

HAS ANYONE HEARD OF YOUR FAITH AND LOVE?

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

How had Paul heard of the faith and love of the brethren in Colosse? We could ask the same question regarding the church at Ephesus since Paul used very similar words regarding their faith and love (Eph. 1:15-16 “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.”). Paul was under house arrest awaiting trial in Rome. About a thousand miles (as the crow flies) separated him from Colosse and Ephesus, two cities in the Roman province of Asia (what we, today, would call Turkey). Obviously you couldn’t just jump on a plane at the airport in Colosse and fly to Rome. Yet word of the faith and love of these good brethren reached the apostle.

Perhaps a brother named Tychicus relayed that happy news to Paul. Tychicus carried the letters from Paul in Rome to the churches in Ephesus and Colosse (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Of course Paul also enjoyed other visitors as Acts 28:30 tells us: “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him.” Did those visitors include brethren who knew of the faith and love of the Asian Christians? We cannot say with certainty, but surely it is plausible.

Both individual Christians and congregations develop reputations. What is your reputation? What is the reputation of this congregation? If Paul were still in custody in Rome, and visitors told him about you and about this church, what would they say? Would Paul write to you, or to the church here, and say he had heard of your confident trust in Jesus and your love for all the saints?

Both faith and love must be demonstrated, not merely felt. We show our faith by our obedience, as did all the great examples of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. We also demonstrate love by our obedience to the Lord. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). We exhibit love for one another through acts of kindness and service. Jesus’ “Good Samaritan” parable illustrated love for one’s neighbor as the Samaritan served the injured traveler in ways the priest and Levite utterly neglected.

We shouldn’t crave recognition and praise from others as we exercise faith and love. If that were our goal, Jesus said that’s the extent of the reward we would receive – it wouldn’t please God at all. Nevertheless, people will notice, and they will talk. What would they say about you and about this church?

May God help each of us to trust and obey Him, and to demonstrate His love to others through kind acts of service in His name.