

The Faith Files

The Letters to the Philippians and Colossians

September 22, 2001

1. Colossians 1:2-8

To the holy and **faithful** brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--the **faith** and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a **faithful** minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. (NIV)

- Paul mentions several coworkers in this letter, and he refers to each one as faithful servants; not gifted, anointed, or brilliant, although they may have been. They were men full of faith and men in whom faith could be placed. Do people refer to you as faithful?
- Paul refers to faith and love again in the same sentence. Their faith and love led Paul to give thanks to God. It's possible that people are talking to God because of who you are and what you do. I want people saying good things about me to God. That requires faith and love on my part.
- Hope is always put into this faith/love mix. We have faith and love because of the hope we have in heaven, in the future. Faith and love refer to "now," hope refers to the "future." God has given us a down payment on the future so that we can trust Him now!
- Grace and truth are also mentioned in this passage. Only God can embody pure truth and perfect grace. Jesus preached a gospel of high standards (if you call your brother a fool, you are guilty of murder) yet he applied grace when confronted with men and women who did or could not maintain those standards. (consider the woman caught in adultery in John 8).

2. Colossians 4:7-9

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a **faithful** minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that

you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our **faithful** and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. (NIV)

- Here are two more “faithful” servants, men full of faith and in whom faith could be placed. Paul sent them to inform and encourage the church. That is a good mission to have: inform and encourage.
- I want to tell people what God is doing in the earth, let them know what He is doing with me, and encourage them to faith. That is why I am writing The Monday Memo, developing The Faith Files and my website, and writing two other books.
- Write down what you are doing to inform and encourage other people. Love’s main focus must be to build up other people.
- Paul kept the church informed of the news about himself. Good communication between leaders and followers is essential or else people make assumptions about what is happening, or rumors arise.

3. Philippians 1:25-30

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the **faith**, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the **faith** of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to **believe** on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. (NIV)

- Two other elements are now connected to faith: progress and joy. Obviously, part of Paul’s work was to help people grow and enjoy their growth. That required a relationship with the Philippian church, where he did not spend much time physically. He did what he could, however, and that was to write letters.
- Is there someone today to whom you can write a letter or send an email? Your objective will be to make them happy and add to their progress of faith.
- Contending for the faith transpires against a backdrop of fear. We must all work hard to maintain our trust in God in the face of opposition to the gospel.
- To spread the message of faith involves opposition and suffering. Jesus made that clear through the life He lived. Are you suffering for the faith? Are you willing to

suffer? It says in this passage that it is a gift (granted to you) to not only to believe, but to suffer. I don't always see suffering as a gift. Do you?

4. Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your **faith**, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. (NIV)

- Drink offerings are either poured out on the ground, where they are immediately absorbed, or onto a burning sacrifice, where they are immediately consumed. No trace is left of the drink offering in either case. Is God pouring you into any situation, where it doesn't seem like you are leaving a "mark" or trace? You are leaving one, but only God can see it. Are you rejoicing like Paul did?
- Someone once said God is looking to use a people who are not concerned who gets the credit for their service.
- The Philippians' evidence of a life of faith was sacrifice and service. Once again we see that faith without works or deeds is useless and has no meaning.
- Paul, the greater, was being poured out for the Philippians, the lesser. Servant leadership always requires such a scenario.

5. Philippians 3:8-9

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through **faith** in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by **faith**. (NIV)

- It's possible to have a self-generated righteousness, but it is useless in the presence of God. I can do correct moral things and not be acceptable to God. Only when I do correct moral acts *in faith* do they gain me standing before God. Is that an accurate statement?
- Our goal is righteousness that comes from God through faith. Remember, it is a righteousness through faith in Christ only. When Abraham believed God, it was credited to his account as righteousness. The same process is how we will have righteousness credited to our accounts.
- Paul saw that everything he had before Christ was rubbish (this is a "stronger" word in Greek) in comparison to what he had in Christ. Are you holding onto anything that is worthless compared to your relationship with God? Get rid of it!

6. Colossians 1:22-23

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--if you continue in your **faith**, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (NIV)

- If we are to continue in the faith, established and firm, then there must be times that will pressure us to be moved and un-established. Have you been through times like that? Are you going through them now?
- It may seem that the hope for the future is not worth the trial of the present. That is an erosion of faith, nothing more or less.
- Faith is the means by which we will be presented to God without accusation or blemish. This cannot be accomplished by righteous deeds, but by a righteousness produced through faith.

7. Colossians 2:5-7

For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your **faith** in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the **faith** as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (NIV)

- The Faith Files are teaching faith, so that you can be orderly in your lifestyle and trust in Jesus even though I am not with you in body. I am following Paul's example. What can you do to follow the same example? You don't have to be physically present to build someone up. Who can you call or write to this week in order to encourage them in their faith.
- Notice the order here: 1) received Christ as Lord by faith; 2) continued to live in him, 3) rooted and built up, 4) strengthened in faith, 5) overflowing with thankfulness. Faith permeates our entire process of relating to God.

8. Colossians 2:11-12

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your **faith** in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (NIV)

- We have been raised through faith in the resurrection power of God. That is the strongest power in the world and you and I have access to it everyday through faith.

- If you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, then you can trust God to do anything! I want resurrection power to flow through my writing, speaking, humor, giving, and life. When people touch me, I want them to be able to access God. I am not the same person I was before Christ or even last year. I am growing in Christ and faith.