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Colossians Transcriptions
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Faith and Love pt. 1

Col 1:3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints.

Paul mentions prayer here in verse 3. He gets back into it in verse 9 and talks more about what he's specifically praying for there. So I'm going to wait and share some thoughts about prayer when we get to verse 9. We spent some time talking about grace and peace and now we're going to speak about faith. I don't know if we'll get to love today or not. But like I've told you before I'm not really in a hurry.

So faith and love. I want to start by backing way up and approaching these words a little bit. As I was thinking about how to talk about faith and love my mind started going up to the 50 thousand foot view, the birds-eye view looking at the big picture. That's often how I approach these things. I feel like I always come to a broader view first and then it gets progressively more narrow. The blanks get filled in little by little.

Let me start by repeating something I've said many times: Christ defines spiritual words. The words don't define Christ. I know that that sounds like a really simple statement but I would suggest to you that there's not a lot of people who really understand what that means. We usually try to learn what the words mean: faith, love, righteousness, whatever... and we think that by learning what those words mean we know what Christ is like, or we know something about Christ. But that's just not true. It's not only not true, it's insanely dangerous to think that way, because all you're doing is creating a mental concept, collecting it and combining it with other mental concepts, and then trying to define something that's completely foreign to the natural mind and nature. This is how you can be forever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. This is how you can waste your life studying the Bible and never see Christ. I know this from experience.

So what I'm NOT doing this morning, is trying to give you a good definition of the word faith or the word grace or peace. I'm trying to just point you to a place where I've seen a little bit of

these realities, describe a little bit of what I've seen there, in hopes that you'll turn your heart and go there too. That's as far as I can go with any of this. Man cannot really teach spiritual things. That's just not part of this covenant. It was part of the old covenant in the sense that man could teach the words, laws and ceremonies. **But in our covenant the law is written on your heart, and it has to be taught there as well.** It has to be taught by the Spirit of God. He is the one who writes it there by his own finger. And the most that I can do is just testify of the things I've seen and heard. That's as far as I can help you, and yet the Spirit of God can use this. That's what preaching is. It's really just a testimony. I can testify to that which I've seen, but I can't *teach* you these things because they are Christ in their substance and definition. And only when Christ appears in the soul as the definition of faith and love and righteousness and grace do you then have some true meaning that can go with that word.

I know I say this like a broken record. I say this kind of thing all the time. I received a couple of emails recently where people are asking "do you believe this about that?... or that about this?" And I always want to write back and say, "I don't care what I believe. If you knew how little I care what I believe you probably wouldn't have written to me. I don't even want to believe anything; I just want to see Christ. And in seeing Christ I will come to see many things that are true, but it won't be what I believe about a concept, it will be about what my soul is beholding in the face of Christ."

The Seed of the Serpent

I want to start this discussion about faith and love by saying that there is a nature that is in every way contrary to the nature of God. It's the nature of the serpent, the dragon. It's also the nature of all of his children. The sons of the devil, as Jesus calls all people who aren't the sons of the kingdom. The sons of the Adamic man. There's a nature that rules in the absence of God's nature. Just like darkness is present wherever there's not light, there's a nature that fills darkness, it fills wherever there's not the nature and light of Christ.

This nature is a seed. It's called a seed in various places in scripture. It's the seed spoken of in Genesis chapter 3 where we read that the serpent has a seed, and the woman has a seed, which is Christ. And we find that the serpent's seed has this hostility or enmity toward the seed of the woman. It's always been this way.

Or here's another example: The parable of the wheat and the tares. Jesus sows these seeds in a field and an enemy goes out and sows other seeds. And a man says to the sower, "didn't you sow good seeds?... where did all these tares come from?" And then the sower says, "An enemy

has sown this seed." And speaking of this parable Jesus says, "every seed that my father did not plant will be uprooted and thrown away."

