



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

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"The Hope Laid Up for You"

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul and Timothy write to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse. Paul wrote this letter to refute heretical teaching influencing this church. The heresy involved Judaistic tendencies along with integrating early Gnostic philosophy consisting of ascetic ideas, the worship of angels as intermediaries between God and man, and the idea, supposedly, that a person could reach perfection by progressing through various initiations and levels of wisdom in some sort of spiritual mysteries. Paul counters by showing that all things are fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer who now holds authority over all things.

Colossians 1:3-8 is one really long sentence, and goes like this:

We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel: which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: as you also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ: who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Paul expresses himself, and the will of God. Verbs express acts, action, and states of being. Participles tell us about the circumstances, and the characteristics of particular people and things. So what is Paul saying here under the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit?

Paul stresses the action of praying thanks to God, namely the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, concerning you (all). This praying is ongoing. They pray in behalf of themselves and for those belonging to them, for those in close association with them, namely the brethren. While they are praying for themselves and for these others, they are praying thanksgiving to God. They are praying always this thanksgiving when entering the presence of God on behalf of themselves and these others.

What provoked this response? Hearing two things: the faith of you all in Christ Jesus and the love which they continue having toward all the saints. They have been given this love; it is set in motion towards the saints there in Colosse. This love is a gift from God and we are responsible to set it into motion in a distributive fashion towards those of the body of Christ until Christ comes. We are to give away that which comes to us from heaven, from God. Freely we received, freely are we to give.

What prompts this faith and love into existence for us? “Because of **the hope**.”

The hope. In Christian lingo we have two aspects to hope: expectation or the act of hoping, and the thing hoped for, the object of hope. So when we have hope, we have an objective expectation for the thing hoped for and expected.

The word for hope in NT Greek is *elpis*. But now we must separate secular from Scripture usage. *Elpis* is a general word for the anticipation of future events of all kinds, whether of good (hope) or of evil (fear). Classical Greek literature began around 900 B.C. In secular Greek, there was no single word term for “hope.” It took the addition of an adjective, such as “good,” “bright,” “joyful,” etc.

The Hebrew verbs of hoping closely connect with those of trust. So when the secular/worldly mind speaks of hope, it must qualify it in order to distinguish **the hope**. For the Christian, however, living hope is a fundamental spiritual attitude unknown in Greek culture. We qualify it in today’s secular society, for them.

To the Hebrew mind, hope has the meaning of trust and security in God. Four main verbs are used: to be stretched out towards, to long after, to wait for (as wait for God); to wait, long (for God); to wait (for God); and to wait, hope (for God). Otherwise, in uses of “hope” in the OT, where the circumstances have to do with the secular, there is always an expectation directed towards some definite desired object or event still lying in the future. Hope apart from God is described as futile. (Proverbs 11:7; Proverbs 26:12, e.g.)

Look at this: What has been handed down to us from the prayers of the Babylonians, is that they never called their gods their “hope.” Israelites, however, could pray, “You, O LORD, are my hope.” (Psalm 71:5) Jeremiah spoke of God: “You hope of Israel.” “Hope of Israel” is a Name of God.

Is this some empty piety? It might seem so in some churches today. We don’t see the living-faith sense of security in the LORD. Believers seem phony, looking to the government or somewhere else than to Christ. More and more Christians are becoming fearful, as opposed to hopeful.

In what fact is living hope based? Since God knows, promises, and brings to pass what the future holds for His people, hope for the believer attains an assurance historically unparalleled. **The hope** in Colossians 1:5 is **the hope** that is laid aside in your behalf, that is appointed and presently active in you, and the place of its origin is in the heavens, in God Himself.

The hope had been previously heard in “the word of the truth” of the gospel. Our relationship with heaven-sent, God-sent, hope is direct, personal, and appointed unto us.

How does **the hope** of God come to you and to me?

Gospel → the word of the truth → **the hope** → faith in Christ and love for the brethren

From God comes the Gospel which is the truth, and this word bears in it a gift of hope given to us which bears forth fruit of faith in Christ and the love for the brethren. We know the grace of God in truth. The witness goes out of our being faithful ministers of Christ, faithful in the stewardship of the Gospel. Others declare this love in the Spirit.

And that's why Paul goes on to say:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power [*exousia*] of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:9-14)

The hope is laid up for you in God. Believe the Gospel, seek out and study the word of the truth, and walk in **The Hope**, bearing the fruit of faith in Christ and love for His. Let the witness of this love in the Spirit go out, beginning where you are unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Taking the Gospel to the Nations,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Psalm 43:5

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