

Bearing Fruit and Growing

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[0 : 00] So tonight we're going to be talking about Colossians chapter 1, specifically verses 1-14.

! So Paul is writing these from prison. This is probably around the year A.D. 62-63. So this is 30 years after the resurrection of the Lord.

So the Christian movement has spread all throughout the Mediterranean. Paul has already had his three missionary journeys. And he's currently imprisoned in Rome. So this would be following Acts chapter 27 and 28.

And Paul is writing to Colossae. Now Colossae is a city in the country that we today know as Turkey. So Colossae is a...at one point it had been a very wealthy city, but by this point its glory days were behind it.

Colossae was next to two other cities, and those three cities kind of formed a single unit. The other ones were Laodicea and Hierapolis. So you'll hear those referenced throughout the New Testament.

[1 : 24] Those three cities oftentimes together. And it's important to know that Colossae was a mixed city. So this is a city in what we know today as Turkey, but the primary population in it was Greek.

But this is also the Roman Empire. So there are Romans living in Colossae as well. But also, when we look at the letter, we can tell Paul is also writing to people who are Jewish.

So there are Greeks, Romans, and Jews all living together. And there would have been many other people living there as well. It's a very mixed city. So it's important to know that as Paul writes this letter, Paul has never actually been to Colossae.

He's never met these people before. He'll say that in chapter 2. He'll say, you've never actually seen my face. So Paul's writing to people that he's never even met. And what is the occasion for the writing of this letter?

The occasion is that, unfortunately, false teaching has entered into the church at Colossae. Now, if you do any reading on the background of this book, oftentimes you'll find the word Gnosticism thrown around.

[2 : 32] So Gnosticism was a type of heresy that was particularly dangerous for the early church. It really arose in the 2nd century AD. And thankfully, the church defeated it.

The idea of Gnosticism was that you needed a special revelation of divine knowledge, essentially to attain enlightenment.

So there's all these normal people below who have not had this special enlightenment. And then there's a few special teachers who get this enlightenment. So they understand God on a higher plane than normal people do.

It's very dangerous, as you can see. Some people say that in Colossians, we're looking at Gnosticism. But remember, this is written in AD 62, probably.

That's about 100 years before Gnosticism arises. So this isn't Gnosticism, as the church will face it a century later. But it is something very similar. So keep this in mind.

[3 : 29] You have this heresy that focuses on special knowledge, focuses on wisdom. And it's going to make a system where you have the spiritual elite and those below who are not enlightened.

But also, this heresy in Colossae has a Jewish element to it as well. So as my brothers will continue with Colossians, looking at other chapters, you'll see that he references keeping the Sabbath.

He also references asceticism, like fasting. So it seems that in Colossae, this mixed religious city where we have Greeks, Romans, Jews, and other people, there's a distinct type of heresy here that seems to be a blend of Jewish philosophy and mysticism, excuse me, Greek philosophy and

mysticism with Jewish religious practices.

And this is particularly dangerous for the church. And this will be very significant for us because Paul is going to write to the Colossians and he is going to talk with them about the sufficiency of Christ in all things.

They don't need this extra spiritual knowledge. They don't need these rituals. They have Jesus. And all the goodness of God is found in Christ. You don't start with Christ and add extra stuff on later.

[4 : 55] You start with Christ and you finish with him because he is everything. And Paul is going to be explaining that to the Colossians. So to begin in chapter 1, Paul is going to be talking about, well, first he'll greet the Colossians.

He'll introduce himself. He'll say some really nice things about them. That's actually what we're going to be looking at tonight. He'll then pray for them. Then he's going to be a hymn to Christ, starting in verse 15.

And this all of us are familiar with. It's one of the most beautiful passages in all of the New Testament. It lifts up the Lord in such a way that we can see him in his glory for who he truly is. Starting in chapter 2, Paul will begin to rebuke the Colossians. And he'll begin to focus specifically on this false teaching. And he'll start to dismantle it piece by piece so that the Colossians can see that they have followed a lie.

And they didn't need to. They had everything that they already needed in Christ. And then in chapters 3 and 4, Paul will show the Colossians how they should live in light of who Christ is.

