

Colossians 1:4 Commentary

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CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL

Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

[Colossians Overview](#) - Click Chart on right side

Christ			
Preeminent in All Things			
Supreme Lord - Sufficient Savior			
Colossians 1	Colossians 2	Colossians 3	Colossians 4
Supremacy of Christ		Submission to Christ	
Doctrinal and Corrective		Practical and Reassuring	
What Christ Did For Us		What Christ Does Through Us	
Christ Our Lord	Christ Our Life	Christ our Love	

Christ the Head of the Body	Christ the Lord of the Universe	Christ the Head of the Home	
Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Reconciliation	Creation	Submission	Conversation
His Person and Word		His Peace and Presence	

Colossians 1:4 since we **heard** (AAPMPN) of **your faith in Christ Jesus** and the **love** which you **have** (2PPAI) **for all** the **saints** (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [akousantes](#) (AAPMPN) [ten pistin humon en Christo lesou kai ten agapen hen echete](#) (2PPAI) [eis pantas tous hagiois](#)

Amplified: For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [the leaning of your entire human personality on Him in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness] and of the love which you [have and show] for all the saints (God's consecrated ones),

Barclay for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have to all God's dedicated people, ([Westminster Press](#))

KJV: Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Lightfoot: We are full of thankfulness for the tidings of the faith which you have in Christ Jesus and the love which you show towards all God's people

Phillips: because you believe in Christ Jesus and because you are showing true Christian love towards other Christians ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the divine, self-sacrificial love which you constantly have for all the saints

Young's Literal: having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that is to all the saints

SINCE WE HEARD OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS: [akousantes](#) (AAPMPN) [ten pistin humon en Christo lesou](#)

- **we** : Col 1:9 2 Co 7:7 Eph 1:15 1 Th 3:6 3Jn 1:3,4
- **faith:** Ga 5:6 1 Th 1:3 4:9,10 2 Th 1:3 Philemon 1:5 1Pe 1:21-23 1 Jn 3:14,23 1 Jn 4:16
- [Colossians 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PAUL'S REASON FOR GIVING THANKS

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus - This simple statement begs the question "Is my (your) faith "audible" to those around us?" Faith is dynamic not static. It affects our life and others hear about it. And God is glorified (Mt 5:16).

Eadie - The apostle now expresses the reason why he gave thanks (Col 1:3), the participle (more literally the text reads "having heard") having a causal sense. Similar phraseology occurs in Ephesians 1:15. Paul's heart had been gladdened by the news of their consistency and spiritual advancement, and in the fulness of his joy he offered thanks to God (Col 1:3).

Peake agrees - Paul now introduces the grounds of his thankfulness, the good report he has heard as to the faith and love of the Colossians. He refers to it again (Colossians 1:9). ([Colossians 1 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

How did he hear? Where was Paul? What did he hear? Who brought Paul the news? How did Paul respond?

Moule - He refers to the information given by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7), probably quite recently. (Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges)

Faith ([4102](#))(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of

belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. Notice that Paul is not thankful for their faith in faith but their faith in Jesus. True (saving) faith always has an object (Jesus). Remember that the demons believe that God is one but they are not saved (James 2:19-note) but they lack Spirit inspired and enabled works that prove their faith is saving faith!

Faith is like an anchor on boat, See it's not the anchor itself that holds the boat, it's what the anchor is hooked up to that holds the boat. As John Eadie observes the Colossian saint's "**faith** rested in Christ Jesus, fixed and immovable, fully satisfied in Him as a Divine Saviour. [Ephesians 1:1.] ([Colossians 1 Commentary](#))

Paul wrote that "**Faith** comes from [hearing](#) and [hearing](#) by the [word](#) of [Christ](#)." (Ro 10:17-note).

Our Christian lives begin with saving **faith**; but then in the process of sanctification we must learn to [walk](#) by [faith](#), not by [sight](#)" (2Cor 5:7) and work by **faith** (1Th 1:3-note).

