

fertilize and shine the light of God's grace and love to produce **"every good work"** in the Christian's life.

Notice in v. 10 that Paul prays that the Colossians may **"grow by means of the knowledge of God."** What happens when a fruit tree stops growing and stops bearing fruit? That tree is chopped down for firewood. Every Christian needs to make regular and consistent use of the Word of God so that the Law can show us our sin and prune away those attitudes and actions that are not in line with God's will, and so that the Gospel can bring forth the fruits of faith and love.

According to Paul's prayer, every Christian needs to make continued use of the word of God so that he may grow and not become firewood! We are all immature Christians in one way or another. None of us knows God love or His will perfectly. If we did, we would never be afraid of anything, and we would always be thankful in everything! We all need to grow by the knowledge of God's Word

Further, Paul prays in v. 11 that the Colossian Christians might be **"strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy."** Look at the damage done to our fruit trees in the south when high winds and hail come whipping in. Those trees that stand tall and strong are only those that are well rooted and not dead or dying! So also only the consistent use of the "knowledge of God" in His word helps us remain strong and firm in faith when the storms of family problems, illness, and economic stress come whipping in.

At the beginning of his letter to the Colossian congregation, Paul addresses them as **"the saints and faithful brethren in Christ."** I address you the same way, for you are saints and faithful brethren in Christ. But Whom do we have to thank for being God's "holy ones" and "faithful" brethren in Christ? Certainly not ourselves, but God! He alone has performed this miracle. He alone has rescued us from the deep, dark dungeon of the Devil's domain, and **"conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."** He alone has rooted the Gospel in our hearts that bears fruit in our lives.

May God grant His continued gracious operation in us by His Word, so that this congregation may be known as those who thank God alone for the Gospel's growth, that He may have the praise and glory! Amen.

7/29/12 T8

INI

Colossians 1:3-14

Dear fellow redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Church's have reputations, don't they? You can go into any neighborhood or community and ask what the people know about this or that church. You will hear things like: "Oh that's the church where the people go who have money." Or, "That's the church where there was that scandal some years back." Or, "That's the church that is always fighting over something."

How do you want to be known as a congregation in our community? Surely, we would like to be talked about the way Paul talks about the Colossians. Paul addresses them as **"saints and faithful brethren in Christ,"** in the opening verses. Then in vs. 3 and 4 Paul mentions that ever since he and Timothy had heard of the congregation's faith in Christ and of their love for all the saints, they had been giving **"thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always"** for them.

From the beginning Paul wants to draw the attention of these faithful Christians to the great things God has given to them in Christ. Therefore, as we seek a blessing for ourselves from this message to the church in Colossae, we say

THANKS BE TO GOD FOR THE GOSPEL'S GROWTH!

I.

Verses 3-8 are really one long sentence in the original Greek. These verses speak of how "The Gospel takes root in our hearts." Notice first how often the verb, **"heard"** is found in vs. 4-9. All people, including Christians have "reputations" because people "hear" about them. Paul and Timothy could not have given thanks for the faith and love that the Colossians demonstrated, if they had not heard about it. They had indeed heard from others about the reputation of this church. According to v. 8, their **"faithful"** pastor, Epaphras, had also reported to Paul and Timothy concerning this congregation's "love in the Spirit." (v.8)

But this could not have been the reputation of the "faithful" Christians in Colossae, unless the congregation, had first **"heard"** the Gospel of Christ. So Paul writes in vs. 4-5 that they also gave thanks to God **"because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the**

Gospel, which has come to you as also in all the world – bringing forth fruit and growing – as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras.

The Colossians had learned from the preaching of Epaphras, who had been faithful in his ministry of Christ to them. They had both **“heard and knew the grace of God” in “the truth of the Gospel.”** As this Gospel took root in their hearts they “knew” and believed in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, by Whose blood they had been redeemed from all sins and forgiven. (Cf. v. 14) The **“the hope” of heaven was “laid up for them”!** (v. 5)

But what about us? As your pastor, am I not able to give thanks to God that the Gospel of the truth in Christ has also taken root in your hearts? Do I not also speak of the faith and love demonstrated by this congregation because of the hope of heaven given to you by the hearing of the Gospel, even as Epaphras did concerning the Colossian congregation? Absolutely – many times through the years I have done exactly that!

Why shouldn’t the power of the Gospel work in you what it did in the Colossian Christians? The true Gospel of Christ has not changed. Notice that Paul says in v. 6 that the **“the truth of the Gospel is bearing its fruit and growing” also in all the world.”** The faith and hope of the Colossians was being threatened by little sects that preached a false gospel, that was really law, demanding a show of super-religiosity and a show of love by the observance of certain, man-made rules.

To this very day, there are legalistic sects and false religions scattered in all the neighborhoods and communities of the world. They all have their own self-chosen ways to gain acceptance with God. But the “word of the truth of the Gospel of free Grace in Christ is the same, unchanging message in all the world. When this message is preached “in truth” by faithful pastors like Epaphras, Timothy, and Paul, it says: Sinners have redemption in the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of heaven, apart from any religious works of their own!

By the grace of God, this congregation, like the Colossians, has been blessed with faithful ministers of this Gospel through the years. I do not say this to praise my ministry or some goodness in

you, but the power of the Gospel in the hearts of those who hear and believe it. This Gospel is still present “among you,” as it was with the Colossians.

To praise the powerful working of this Gospel in faithful Christians, Paul says that it **“is bringing forth fruit and growing.”**

He is praising the power within the Gospel seed. He says that wherever the truth of the Gospel is planted in all the world, and believed, it takes root so that it **“is growing and producing” the “fruit”** of faith and love which the Colossians were known for and which Paul had heard about. **Thanks be to God that His Gospel truth has taken root in also in our hearts!**

II.

“For this reason,” Paul continues in v. 9, **“we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. . . .”** Prayer for the Colossians must continue unceasingly, because of the false teaching that threatened to poison the Gospel root in their hearts! As it was back then, so it is today: The false teachers suggest that the truth of the Gospel rooted in our hearts allows us to take a few “baby steps,” but if we want a full knowledge and higher wisdom for our Christian life, then we need to follow their teachings and programs.

But Paul gives thanks for the Gospel’s growth because it bears fruit in our lives. What does he pray for unceasingly for the Colossians? – read with me, beginning in the middle of v. 9: **“that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and growing by means of the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”**

Because of the Gospel truth that has taken root in our hearts through faith in Christ, Paul says in v. 12 that **“the Father” has already qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”** The errors of false teachers in all generations bring darkness, not light; emptiness, not fullness; foolishness, not wisdom; the works of the law, not the fruit of the Gospel! Once the Gospel takes root in the believer’s heart, it continues to water,