[6 : 02] So, that being said, let's go ahead and let's begin together. So let's look at Colossians chapter 1, verses 1 to 14. This is the word of the Lord.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world. It is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

[7 : 18] May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we love you so much. Thank you so much that we get to study your word together. Lord, we thank you for your word. Your word is true and your word is alive. And God, we thank you that your word points us to Christ, your Son.

God, we thank you for who he is. We thank you for what he has done. And God, we pray that through studying your word tonight, we might see him in his glory and we might love him more deeply and obey him completely.

We love you, Father. We ask these things in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen. Tonight, our passage is 14 verses long. We're going to break it into three sections and we're going to look at those together.

[8 : 27] And then we're going to have some application at the end of the sermon. Our central idea is this, that in Christ, Christians have everything they need to bear fruit and grow.

And bear in mind, remember, the Colossians are adding something extra onto their relationship with Christ. But we're going to see tonight that we don't need to do that. So our first section is going to be Paul's greeting in verses 1 and 2.

Then we'll look at Paul's gratitude for the Colossians in verses 3 to 8. And finally, we'll look at Paul's prayer for the Colossians in verses 9 to 14. Now, firstly, his greeting in verses 1 to 2.

Paul writes, Now, there's a lot that we can learn even from these simple verses about who we are and about what the church is.

But I want us to focus on the word saints. Because this is how he greets the Colossians. He calls them saints. Now, we take the word saint from a Latin word. It's sanctus.

[9 : 39] It means holy. And the word holy, it means to be set apart. It means to be divided from something else. And as the word holy is used throughout the Old Testament, we know that places that are holy are set apart from the normal things of the world.

But more than that, they're set apart from things like death. And more than that, they're set apart from things like sin. Holy means to be set apart. Remember, I used the word sanctus. Right now, we sit in a sanctuary.

It's a special room that's set apart. Because this is the room where we will sit and worship the Lord together. And Paul uses this word, saint.

Holy. He uses it. Not for a building. Not for a ritual. Not for implements from the temple. He uses it for people.

He uses it for the Colossians themselves. Which means Paul looks at them and says that they are set apart from the world. They are set apart from sin and death. They're different because of what Christ has done in them.

[10 : 53] But more than this, they're not just set apart from the world. They are set apart to God. To serve Him. And to be used by Him. And to glorify Him.

And guys, I think that this is really powerful. Because we are the same. We are the saints. We are God's people. Set apart from this world.

And set apart to serve Him. And it's a beautiful truth. It's not focused just on a building. It's people now. We are the temple of the Lord. We are to be a holy place in this world.

And Paul is calling these simple Colossian believers holy. And remember, these Colossians, they're not perfect.

We know that some of them that he's writing to have accepted false teaching. And still he calls them by this word. And guys, that should give us a lot of hope. Because the Colossians are not holy based on who they are.

[11 : 52] They are holy because of what Christ has done in them. But we keep looking. And we see that Paul also calls them faithful brothers. Now he's using a familial title.

He calls them brothers. He's saying that they're his family. And guys, remember what we said earlier. Paul's never even met these people. But he calls them his family members.

And you might say, well, yeah. He knows he's writing to a lot of Jewish people. And it's pretty obvious in the scripture. Jews used to call each other brothers. Okay. But remember, this is a mixed congregation.

So Paul is writing to a congregation of mixed Jews, Greeks, Romans, and others that he's never met. And he calls them family. And guys, I think that that should humble us.

Because we are each other's family. We are the family of God. And what do you do with your family? Man, you persevere with them. Yeah, sometimes they frustrate you.

[12 : 54] But you don't break relationship with your family. Family is forever. And guys, that's what our relationship is supposed to be as well. And Paul is demonstrating that by calling these people his family members.

Even though some of them have messed up. Some of them have embraced false doctrine. And instead of saying, you're out of the family. Man, he calls them brothers. Brothers. And for the ladies, you should know, in Greek, the word brother is used for a mixed group as well.

So you're included, you know. You might have a footnote that says brothers and sisters. But let's keep looking. So we've seen his greeting. He's calling these people holy.

And he's saying that they're family. And these are titles that are put on us by extension as well. Get his gratitude for them. So this is in verses 3 to 8. Now, while I was preparing the sermon, I was listening to a podcast.

And it's a podcast on parenting. And I do that so I can better judge your children. Because I don't have any of my own. Not true. It was talking about fatherhood.

