



A new creation focus through Colossians ...

## Learning the Gospel

The gospel must be learned, and therefore the gospel must be taught. Or, the gospel must be taught, and therefore the gospel must be learned. Unfortunately, the obvious has to be stated occasionally because the confusion factors emanating from the one who is the source of all lies and from denominationalism really obfuscate the truth. The relationship between immersion in Jesus' name and forgiveness of sins is obvious as stated in Acts 2:38, but confusion reigns in the hearts of those trapped in the errors of their denominations. Similarly, the underlying foundation of

nearly all Protestant belief systems is that "unregenerate man" cannot understand the Bible, and the Holy Spirit has to "quicken" him — cause him to be "born again" — before he can make any sense out of the Bible. It is clear that this position means that man cannot be taught the gospel in order to obey it. This, of course, contravenes all scripture, beginning with the commission of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19). The basic core is that followers of Christ and fishers of men must go out and set up Bible studies with lost people, and then teach them also to be followers of Christ. The gospel must be taught, and therefore the gospel must be learned.

- **Understanding** — The apostle Paul is commenting about the brethren in Colossae and their interaction with the gospel, "since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:6). The system of thought called "the faith of Christ" is often also termed "the grace of God" as contrasted to the system of thought called "the law of Moses." The apostle John thus affirmed, "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The apostle Paul is laying down an important concept that he will refer back to later in this letter, that the brethren *understood* the grace of God in full truth.
- **Learning** — The apostle and the Holy Spirit are willing to give the credit for the basic teaching that laid the foundation for the church at Colossae to a preacher named Epaphras. Epaphras was known to Paul and clearly associated with the apostle, and Paul knew the type of teaching Epaphras had done in Colossae. Speaking of how the gospel came to the brethren, Paul comments, "just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved and fellow bond-servant who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf" (Colossians 1:7). Epaphras taught the gospel, made disciples out of those who were willing in Colossae, and then taught them the system of thought called here "the grace of God." The faithful brethren in Colossae learned. Simple.
- **Love** — Ultimately, all teaching and preaching is going to focus on the love of God, and how that love is produced in the hearts of those who are to be imitators of God. The sacrifice which Christ made on behalf of the lost world was a huge demonstration of God's love for each person. "We know love by this," asseverates the apostle John, "that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Understanding the love of Christ generates the love of the brethren and the love of the lost in the hearts of saints. Epaphras, Paul's "beloved" fellow bond-servant, not only taught the brethren, but "he also informed us of your love in the Spirit" (Colossians 1:8).

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The brethren in Colossae had been taught well, and had been willing to learn what was taught. It must have been very exciting for Epaphras to bring Paul the report of the faith of the Colossians, their understanding of the grace of God, and their love in the Spirit! May others be able to report these same things about our existing congregations in the twenty-first century.

JAY WILSON