

I passed the spot I expected it to be for the third time. There simply was no address that matched the number I'd been given. There was the number right before it on one side and the number after it on the other side. But the number I was looking for didn't exist. The building was hidden in that it wasn't there. As I passed the road sign driving off I realized my mistake. This was the wrong street. The building wasn't hidden, it wasn't on that street. One street over, there was the building and address I was looking for.

Too many times things seem or actually are hidden to us. They might be hidden in plain sight, but for whatever reason we can't see them. Virtually all spiritual things are that way. Your soul is hidden. Jesus remains hidden from sight. Eternal life in heaven is still hidden. Being hidden doesn't mean not real; hidden means not visible. But the world loves the visible. So as far as the world is concerned the soul, Jesus, and heaven are things for other people. The world says we need things we can touch. Those are things you can hope in.

The Apostle Paul's letters to churches often begin with words of thanksgiving and prayer. In this letter every time Paul starts to say his prayers he can't help but think about and pray for the Colossians. But the Holy Spirit had Paul leave his recorded words general enough that you can see yourself in words written about the Colossians. His prayers center on the hidden things. But his prayer also is for things not hidden. From the second lesson we listen to Paul say...

**Thank God for you
Your hope is hidden in heaven
Your faith and love aren't hidden**

Would you believe that Paul never met the Colossians? Never saw them face to face, didn't know them individually by name, and never ate or drank with them. But listen to his words and you'd think they were people he'd known all his life. There was so much joy over the Colossians. Paul could go back into their history and recall the moment the gospel message about Christ first came to them. That moment gave them a firsthand look at the grace of God. They were made children of God and therefore brothers and sisters in Christ to Paul. Paul didn't know them personally but he knew them in Christ. Paul could thank God for them.

There was something hidden about them. The gospel of Christ brought them hope, hope far greater than themselves, hope that couldn't be destroyed. It was hope kept safe by God himself. **"We always thank God...because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven."** Nothing can touch that hope. It was in no danger of being lost. That hope was forgiveness of sins. That hope was seeing loved ones again in heaven. That hidden in heaven hope gave them something to hope for while still here on earth.

You can hope tomorrow will be cooler or hotter, depending on what you want. You can hope for no storms. You can hope for health. But you do realize there's not much to those hopes. How much impact do you have over tomorrow's temperature or storms? How much can you really count on your health? And you know there are far worse things that seem to take away hope. I don't have to mention the news both national and local. Murders, robberies, plenty of destruction and things to be anxious over. That's happening around you. What about in your own life? Divorce, hatred, worry, and greed are just some of the things that have infected your life and seem to take away hope. What hope can you really have?

Hope isn't hidden in you. Hoping in yourself is no hope at all. Don't hope on others around you either. Hope in the only thing that gives real hope. It's found here on earth in the Word of God, the Bible, the gospel. The Word of God proclaims Christ died and rose again. It proclaims the truth that cannot be changed and the truth that can never go away. It needs no updates, changes, or improvements. Rock solid news from God that is the truth, Christ Jesus is your hope. And that hope is hidden in heaven. Your hope is hidden in heaven but real for you right now.

The hidden hope that came to the Colossians and has come to you isn't exclusive. Thank God it's far more inclusive, it's universal. No secrets to keep but rather joy to share. That same hope locked away in heaven for the Colossians and for us is also locked away for others. They simply need to know. It's made known through the Word of God, the gospel of truth. The fact that it's universal gives even more confidence that it's true. God made it for everyone, and then certainly God made it for me.

In magic tricks the magic mostly comes from you being distracted. While the magician has you concentrating on something over there, they're making something else happen over here. So what looks like things suddenly disappearing or appearing is mostly tricks played on your eyes. One thing definitely hidden is your hope in Christ. It's locked away, hidden away in heaven. Safe where no magician could ever make it disappear. With no tricks though that hidden hope suddenly appears. Your faith and your love aren't hidden. They show that hope.

The Colossians were the kind of people who had a reputation that preceded them. People knew about them and so did Paul. He heard firsthand when their pastor showed up. Their pastor came with good news and bad news. The bad news was that false teachers were at work among the Colossians. Not surprising. The good news was the hidden hope was showing itself in very not hidden deeds. Paul recognized the good in the situation. In spite of pressure to give up their hope, the Colossians were growing in their hope and it was leading to stronger faith and love.

Paul bases the Colossians' love for the saints on their hidden hope. But hidden hope was showing in visible love and faith. The more that hope which was unseen grew in Christ the more their faith and love grew and were seen. And in the Colossians it was seen a lot. **"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth."** Paul could compare the gospel's work to bring about good works in the world with the gospel's work to bring about good works among the Colossians. That's quite the comparison.

It shouldn't be surprising that Christians can have disagreements or fights even with other Christians. People with differing opinions that are expressed will disagree. But how those disagreements are handled is important. Do we look down on those we disagree with? Do we speak badly about them to others secretly? Do we force our opinions on them so we get our way? Love and faith are extremely hard to display because our sinful nature wants to get its way. We sinfully want to win the disagreement. The hope which is hidden is seen as having no power or authority so visible things like love and faith don't matter much either.

The source of showing love or faith is Jesus Christ. He must be the source because he showed love to us first. In the gospel message found in the Word of God it might not seem strong or authoritative. It's like a tiny mustard seed. But in that mustard seed is the message of how God loves you and forgives your sins. Real hope bursts into your heart. Real hope that isn't weak. Real hope based on Christ's love for you. Real hope with real power that shows itself in love, in acts of faith, and in very visible ways.

Thank God and grow in love and faith. Grow in how you practice it and show it. Love other Christians and love all people. Love doesn't mean having to accept sinful things. Love means speaking up against sin. Love means speaking the truth and taking action. You have the grace of God and you want to share that. Seize every opportunity to show love and demonstrate your faith. Have your fellow Christians on your heart. Not just the ones in the pews around you but also in other parts of the world too. Pray for them, seek to help them when you can, and actively be thinking about them.

Some things will always be hidden, like an address you just can't find because you're on the wrong street. But God makes visible the important things. God's grace is hidden but your actions prompted by grace are not. God's grace leads to real hope which is also hidden in heaven. But that hidden hope leads to visible love and faith put into action. Your heart of faith is showing actions prompted by love and founded on the hope stored for you in heaven with Christ. For these we thank God for you.