[14:00] And it said that fathers are important for a variety of reasons. But one reason being mothers look at children, love them, and accept them for who they are right now.

As a 2-year-old or as a 4-year-old or as a 6-year-old. But they said fathers, they often look at their children and they love and appreciate them. Partly based on who they know this child could become.

And I thought about my own father. And that's absolutely true. I mean, I always had just this incredible relationship with my mother. Ah, she loved me so much. And her love was the most beautiful thing in my world.

But it was my father who was always calling me to be better. In many ways, I stand before you today based on what he saw in me and helped me become. So Paul is going to look at the Colossians in the next six verses.

And he is going to express his gratitude for them. And in many ways, guys, I feel like this is almost kind of that maternal side. Paul is saying thank you to the Lord for who the Colossians are right now.

[15:08] But in the next section, he's going to pray to the Lord asking that they could be more than they are right now. So we see it's both sides here are going to be combined in what Paul does.

So let's look at verses 3 to 8 together. Paul writes, So we see someone's name in here.

This is Epaphras. Now, who is this Epaphras? We know, because Paul will reference it here in Colossians, that Epaphras is from Colossae.

And so what probably happened is that Epaphras had been saved through the ministry of Paul when Paul was in Ephesus. It seems then that Epaphras took the gospel back to his hometown and he planted this church.

But then false teaching entered in. And so it seems then that Epaphras went and found Paul in prison in Rome to talk with him about the false teaching that had entered into his hometown church and to ask him, what do I do?

[16:40] In response, Paul has written this letter. So Paul is praising Epaphras here and saying he's a faithful servant on their behalf, on behalf of the Colossian Christians. Now, we notice here that Paul is praying in gratitude for this church.

And he's never met them, but he's grateful for them. And why is he grateful? It says that he is grateful specifically for their faith in Christ and of the Lord.

that they have for all the saints. So, we see that Paul is thankful for the Colossians.

And he's thankful because of their faith and because of their love. And brothers and sisters, this hit me right in the chest. Because if somebody was praying to God in gratitude for my walk, what would they say?

What defines my walk in Christ? Would it be my faith? Would it be my love? Would it be my hope? Would it be my charity? I don't know.

[17:47] But it humbled me to even sit and think. Now, additionally, I thought about this, about us personally. What would define us as a congregation?

If somebody were to evaluate us and just put two adjectives on us, perhaps, would they say faithful and loving? I sure hope so. Because we all know that there are churches who are known for being angry and judgmental.

And I don't want that to be true of us. But you notice the Colossians are praised by Paul. He's thankful for them because of their faith in Christ.

That's obvious. But also, he says their love. But it's not just love in general. It's a specific love. It's a love for the saints. The Colossians love God's people.

But more even than this, this is what hit me. Paul says your love for all the saints. Now, guys, I've been in church all my life. I know many of you have as well.

[18:53] Christians are wonderful, truly. They can also be incredibly frustrating. And I know you know this. And the Colossians would have known this, too.

They would have known that sometimes the saints can be disappointing. And yet still, the Colossians loved them. They loved all of them. He didn't say, and the love that you have for all the saints that think like you, that look like you, that act like you, that don't frustrate you.

He says they loved all the saints. And guys, I want this to be true in my life as well. And honestly, I can say by way of conviction or confession, I was convicted in preparing this because, you know, it's easy for me to look at other Christians who disagree with me or with us on secondary or tertiary

issues.

And sometimes to speak of them in condescension and judgment and anger. We just had a convention. We're fighting the same fights that we have fought for years.

These things don't seem to go away. And I know I need to stand on the truth, and I need to be fully convinced of what I believe from the Scripture. But I am to hold to the truth in love.

[20 : 10] And I am to love all of God's people. I don't have an excuse to not do that. Often in my flesh, it's easy for me not to speak of these people, other brothers and sisters in love.

And I can say that to you because it's apparent in my life, but it's something I want to get back to. It was something that came to me as I studied this. But notice also why the Colossians have faith in Christ and love for the saints.

It's because of the hope laid up for them in heaven. This is the glorious reward that awaits the people of God.

The Colossians were absolutely sure that one day they were going to see their Lord in his kingdom. And because of this, they persevered in faith and in love.

Now, their steadfast hope and what was to come impacted their daily lives in the here and now. And my question for us is whether or not this is true for us now.

