



Background Detail :-

Author :- Paul is clearly seen as the author of this letter to the Christians at Colossae. Colossae was a large town / small city in what is now modern day Turkey. Both in the introduction and the style that is used we see a clear declaration of Paul's authorship. Many believe that this letter was written during Paul's imprisonment around AD. 61.

Purpose of Book –

Ephaphras, who appears to be a convert to Jesus, through Paul's ministry, (possible in Ephesus.), looks to be both the founder and the leader of the church in Colossae. He seems to have approached Paul as a mentor, and has given Paul a good account of the church, but has highlighted particular problems and weakness in the fellowship that Paul as an apostle feels it is important to deal with. People from different cults and religions were being saved, but the problem was that they were bringing into the church, ideas and philosophy about spiritual things, that was undermining the true Gospel of Christ. The main heresy that was declared was the idea that Jesus was not fully God or fully man, but was one of a number of semi-divine beings that bridged the gap between God (the spiritual being) and man (the physical world) This was undermining the belief in the Church that Jesus was completely preeminent and sufficient in all matter of salvation and life. Alongside this was the wide spread worship of angels and belief in rituals and hidden knowledge enabling people to grow closer to God. Paul calls the church to stand firm in the face of such heresies and develops a clear understanding of the preeminence of Christ in all things.

**Discuss – Do you think Christians today understand “their faith” and its doctrines well?
How would you recognize whether a teaching was truly Christian or not?
Do you think there are heresies around in the church today?**

Read – Colossians v 1 – 8

Paul starts this letter of by defining to this church, that he has not founded, the reason why he has authority to speak to them and is this oversight way. He clearly defines that his authority to speak comes from a calling to apostleship that God has established on his life. What he declares here is that it is God who has raised him up to this office in the church, so it is with God's permission and authority that he is speaking.

Discuss – Do you believe that today God still calls people to a specific office in the church and gives them authority to speak?
If so do what do you think are response to such people should be before God ?
How do you think the church should balance respecting the office that a person is called to, but also holding that person / persons, accountable to the wider body of believers?

Again we see here that Paul addresses the Christians he writes to as “Saints.” in Christ. This continued statement that Paul uses in his letter challenges us about how we see ourselves and our identity in Christ. For Paul those who are true disciples and followers of Jesus; Those who are truly faithful to the Lord are given the identity and standing of sainthood from God himself through faith in Jesus. The idea that sainthood is something that the church bestows on you if you meet a certain criteria, is not found within the word of God. Sainthood is not a title – it is a condition that you are given through the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Himself.

Discuss – Do you think Christians today have a good understanding of their identity and standing before God?
How does it make you feel when Scripture declares things like :- that we are saints, royal priests of the most high God, children of the living God and co-heirs with Christ ?
Why do you think the church over the centuries has only given these sort of titles to a chosen few when Scripture gives them to all believers?

Paul goes on in verses 3 – 8 to recognise the genuine faith that the people of this town have in Christ and affirms to them that it is simply by hearing and believing the Gospel message of repentance and salvation in Jesus, that God establishes this salvation work in your life. Clearly Paul is establishing that the message of the cross is a message of truth that by the grace of God, people hear and believe, that has power to bring forth the works of salvation. Right from the beginning he is declaring that this knowledge is not a hidden knowledge, but has been clearly declared – heard – believed and in and of itself has power to save for God has made it that way!!

For Paul, what he is establishing here, the Gospel of Christ being the power of God unto salvation, is already putting a context to the message that he is bringing. This is that in all things and in all ways it is by Jesus Christ and His gospel that God has established the process of salvation and brought all things under his headship. This is why there is such an interplay between the words hearing and believing and the name of Jesus Christ!!

Discuss – Do you think that the church today has the same confidence in the Gospel of Christ having power to save the lost today? (give evidence for your answer)