There are two interesting things about seeds that I think paint a very important picture for us. **1) One of these is the fact that a seed comes from a parent, or father.** A seed is the extension of the nature of its father. If we're talking about the seed of righteousness, the source or father is Christ. But the natural man has a different father, the serpent. **2) The second is the fact that a seed grows and it is planted and spreads in the fertile soil. Spiritually speaking, that fertile soil is the human soul.** The human soul was created as a fertile territory. It's something like a Petri dish where anything can grow, good or bad. It was created to be the living expression and increase of a seed... of a nature.

There's a lot that we could say about the nature of Satan, the seed of sin, of death, of Adam. And I'm really talking about the serpent's seed in order to introduce another seed, another nature, the one that is Christ. The reason I backed up and am looking at the wrong seed is because we need to understand an important contrast. We need to understand why Paul is rejoicing when he sees the fruit of Christ's seed.

The enemy's seed is characterized primarily by words like *lie* and *death*. The lie is simply the absence of light. The lie is the absence of truth. The natural man is governed by this lie. It's not just any old lie. We're talking about a lie that is *total* darkness. You see, the natural man has no light. No light whatsoever, no spiritual truth. None. The heart of the natural man is the darkest place in the universe. Darker than a black hole. Darker than the earth was before God said "let there be light!" Jesus said "If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" And darkness, the absence of light, brings with it all the experiences of this nature. Things like fear, insecurity, shame, condemnation, emptiness, etc. All these things come in the darkness. They're all aspects or experiences of the nature of that seed.

Death or murder is another primary aspect of that seed of Satan. And this has to do with the absence of life. **The Lie has to do with the absence of the light or truth. Death has to do with the absence of life.** And with that absence of life, our experience is characterized by things like hate or violence or stealing murder. I'm not trying to create a theology here, but it has struck me recently how comprehensive these two words are – Death and Darkness. Or Murder and Lie. These two words are sort of how Christ summed up Satan in John chapter 8.

In John chapter 8 Jesus said to the Jews: you are of your father the devil and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning. He was a life-taker from the beginning. He worked against life. He spread the absence of life. That's what he did from the beginning. He does not stand in the truth because he is the absence of truth. He is the vacuum

of truth. When he speaks a lie he speaks from his own resources because he is a lie and the father of it. So from the very beginning Satan took life. Or you could say he spread death. And Satan spoke lies, that is to say he spread darkness. That's what he is, that's what he did. And this is totally contrary, it's the exact opposite, of the seed of Christ and of our experience of Him.

I think that the human soul's experience of Christ can be summed up in two opposite words. **The words life and light. Light is the pure seeing, the pure and true seeing of things as they are in the sight, in the awareness of God. That's what light's all about.** And light *removes* fear and removes shame and destroys lies. It actually becomes the removal of all those other things that darkness creates in the human soul. Light kills all of those things in you.

This kind of light doesn't shine in the natural creation. It doesn't matter if an angel appears and is glowing with light. That's still natural light. Or maybe its supernatural light, but it's not *spiritual* light. Christ is a light that only shines in your soul because your soul was created to receive this kind of light, to be filled with light and in the coming of that light there is a judgment of all darkness. The coming of light is like the dawning of a day in which no enemies can remain, in which all the enemies of the Lord are judged and removed. And so that's one word, light.

Life is the other word. Life has to do with the person and being and nature of Christ. And that contains in it words like righteousness, love, goodness, etc. I have some verses written here... "In him was life and the life was the light of man" and Jesus says "follow me and you'll have the light of life." Jesus described himself with these two words (light and life) and he described the devil with the opposite two words (liar and murderer) and I think there's a really good reason for this. I don't think this is a coincidence.

But here's my point in mentioning all this. According to our natural birth, the first birth, we are part of the enemy's seed. We're the ground that is bearing the wrong seed. We're sons of wrath, sons of the devil, contrary to God by nature, children of flesh, enmity with God, vessels for the spirit who works in the sons of disobedience. We don't have any light, not of ourselves. Again, the human soul is the darkest place in the universe. The Bible says this in a number of different ways. It says every thought and intent of the human heart is only evil all the time. Or it says the heart is desperately wicked beyond all things, who can understand it? And in 2 Cor 4:6 Paul says that the light that shines in the darkness of the natural creation was only picture of the light that now shines within us.