[21 : 14] Because you know, Colossians have a heavenly hope, but that impacts their present. Guys, is that true of you and me? Is what we believe is coming for us on the other side of the river, is that impacting how we live right now?

Because it did for the Colossians. Is the fact that everything that we do for the Lord going to be rewarded a motivator for us in our service now?

And I, you know, I just started thinking about the people in this church. I started thinking about the remodel of our children's wing, of Julia's faithful service there.

But of all the brothers who have gotten in there and have laid wood floors on their hands and knees, on their evenings rather than being at home. Or all of the ladies who have volunteered to teach Sunday school.

Or for how John has kept our building clean all these years. Guys, we need to remember as we serve the Lord, there is a heavenly reward. For we have a hope that awaits us in heaven. And that should spur us on to serve yet more.

[22 : 16] But we keep looking. And we notice what Paul has done here in these few verses. He has commended the Colossians for their faith and for their love. But then also he references their heavenly hope.

Paul has referenced faith, hope, and love. And this is something that Paul does throughout his writing. He does this in Romans 5. He does this in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. But he does it most famously in 1 Corinthians 13.

Which reads, So now faith, hope, and love abide. These three. But the greatest is love. So we see that Paul is bringing these three together. And he's pointing out how they're apparent in the lives of the Colossians.

And where have the Colossians learned about their faith? Where have they learned about love and hope? Is it from the teachers of this false doctrine?

No. We see that they have learned about it in the gospel. Which is the word of truth. Now we need to remember this in our day. Because the Colossians, they had the gospel.

[23 : 23] They had the word of truth. And they were tempted to add something extra to it. Guys, the gospel is never obsolete. It is never insufficient.

It never needs to be improved. We're not waiting on the release of gospel version 2.0. It doesn't need to be changed to fit our culture.

All the gospel needs to be is preached boldly and faithfully. And it will have effect. Because God has chosen to use the preaching of the cross.

Not the methods of men to expand his kingdom. And just for clarity, the gospel is the good news. That sinners like us can be saved by faith alone.

And the perfect life. Atoning death and victorious resurrection of Jesus, the son of God. Now this message is as offensive today in our age as it was 2,000 years ago in theirs.

[24 : 19] Because the preaching of the cross is and always will be foolishness to those who do not believe. But to those who do believe, it will always be the power of God unto salvation.

So let's never try to move past the gospel. Let's never try to modify it. Let's hold on to it and proclaim it boldly. But we see in verse 6, it says, Which has come to you as indeed in the whole world that is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you.

Since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. Now we see here that the gospel is bearing fruit and increasing among the Colossians.

Now it's very important here that we notice that the Colossians bore fruit after they put their faith in Christ. It's not a simultaneous event.

The gospel came and the Colossians accepted it. Meaning that they had salvation. And because of this, they bore fruit. It was not the other way around. It was not that they were bearing fruit and because of this, God accepted them.

[25 : 26] No, no, no. If we do that, then we're completely off base. We believe. And because we have believed, we bear fruit. Because we have believed, there are good works in our lives. We see that Paul uses the word increase here.

At least in my translation. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Now the word increase, it's a different way to translate the word grow. So we have something that is growing, that's also giving off fruit.

Paul's using a metaphor here. He's talking about a tree. And this is going to be important later. And you see that they're giving off fruit and they're giving off fruit. These are verbs that are continual.

So this is not a one-time thing. They didn't give off one piece of fruit and they didn't grow one time.

These verbs are describing continual activity. The Colossians are continuing to give off fruit and they're continuing to grow.

Now firstly, fruit. The faith of the Colossians was a faith that worked. They didn't just receive the gospel and keep it for themselves. Rather, they received the gospel. And it was obvious because they had fruit in their lives.

[26 : 36] This makes me think of James 2, verse 17. The faith without works is dead. And looking at the faith of the Colossians, it was obvious that their faith was not dead because they had fruit.

But their faith was also a faith that grew. The gospel was growing amongst the Colossians. And guys, you think about it. The older a tree gets, the taller and thicker its trunk gets.

The deeper its roots go. And this means that the tree is strengthened against storms that are going to come its way. And guys, this was true of the Colossians.

There was a developing depth, a developing maturity in their Christian walk. A commentator said that the two terms, producing fruit and growing, speak respectively of the inner working and the outward extension of the gospel.

