

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

A. Nurture In Observing The Practical Evidences Of Our All-Sufficient Lord's Salvation (Colossians 1:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. Paul's era saw many try to discredit the Christian faith, creating the need for believers to have ready, practical evidences of the truth of this faith, a challenge we today face as many in our era try countering Christianity.
- C. To nurture his readers, Paul gave his believing readers at Colosse practical evidences of their All-Sufficient Lord's salvation in Colossians 1:1-8, evidences that are available to us today to minister similarly to our needs:

II. Nurture In Observing The Practical Evidences Of Our All-Sufficient Lord's Salvation, Colossians 1:1-8.

- A. Paul's epistle to the Colossians dwells in theme on the "supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ," Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1690, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Colossians: Contents."
- B. Thus, in writing to the faithful believers at Colosse (Colossians 1:1-2), Paul provided **four** very *practical*, *universal* and *practical* evidences of the validity of the true Christian faith to edify his readers, Col. 1:3-8:
 1. First, Paul thanked God for the faith in Christ Jesus expressed by these Colossian readers, Col. 1:3-4a.
 - a. Colosse was located nearly 100 miles east of Ephesus where Paul had evangelized, Ibid.; Acts 19:1-41.
 - b. However, Paul did not personally take the Gospel to Colosse, but it may have been evangelized during his ministry at Ephesus as people who had heard him took the Gospel to inland Asia, Ibid.; Acts 19:10.
 - c. Many believe that the evangelist involved in reaching Colosse had been Epaphras (cf. Colossians 1:7), but since it had not been Paul himself, he rejoiced in the sovereign work of Christ to evangelize them!
 2. Second, Paul thanked God for the love these believers at Colosse had toward "**all** the saints," Col. 1:4b:
 - a. One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Early Church was the **unity** and **love** they had for one another regardless of cultural (Palestinian versus Hellenistic Jews, Acts 6:1-7) or racial (Jews versus Gentiles, Acts 15:27-29) differences that divided non-Christian peoples of similar differences at the time.
 - b. Remarkably, this **love** for *one another* had been predicted by Jesus to be a hallmark witness to the world of the reality of Christianity (cf. John 13:35), and this same universal Christian love had shown up in the lives and attitudes of the Colossian believers who live inland in the province of Asia, Colossians 1:4b.
 - c. Accordingly, as it testified of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), Paul gave thanks for it unto God the Father, Colossians 1:4b.
 3. Third, Paul acknowledged how the Gospel of Christ had produced faith and love in the Colossians in line with the effects of faith in the Gospel on people throughout the known world, Colossians 1:6a. The way Christianity **universally** produced such faith in Christ and love to one another evidenced the reality of God's work in believers' hearts, and thus the reality and credibility of the Christian faith.
 4. Fourth, Paul acknowledged how the Gospel had led to a **lasting, consistent** evidence of faith in Christ and a love for other brethren from the Colossian believers, which quality also validated Christianity, Col. 1:6b:
 - a. The spiritual fruit of changed thinking and behavior that marked the Colossian believers at conversion had continued to manifest itself in their lives from that time until Paul wrote this epistle, Colossians 1:6b.
 - b. This consistency is an evidence of true conversion in any Christian anywhere in the world: even Jesus said that "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," John 8:31 ESV, and Paul revealed that the sealing of the Holy Spirit preserves the believer's saved status until the day of redemption, Eph. 1:13-14.
 - c. Paul states this in the following correct translation of Colossians 1:6: "Which is come unto you; as also in all the world it is bringing forth fruit and growing as it is among you . . ." (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Col. 1:6)

Lesson: Paul edified his readers by noting four practical, universal evidences of the validity of the Christian faith of (1) faith in Christ Jesus, (2) love toward "all the saints," (3) which faith and love were seen in true Christians worldwide, and (4) the lasting, consistent commitment of love and faith of all true believers throughout the world.

Application: May we be encouraged that our Christian faith is VALID by noting the reality of (1) our faith in Christ, (2) our love toward all the saints, (3) that this faith and love exist in the hearts of true believers worldwide and (4) the lasting commitment of love and faith existing in us also consistently appears in believers worldwide.