It is **faith** that gives power to prayer (Lk 17:5,6).

Faith is a shield each believer needs to take up for with it alone we are made [able](#) to [extinguish all](#) the [flaming arrows](#) of the [evil](#) one (Ephesians 6:16-note; see sermon Eph 6:16).

THOUGHT: Do the Scriptures above describe the quality of your faith? Have others heard about your faith in Christ Jesus that leads to an unconditional, sacrificial love even for the saints that aren't particularly easy to be around?

Vine says that **faith** (pistis) "primarily denotes firm persuasion, and so signifies trust. It is always used in the New Testament of faith in God or in Christ, or in things spiritual. There are three

Faith in Christ (Eph 1:15-note is a closely related passage) - Lightfoot feels that the "in" "probably indicates "the sphere in which their faith moves rather than the object to which it is directed." This faith rests upon Christ. ([Colossians 1 - The Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Keathley - A depositor's money is not safe in proportion to the depositor's faith in the bank in which the money is deposited. It is safe in proportion to the bank's solvency. So, the Christian is not a Christian because he possesses faith, but because he possesses faith in Christ. It is not simply faith that matters; it is faith and its object. But it is important to also note that their faith is defined as "in Christ." "In" is the Greek preposition en, which may point to the object of their faith,⁵¹ but it most likely points to the sphere in which their faith lived or resided and acted since it is not at all certain that en with pistis (faith) refers to the object.⁵² This may be a matter of splitting hairs since one's faith cannot reside in Christ if He is not also the object of that faith. But a faith that resides in Christ would stress not only the past initial act of trust in Christ, but also the present focus of the faith of one who seeks to live by virtue of who and what Christ means to believers. Regardless, the issue is not just the presence of faith, but of a faith that resides in Christ. "It gives the thought of reliance going forth to Christ, and reposing on Christ, so as to sink as it were into Him, and find fixture in Him; as the anchor sinks to the floor of the sea, and then into it, that it may be held in it." (Moule) The apostle will deal with this concept in more detail in Col 2:6-10. ([Paul's Gratitude for the Colossians Col. 1:3-8](#))

Gregg Allen - I read a story the other day that seems very much worth sharing at this point. Many years ago, the great New Testament scholar and defender of the evangelical faith, Dr. J. Gresham Machen, was much in the public eye. In the early part of the last century, as a professor in Princeton Seminary, he stood almost alone within the Presbyterian Church in defending the full authority of the Bible, and the truthfulness of the gospel message it proclaimed. He was a great man of God, and had become quite controversial because of his bold stand. As it happened, during the height of the controversy, he was speaking one day at the Chicago Divinity School chapel -- which was crowded to the doors with listeners and reporters. An eyewitness said that he had held the crowd spellbound throughout his message, as he shared the Bible's teaching of the sinfulness of man, the grace of God, and the need for men and woman to be saved through faith in Christ. Near the end of his message, a female reporter spoke up. She asked, "Dr. Machen, you don't seem to think very much of man. What reason do you have for so belittling him?". And Machen simply replied that he was simply repeating what the Bible said. The woman then shot back with a question that, in one form or another, you and I hear all the time in our own day; "But really Dr. Machen; It doesn't make any difference what anyone believes, does it? Just so long as he believes something?" Dr. Machen could have passed that question off; but he didn't. It was too important to not be answered. It was said that he leaned over the lectern, looked the reporter directly in the eye -- with news people all around him, and yet as if speaking directly to her -- and boldly quoted the words of John 3:36; "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Dr. Machen was asserting that it makes all the difference in the world what someone believes about Christ; and apparently, he was asked no further questions. ([God's Grace in a Greeting](#))

FAITH, LOVE, HOPE

Faith, love and **hope** are also mentioned here in Colossians 1:4-5 and in the following verses -- 1Co 13:13; 1Th 1:3; 5:8; Ro 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Gal 5:5, 6; Eph 4:2, 3, 4, 5; Heb 6:10, 11, 12; 10:22, 23, 24; 1Pe 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,21, 22.