So then, to us, what does the reception of the gospel look like in our lives? Have we ornamented the profession of belief in Christ by a steady stream of good works?

[27 : 49] By a steady stream of opportunities for evangelism? Or is the canopy of our tree, is it bare? Is there no fruit up there? Or what about growth?

Has the gospel grown deep roots in our hearts through study and application of God's word and prayer? So that we are not shaken by the storms of this life. Or are we pushed into despair at the inevitable trials that come to us?

And notice, guys, here, it's not just one or the other. It's not that the tree either bears fruit or it grows. It's doing both. And it's doing both simultaneously.

The bigger this tree gets, the more fruit that this tree is going to give off. And guys, I want you to see how Paul describes the gospel in verse 6. He says it's the grace of God in truth.

Now, grace is God's undeserved favor given to sinners like us. And truth is the quality of something that corresponds to reality. The truth in this case is that we and the Colossians and all men everywhere were dead in our trespasses and sins.

[29 : 03] We had rebelled totally and completely against God. And the penalty for this was our judgment and our conscious, eternal destruction. This is the truth.

And it is horrible. It's a terrifying truth. But because God is gracious, we were delivered through Christ from this fate.

But notice that the Colossians were blessed after they understood God's grace and truth. Since God sets reality because God is reality, this means that the Colossians understood what God was saying and accepted it on God's sins.

Our culture wants a gracious God who will love them despite their sins. Katie and I were in St. Louis yesterday. And we're driving and we just so happened to drive by Pride Fest 2023.

And unfortunately, we saw things that we will never be able to forget. It was horrible. And we got out of St. Louis this morning before the Pride parade began. If you were to talk with those people, they want a God who's loving, a God who's accepting.

[30 : 10] They want a God who's gracious. But they don't want a God of truth. They do not want to accept God or come to Him on His terms. They want to craft God into their image.

And guys, we are not allowed to do that. God is a God who saves. But He saves on His terms and He saves His way. And that is only through faith and repentance in Christ Jesus.

There is no other way. Now in closing this section out, two things to notice. First, Paul's the honor that he shows to Epaphras.

He calls him a faithful servant. And I just wanted to point this out because Paul didn't have to do this, but Paul is showing honor to his friend and to another believer. And guys, I want that to be true of us.

I want us to be people who are quick to honor what is good in each other. But also you see here that Epaphras is made known to Paul their love in the Spirit.

[31 : 12] So the Holy Spirit is here referenced. So we see the Holy Spirit in verse 8. And then we see that the Son is referenced in verse 1. And then we see God our Father in verse 2.

So guys, you might not have noticed it. You've read over this before. But we see the Father and we see the Holy Spirit in this passage. We see the entirety of the Blessed Trinity here on display for us. We don't have time to really develop that. We'll move on. But I just want you to know that it's there. So we've read Paul's greeting to the Colossians. We've also read of his gratitude to God for the things that he sees in them that are wonderful.

Now we're going to look at Paul's prayer for them. And this is verses 9 to 14. And guys, remember going back to what we said earlier. The section we just talked about, I think, is Paul expressing his gratitude, his love for the Colossians as they are.

But now this is Paul praying to God for what he knows the Colossians need and what he knows they could become. This section is dense.

[32 : 22] Verses 9 to 13 in Greek are one sentence. One sentence with 218 words in it. There's a lot going on, which means all of these ideas are stacked on top of each other and interconnected.

We are going to do our absolute best to get through this together. We will not be able to touch on everything, so please bear with me. And so we see Paul firstly in verse 9. He says, And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.

Now remember, Paul's in prison. And rather than feeling like he is unable to be involved spiritually in the lives of the Colossians, he is actively praying for them. Now Paul's incredible.

If you let Paul loose, all he's going to do is walk around and evangelize and plant churches. So if you imprison Paul, he's just going to pray without ceasing and write epistles.

For him to live is Christ and for him to die is gain. Paul wins no matter what you do to him. And I want to be like the Apostle Paul. And Paul says, Paul wants the Colossians to know the desires that God has for them and to literally be filled up with this knowledge.

[33 : 39] Now remember, the heresy in Colossae was something that was really focused on knowledge and wisdom. This is like special knowledge, special wisdom. And Paul wants them to know that they don't need this special knowledge and wisdom.

