

Journey Into Becoming All God Wants You To Be

LESSON 1 . . . The Trilogy for Spiritual Growth (Colossians 1:1-8)

NOTES

The main goal of every Christian should be to become all God wants them to be. This requires a trilogy—a set of three related things. The book of Colossians is about **becoming all God wants you to be**. Some of us have further to go in this spiritual journey than others, but all of us must have the required trilogy of characteristics Paul writes about in this passage.

Colossians was written to the church at Colossae (koh-law'-see) in ancient Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus. The church was probably founded during Paul's three-year ministry at Ephesus (A.D. 52-55; Acts 19:10-30). During that time, a man named Epaphras (Ep'-uh-fras) apparently traveled from Colossae to Ephesus, responded to Paul's preaching, and returned to start a church in Colossae. That's why Paul makes what comment about Epaphras in Colossians 1:7b?

Paul wrote this letter during his first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60-62; Acts 28:16), when he also wrote his other prison epistles: *Philippians*, *Ephesians*, and *Philemon*. He wrote *Colossians* to confront the attempts of some believers to combine elements of paganism and secular philosophy with Christian doctrine. In *Colossians*, Paul presents Jesus Christ as the absolute authority and the complete sufficiency for becoming all God wants us to be.

Paul introduces himself as *an apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1a). The word translated *apostle* (APOSTOLOS, ap-os'-tol-os) means one sent forth with a message. Its modern equivalent is "missionary." Yet, Paul was more than a missionary; he also held the office of *an apostle*, even though he wasn't one of the original Twelve. At his conversion on the Damascus Road, how does the Lord describe Paul's future ministry (Acts 9:15b)?



Therefore, Paul was called to be *an apostle . . . by the will of God* (1:1c). Paul also sends greetings from his associate and brother in Christ, *Timothy* [Timothy] (1:1c). After introducing himself, Paul reveals the spiritual trilogy required for **becoming all God wants you to be**.



#1: A Saving Faith (1:2-4)

This letter is written *to the saints . . . at Colosse* (1:2a).

The word translated *saints* (HAGIOS, hag'-ee-os) means “set apart,” or “consecrated,” to God. All Christians are *saints* who should daily experience Paul’s prayer for the Colossians—that God will give them His continuing *grace* and *peace* (1:2b). *Grace* refers to God’s unmerited favor and supernatural empowerment (Acts 4:33).

Experiencing God’s *grace* results in *peace, from God*. However, we are responsible for maintaining our *peace, from God*. If we don’t have *peace, from God*—inner tranquility—even during life’s storms, we’re not all God wants us to be—and it’s not God’s fault. The key to sustaining *peace, from God* is found in Isaiah 26:3. What is it?



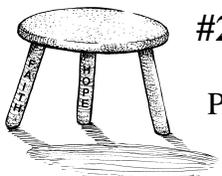
Paul constantly prayed for other believers. Therefore, he reminds the Colossians that he *always* prays and thanks God for them (1:3). Nothing is more uplifting than hearing someone thank God for you or for something you have done.

Next, Paul compliments them for their *faith in Christ Jesus* (1:4a). This refers to the saving *faith* they demonstrated when they accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. The word translated *faith* (PISTIS, pis'-tis) in the Bible is not a blind leap into the dark. Biblical *faith* is being persuaded something is true to the point it changes your life.

For instance, do you believe a jet plane can safely carry you to Australia? If you just “believe” that, you will never get there on a jet. What must you do for a jet to take you to Australia? Trust your life to it by getting on board! That’s what biblical *faith* is. You must “get on board” by *faith*, trusting Christ to get you to heaven. Are you on board right now?

Saving *faith* always reveals itself by what Paul mentions next. What is it (1:4b)?

The first component of **the trilogy for spiritual growth** is a **saving faith**.



#2: A Steadfast Hope (1:5-6)

Paul knows the Colossians’ *faith* has a definite source. It is the *hope which is laid up for them in heaven* (1:5a). This *hope* is also *laid up for us in heaven*. The word

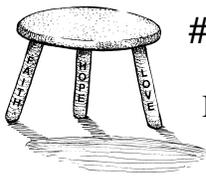
translated *laid up* means “reserved.” How is “reserved” *hope* described in Hebrews 6:19?

As Christians, we have a long, long “spiritual chain” with an *anchor* on the end of it. The *anchor* is secured inside the *veil* in the real Holy of Holies in heaven. This means we have an unbreakable, unshakable connection to the very throne of God. Just as an anchor keeps a ship from drifting away during a storm, so our *hope* keeps us from “drifting” in our faith during the storms of life.

Concerning what he has just written, Paul reminds the Colossians they *heard* this when they first learned the *truth of the gospel* (1:5b). Paul is just repeating what they had already been taught about *faith* and *hope*.

Paul tells the Colossians the Gospel is producing *fruit* all over the Mediterranean *world*, just as it did among them. This is because the Gospel is *the grace of God in truth* (1:6). The Gospel is not a mixture of *faith* and works because salvation is by *grace* alone (Eph. 2:8). How does Paul express this truth in no uncertain terms in Romans 11:6?

The components of **the trilogy for spiritual growth** include: **a saving faith, a steadfast hope**, and . . .



#3: A Supernatural Love (1:7-8)

Being the person God wants you to be has three requirements, two of which Paul has already mentioned: *faith* and *hope*. Now, he writes about the third, *love*. These three components are like a three-legged stool; if one leg is missing, you will topple over spiritually. In his epistles, Paul often mentions this trilogy. For example, what three things does Paul remember when praying for the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:3)?

We have already talked about Epaphras, whom Paul mentions in verse seven. Paul then writes that Epaphras has told Paul and his associates about the Colossians’ *love in the Spirit* (1:8). Not only did Epaphras take

the Gospel to Colossae, but he apparently also brought news of the believers there to Paul, who was a prisoner in Rome, over 1,000 miles away. That's the distance from Oklahoma City or Dallas to Phoenix, Arizona.

The presence of *love in the Spirit*, or supernatural *love*, in our lives is the acid test of saving faith. How does Jesus make this clear in John 13:35?

Christian theologian Francis Schaeffer said, "With that statement, Jesus gave the world the right to judge us by our love." Some believers are far more difficult to love than others. However, if we have truly placed a saving *faith in Christ Jesus*, we will sincerely desire to love everyone.

At least thirteen times in the New Testament we are **commanded** to love one another (Jn 13:34, 15:12, 15:17; Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn 3:11, 3:23, 4:7, 4:11, 4:12; and 2 Jn 1:5). However, we can't love others on our own. We can only love as God commands if we *love in the Spirit* (Col. 1:8). Since God never commands us to do anything we cannot do, we can *love in the Spirit*. Why, according to Romans 5:5b?

To *love in the Spirit* is to allow God's love to flow through us. Then, we *love* people for who they can become in Christ, not for who they are now. People, even some Christians, are not easy to love. They can be grumpy, rude, unfriendly, and irritating. That's why we are **commanded** to love one another. To become all God wants you to be, concentrate on keeping God's commands. If you do, you will find yourself learning to *love in the Spirit*. How does 1 Peter 1:22 express this truth?

As the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to purify our hearts, we begin to *love in the Spirit* more and more.

Becoming all God wants you to be requires the trilogy for spiritual growth: a saving faith, a steadfast hope, and a supernatural love.

