

Col. 1:3-8 - Life-Giving Hope

Written by Tim Black

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1.

Body. Paul gives thanks in this passage for that fact. He focuses our attention on two ways Christ gives us life: Christ gives us life 1) through **faith and love** (vv

. 3-5a), and 2) through the

gospel

(vv. 5b-8).

Faith and love

are the

chief elements of the experience

of the life which Christ gives. And the

gospel

is the

one message by which you can learn

of this life. So we should seek to

understand

how it is that Christ gives us faith and love, and how it is that we received the gospel, and then we should

rejoice

in these great blessings!

1.

This hope gives you faith and love 3-5a. First, **this hope gives you faith and love** .

1.

FAITH in Christ

1.

Vv. 3-4 say:

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3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of the **love** that you have for all the saints,

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Paul says here that our faith is “in Christ Jesus.” Paul goes on to tell us much more about Christ later in this chapter. Most notably, he says in

v. 19

that “

in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

” which is elaborated in

2:9

, which says “

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him.

” That is to say, God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, is fully divine, is fully God, contains

all

of the being of God within Himself. There is nothing

in God which is not in the Son. Further, when God the Son took on human flesh and became the God-

man

Jesus Christ, He still remained

fully God

, and more than that, all of the divine perfection dwelt in Jesus Christ’s humanity, and thereby made His human nature

perfect

“

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

” In this man there was no longer any

conflict

between God and man, no longer any

estrangement

between God and the likes of you, “

who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds.

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” (
1:21
)

Here was a man who was truly alive. “

In him was
life
, and the
life
was the light of men.

” (

John 1:4

) Being the fullness of God, this was the only man who could say “

I am the way, and the truth, and the
life

. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

” (

John 14:6-7

) This God-man Jesus Christ says to you today, “

I am the resurrection and the
life

. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

” (

John 11:25-26

) And I tell you that

“

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

” (

John 3:36

)

-

My friend, if you are one who believes on Christ and has life in His name, then He has made known to you “the paths of life,” and you

have found that “

in [His] presence there is fullness of joy

.” (

Acts 2:28

) Let us give thanks to God for giving us faith in Christ!

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LOVE for all the saints

1.

Now if Christ is the wellspring and faith is the channel of “newness of life

” in Christ,

love

is the

overflowing stream

of that new life. Paul gives thanks in

v. 4

for “

the

love that you have for all the saints

.”

”

2.

John says that “By this we know that we have passed out of death into life, that we love the brothers.

” (

1 John 3:14

)

3.

This love begins in the heart of God the Father, who loves His Son, and who “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

” (

Colossians 1:13

) “

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God!

” (

1 John 3:1

)

4.

Now this love in fact begins to bubble up inside us and flow out through us. John tells us that “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.” (1 John 5:1)

Because of your faith in Christ, you begin to live a life of love. And that love is in fact the new life that God is giving you. Jesus said to the woman at the well, “

Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

” (

John 4:13-14

) Here Jesus draws on the language of the prophets' expectation that God, the fountain of living water, would make a stream of living water flow out from His throne in the temple in Jerusalem, watering the desert, healing the

water of the sea, giving life to fish and trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In this we see that this love which God has poured out in our hearts is the renewal not only of our individual lives, but of our

corporate life

as God's people, and even of the life of the whole creation

.

5.

If you have this love through faith in Christ, then you have everlasting life. When you see this love for all the saints overflowing in your heart, in your brother's, in the church, give thanks to God for giving us so beautiful and precious a gift.

6.

HOPE laid up in heaven

1.

But you might be recognizing in your own heart at this moment that in fact you do not experience the fullness of this love for all the saints. Often there is much lacking in our faith and our love. We fail to have excitement or anticipation in reading God's word, our prayers are empty of true communion with God, our fellowship with other believers has grown cold, we wonder where the joy of our salvation can be found. We feel that this might be an inheritance that spoils, or fades.

2.

To help us in our weakness in this area Paul tells us in **v. 5** that your faith and love exist “ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. ”

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First, our faith and love find their ground and support in heaven, a perfect place, where moth and rust cannot destroy, the place which is not subject to futility and corruption and decay.

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Second, that hope in heaven is “**laid up**”

for us. It is
set aside

for us, it is actively being
preserved

and
protected

by God. Nothing can assail it there.

