

Dig Deeper / Colossians 1:3-14 and Psalm 126 Otisville Church of Christ / December 9, 2012

Colossians 1:3-14

Paul wrote Colossians to deal with some issues that crept into the early churches. The church in Colossae was established by Epaphras, but Paul was well-known to them. These issues were relatively common, especially in largely Gentile churches, which the Colossian church was. Because the early church emerged out of Judaism, some Jews tried to bring elements of Judaism into the church.

The worst of these mixed Judaism with the gospel and tried to require Gentiles to become Jews first before they could become Christians. They did this by requiring Gentiles to keep parts of the Law of Moses. This is the focus of Colossians 2, and Paul details how mixing anything with the gospel empties the gospel of its saving power. Paul wrote this letter to remind the believers that they have everything they need for spiritual growth and fulfillment in Christ. He is complete.

Colossians 1:3-14 serves as an introduction to the letter by way of Paul's prayer on behalf of the believers. In this prayer, Paul emphasizes that spiritual growth is tied to faith in Christ and hope that is already laid up for them in heaven. It is accomplished. It is not based on keeping the law or anything else that is outside Christ. Believers *have been* delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the Son. Believers *have* redemption, in Christ, through the gospel. We need nothing else.

1:3-8. Paul gives thanks for their faith and for the increase of the gospel.

1. What two things prompt Paul to give thanks to God when he prays for them?
2. How is hope the foundation for those two things?
3. How does Epaphras' involvement in their faith indicate how the gospel spreads and bears fruit?
4. Are you helping or hindering the increase of the gospel?

1:9-14. Paul prays for their continued spiritual growth in Christ.

1. What two things does Paul pray for them (vs. 9 and 11)?
2. What two ways are given as evidence that you are walking in a manner worthy of the Lord?
3. What four reasons are given for why Paul gives thanks to the Father?
4. Are you walking in a manner worthy of the Lord? If not, pray to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual understanding and wisdom.

Psalm 126

This psalm is part of the collection identified as “Songs of Ascent.” The collection is made up of Psalms 120-134. The Ascent psalms include a wide variety of psalms: individual and group laments; psalms of confidence and thanksgiving; psalms about Zion; wisdom psalms; and a royal psalm. The general understanding is that these were psalms that were sung by Israelites as they “ascended” (went up) to Jerusalem to worship.

Psalm 126 is a lament psalm that laments on behalf of the Israelites. It remembers a previous time when God showed mercy to his people and asks God to restore them and his mercy among them. This psalm does not state what happened to put the Israelites in distress, so it is appropriate to be used in general in times of distress. It is a psalm that we may pray and use to remember God's favor. In times of discouragement, we can take comfort from remembering God's mercy and pray for more of it.

126:1-3. This section recalls God's past restoration of his people and the good things he did for them.

1. What responses did Israel have when God restored their fortunes?
2. What responses did the nations have to Israel?
3. How should remembrance of God's mercy cause you to be glad?

126:4-6. This section focuses on their present discouragement but also their hope that God will restore his favor to them.

1. What kind of restoration does the writer possibly have in mind, based on the images he uses?
2. What might this indicate about the crisis they are in, where they feel the loss of God's favor?
3. Why does the writer make a connection between weeping and joy?
4. What weeping do you need to do to realize the joy of God's favor?