certainly deserve by your treatment, especially when you're faithful, day-in and day-out, without anybody having to push you to do it. You're always there. You're ready to help when we call upon you. But when you are a minister of Christ, then He's the one that you're interested in having the preeminence who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf. That is in behalf of referring to Paul and the Colossian Christians together, Epaphras served those who are open to his teaching in Paul's behalf. Didn't matter how large the congregation was, didn't matter how large the attendance was. But what always mattered to Epaphras as does matter to a genuine spiritually oriented pastor-teacher is not how many people are there, but the people that are there when he walks in.

He wishes the rest of them were there, but his interest zeros in on those positive people who have taken the trouble to attend. Epaphras did not conduct his teaching ministry and his grace methods furthermore for those who did not like them. He stirred them for those who are positive to God's doctrinal truth and to grace ways. Pastor-teachers are always being asked to change his ways. He's the one who's right. The people who want him to change, they're the ones who are wrong. And he is not to be serving people who don't want to be served by him. And when they finally decide, I don't want you to be my diakonos administrator in spiritual things, then they shove off. But his duty is to those who say Yes, I want that administrative care upon me, and I want shepherding care and I want that instruction.

The false teachers and the non-teaching professional preacher types are not slaves and ministers of Jesus Christ. They're slaves and ministers of their sin nature, their own spiritual disorientation and they're eyes on are on themselves and on their own promotion. Epaphras, like Paul, was no doubt verbally and socially beaten up by the false doctrine and professional preacher crowd in Colossae. It was inevitable that he took that abuse. But Paul says that the Colossians can trust Epaphras as a teacher of God. They should listen to him without dragging their feet as he leads them to Super grace maturity and be glad that he's doing his job for them. Is he perfect? No. But then that doesn't disturb him for the simple fact that he deals with Christians whom he knows so well, and he knows that none of them are perfect either. And usually they're far more imperfect than he is. So he isn't intimidated by people who will not rise to the fullness of the capacity that they could have in Christ. And Colossian 1-8 says and he also, "informed (declared) us of your love in the Spirit." He also informed us.

Now, Paul finishes this long Greek sentence by closing it down, says, I know what I'm talking about. Epaphras told (declared) me all about you. The word is "deloo" (day-lo'-o) D E L O O. It means to give information to someone about something. And here it refers to the fact that Epaphras came to Rome, and he briefed Paul about the spiritual conditions that existed with the believers in that city. Translation is he indeed informed us at the point that he met Paul in that cell. He personally told him what things were like with the saints in Colossae. Epaphras came there seeking Paul's advice and that's the reason the letter was written. And what he told Paul about those people was the love in the Spirit, and that, as you might expect, is the Greek word "agape" (ag-ah'-pay), A G A P E. This is the word for mental attitude love.

This is an objective love. This is not subjective love. Emotional love is subjective. I you don't love everybody emotionally. That's very subjective relationship between you and that person that draws out that you have an emotional attachment. But agape love is objective. Therefore, it can be applied to any believer no matter how that person may strike you in other ways. This kind of love enable the Colossians to have a relaxed mental attitude in dealing with the issues of their lives. Consequently, the Colossian congregation was receptive to instruction in the word from Epaphras. They had a relaxed mental attitude because they were governed by this agape love. What does that tell you about them? If they were governed by the agape love. He even pointed out. Agape love in the Spirit that is by means of the Spirit. So these people were filled with the Spirit (Holy Spirit). These people kept their known sins confessed, and consequently their receptivity, which was essential for their spiritual nourishment was the way that they had care for their souls because they were receptive.

They were led of the Spirit of God, and they were open to the truth. And the soul is the battleground in the angelic conflict. Every day the devil's going to come after your soul. The demons are going to press against your soul. They're going to come after your thinking, after your emotions, after your will. Because if they get that then they can get your body. They cannot get your body until they have you oriented in your mind to Satan's point of view through the sin nature. Then they can get at your emotions, then you run amuck. Then they can get at your will, let you do crazy things. Then they have you in the misuse of your body. So it's an inevitable system.