We don't naturally possess any light because we don't have Christ. We also don't know anything of love because love is the nature and life of God. **So we don't naturally have light,**

that is to say true faith, and we don't have love. They're totally foreign to us. Of course we have our own form of love but that love is according to the wrong seed. In other words, the love that we know according to the serpent's seed is a love that *takes*. It's not a love that gives. It's a love that desires its own good. It's a love that seeks its own gain. It's a love that keeps record of wrongs. It's a love that's exactly the opposite of the love that Paul describes in 1 Cor 13. We read these verses and say 'oh that's beautiful'... but then we do the opposite because Paul is describing a love that comes from another seed.

When the seed of Satan loves something the thing he wants to do is take it for himself. That's what natural love is like. And if that seed gives, he gives for the purpose of ultimately taking. In other words, I might give someone a bouquet of flowers or a diamond ring but it's with the intent of taking that person for myself. If I give it's to take. And so we have a different kind of love that isn't love at all. And this is the reason that Paul uses these two words, or speaks of these two words, not just here in Colossians but in a bunch of other places. **Paul talks of these two words, faith and love, as though they were these sure signs of spiritual life and growth in the body of Christ. It's like when Paul sees evidence of true faith and love he knows that there is a genuine work of God in the soul. When he says "I've heard of your faith and love from Timothy" he says "I rejoice. I can't stop praising God" or "I begin to pray even more for your growth." Faith and love, it's like he just saw a total miracle from a different realm, it's something completely foreign.** It's like Paul is saying, "I just saw Christ." And he did! He saw Christ in them. Of course this is not *our* version of these words because man has his own faith and his own love. Man has his own righteousness, his own glory, his own everything.

There's about 500 man-centered definitions of faith and love, but that's not what Paul was excited about. The way that the world talks about faith is purely natural; it's from the wrong seed. It's dead; it's human ideas. It's your brain thinking of things and coming to conclusions. That's useless. That's why I said in the beginning I'm hoping that I come to a point where all of my beliefs die and faith replaces them all!

I don't want to have human beliefs that are right or wrong. I want to have faith! And I want to have love because love is perfectly foreign to my heart. It's not of this world, it's totally different. Until Christ appears in my soul I have never ever tasted or seen a drop of love. Not real love.

And I took that long detour to come back to this point... so we can understand that when Paul says, "we give thanks to God our Father, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ and your love for all the saints"... Paul was seeing a true work of Christ in the hearts of the church. He was seeing a light and a nature from another

realm. He was seeing God's light and God's love, and He knew that the Lord had found room to work in these hearts.

So you're going to find these two words together a lot of places:

- Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision has any value but what does have value? Faith working through love.
- Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the Saints.
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith and that you being rooted and grounded in love...
- 1 Thes 3:6 but now when Timothy came from you to us and brought us good news of your faith and love.

(That's the news Timothy brought, the news of faith and love.)

- 2 Thes 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you my brothers as it is right because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of each one of you abounds toward one another.
- 1 Tim 1:5 but the goal of our instruction is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith. *(So again love that's coming out of an unfeigned faith.)*
- 1 Tim 1:14 ...and exceedingly abound did the grace of our Lord with the faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. *(I like that—the faith and the love that is in Christ Jesus)*
- 1 Cor 13:13 Now abide faith, hope, love. These three but the greatest of these is love.

And that's not an exhaustive list but just the first few that popped up on my word search.

What is faith? If you look in Webster's dictionary it will tell you one thing and if you look in Strong's dictionary it might tell you something slightly different. And if you ask around the church you'll get a multitude of answers to that question. Many of which have to do with belief and hope and trust and confidence. The Greek word here is *pistis*, not that that matters, but I wanted to say that I'm not really trying to give you a definition of *pistis*. Rather, I'm hoping that we *experience* the thing that Jesus and the apostles called *pistis*. Do you see the difference? Jesus was constantly talking a kind of a knowing, a kind of seeing, a kind of awareness, assurance, consciousness if you will, of God, of God's mind, of God's perspective.

