

Characteristics of an Alive Church

Colossians 1:1-14

Introduction If we read carefully the opening verses of Paul's letter to the church at Colosse, we can see seven characteristics that mark an alive church even today.

I. Compelling Faith (v. 4a).

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is the bedrock for every congregation. It comes through increasing knowledge of God's Word (Romans 10:17).

B. Even though some were trying to introduce heretical doctrines to the church, the congregation needed to keep their focus on the one in whom they had originally placed their trust.

II. Compassionate Love (v. 4b).

A. Christian love is inclusive, not exclusive. "For all the saints" includes those who are not just like us (James 2:1ff).

B. Love is the measuring rod our Lord gave (John 13:34). It convinces the world of the reality of our faith.

III. Confident Hope (v. 5).

A. Such hope is anticipation with contentment. Not “pie in the sky by and by” but the presence of the Holy spirit within today, demonstrated in our faith

B. The hope of Heaven is justified by our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, and His promise to return and take us there.

IV. Changed Lives (v. 6).

A. “God’s grace in all its truth” is the answer to the human regulations false teachers were trying to insist on (see 2:8-23). Jesus condemned the Pharisees; not for how they looked on the outside, but for how they were on the inside (Matthew 23).

B. Changed lives bear fruit—more converts to the full life in Christ. Their influence was reaching “all over the world.”

V. Committed Leaders (vv. 7, 8).

A. Epaphras, a faithful leader in the Colossian church, was standing firm with Paul’s message for them. John Maxwell has said, “Everything rises; or falls upon leadership.”

B. Two qualities stand out in committed leaders: servanthood and faithfulness. Those who would lead in the church today must have both.

VI. Constant Prayers (vv. 9-11).

A. Paul had not stopped praying for the church. He asked that God grant them knowledge of His will “through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

B. This, in turn, will affect their life-style (v. 10). Endurance and patience mark the church that is truly alive.

VII. Continual Appreciation (vv. 12-14).

A. Thanking the Father is an essential element in Paul’s prayers, and should be in ours. After all, think of what He has done for us (vv. 12-14).

B. Gratitude should be an integral part of the church. As we express our appreciation to others for their good work, we again give thanks to the Lord who prompted it.