Spurgeon writes ([The Hope Laid Up in Heaven](#)) - Three Divine Graces should be always conspicuous in Christians - **faith, love,** and **hope**. They are each mentioned by Paul in the opening verses of the epistle from which our text is taken. These lovely graces should be so conspicuous in every believer as to be spoken of and consequently heard of even by those who have never seen us. These flowers should yield so sweet a perfume that their fragrance may be perceived by those who have never gazed upon them. So was it with the saints at Colossae...May our characters be such as can be reported of without causing us to blush, but that can never be the case if these essential virtues are absent. If these things are in us and abound, we shall not be barren or unfruitful, but if they are lacking, we are as withered branches. We should therefore be rich in **faith** which is the root of every grace; to this end we should daily pray, "Lord, increase our faith." We should strive to be full even to overflowing with **love** which is of God and makes us like to God; we should also abound in **hope**, even that heavenly **hope** which causes a man to purify himself in readiness for the inheritance above. See to it that neither of these three divine sisters are strangers to your souls, but let **faith, hope,** and **love** take up their abode in your hearts. Note, however, the special character of each of these graces as it exists in the Christian. It is not every **faith** and **love** and **hope** that will serve our turn, for of all precious things there are counterfeits. There is a kind of **offaith** in all men, but ours is **faith** in Christ Jesus, **faith** in Him whom the world rejects, whose cross is a stumbling block and whose doctrine is an offense. We have **faith** in the man of Nazareth who is also the Son of God, **faith** in Him who having made atonement (the work Christ did in His life and death to earn our salvation) by His own blood once for all is now exalted to His Father's right hand. Our **confidence** is not placed in ourselves nor in any human priest nor in the traditions of our fathers nor in the teachings of human wisdom but alone in Christ Jesus. **This is the faith of God's elect.** (Read the full sermon [The Hope Laid Up in Heaven](#))

When missionary **John G. Paton** was translating the Bible in the Outer Hebrides, he searched for the exact word to translate **believe**. Finally, he discovered it: the word meant "**lean your whole weight upon.**" That is what saving **faith** is—leaning your whole weight upon Jesus Christ. ([Lessons from the Life of John G. Paton](#)) That's faith, for true faith is trust that firmly rests upon sure evidence, and leads to Spirit energized action.

Faith must never be severed from good works. Martin Luther summed up the biblical view of the link between saving faith and good works in these words: "Good works do not make a man good, but a good man does good works"

W. H. G. Thomas gives us an excellent description of the interrelation of **faith, hope and love** "**Faith** rests on the past, **love** works in the present, and **hope** presses toward the future; or, **faith** looks backward and upward, **love** looks outward, and **hope** looks forward. These three constitute the true, complete Christian life and not one of them should be omitted or slighted. We are only too apt to emphasize **faith** and **love** and forget **hope** but, inasmuch as **hope** is invariably connected with the coming of the Lord, "that blessed **hope**" (Titus 2:13), it is a vital part of our Christian life. **Faith** accepts, **hope** expects; **faith** appropriates, **hope** anticipates; **faith** receives, **hope** realizes; **faith** is always and only concerned with the past and present, **hope** is always and only concerned with the future. We know that **faith** comes by hearing; we shall find that **hope** comes by experience. **Faith** is concerned with a person who promises, **hope** with the thing promised; and **faith** is the root of which **hope** is a fruit. ([Hope Laid Up for You in Heaven - W. H. G. Thomas](#))

William Barclay describing the interrelationship of **faith, love** and **hope** - "Faith without love is cold (Read Gal 5:6), and hope without love is grim. Love is the fire which kindles faith and it is the light which turns hope into certainty."

In Christ Jesus describes genuine faith's object, Christ Jesus.

