

## DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

### TEXT: COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

Faith, hope, and love are familiar themes in the writings of Paul; perhaps because they are at the foundation of Christian doctrine. Paul is known for being a no nonsense preacher. He is not one who is impressed with the trappings of religion; rather it's good, solid, basic Christianity that catches his attention. He is interested in substance.

■ Frances Bacon wrote, "It's not what men eat, but what they digest that makes them strong;

Not what we gain, but what we save that makes us rich; Not what we read, but what we remember that makes us learned;

Not what we preach or pray, but what we practice and believe that makes us

Christians." (Hewett, 189)

■ Billy Sunday put it this way, "Going to church don't make anybody a Christian, anymore than taking a wheelbarrow into a garage makes it an automobile." (Hewett, 89)

The Colossian church to which Paul was writing, like the apostle Paul, knew all about practical Christian living. It was a church that had been founded on these principles. It is important to note that it is on this ground which Paul approaches the church. Paul addresses this erring church first by commending them for their reputation of having faith in Christ, love for the saints, and hope in heaven. By pointing out their solid beginning, he is seeking to draw them back to the truth from which some were trying to lead them astray. Paul reminds them of those things which man cannot manufacture - FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE - in order to help them return to a firm foundation from which they were moving.

As we look at the first few verses of Paul's letter, notice that at least three *essentials* of the faith are mentioned. He begins by reminding us of the following:

### I. WE MUST HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST (v.4).

#### A. Faith is of little value unless Christ is the object of that faith.

■ R. Kent Hughes writes, “Faith has no intrinsic value in itself. It must derive its value from its object.” (117)

*The value of our faith is equal to its object.*

### **B. Faith in Christ means, “trust in Christ.”**

When Paul spoke of the Colossians’ faith, he was acknowledging the manner in which they had trusted Him. He said in verse 2, “To the saints and faithful brethren...”

## **II. WE MUST LOVE ALL THE SAINTS (v.4).**

A. Love for others is that which makes us different from the Pharisees.

It is one thing to be orthodox and upright; but it is something entirely different to be upright before God because of the love in our hearts. Many individuals lead impeccable moral lives in the community without scarcely a drop of love in their hearts.

■ They are as Mark Twain once said of an individual; “He is a good man--in the worst sort of way.”

B. Love is an essential ingredient for victorious Christian living.

■ Donald G. Barnhouse had this to say of Christian character, “Love is the key. Joy is love singing. Peace is love resting. Long-suffering is love enduring. Kindness is love’s touch. Goodness is love’s character. Faithfulness is love’s habit. Gentleness is love’s self-forgetfulness. Self-control is love holding the reins.” (Hewett. 321)

C. Love for everyone is the true test of Christianity.

■ Ian Pitt-Watson adapts this portion from [A Primer for Preachers](#):

There is a natural, logical kind of loving that loves lovely things and lovely people. That's logical. But there is another kind of loving that doesn't look for value in what it loves, but that "creates" value in what it loves. Like Rosemary's rag doll.

When Rosemary, my youngest child, was three, she was given a little rag doll, which quickly became an inseparable companion. She had other toys that were intrinsically far more valuable, but none that she loved like she loved the rag doll.

Soon the rag doll became more and more rag and less and less doll. It also became more and more dirty. If you tried to clean the rag doll, it became more ragged still. And if you didn't try to clean the rag doll, it became dirtier still.

The sensible thing to do was to trash the rag doll. But that was unthinkable for anyone who loved my child. If you loved Rosemary, you loved the rag doll -- it was part of the package.

"If anyone says, 'I love God' yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar"

(I John 4:20).

"Love me, love my rag dolls," says God, "including the one you see when you look in the mirror. This is the finest and greatest commandment."

(Larson,

138)

### **III. WE MUST HAVE HOPE IN HEAVEN (v.5).**

A. God lays up this hope for us in heaven.

It is "stored up" or "kept safe" for us by the One who has given it to us.

■ Paul wrote in II Tim. 1:12, "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

B. This hope comes through the Word of God.

Hope for the future always springs from the Gospel message or the “good news!”

C. This hope binds us closer together.

We are gathered together today because of a common hope and a common experience, why shouldn't we then enjoy our common bond?

## CONCLUSION

■ Leonardo da Vinci had started work on a large canvas in his studio. For awhile he worked at it -- choosing the subject, planning the perspective, sketching the outline, applying the colors, with his own inimitable genius. Then suddenly he ceased, the painting still unfinished, and, summoning one of his students, invited him to complete the work. The student protested that he was both unworthy and unable to complete the great painting which his master had begun. But da Vinci silenced him. ‘Will not what I have done inspire you to do your best?’

Two thousand years ago our Master began the greatest work mankind has ever known. It is that work that He has left for us to finish. His example, His words and His life are all that we need to inspire us to do our best and to live a life for His glory. We must be watchful that we do not become sidetracked by anyone or anything that draws us away from completing what He has started.

According to verse 6, these Christian men and women had been experiencing the fruitfulness of a walk with God long before the false teachers arrived. Paul was seeking to remind them that no amount of so-called “superior knowledge” was as impressive as true faith, hope, and love. Likewise, the only way to gain spiritual stature is to live out the Christian life to the fullest extent. This is something that we cannot begin to do without the *essentials* of the Christian faith. Do you have what it takes?

## References

Hewett, James S. (Ed.). (1988). *Illustrations Unlimited*, Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House Pub. Inc.

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