He was always saying things like he knew what the Father was doing, He knew what the Father was saying. In some strange, not natural way, Christ was experiencing this non-visible seeing or awareness. And He called that *pistis*. That's the word he used in Greek.

So He attached that word to this particular experience. Now perhaps other people would have already had a different definition for that word, because this word already existed before Jesus was born. But Jesus attached this word to this kind of seeing, this kind of knowing and he was constantly saying things like "where's your *pistis*?" Where's your faith? 'Oh *pistis*-less generation.' 'Oh faithless generation.' Why can't you see what God sees? Why can't you walk in the light and see what is real? What's wrong with you?

Well, what are we after this morning? We are not after a more accurate dictionary definition of that word. We're after whatever Jesus was experiencing that he tagged that word onto. You see the difference? It's the same with Paul. Paul lived by *pistis*. He walked by the *pistis* of the Son of God. He saw things that were unseen. He was fixing his eyes on only the things that *pistis* could see. And what do we want as Christians? **Do we want a theological definition of *pistis* or do we want to see with that same kind of seeing? And then maybe that seeing will define that word!** Maybe then that kind of knowing and understanding and awareness and consciousness of spiritual reality that flows out from the light of God will then give us an understanding of what that word means, rather than just looking in a dictionary.

This is the only way to know spiritual things. Christ being the sum of those spiritual things. Seeing Christ in Christ's own light gives us that understanding. I think it's impossible to argue against this. To anyone who has read the New Testament. I think it's impossible to argue against the statement that when Jesus and the authors of the New Testament talked about faith they were talking about something that was **clearly** different than human belief. And we could go through all the scriptures where that's beyond obvious. Without turning to all of them you read in the New Testament that the apostles are experiencing a kind of light and they were walking by a different kind of light. There was a light dawning in their heart. There was a kind of seeing that wasn't the seeing of natural things. In fact that was a looking at, an abiding in, fixing your eyes upon, something that could not be seen.

In fact Paul belittles about the things that can be seen, saying they're temporal. Don't put your mind on those things! He says that we count the pain of this realm light and passing because we're looking at the things that can't be seen. This looking and seeing has nothing to do with the human intellect. They're not talking about belief systems or theology. That's not on their grid. By faith Moses saw him who was unseen. Seeing from afar the One who was to come yet not possessing.

Jesus is walking in this kind of light, this knowing of the Father's will. Seeing a totally different way. And interestingly right after the resurrection Jesus began to exalt, so to speak, this kind of seeing that didn't have to do with natural seeing. Jesus began to say things like to Thomas "you only believe because you saw with your eyes but from now on blessed are those who believe [which is the verb form of the word *pistis*] blessed are those who experience this *pistis* without seeing."

Everyone that tries to keep seeing Christ after the resurrection with their natural eyes... He doesn't even let them. He disappears. He pops up until they see him with their heart and then he disappears. You know the guys on the road to Emmaus were walking with Him without truly seeing anything, and their hearts were starting to burn. All the sudden he breaks the bread and they see Him for who he is with a different kind of seeing. And just as soon as they see him in that way He says "now you're really seeing Me!" and he disappears from their view. Well he doesn't actually say anything he just disappears. But that's because they starting seeing him in the right way. That's what he was doing. He wanted to be seen, he wanted to be known by faith, not by sight. And though I've said this before, the whole Christian world seems to be hoping for faith to turn into sight and God is hoping that our sight will turn into faith.

Unfortunately, Faith to us is this nebulous, dark belief. And sight... well we think sight is so pure and real. But it's just the opposite to God. Faith beholds. Faith truly sees. Sight only sees natural shadows. The most you can see with sight is a world of shadows. And even if you saw Jesus in this world of shadows it wouldn't be beneficial to your soul until you saw by faith... and then he would disappear saying that now you've come to true seeing! Now you've come to true awareness that's so much greater.

Sight is really important for driving your car. It's really important for making a salad. It's important for natural things but that's as far as it goes.

Faith is the spiritual counterpart of that natural faculty and it's for seeing in a different light. And not only does faith see, it actually lays hold of what it beholds. Faith doesn't leave things far away. It beholds them and possesses them.

