

Colossians 1:3-7

*Colossians 1:3 (NASB) We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and the **love** which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth . . . ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras . . . who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf.*

The New Testament authors frequently refer in their letters to faith, hope and love.* The most well-known reference is in 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” But what is the specific relationship between these three terms? This passage in Paul’s letter to the Colossians is the clearest answer to this question. In short, **faith** connects us to Jesus, Jesus provides us with **hope**, and His hope motivates us to **love**.

- “Faith” refers not to faith in oneself or some nebulous spiritual reality, but specifically to our decision to entrust ourselves to Jesus as the promised Messiah – “We heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus.” (“Christ” is the Greek word for Messiah.) This message about Jesus is “the gospel,” the good news that Jesus has died to pay for our sins, has been raised from the dead so that we can know Him personally, and will return at the end of the age to establish God’s good rulership over this world.

* For Paul, see also Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8. See also the authors of Hebrews in Hebrews 10:22-24. Peter also refers to faith, hope and love in 1 Peter 1:21,22.



The Colossians heard and understood this good news (also called “the grace of God” in vs. 7) as it was proclaimed by a fellow-Colossian, Epaphras. Then they each decided to receive Jesus as their Messiah. That’s the way it still works today, over two thousand years later. A simple step of faith in Jesus is all He requires – not earning His love through religious observances or moral self-reform, but receiving His forgiveness as a free gift.

- “Faith” in Jesus leads to “hope” – “*the hope laid up for you in heaven.*” “Hope” is not a wish for an unlikely positive outcome (e.g., “I hope I win the lottery”). It is the confident expectation of a positive future based on Jesus’ promise-keeping character. This “hope” is ultimately the promise of eternal life for all who put their faith in Jesus. Jesus promised: “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Because Jesus has conquered death through His bodily resurrection, so will those who belong to Him be raised to spend eternity in God’s kingdom. So no matter what happens to us in this life, we know that “the sufferings of this present age are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). This hope does not remove suffering from this life, but it places our sufferings in a larger context that ultimately outweighs their impact on us.

This “hope” also applies to this life in the sense that, as Paul says in Romans 8:28, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” It’s not that only good things happen to Jesus’ followers – they are subject to the same sufferings that everyone faces in this fallen world. But God promises to work through even our sufferings to fulfill His good purpose for our lives. After all, He worked through the most terrible tragedy (the crucifixion of Jesus) to make available the greatest gift to humanity (forgiveness and new life). If He was able to work for good through this tragedy,



He can also work for good through our sufferings. So we can look at the rest of our lives here on earth with confidence that the Lord will be with us and working out His plan through us. And then . . . eternal life!!

- And because faith in Jesus results in hope concerning the future, we can love other people – “*the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*” When you realize that Jesus is with you to provide for you in every situation in this life, and when you look forward to the promise of spending eternity with Him in the next life, this changes the way you view your interactions with other people. No longer do you live as an orphan, relating to people as threats or as those who must meet your deepest needs. You can now relate to them as God’s well-loved child, with a fullness of Jesus’ love that enables you to give His love to them. His Spirit can keep filling you up with His life, so now you can give His life to others. Yes, we learn this new way of life gradually – as faith in His love increases hope in our hearts – but He will help us to learn it!

So faith, hope and love are the very heart-beat of Christianity. Through simple faith in Jesus, we have a love-trust relationship with Him that provides us with true hope and the motivation to truly give His love to others. No wonder that Paul constantly thanked God for the Colossians’ conversion!

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your gift of complete forgiveness and new life. Increase my faith in You as I seek to trust You instead of my own goals and resources. Deepen my hope in Your promises instead of my hope in my own plans. Grow my love for the people You put into my life instead of fearing them or expecting them to meet my deepest needs. Though I often wander from this way of life, thank You that You remain utterly faithful to lead me back to this path!

