

Daily Devotions Monday 23rd March 2020

Colossians

Paul wrote his letter to the church of Colossae from a prison cell in Rome. His intention was to address a problem that had arisen whereby people felt they had to supplement their faith in Christ with belief in other powers and authorities. The result was that Jesus was becoming domesticated, a Lord of some things but not Lord of all! We live in a similar world today. Christ has been reduced to just one of many philosophies, religions and ideologies that compete for our attention.

Is Jesus in the right place in our lives?

I hope that as we go through this book in small stages we will all be able to renew our focus on him as Lord of ALL.

Read Colossians 1 vs 1-2

It's interesting how Paul introduces himself. I usually say "My name is Les Robinson. I'm a retired teacher!". I really should follow Paul's example. Les Robinson, an apostle of Christ! Apostle means "sent one". All of us have a mission to spread the word of Christ so, in that sense, we are all apostles. However Paul and the other men we usually refer to as apostles had a face to face calling from Christ. (Paul's being from the risen Christ on the road to Damascus). This is special and exclusive. It was "by the will of God". He didn't just choose a new job, he was personally commissioned by Christ.

It was also God's will that Paul should write this letter. He also wrote letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon while he was in prison for the gospel. Imprisoned by God so he could write letters? We often think we have to be healthy, wealthy and wise to be useful for God. We presently may feel that we are being imprisoned by self isolation and social distancing. Whatever our situation God can use it for his purposes just as he did for Paul. Paul's letters have been a blessing to many generations since he wrote them. Think about how, in our present difficult circumstances, we can bring Glory to God.

Romans 8 vs 28

Daily devotions Tuesday 24th March 2020

Read Colossians 1 vs 1-2

There is much in these opening two verses. Today I want to focus on two phrases in verse 2. “..in Colossae” and “..in Christ”.

Paul writes to God’s holy people. Both Jews and Gentiles would have been accepted as God’s holy people in the church at Colossae. However Paul addresses those who are “in Christ”!

We as Christians have 2 places to live. We must take care to live in both fully if we are to be effective witnesses for Christ. They were “..in Colossae”. We each have our own geographical addresses. Communities where we live. Mine is a stretch of the B586 between Donisthorpe and Moira!! How well do we know our communities? How well do we understand our neighbours and their needs? It’s very easy for us Christians to be insular. We leave our homes isolated in our cars, seclude ourselves at church services or other church events then drive back to the isolation of our homes again! God has placed us in our communities for a reason (Acts 17 vs 26) and maybe he is using this time of crisis for us to re-connect with those around us. (At a safe distance of course).

This, however, is only half the picture. We are “..in Christ” and that makes a huge difference! We have the truth of the gospel and the Holy Spirit who empowers when we act. Christ in us is a source of love unequalled by any secular love. Salvation is more important than good health to a sinner who is not saved!

Forgetting we are in Christ will result in us being swallowed up by our culture. Forgetting we are in our own personal Close will render us ineffective in our culture.

Pray for all the community action in your area, for opportunities to get safely involved and for opportunities to share the gospel. Pray for a renewal from the Holy Spirit of the reassurance and deeper meaning of being “in Christ”.

Daily Devotions

Wednesday 25th March 2020

Colossians 1 vs 3-8

Paul is about to write some harsh words to the Colossians but first he starts with encouragement. We all need this and, in fact, are told to keep on encouraging each other. (Hebrews 10 vs 25) Never has this been more important than now!

Paul, as we do, recognises that this is a church based on “the true message of the gospel” and he gives thanks for their faith and love. Paul specifically speaks of the love they have for all God’s people. It’s easy to love people we personally like but the true mark of a Christian is their love for other Christians. (Warts and all). This love is a gift of the Holy Spirit (vs 8). God puts each person together in the church as a fully functioning part of a body. We need others as they need us for us to function properly as the body. It’s God’s design. The master creator pays attention to detail and doesn’t make mistakes. In our church he has created a loving society from a damaged world.

Our faith and love spring from hope. (vs 5) We may have disagreements and differences but we are fired up and spurred on by the knowledge that whatever benefits we receive from the gospel now are foretastes of what is stored up for us in heaven.

Pray that faith, hope and love may be the hall marks of your life.

Give thanks for the members of our church family and the encouragements we receive from them.

Finally continue to pray for those in our communities and families who are facing a dire future because of the real silent killer - sin!