Faith sees a finished work. And this is the kind of seeing that the New Testament talks about. A kind of walking by faith and not by sight. A beholding by faith, a living by faith. And that doesn't mean living by a certain belief system. That's the furthest thing from what it means. Someone says "I'm living by faith" and you say "what do you mean by that?" "Well I'm just holding onto these basic beliefs and Bible verses, and when the enemy comes I just pull these things out." That's not living by faith!

Faith sees with a pure and spiritual light that grows. It's like a day star rising in the heart. It's like light dawning in the soul. It looks at things that are not seen. It sets the gaze of the heart on that which is above. And it comes from God who works in you by God. It's God's knowing. It's God's seeing. It's the faith of the Son of God. It's His and it works in you. And it's the kind of a light that natural man does not have and does not understand. **In fact faith is a kind of light that man runs from because when the eye of faith opens it always sees the finished work of the cross.**

Do you hear what I just said? When the eye of faith begins to open it sees the natural man judged and put down. It sees a world that has fallen short. It sees one life that lives before God and you better be found in that life, living by that life... because everything you try to bring to that life doesn't make it past the cross. That's what faith always sees. And so we run from that faith. We would rather sing about faith than actually live by faith. We would rather have a statement of faith than actually walk in faith because faith kills you. Faith kills the Adamic man and causes Christ to be your life. And so man hides from this kind of faith. Man hides from light.

Man loves darkness. And only those who are willing to lose their life will keep that eye of faith open. **Because when you open the eye of faith, when it opens in you, you are never going to see yourself.** You're never going to see yourself living for God. You're never going to see your best anything. You're going to see Christ all and in all. And to whatever extent there is anything left of you, which there will be, growing in faith is going to kill it. In other words, growing in faith is going to make you face that death. Growing in faith is going to create an expectation in your soul to experience, to know, to live in all that you see by faith. It produces expectation and that expectation will bring you to love which is the actual life and nature of God. It's the actual nature of God working in you by faith. Nothing matters, circumcision or uncircumcision, except faith working through love. That's the whole point. But man doesn't know this kind of faith.

I want to read a few amazing paragraphs from Isaac Penington. I love what this man writes. And he wrote this little thing called *A Distinction Between the Faith which is of Man and the Faith which is of God*. He says:

"THERE is a faith which is of a man's self; and a faith which is the gift of God: or a power of believing, which is found in the nature of fallen man; and a power of believing, which is given from above. As there are two births, the first and the second, so they have each their faith; and each believes with his faith...

[The faith of Cain] is the root of the false religion; of the false hope; of the false peace; of the false joy; of the false rest; of the false comfort; of the false assurance; as the other is of the true. In this faith, which is of man, and in the

improvement of it, stands all the knowledge, zeal, devotion, and worship of the world in general, and of the worldly part in every man in particular: but the true knowledge, the true zeal, the true devotion, the true worship, stand in the faith which is given of God, to them that are born of the immortal seed; which lives in God, and in which God lives for ever.

Now it deeply concerns every man, to consider from which of these his knowledge, religion, and worship proceed, and in which of them they stand. For if they proceed from, and stand in, the faith which is of man, they cannot please God, nor conduce to the salvation of the soul. But though they may taste very pleasantly to man's palate now, and administer much hope and satisfaction to him at present, yet they will fail at the time of need; for, as Christ said concerning the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, so may I concerning this faith; Except your faith, with the works of it, exceeds that faith, and all the works of it (even to the uttermost improvement thereof) which is to be found in man's nature, it will never lead you to the kingdom of God, nor be able to give you any right to the inheritance of life. For he that will inherit, must be the right heir, must have the faith of Abraham, the faith of Isaac; which springs up from the root of life in the seed; and this leads the seed into that spring of life (out of which it shot forth as a branch) which is the inheritance promised to the seed.

Therefore observe, and consider well, what this faith which is of man's self can do; and how far it may go in the changing of man, and in producing a conformity of him to the letter of the Scriptures. And then consider where it is shut out, what it cannot do, what change it cannot make, what it cannot conform to: that so the true distinction may be let into the mind, and not a foundation laid of so great a mistake in a matter of so great concernment.

