**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 16**

**Colossians 1:1-2**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. Why do you think Paul introduces himself in this way?
2. Why is it significant that he mentions Timothy?
3. What does being a “holy people” mean?
4. How should being holy affect how I see myself as a Christian and how I should act?
5. Have I been faithful to God? How have I shown mg faithfulness?

***Insight:***

Paul knew who he was. He was an apostle of Jesus by the will of God. He let this fact define his life. He did not let his critics determine how he lived. He was an apostle, God’s messenger. So he spent his life spreading God’s message completely and accurately to everyone everywhere. There were many good things he could do. But he chose to focus on doing what God had called to him to. What about us? Do we see ourselves as God sees us? Do we let this truth define our life or are we letting the world define who we are? Are we spending our lives doing what God has called us to do?

Paul mentioned Timothy in his letter. Paul would mention different brothers and sisters in his letters. Paul was an extremely talented man but his ministry was a team effort. He had many fellow workers and partners in the gospel. He developed a network of relationships so that the gospel could spread faster. Colossae was one clear example of how effective this was as it was a church started by Epaphras who Paul describes as his fellow servant. Preaching the gospel requires a team effort. Are we working as part of a team in reaching out to others?

Paul wrote to the Colossians while he was in prison in Rome. The church in Colossae was not a church Paul started and perhaps one he never visited before. Scholars say that the city was just a small town by the time Paul wrote and the church was “the least important” of all the churches Paul wrote to. But to Paul there were no insignificant churches. In God’s church there are no insignificant members. There are no insignificant needs. Let us make sure no one is neglected in our churches. These days when we are all quarantined in our homes it is easy to forget other disciples. Let’s think about everyone in our small groups every day and try to get in touch with them daily.

Christians are a holy people. To be holy is to be set apart or separate. The idea or being “apart” has greater meaning today during these times of social distancing. In a way, being a Christian is like being in *spiritual quarantine*. Although we build relationships to reach out to people in the world, we also do not allow ourselves to be “yoked with unbelievers.” There is a line we do not cross in our relationships with people outside of the church. We do not allow ourselves to conform to the pattern of the world. We do not indulge in things the world indulges in. We live our lives as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession. We do this not because we think we are better or superior. We do this because God is holy and we called to be holy just as He is holy. How holy have we been lately?

Paul also described them as being *faithful*. Faithful can mean “full of faith” or it could mean “trustworthy” or shows a “commitment to follow Jesus.” Steve Kinnard believes that it is the latter because in Colossians Paul was dealing with *syncretism* (combining different beliefs and religions). Because of its mixed population and location, Colossae was a place where religious ideas were combined and practiced together. The temptation they faced was not to reject Christianity entirely but to combine it with other beliefs. Paul was reminding them that as Christians they are to be faithful and not allow themselves to be influenced by false teachings. Even today there are many enticing philosophies or even alternative versions of Christianity. These are tempting because adhering to them makes us more “acceptable” to people. Critics would say that biblical Christianity is out of style and needs to be “updated” to fit modern thinking. This criticism is not modern at all as the first century church grappled with this very issue. As we read on in Colossians, we will see how Paul addressed this. But for now, let us begin as Paul began. Let us focus on being a holy and faithful people.

Let us remain in our spiritual quarantine during the lockdown and beyond.