Harrison comments on this specific name of Jesus - His designation of the Saviour as "Christ Jesus" (the reading of the leading manuscripts) may be understood as a deliberate effort to emphasize at the very outset the present exalted position of the risen Lord over against a system of thought which tended to rob Him of His full majesty. Paul does not use the name Jesus alone in this letter. (Colossians: Christ All-sufficient)

John MacArthur - The relationship of faith to Jesus Christ is expressed in the New Testament by various Greek prepositions. Acts 16:31 uses the preposition **epi**, which suggests resting on a foundation. In Acts 20:21, **eis** is used, with the meaning of "to find a dwelling place in," "to go into," "to abide in," or "to find a home." Here it translates **en** and has the connotation of coming to a place of security and anchor. With Christ as its object, our faith is as secure as a house on a solid foundation, or a boat safely at anchor. Charles Spurgeon illustrated the importance of faith's object by telling of two men in a boat. Caught in severe rapids, they were being swept toward a waterfall. Some men on shore tried to save them by throwing them a rope. One man caught hold of it and was pulled to safety on the shore. The other, in the panic of the moment, grabbed hold of a seemingly more substantial log that was floating by. That man was carried downstream, over the rapids, and was never seen again. Faith, represented by the rope linked to the shore, connects us to Jesus Christ and safety. Good works apart from true faith, represented in the story by the log, leads only to

ruin.

[What Do You Believe In?](#) Theodore Eppp writes...

Almost everyone talks about faith because almost everyone has faith in something.

But faith is only as good as its object. It is important to recognize that we are not saved from condemnation by having faith in faith. Paul commended the Colossians for their "faith in Christ Jesus" (Col 1:4).

So it is not sufficient to tell a person, "Just believe." The question is, Believe what? The message of the Gospel is not to believe in yourself, in church or in doctrine but in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This implies believing in all that Christ did for us when He died on the cross in our place. It recognizes that we are sinful human beings who deserve condemnation, or else it would never have been necessary for Christ to die.

It means we recognize that Christ is our only hope because if we could have been saved by some other means, Christ would not have had to die (see Gal. 2:21).

Having faith in Jesus Christ implies we have placed our confidence entirely in His finished work on the cross, recognizing that He forgives our sins and gives us eternal life.

One can summarize saving faith as a commitment to Jesus Christ, who is our life and Lord. Faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord is also necessary for growth in our Christian walk.

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). [What Do You Believe In?](#)

AND THE LOVE WHICH YOU HAVE FOR ALL THE SAINTS: kai ten agapen en echete (2PPAI) eis pantas tous hagiois

- Jn 13:34, 35 1Jn 2:9, 10, 11, 3:10, 3:14,15, 4:20, Gal 5:13
- [Colossians 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE BADGE OF BELIEVERS LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

And the love which you have for all the saints - These saints were disciples for as Jesus said ""By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:34) And such love buttresses our assurance for as John stated "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." (1Jn 3:10-note) In fact later John reiterated this declaring that "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1Jn 4:20-note)

And we see also that **John** associates **faith** and **love** - "And this is His commandment, that we **believe** in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love** one another, just as He commanded us." (1John 3:23-note)

The saints at Colossae demonstrated that their **faith** was genuine by their deeds of **love**.

[They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love — by Jars of Clay \(haunting version\)](#)

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

Refrain

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

2. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

3. We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

4. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.