1. A man may believe the history of the Scriptures; yea, and all the doctrines of them, so far as he can reach them with his understanding, with this faith which is of man. As by this faith a man can believe a history probably related to him; so by this faith he believes the histories of the Scriptures, which are more than probably related. As by this faith a man can receive doctrines of instruction out of philosophers' books; so by the same faith he may receive doctrines of instruction out of the Scriptures. Reading a relation of the fall of man, of the recovery by Christ, that there is no other way to life, etc., this faith can believe the relation of these things, as well as it can believe the relation of other things.

2. This being believed from the relation of the history of these things, it naturally sets all the powers of man at work (kindling the understanding, will, and affections,) towards the avoiding of misery, and the attaining of happiness. What would not a man do to avoid perpetual extremity of misery on soul and body for ever, and to obtain a crown of everlasting blessedness? This boils the affections to a height, and sets the understanding on work to the utmost, to gather all the rules of scripture, and to practice all the duties and ordinances therein mentioned. What can the Scriptures propose to be believed, that he will not believe? What can it

propose to be done, that he will not do? Must he pray? He will pray. Must he hear? He will hear. Must he read? He will read. Must he meditate? He will meditate. Must he deny himself, and all his own righteousness and duties, and hope only for salvation in the merits of Christ? He will seem to do that too; and say, when he has done all he can, he is but an unprofitable servant. Does the scripture say he can do nothing without the Spirit? He will acknowledge that too, and hope he has the Spirit. God hath promised the Spirit to them that ask it; and he has asked long, and asks still, and therefore hopes he has it. Thus man, by a natural faith, grows up and spreads into a great tree, and is very confident and much pleased; not perceiving the defect in his root, and what all his growth here will come to.

3. This being done with much seriousness and industry, there must needs follow a great change in man: his understanding will be more and more enlightened; his will more and more conformed to that to which he thus gives himself up, and to which he thus bends himself with all his strength; his affections more and more weaned; he will find a kind of life and growth in this, according to its kind. Let a man's heart be in any kind of study or knowledge, applying himself strictly to it, he gathers understanding in his mind, and warmth in his affection: so it is also here. Yea, this being more excellent in itself, must needs produce a more excellent understanding, and a more excellent warmth, and have a greater power and influence upon the will.

4. Now, how easy is it for a man to mistake here, and call this the truth! First, he mistakes this for the true faith; and then he mistakes in applying to this all that which belongs to the true faith: and thus entering into the spirit of error at first, he errs in the whole course of his religion, from the beginning to the end. He sees a change made by this in him; and this he accounts the true conversion and regeneration. This leads him to ask, and seek, and pray; and this he accounts the true praying, the true seeking, the true asking. This cleanses(after its kind) his understanding, will, and affections; and this he takes for the true sanctification....etc.

Thus far this faith can go: but then there is something it is shut out of at the very first: there is something this faith cannot receive, believe, or enter into. What is that? It is the life, the power, the inward part of this. Though it may seem to have unity with all the scriptures in the letter; yet it cannot have unity with one scripture in the life: for its nature is shut out of the nature of the things there witnessed.

Quest. What then is that faith which is the gift of God? And which is distinct from this?

Answer. It is that power of believing which springs out of the seed of eternal life; and leavens the heart, not with notions of knowledge, but with the powers of life. The other faith is drawn out of man's nature, by considerations which affect the natural part, and is kept alive by natural exercises of reading, hearing, praying,

studying, meditating in that part; but this springs out of a seed of life given, and grows up in the life of that seed, and feeds on nothing but the flesh and blood of Christ; in which is the living virtue, and immortal nourishment of that which is immortal. This faith, at its first entrance, strikes that part dead in which the other faith did grow, and by its growth perfects that death, and raises up a life which is of another nature than ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. And by the death of this part in us, we come to know and enjoy life; and by the life we have received, know, and enjoy, we come to see that which other men call life (and which we ourselves were apt to call life formerly) to be but death.