

# The Power Of Our Testimony

Col 1:1 – 14

## III. - Peter Macharia

If any of you ever got to meet Peter you would understand exactly what I mean. His was a fascinating story of God at work, and a powerful proclamation of God's ability to save thru the cross. But Peter's story is just one among many stories. By chance over Lunch today I happened to switch on the TV and right there they were interviewing a man in prison who was telling his story of how messed up he was and how, just by picking up the bible and reading thru it, it convicted him and caused him finally to accept Jesus as his savior. He went on to narrate how this had changed his life, and how he was not in trouble now as had been the constant habit before, with the prison authorities.

You have heard these sorts of convicting testimonies before; we all love to hear a testimony because a testimony. In Colossae some false teachers had come into the church and were questioning the faith of the Colossians, the credibility of Epaphras, and the sufficiency of Christ work on the cross. Surprisingly, Paul in writing to the Colossians to instruct them does not begin with some heavy, theological discourse to refute these teachers – he comes to that later, but first he begins with the testimony of the Colossians themselves. Why, because a testimony is powerful, it

- has the power to **declare** the sufficiency of Christ, and to proclaim afresh the work he has done for you and I on the cross.
- has the power to **define** and clarify what has been accomplished on that cross, and to whom the glory belongs;

- and a testimony has the power to **delight** and encourage all who hear.

And by beginning with their testimony Paul was also affirming these believers that their faith in Christ was sufficient.

How was it that the Colossians testimony declared the sufficiency of Christ as against that which these false teachers taught?

### A. Their Testimony Declared (Proclaimed)

**We have heard** (vs 4, 5) – the testimony of these believers had reached even as far away as in Prison where Paul was, presumably in Rome. You get the sense in this passage that their faith had caused quite a stir, people were talking about it, and not in the negative sense, but in the positive! News of their FAITH in the Lord was a matter of enthusiastic discussion, and . . . and not only that, but have you heard of their LOVE for one another . . . in fact the other day I gather they were . . . whatever it was, their testimony was causing quite a stir in the whole region

**We have seen** (vs 6) – but their testimony was not just something to talk about, it was also visible, active, tangible. Paul could almost say – not only have we heard about your faith, but we have seen it too. Why, because the fruit of their faith was evident, their testimony was not just a matter of words, but of fruit. *“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.”*

This is the nature of the gospel – to bear fruit and grow, and this was happening among the Colossians also. It had tangible results there; one could point to actual things about them that were as a

result of their salvation. They were not the same, they were a changed people since they had embraced this gospel.

The bible has a lot to say about fruit, and as far as the gospel is concerned it talks about it bearing two types of fruit in our lives – the first is the fruit of character as in Gal 5:22 “*the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace . . .*” a matter of character. The second is in the sense of our behavior as in the fruit of good works. The one is inner, the second is outer. The first fruit is internal, and the fruit of that fruit is external in behavior. The impact of the gospel among the Colossians was not just something to talk about, it was also bearing visible fruit – whether that fruit was in character, in outward behavior or in new converts.

I’m struck by this that – allow me to ask us a question about our own testimonies – when was the last time that your testimony was a matter of great excitement and talk among others? Does your present walk with the Lord in any ways cause a stir anywhere? Or does life around you go on as though it doesn’t exist? As though you don’t have a testimony?

I can still remember going to Embu once to visit Mrs. Njeru and being overwhelmed by her sense of joy in the Lord, her sense of excitement at the little discoveries of truth she had made in her morning devotion in the Word, her gratitude to God for the little things of life, her excitement about her church, and about how God was at work in the children’s ministry there. I could not help but sense that where ever this lady went there would be a ripple of excitement at God’s wonderful majesty; that she , and her faith, would be the center of positive gossip BECAUSE of her testimony.

Our testimony is truly our most powerful first advance of the gospel; and not just about how we accepted the lord, but especially about what he is doing in your life now, what he is teaching you, what insights you have recently drawn from scripture, what you are

thanking him for. Do you ever talk about these things? Do you have a testimony? And what are the visible fruit about it, what can people really point to as a sure and definite sign that the gospel is true. Maybe 10 yrs ago when you first got saved people could point to the radical change that came over you, but what of now? In your daily behavior, your reactions to stress, to conflict, to failure, to need – can people point to anything? Or would they be forced to say from your life that the gospel is like a battery, strongest in the beginning but wears out over time and has t be thrown out. The older we are in the faith, the more private we tend to become in our faith, and the less obvious it is that the gospel is still at work in us.

The Colossians faith was “*bearing fruit and growing!*” What of yours?

**We have known** (vs 7) – the third thing that Paul could say to these Colossians was “*not only have we heard, not only have we seen the fruit, but we know why all this is so and where you heard the gospel – from Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ, – who brought it to you!*”

Allow me to come back to this that in a moment.