Moule - Divine **faith**, in true and full exercise, issues by its nature in a life and work of **love** towards men, regarded as either actual (as here) or potential brethren of Him who is faith's goal and rest. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

And remember that **Loving God** is seen in how we **love our neighbor!**

Brian Bell - What Is Love? It is silence when your words would hurt. It is patience when your neighbors curt. It is deafness when a scandal flows. It is thoughtfulness for other's woes. It is promptness when stern duty calls. It is courage when misfortune falls. ([Colossians 1](#))

Keathley - Paul also thanks God for the love of the Colossians, a love that was being expressed toward all the saints, to believers in Christ. Here the focus is certainly on the present outworking of an active faith that resides in Christ and all that He means to believers. It is the fruit and evidence of fellowship with the Lord Jesus through an active faith in His blessed life (John 15:1-9; 1 John 3:14, 23). A faith that resides in Christ and a love for others are twins that should walk together in life. It is also important to note that "...such love was directed toward all the saints, not to those of the same social class or intellectual stratum. It is to all the saints without exception that true Christian love is shown. The communion of saints means, not a series of loosely related cliques, but an all-embracing and self-abnegating fellowship." ([Paul's Gratitude for the Colossians Col. 1:3-8](#))

The love (26) (agape [word study]) of one for another is evidence of a person's genuine faith in Christ Jesus. Genuine vertical relationship will be manifest in our loving horizontal relationships of saints, some of whom are not very lovable! This **love** is not a mere impulse from the feelings, does not always run with one's natural inclinations, does not manifest itself only to those in whom a certain affinity is realized, is the considered denial of self in the interests of others and seeks opportunity to do good to "all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." (Gal 6:10-note).

Wuest - The particular **love** which the Colossian saints had for all the saints was that **agape** love which is produced in the heart of the yielded saint by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22, Ro 5:5), a love which impels one to sacrifice one's self for the object or person loved. (Ibid)

There are two sides to the Christian life, both of which are crucial: faith and love. Genuine belief in the truth and experiential love for other believers characterizes every true believer. We are saved by faith; we are saved to love. True saving faith is more than a conviction of the mind. It transforms the heart to love.

You have - Notice this possession of love for all saints is their lifestyle (**have** = present tense). How this convicts so many of us (myself included) whose love is more like a stoplight, sometimes on green (like the Colossians), sometimes on "yellow" (a bit cautiously given or given "with strings" attached) or other times "red" (completely brought to a standstill so to speak!).

For (eis) pictures their love as an active, in motion toward others, dynamic process. Wuest adds that "The preposition "to" is not *pros* "to, towards," but *eis* , "into," showing that the Colossian's love reached **into** the very hearts of the other saints. (Ibid)

All the saints - Christianity is not exclusive but inclusive because we are all now made one in Christ. The foot of the Cross is the great "leveler" in time and eternity.

Moule comments on **All the saints** - Doubtless not at Colossae only, but everywhere. It was one of the earliest glories of the Gospel, illustrated everywhere in the NT, to bind together in love a world-wide family. ([Colossians 1 Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#))

Spurgeon describes this love for all the saints - "The true believer loves the persecuted, the misrepresented, and despised people of God for Christ's sake. He loves them all even though he may think some of them to be mistaken in minor matters. He has love to the babes in grace as well as to the grown saints and love even to those saints whose infirmities are more manifest than their virtues. He loves them not for their station or for their natural amiability but because Jesus loves them and because they love Jesus.

Barclay comments on **faith** and **love** of the saints at Colossae - "These are the two sides of the Christian life. The Christian must have **faith**; he must know what he believes. But he must also have **love** for men; **he must turn that belief into action** (Ed: Cp 1Cor 13:1-3) It is not enough simply to have **faith**, for there can be an orthodoxy which knows no **love**. (Ed: Sound orthodoxy calls

for sincere orthopraxy) It is not enough only to have **love** for men, for without real **belief** that **love** can become mere sentimentality. The Christian has a double commitment--he is committed to Jesus Christ and he is committed to his fellow-men. **Faith** in Christ and **love** to men are the twin pillars of the Christian life. ([Colossians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Vincent - Faith works by **love**, and the ground of their **love** is found in the **hope** set before them. Compare Rom. 8:24. The motive is subordinate, but legitimate. "The hope laid up in heaven is not the deepest reason or motive for faith and love, but both are made more vivid when it is strong. It is not the light at which their lamps are lit., but it is the odorous oil which feeds their flame" (Maclaren).