

"Gospel Growth"
Colossians 1:3-8

Theme: Participation in the growth of the Gospel through a public faith.

Topic: Why Paul gives thanks for the Colossians: (We must imply he'd give thanks for the same reasons at MVBC.)

1. Their faith was public. (vs. 4)

- A. "Private faith" popular in our times and meant to appease social-correctness is not N.T. Gospel-faith.

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works [obviously public & outward] is dead. - James 2:26

2. Their faith was displayed through love. (vs. 4)

- A. Nowhere in N.T. theology do we see faith and love as separate effects of the Gospel.

- I. They are inseparable and forever linked.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...Love your neighbor as yourself." - Mark 10:30-31

- B. The primary arena for Christian love is the local church. "...which you have for all the saints..."

- I. The Couch-Christianity that has become popular today is counterintuitive to public faith and love.

- a.) You can't love God and hate the church. *(A relatively new postmodern idea.)*

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. - 1 John 4:20-21

- b.) Let me ask you something: "How are you going to love your brother from your couch?"

- i.) Your love ought to be seen - first among the saints, and then out in the world.

- II. You may think your church attendance & participation isn't important but it is.

Do not forsake the fellowship of the brethren. - Hebrews 10:25

3. Hope was the reason for their faith and love. (vs. 5)

- A. Their life-focus was heaven because of the Gospel. *(The Good News: You're on your way to heaven because of Jesus.)*

- I. It's practically impossible to have a strong hope in heaven and a private faith at the same time.

- a.) At best your interests are divided.

- B. Where have you put your hope? *(Since we are all gonna die...)*

- I. In your own goodness? *(The bulk of humanity places their hope here. They say, "I'm I good guy.")*

- a.) God is going to give your heaven (or whatever the afterlife holds) because you're not as bad as your neighbor?

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags: we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

There is none righteous...There is no one who does good, not even one.

- II. In your own happiness? *(Most others say, "Live life to the fullest. Be happy. Live the great adventure.")*

- a.) This philosophical fallacy once again falls short.

Everything this world can offer you is a "chasing after the wind." - Ecclesiastes

- b.) One day all you have will be taken from you. In that day it will mean nothing to you.

4. **The Gospel had borne fruit *in* them. (vs. 6)**

- A. It is cross-cultural and works wherever it goes. (*Diff. peoples, cultures, countries, languages.*)
 - I. Everywhere in the world people have and are being **transformed** by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - a.) It fits in to any culture.
 - b.) There are Christians everywhere believing in One Gospel.
 - II. Here's why:

It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... - Romans 1:16

- B. The power of the Gospel works **in** people. Anything else is pseudo faith.
- C. It never bears fruit in any culture or any person apart from the grace of God. ("*...you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.*")
 - I. *God* is the active Agent in the Colossians' salvation and success.
 - II. Notice: Paul doesn't thank the Colossians in vs. 3 - he thanks *God*.
- D. **Have you heard the Gospel and understood the grace of God in truth? (GOSPEL)**

5. **Epaphras had brought the Gospel to them. (vs. 7-8)**

- A. The Gospel not only works in any culture, it is passed on from person to person.
 - I. Like a torch of God, it is passed on from one generation to the next through individuals.
- B. YOU ARE CALLED TO BE AN EPAPHRAS.
- C. Back to the start of the message: YOUR FAITH IS MEANT TO BE PUBLIC.
- D. The Gospel will continue to increase and bear fruit after you just as it did before you - BUT NOW IS YOUR TIME TO SHINE YOUR LIGHT IN THIS DARK WORLD.

Close: Are you an Epaphras? A relative "nobody" making an impact in other people's lives because of the Gospel and your faith in Jesus Christ?

It's not too late to start...yet.

"David served his generation and fell on sleep."