-

Third, our hope causes our faith and love to exist. The certainty and strength of this hope help us in the uncertainty of our faith, and the weakness of our love.

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Now Paul cannot mean that this hope is a “hope” in the sense of an orientation or expectation located within our own hearts, because he says that this hope is located in heaven. It is external to us, and so must be the external object

in which we subjectively hope. And note further that this hope is not the kind of hope that flows **from**

faith and love. Of the 29 places where Paul clearly joins faith, love, and hope together, such as
1 Cor. 13

,

1 Thess. 1

&

1 Thess. 5

, the majority indicate that hope located within our own hearts in fact flows from faith & love. But here the order is reversed. Faith and love come from this hope. This hope gives us our faith. If this hope

was within us and gave us our faith,
we might be wrong in our confession
of
sola fide
, that it is by faith alone that we
receive Christ and all His other
benefits.

-

So what is this hope? In a word,
our hope is Christ. Christ Himself
is the heavenly Guarantor of the
vitality of our faith and love. He is
our hope.

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First, Paul tells us this in **3:1-4** by saying that Christ is in heaven:

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If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

-

This hope is immediately accessible to us in the present through our spiritual union and communion with Christ. In fact, we are even actually located in heaven with Christ right now by means of that union. His Spirit unites us to Him, and so all the fullness of His divine life and grace and truth, all of His power which raised Him from the dead, all of His holiness and love which He had as the God-man is now ours, for He is our life. If your experience of spiritual vitality is waning, if your faith is weak, if your love is cold, then set your mind on Christ, who is your life, and draw that life from Him.

Cry out to Him, “Lord, I believe,
help Thou my unbelief.

” “

Restore unto me the joy of your
salvation, and uphold me with a
willing spirit.

”

He

is the eternal God, the priest who
has the power of an indestructible
life, who always lives to intercede for
us.

He

is the true God and eternal life.

He

will never perish, spoil, or fade,
and no one can snatch you out of
His hand. You have the promise that

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. And in the measure of faith and love God has already given you you know that “

from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

” (

John 1:16

)

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Second, Paul tells you that Christ is your hope in **1:27:**

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To [His saints] God chose to
make known how great among the
Gentiles are the riches of the
glory of this mystery, which is **C**
hrist in you, the hope of glory
.

-

Not only are you in Christ in
heaven, but He is in you on earth.
He dwells in you by His Holy
Spirit, working in you that faith

and love even as in concurrent response you work out your salvation with fear and trembling. United to Him by His Spirit, receiving Him by faith, there is nothing in all creation that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing! Because He's in you. Your faith and love may flag because you are weak, but take heart, because He is strong. And greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

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It is His greatness, and His life poured out into us in our faith and love, which is our hope. It is Him whom we need, Him whom we seek, Him alone the hope that will not disappoint.

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You heard of this hope in the gospel 5b-8

1.

Remember when the gospel came to you

1.

This living hope gives you faith and love. **You heard of this hope in the gospel** .

2.

Paul tells us this and reminds us of the vitality we had when our salvation began in order to encourage us to cling to Christ as the source of our life. He says in v . 5

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-

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

-

Paul then proceeds to call us to **remember four things**

about the beginning of our salvation, and in the Greek he joins these 4 points together with 3 connectives we can translate with the phrase “just as.” First, Paul calls us to

remember when the gospel came to you.

He says in
v. 6a

,

-

6 which has come to you,

-

Do you remember when the gospel first came to you? Where were you? What part of the message struck home in your heart? Of what sins did God convict you? Of what truths did you become certainly convinced?

-

I remember many times the

gospel came to me when I was young; my parents read Bible stories to me, we had family devotions & Christian conversations, Sunday School and worship services in the church placed me in an environment that lived and breathed the gospel. One day after Vacation Bible School in grade school I was convicted that I needed to accept Christ as Lord and Savior, so I asked Him to save me. Various sermons would teach, convict, correct, and train me in righteousness. Believing on Christ and owning a reformed

understanding of the gospel as my own I made profession of faith in Junior High. But early in high school I became convicted that when people ridiculed me, I repaid them evil for evil, reviling for reviling, and I knew that because of this sin I could not claim to have the love of God in me. More sincerely, with more maturity and resolve than before I cried out to the Lord for forgiveness, and for His strength and love to fill me as I well knew He had promised to do. Resting in the certainty of His promise, in the completed work of Christ's life, death, and

resurrection, on His divine power, in the promise of His Holy Spirit, I had the great joy of being assured of my salvation, of restored fellowship and communion with Him, of having my heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, my body washed with the pure water of His sanctifying Spirit. I did not know whether I had been saved before that day, but I had no doubt of my salvation from that day onward.