## **B. Their Testimony Defined (Clarified)**

In Vs 9 – 14 Paul moves onto the power of a testimony to clarify the truth of the gospel.

III – A good photo – credit to the camera!

The credit does not go to the camera. Yes, a good camera does make a difference, but it is the photographer who composes the picture, who determines the angle, who selects the moment. Many times in our testimonies we unwittingly take the credit for what

has happened, but there is another side to it – Yes, I found the Lord; but the other side is that he found me, or even that he allowed himself to be found by me. Yes, I accepted the Lord, but the other side is that he pursued me and redeemed me. To my human action is the divine side of things. How does this relate to the Colossians? Well in Vs 9 – 14, Paul shows the other side of their testimony, and brings out why it is that a testimony has the power to clarify.

There are 3 that's that he has in Vs 3 – 8 that he repeats in vs 9 – 14, but does so now not looking at the human agent, but at the divine outworking of God's purposes. We could talk about this as the otherwise hidden side of the gospel; and our testimony is not complete if it does not clarify this.

**We have heard** (vs 9) – and so to the first we have heard of your testimony – Paul points out to that that testimony is also because of the continuing prayers that have been prayed on your behalf, and that, in the spiritual realm, have caused this testimony.

**We have seen** (vs 10, 11) – to the first we have seen fruit, he points out that that fruit is also the work of diving outworking of power . . . that you are *“being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might”*

**We have known** (vs 13, 14) – and to the first we have known that Epaphras was the agent of your salvation, he points out that on the divine side your salvation was because of the Father, who qualifies us and has redeemed us thru his son, in whom we have the redemption of sins.

If the first set of verses talk about “The What” of their faith – what we have heard, seen and know; then vs 9 – 14 talk about “The Why” of their faith – the power of unseen prayer to mould and

shape them; the power of the Spirit to bear fruit in them, and the power of God's work through the cross to redeem them.

To the Colossians, who were probably wondering if they had done the right thing in following Epaphras' teaching, can you imagine how reassuring this message from Paul was? In essence he was also saying – your testimony is a sign that what Epaphras taught you, the cross of Christ, was the true gospel, the sufficient gospel, otherwise how could you explain the stir it has caused? It's also the true gospel, otherwise how could you explain the fruit it has borne? Fruit that is similar to that which it is bearing all around the world.

### **C. Their Testimony Delighted (Encouraged)**

But there was one other cause for comfort and reassurance - Paul's own encouragement. Here was Paul, in prison, in a far off place; but news of the Colossians faith and love and hope had reached him and given him reason to rejoice.

**D. Conclusion :** Let me try and bring text to bear on us. 4 things come to mind

**1. Overflowing with a testimony :** All too often this world teaches us to be a sour and cynical people. We complain about everything, and yes, we have ample reason to complain. The papers, the media, even the people around us daily give us reason upon reason to complain and to find fault. But once we embrace a spirit of complaint, we cannot really be the sorts of people who espouse a powerful testimony that has the power to convict.

You can't complain with one breathe and be a person who overflows with joy and gratitude in the next – I know, I've tried it. My heart's longing however, is that I would be so filled with

gratitude and joy that I would not be able to stop myself, that rivers of living joy would flow from me, to refresh and encourage others.

**2. The need for a powerful testimony :** All of us need to be people with powerful testimonies – testimonies that proclaim Christ as sufficient, that clarify it is he who has done it, not I; and that encourage those who know Christ, and convict those who don't know him.

**3. Faith & Love :** The 2 defining characteristics of the Colossians salvation was their faith and their love. The one vertical, the other horizontal. What are defining characteristics of your faith? In a sense these Colossian believers had caught the essence of the gospel – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. Which do you need to work on? Do you need to cultivate deeper devotion or obedience? Do you need to more actively relate with people from the perspective of Love? Or do you need to work on both? What is God saying to you?

**4. Present continuous :** Paul talks of their faith as “bearing fruit and growing”, as something that is present continuous – it's happening and it continues to happen. Look at your life however, has it plateaued or is it present continuous?

Read aloud – “The Message”

## Personal Application Questions

1. As a general response, what has God said to you this morning?
2. Which areas did he cause your heart to “burn” with?
3. What will you do about them? List 3 concrete things you can do –
4. Scripture study????
5. What, from today's sermon, can you share with a friend/colleague at work?

<sup>3</sup> We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup> because we have **HEARD** of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints -- <sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel <sup>6</sup> that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is **BEARING FRUIT/GROWING**, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. <sup>7</sup> You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of **CHRIST** on our behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we **HEARD** about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup> And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: **BEARING FRUIT /... GROWING** in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of **THE SON (CHRIST)** he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

## Christ's Sufficiency Declared By The Colossian's Testimony.

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We have heard

We have seen

We have known

### B. Their Testimony Defined (Clarified)

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We have seen

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### C. Their Testimony Delighted (Encouraged)

Paul's own encouragement