They need the knowledge of God's will in Christ. Also, he's going to use the word filled. And that's going to be a word that is used frequently throughout Colossians. So look for that word as you read the letter.

So, how do we get this knowledge of God's will? I think this is the knowledge that Paul is praying for. I think first and foremost, this is the knowledge that's given to us.

It made me think of John 16, verses 12 to 15. Jesus said, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

[34 : 42] All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. So we know that to be led into knowledge of God's will, man, this is an act of the Holy

Spirit, because the Holy Spirit wants us to know what God wants for us.

But also, guys, what about the reading of the word, which is what the Spirit illuminates for us? What about meditation upon God's word? What about time spent in prayer?

And guys, what about time spent discussing God's will with other people that have also been saved and transformed by God? Now, these are the paths that we must walk if we want to be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

But let's look at verse 10. Paul says, So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Now, we see in verse 10 the purpose of Paul's request. Why does he want them to be filled with the knowledge of God's will? Is it just so they'll be, like, really theologically solid, and that's it?

[35 : 44] No. No. We see so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Paul is not asking just for theological knowledge for the Colossians.

He's asking for theological knowledge that will lead to obedience. Now, guys, I have had the misfortune in some senses of going to seminary.

And one of the things that's unfortunate about that is I have seen men who are brilliant, men who know more about the Scripture than I ever will, men who can literally read it in a handful of languages.

Unbelievable. And yet, I've seen some of these men who did not walk in obedience to the Lord. It was like modern Pharisees, but they were Southern Baptists.

Unbelievable. I saw professors who were brilliant and yet unkind, who knew all the answers, but somehow they didn't care at all about the lives of their students.

[36 : 42] It killed me sometimes to see this. And this is not what Paul wants for the Colossians. He does not want them just to know, to have a knowledge of the will of God, and not do anything with it.

He wants it to come out in their walk. There is a reason that he wants them to know, so that they can obey the Lord. Now, notice in verse 10, Paul will repeat the same metaphor he's already used in verse 6.

He's going to be talking again about a tree. In the same way that the gospel has grown in the lives of the Colossians and born fruit, their knowledge of God's will is supposed to be demonstrated in service for God and in growth and knowledge of him.

Like a tree that continues to grow, laying on one ring after another, after another, year after year. Paul wants the knowledge of the Colossians to grow.

And brothers and sisters, I ask, is that true of us? Are we continuing to bear fruit? And with each passing year, are we continuing to grow deeper in our knowledge of God and of his will?

[37 : 46] We don't ever hit a point where we know enough. Every single year, we as believers should be growing. We should be increasing. And I ask you this. Think about it.

Are you growing deeper in your faith? Because if not, don't leave this building without talking to one of our pastors about a desire to grow and asking them, how can I go deeper in my faith?

And guys, we see in verse 11 that the Colossians are supposed to be strengthened with all power, glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

So he wants the Colossians to be strong. But he doesn't just want them to be strong. He wants them to be strong so that they can endure with joy.

Brothers and sisters, this tells me that just like now, back then, there were hardships in life. These Christians had trials in their lives right at that moment.

[38 : 51] And there were trials that were coming. And Paul wants them to be able to endure these trials in patience and in joy. The Lord does not want us just to be able to endure suffering.

He wants us to be able to endure it joyfully. It reminds me of Paul who wrote that he was sorrowful always. He was sorrowful but always rejoicing. And guys, how can we do this?

How can we suffer and yet have joy? We can do this because we know who is sovereignly in control of our circumstances. And that includes the suffering in our own lives.

We also know that all things, and I repeat, all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purposes. And then also we know that we have a certainty of a heavenly reward.

And this is something that Paul's gone back to earlier, talking about hope. Beloved, your relationship with God will not get you out of suffering in this life. But it will get you through it.

[39 : 57] Now, in closing, this final section.