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My dear friends in the Lord,
does it not refresh your soul to
remember what God did for you
when the gospel first came to you?

-

**Remember the gospel's
fruitfulness in all the world**

1.

What you experienced is part of what God is doing throughout the world, and so Paul calls us also to **remember the gospel's fruitfulness in all the world.**

He says in

v. 6

,

-

as indeed [or, in the Greek, 'just as'] in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing-

-

The gospel is bearing fruit and growing not only in you, but in the whole world. God is working His saving purpose out by sending His victorious word abroad to bring the strangers home. By Him all things were created; they were created through Him and for Him. And it pleases Him to reconcile all things to Himself, particularly, we who once were alienated and enemies in our mind. We need not then let ourselves be cheated by philosophy and empty deceit, according to

the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world. The world does not set the standard for God's people. God sets the standard for the world, and His work of saving His people must remain at the center of our focus. God is transforming individuals' lives, gathering them in His church, spreading salt and light throughout their communities, and the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light are being proclaimed by His city set on a hill, His lamp that is not under a bushel.

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I would encourage you to read church history, biographies of ministers & missionaries, read our current missions updates from Uganda, Ethiopia, Suriname, and elsewhere, rejoice in the fruit and growth in Home Missions you hear about through New Horizons or other believers. In the past 15 years or so the OPC has taken part in many new church plants, in two of those church plants I have seen firsthand that God is building His church.

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Remember your growth in your faith (FAITH)

1.

But God is building His church right here as well. Paul exhorts us to **remember your initial growth in your faith** . He says,

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just as in the whole world it is
bearing fruit and growing- **just
as it also does among you**
, since the day you heard it and
understood the grace of God in
truth,

-

You see, God's work throughout
the world has now come to you.
The gospel came to Europe,
America, or wherever else you are

from. It came to California. It came to San Jose. It came to each person here at Covenant Presbyterian Church. It is here now.

And God is causing you to grow in your faith by means of the gospel's work in your heart.

-

When did you first hear and understand the grace of God in truth? Did you not grow immeasurably as a result of first learning about God's grace? That He has placed His unmerited

favor upon you expressed in His
condescending care for your every
need, especially your need to be
reconciled with Him? What
freedom, what joy, what new
opportunities to feel, to think, to
act in this world God's grace opens
up for you! Pray that you would
grow even more in your faith, as
Paul prayed for this very same
growth in the verses that follow our
passage:

-

Colossians 1:9-10 that you

may be filled with the
knowledge of his will in all spiritual
wisdom and understanding, 10
so as to walk in a manner worthy of
the Lord, fully pleasing to him,
bearing fruit in every good work
and increasing in the knowledge of
God.

Remember your growth in your love (LOVE)

1.

And lastly, Paul calls you to **remember your growth in your love.**

He says this in
vv. 7-8

:

-

7 just as you learned it from
Epaphras our beloved fellow
servant. He is a faithful
minister of Christ on your behalf
8 and has made known to us
your love in the Spirit.

-

Remember God's love. Paul
expressed that love to Epaphras
by teaching him about Christ
and the hope we have in Him.

-

**Remember God's love
expressed to you by t
he person whom God used to
lead you to Christ**

.

-

**Remember God's love which
now y
ou have begun to show
to others.**

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Conclusion

1.

Do you still place some hope in

a thing which will not satisfy? As it says in the Proverbs,

2.

Proverbs 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

3.

The way to receive the one hope that will be perfectly

fulfilled is to set your heart on eating from the true Tree of Life, Jesus Christ. He is the “**living hope**

” Peter spoke of in

1 Peter 1

:

1.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused

us to be born again to a **living hope**

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2.

Let us then praise God for this hope laid up in heaven for us—for the hope He gives us in Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our life. For this hope gives you faith and love. For you heard of this hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ, who alone is your life-giving hope.