Daily Devotions Thursday 26th March

Colossians 1 vs 3-8 (esp 6-8)

It's easy to believe here in the UK that the gospel isn't growing as verse 6 suggests. However it definitely is if you look more globally! In 1900 there were about 10 million Christians in Africa. By 200 there were 360 million and is estimated that by 2025 there will be 633 million. The same explosion is happening in Latin America and Asia!! Paul was right! The gospel is bearing fruit!

Back in Genesis, God told the sinless Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Before even their first generation was born, sin had entered the world bringing a curse and chaos into God's otherwise perfect creation. Now, through the gospel, God is reversing that curse and will one day create a new heaven and earth.

The gospel is growing thanks to "the word of truth" (vs 5) which is both heard and understood. (vs 6) We, as evangelising Christians, need to use spoken words to proclaim the gospel. It's not enough to just display a fish sticker in our car windows or even show kindness with good deeds. Sooner or later we have to "give a reason for the hope we have" (1 Peter 3 vs 15).

Next we read that the Colossians learned the gospel from Epaphras. People need the opportunity to sit under the teaching of an Epaphras. For me it was mostly Brad Greening but also Lynda's dad and all the men who faithfully have preached in our church. I'm sure you will be able to think of your own teachers. However, have you ever considered yourself as an Epaphras? Are there people in your life you can teach the gospel to? I have several Stranger on the Road to Emmaeus books. Please let me know if you'd like to give one to someone then follow up each chapter with a phone call or a FaceTime (if they are not in your household).

Give thanks today for the people in your life who have taught you the gospel. Pray about whether God has placed someone in your life you can be an Epaphras to. Pray also the God will empower the efforts the government and the NHS are making to beat the virus and keep illness and deaths to a minimum.

Daily Devotions Friday 27th March

Colossians 1 vs 9-14 (esp 9-11)

What a blessing it is to be able to see things with Christian perspective. The goals of the majority of the people of this world are to be happy, wealthy and to live a long healthy life. That is currently being challenged and many are putting being happy before the safety of themselves and others. But, here, Paul writes of the importance of "living a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing him in every way". Is that the goal of our lives?

It is achieved as the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Also we are strengthened in endurance and patience so that we will run the distance. Endurance often is associated with misery! We, miserably, endure toothache until our dentist can sort it out! However, we are told to be joyful in verse 12. We are capable of this joy because with wisdom and knowledge we can see God's big picture as we seek to live lives honouring to him. He is working his purposes out through Christ and those who love him. Paul is reminding the Colossians of God's big picture and despite all we are going through or may soon go through we also need to keep it in mind.

After many men lost their lives on a mission to save Private Ryan, he is seen at the end of the film visiting the graves of those who had given their lives for him. He asks himself, "Was I good enough for all that has been done for me?".

We were never good enough for what Christ has done for us but he considered it a worthy cause! Out of gratitude each of us should be prepared to "deny himself, pick up his cross daily and follow me" Luke 9 vs 23-25. Meditate on this verse and what it means as we seek to live lives worthy of him.

Pray for help from God if you are aware of attitudes and actions that you are resisting denying for him. He promises the power of the Holy Spirit but will not do it without you being willing.

Colossians 1 vs 9-14 (esp vs 12-14)

I remember a children's talk I did once with a live frog in a glass vase who kept trying to crawl up the sides to escape but always fell back! His rescue came when I reached in, picked him up and put him on solid ground. Now I know you're all thinking of Psalm 40 because you're all such excellent Bible scholars! "He lifted me out of the miry pit" vs2. Salvation is all God's doing. We cannot save ourselves but he reaches down and rescues us! Paul is reminding the Colossians of this in these verses. There is that wonderful verse in Matthew 14. Peter gets into trouble when walking on the water and cries out, "Lord save me". Verse 31 says "Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him". Peter needed saving and Jesus was willing. Nothing has changed. When people cry out to God realising he is the only means of salvation, he hears and he rescues!

It was troubled waters and a lack of faith that caused Peter's distress. Many with weak or no faith are finding themselves in troubled times during this crisis. Let's pray they too will turn to God for rescue.

The Colossians would have known Old Testament writings well. The dominion of darkness would have reminded them of the plague of darkness over Egypt from which God delivered the Israelites. They were also expecting a Messiah, a King, from Old Testament prophecy. We now see this as a picture of a person becoming a Christian. Dominion means control. We were once controlled by darkness but now we are under new management in the Kingdom of the Son!

Soak up the words in verse 12, "qualified you". Think of what it means and where it came from. Many A level and GCSE students this year will qualify without sitting an exam!! In a sense we became Christians because Christ took the exam for us. WE passed because of his efforts not ours.

"You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary" Jonathan Edwards.

Praise God today for his amazing grace.