It's pretty dense. We're going to move through it. Paul's giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

Now, Paul is going to stack some Greek verbs, one on top of the other. And what's important for you to know is that qualified, delivered, and transferred, all of these verbs refer to one-time action. So this is something that was done one time in the past. It's not something that needs to be repeated because he's describing their salvation experience. This isn't a process of salvation. God saved them, and these people are his now. These are the saints. And guys, that's something that should be encouraging to us because we look at the Colossians, and the Colossians are not perfect, but we know that they have been qualified, by God, not based on anything they've done. [41 : 09] They hadn't qualified themselves. God qualified them. And what did he qualify them to? To share in the inheritance of the saints in light. So this word inheritance, I thought of one of our, like, an inheritance in our culture, you know, which is a big pile of money, probably a car, and then a bunch of old stuff, you know, and it kind of gets divvied up and divided.

That's not what Paul's referencing here by inheritance. The inheritance. He's referencing back to the people of Israel entering into the promised land. And every tribe had its inheritance. This is the same word that's used to describe the conquest of Israel. And so he's saying, guys, that we, we Gentile Christians, the Colossians and us 2,000 years later, we have a share in the promised land.

And that's powerful. And notice it's a kingdom of light. And he has delivered us from the domain of darkness. Now, guys, this word delivered, it can be rescued.

It can also mean to be liberated. Liberation. I was thinking about this. I saw a video last year because I'm really interested in the war in Russia and Ukraine.

[42 : 24] Ukraine did a counteroffensive and recaptured a bunch of land. And I saw this video that hit me right in the heart, and I've never forgotten it. These two Ukrainian soldiers walk up, and they've been in combat.

They're wearing their fatigues. They have body armor on. They have grenades and magazines. They have their weapons. And this Ukrainian woman from a village who had just been liberated runs out to them, and she can't speak.

All she can do is hug one of them, and she weeps. She's been liberated. She's been set free from darkness. And she couldn't do it herself. They came and did it for her.

She's been delivered. And, guys, it's the same for us. We have been delivered from the domain of darkness. We couldn't do it on our own. God did it through Christ on our behalf.

And you see that he's transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. Now, this word transferred, really a cool idea, a really interesting idea. It was used for colonists who were picked up from one city and then moved and planted in another city.

[43 : 29] And that's true of us. We've been taken from the realm of darkness, and we have been brought into the kingdom of light. And this means that we have a kingdom now that we are a part of.

It also means, then, that we have a king. And this is Jesus Christ, our Lord. And, guys, we need to do what he says because we are in his kingdom. He has brought us in here. It's full of light and life and hope and joy.

He's delivered us from death and darkness and chaos. And that means that we need to serve him well. We see, Paul writes, speaking of Christ, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Now, the idea of redemption is that we have been bought. We have been bought with a price out of slavery. But what was this redemption? You see it right there.

It was the forgiveness of our sins. Which, guys, that means that the biggest problem any of us had wasn't that we were poor. It wasn't that we had physical problems. The biggest problem any of us ever had was that we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

[44 : 38] In the slave market of sin, we were sitting there all chained up. We had no hope. But we've been forgiven. And we've been redeemed. And this is what God has done for us in Christ.

So, in closing, I want you to think about who you are and what you have in Christ. Guys, you have been delivered.

You have been transferred. You have been forgiven. You have been redeemed. All of these truths that are true of the Colossians are true of us as well because of what Christ has done for us.

So, I want you guys to think about this. That we, like the Colossians, have no reason to ever go looking for some additional spiritual pathway outside of Jesus.

Because in Christ, just like we said at the beginning of this message, we have everything we need to bear fruit and grow. So, now in application, just a few questions.

[45 : 50] I ask you, in light of what we've read today, to examine your lives. Are you producing fruit? What could you do to produce more?

I also ask you, like a tree that grows, is your faith growing? And if not, what change could you make so that your faith would grow and go deeper and be more solid for the future?

And finally, after hearing this sermon, you don't think there's ever been a time when you were transferred from the domain of darkness through faith in Christ.

I don't want you to leave this building without talking with me or any of our pastors. Because that is the most important thing that you could ever do. So, guys, thank you so much for your attention.

Would you pray with me? Lord, we love you. Thank you for your word. It's holy. It's good. It's true. It's powerful. Father, help us not to be people who just hear the word.

[47 : 00] But, Lord, rather we ask that you help us to be people who also obey it. And help us, Lord, not only to obey it, but to delight in obeying it. God, I pray for all of us this week as you send us out.

Lord, I pray that we would go out into the domain of darkness and indeed that we would be ambassadors for you. We love you, Father. We bless you. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for your Holy Spirit.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.