The word "spirit" here, this is a common Greek word looks like this, "pneuma" (pnyoo'-mah), P N E U M A. We get the English word pneumatics from that, which has to do with spirit. In the Bible this refers to three things. The dead human spirit of the unsaved. Everybody's born into the world with a dead pneuma. He's dead spiritually. It also refers to the human spirit in the saved person who's been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and has thus been made alive. He now has a human spirit which is alive. He's been spiritually born-again. It refers to that. The third thing it refers to is God the Holy Spirit. You have to determine which of these three meanings this Greek word refers to by the context. Here it is talking about a particular kind of love, which only God the Holy Spirit can produce. So we know that this is the God the Holy Spirit that is being referred to here. This context deals with agape love possessed by the Colossians, which they could have only gotten from the Spirit of God because they're in temporal fellowship, filled with the Spirit.

So the idea is love inspired or engendered by the Holy Spirit. We had the same idea indicated in Romans 15:30, a love engendered by the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:30, "Now, I urge you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Very clearly he's speaking about a love which only the Holy Spirit can give. Also in Roman 5:5, that same concept of love that comes to the Christian. It's one of the elements of the fruit of the Spirit. Romans 5:5 says, "And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts, through the Holy Spirit who is given to us." It is the Holy Spirit who produces that love in us. That is what is referred to in the famous Galatians 5:22 passage, which talks about the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and so on..." The first primary one is love.

So, the only place in Colossians is here, in Colossians 1:8, where the Holy Spirit is referred to, is right here in this verse. That makes it important and in what respect? That he gives you the capacity to have a mental goodwill toward the nice people and toward the non-nice people. Something that only God can produce. And it's a result of doctrine being in the human spirit so that the right attitudes are cycled up to our minds, to govern our emotions and to govern our wills. When the Holy Spirit controls the whole congregation, then that congregation can easily be taught the Word of God. And they will respond to it. They will believe it. Great things will be done for them personally, and that church will have an impact that goes far beyond the location in which they exist geographically. Our souls have to feed daily on doctrine to meet the challenge of Satan who wants us to act on the lust patterns of our sin, nature, and the deceits of our society.

The report of Epaphras about the good and the bad in Colossae in the church life there prompted Paul then to write this letter to them dealing with those problems. Epaphras stayed on to help Paul and Tychicus, one of the other associates was sent on ahead to deliver this letter to them. And when Epaphras got home, the people said, you have been with Paul. We know that you have received great instruction in the new doctrines that pertain to the church age and to the grace of God, we are here. We are ready to listen. We are ready to be taught. We are ready to learn. We are ready to build our spiritual maturity structures by filling our human spirits with God's doctrinal viewpoints. And the nice thing about it was that Epaphras was able to deliver. He was able to step up and to do the job. And the second nice thing about it was that he was willing to do it.

He didn't say, I'm going to write this in Parchments and we're going to run it to the printers, and you can buy my book. I'll give you the instruction that way. He gave it to them with great anticipation of what God was going to do for those people. So as we complete this long Greek sentence, verse three through eight, we complete it on the high note, on the high ground of the love which God the Holy Spirit places in the heart of a believer who is on track with a mind of Christ. Because he is on track with doctrinal principles of the Word of God. That's where our life is and that's where our best living is going to come from. You'll thank God for all eternity that you are part of the Berean ministries and that you are able to have your soul fed by the nourishing food of the Word of God. That you are not denied that food. That you are not treated as an intellectual idiot who could not learn the deep things of God because IQ doesn't come into that picture.

But every time you are willing to say, I will let nothing stand in the way of my being there to be instructed. Not only for you to learn. Please remember the second factor to be reinforced. Sure, you'll hear me say things you've heard before. But like 2 Peter 1:12 says, I do this to reinforce, to refresh your pure minds by "way of remembrance" of something be very bad if you were to forget to keep you oriented. So when you got the Word of God and you have access to it as all of you do, you should go home rejoicing and being grateful to God that this has been your heritage. Never hold it in low esteem, never ignore it. If you do, God will take it from you.

Father, we thank You for this time in the Word, and we thank You for this close of this great evening tonight. We pray Your blessing upon all of us as we go to our homes, and we pray that we may live in the joy of who we are, and what we know of You, and how that is an expanding development in our lives as we go through this week. Bless us we pray, and accept our offerings, which we bring to You in great humility and great thankfulness. In Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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