

Held Together:
By The Gospel
Colossians 1:1-8

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Text Introduction: Do you ever feel like “it’s all about to fall apart.” You have tried to keep it all together. It’s the nation one day. Another day you feel like your family is just going to come apart. Before long, you think you can’t hold it together any longer.

I have good news. You are not supposed to hold it all together. He is. In this little letter called Colossians, specifically in 1:17, we read, “He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.”

For the next 10 weeks, we are going to consider much of this letter. We want to understand as much as we can about this idea that “He holds all things together.”

Text: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother:

²To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints ⁵because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You have already heard about this hope in the message of truth, the gospel ⁶that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and recognized God’s grace in the truth. ⁷You learned this from Epaphras, our dearly loved fellow slave. He is a faithful servant of the Messiah on your behalf, ⁸and he has told us about your love in the Spirit.

Introduction: Most believe that Paul had probably never been to Colossae, but that some disciples of Paul started the church there. Regardless of the exact relationship that Paul had with them, he wrote to them primarily to encourage them to follow through in their faith. The specific appeal of his letter is likely to have been the result of false teaching in Colossae. Colossians 2:8-9 gives evidence that the false teaching was a form of Gnosticism. Part of the teaching of this so called secret knowledge of Gnosticism was the false teaching that Jesus only appeared to be divine. The emphasis on Christ’s supreme nature is at the heart of Paul’s letter.

In fact, as an overview of Colossians, I think about one of my favorite sayings from one of Paul’s letters— 2 Corinthians. The actual saying is from Jesus—“My grace is sufficient for you.” That’s what I want you to see in this book. Jesus is sufficient. Jesus is enough. Jesus and Jesus alone is enough to save you. Jesus and Jesus alone is enough to keep your family together in all things. Jesus is enough to keep you together. We are “Held Together.”

And we begin to see this idea of Jesus holding all things together even in the introductory portion of this letter. As do many of Paul's letters and other letters of the first century, Colossians begins with a prayer section. In this letter, the prayer begins with a prayer of thanksgiving for the church.

We will begin there, but don't get lost in just a prayer of thanksgiving. Notice that at the heart of this thanksgiving is the testimony of a church who keeps it together even when the world is falling apart around them.

The Response to the Gospel: A Testimony

Paul begins by giving evidence of his prayer of thanksgiving for the church. The basis of his thanksgiving is not what he has seen, but what he has heard about the church. He had heard about the impact that the Gospel was having on this church. He had heard about the response to the Gospel by this church. He has heard about these things.

- Faith—This word speaks to the fact that they had believed in the Gospel. Epaphras had preached, and they had believed. As I have read Paul's letters, I have often been challenged by the emphasis that Paul placed on faith. We see it here in 1:23 and 2:5. (We see the same triad in 1 Thessalonians.) This is what Paul is concerned about. This is what stood out to him. This is what he heard about. This still ought to be the gauge of the church. Not the size. Not the programs. Has anyone ever asked you, "Tell me about your church's faith? How much faith does First Baptist Church have?"
- Love—Along with faith, he had heard about their love. Now, the way that you hear about love is not when people talk about love, but when they practice love. If Paul has heard about their love, they have practiced love. And notice that it is a love for "all the saints." Paul illustrated his concern for love in continuing to pursue this theme in the letter—1:8, 2:2, 3:14. Again, this is the testimony of the Gospel. This is their response to the Gospel.
- Hope—The third part of their testimony is hope, but it is a specific hope. They have a hope in heaven. In fact, if you follow the grammar of the passage, the faith and love already spoken of is directly tied to their hope. Paul sees in them a people who are looking for another city. They have come to realize what it means to be citizens of another kingdom.

Authentic conversion accompanied with continued instruction is going to make a difference in a person's life. Charles Spurgeon, the famed preacher of London of another generation, had a friend named Newman Hall. Hall wrote a Gospel tract entitled *Come to Jesus*, which was translated into 13 different languages. Another pastor wrote a published article blasting Pastor Hall. After a while, Hall decided to respond to this criticism. His letter was retaliatory, filled with the same kind of vindictiveness of the article about him. Before sending the letter, Hall decided to ask his friend Spurgeon to read the letter. Reportedly, Spurgeon read the letter and remarked to Hall that the letter was well written and true, but lacked just one thing. "Underneath your signature," Spurgeon said, "you ought to write the words, 'Author of *Come to Jesus*.'" Spurgeon, with wisdom and gentleness, had made his point. The two godly men together tore the letter to shreds.

The Roots of the Gospel:

Notice also though the roots of the Gospel. Notice two things about how the Gospel took root in their hearts and how it takes root in our hearts.

- The Power of the Gospel
The power of the Gospel is in its truth. Why is the Gospel effective? Because it is truth!
- The Preaching of the Gospel
In order for the Gospel to take root, the Gospel had to be preached to them. There is a missionary challenge to the Gospel for us.

The Results of the Gospel:

- Bearing Fruit—The Gospel was bearing fruit in their lives, but the Gospel was bearing fruit elsewhere.

When the power of Gospel is proclaimed in the power of the Spirit of the God, the Gospel bears fruit. An adding blessing is when the Gospel is proclaimed in the power of the Spirit and there is also evidence of already changed lives by the Gospel.

A Few Reflections:

- What difference has the Gospel made in your life?
- Who is thanking God for us?
- Who has heard about our faith?
- Who has been a recipient of our love?
- Who has been encouraged by our hope?
- Who have I told about the Gospel?