

Colossians 1:1-8

Announcements:

- Charlie Kirk memorial (12:00pm) - world shaking event (*I will stand on side of truth*)
 - John 12:23-26 - "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; **but if it dies, it produces much grain**. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, **him My Father will honor.**"
- Baby Dedication (2nd service) - Drew/Lauren Gibson: Owen(5yrs), Norah(3yrs), Micah(11mo).
- Interns on stage (Josh, Matt, Kate, Chara) - till the end of the year...

Please open to the Book of Colossians ("Go eat pop corn" - GEPC)

- Great Sunday, if this is your first one... (Colossians)
- Chris is Supreme & Sufficient. He is "**head of creation/church**" - We are Complete in Him
 - Heresies: Philosophy (Greek), Legalism (Hebrew); Carnality (the fleshworld)
 - Put on the New Man: Marriage, children, work, community...
 - **1-2, 3-4**: Doctrine = Duty. Belief = Behavior. Right think = Right living.

Exalting Christ & the Gospel

Message Title: Bringing Forth Fruit!

- Gospel Planted (verses 1-2)
- Gospel Watered (verses 3-5a)
- Gospel Harvested (verses 5b-8)

The gospel, like a seed, is planted, watered, and harvested, producing spiritual fruit in the lives of believers and towards the world.

Gospel Planted (verses 1-2)

V. 1 - Paul

- Common letter in the ancient world to announce name up front (voicemail vs email)
- There's a whole sermon in itself: Saul to Paul... (Road to Damascus)
- One of the Prison epistles (1st imprisonment). Clear from chapter 4. Rome around **AD 60-62**.
- Saulos = *desired* | Paulos = *little/small* = big change! Hebrew vs greek
- His life is a massive story of redemption. Even vicious murderers are not beyond salvation.
- Called as a chosen vessel to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

V. 1 - An apostle of Jesus Christ

- Apostolos = "sent out one" (official vs broader use) (share view - Eph 2:20 / Acts 1:21-22)
- OT Septuagint use = "Shaluach" (from "Shalach" = "to send") used of the prophets (called to speak and act in the name of the Lord) - they were dispatched or sent forth with authority.
- Ambassador is a good modern synonym as well - Sent out as an official representative with credentials and authority of the sending entity...

- **Of Jesus Christ** = the **most important part!**

V. 1 - By the **will of God**

- A **specific calling; divine commissioning**, not self-appointed.

V. 1 - And **Timothy** our brother

- Good Ole **Timoteo with his tummy** problems!
- **Timotheos** = "honoring God"
- **Our brother (adelphos)** = he's one of us. Timothy is **with Paul at the time of writing** in prison.
- One of, maybe even, **Paul's closest ministry partners**. **No one else, like minded (Phil 2)**
- A **younger disciple** of Paul. Paul **could rely on Timothy** to leave behind or send out to share his own very heart for ministry. **Rare & a blessing** when it happens. **Jonathan & armor bearer. Buddy system!** (**Jeuss sent them out in two's** (council, accountability, encouragement...))
- Do you have someone who you would call your spiritual leader/mentor? Someone under you?

When we get to **chapter 4**, many **other ministry companions...** (I'd like to mention 1-2 others now)

V. 7 - **Epaphras**, our dear **fellow servant**, who is a **faithful minister of Christ**

- Bringing in **Epaphras** helps us get the context a little better.
- It appears from **Col 2:1** that **Paul never planted/visited** this church (not listed in Book of Acts)
- **Acts 19:9-10, NIV** - "Paul took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia [modern day Turkey] heard the word of the Lord."
- **Ephesus, Tyrannus (Saurus Rex!) - Epaphras/Philemon** likely took to Colosse (**map!**)
- **Epaphras** = **Col 4:12** (a hometown kid). **Brought the Gospel and ministered faithfully.**
- A good lesson here. The **Gospel does not need** a ton of things (buildings, polices, etc)
- Later, **Epaphras** went and **visited Paul in prison in Rome**, then took this letter back.
 - **Doctrinal concerns? Likely!** - Looking for **Aposltolic confirmation**.
- **Philemon 1:23** - "**Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you**" (remained a while)
- **Dear (Agapetos)** - dearly beloved = **No bitterness or jealousy** in the Apostle Paul.
- **Fellow bondservant** ((**sundoulos**: sun = with + **doulos** = servant) = a **willing, fellow slave**)
- **Faithful minister (pistos diakonos)** - language implies a **dedicated, trusted leader/servant**
 - **Great qualities!** Does this describe **you and I?** So we speak of each other this way?

V. 2 - To the **saints** and **faithful brethren**

- **Two descriptors!**
- **Saints (Hagios)** = sanctified, set apart for a purpose. **No longer ordinary**. (**Hebrew = Qadosh**)
- **OT: Israel (land/people), Jerusalem, Tabernacle, temple, furnishings, utensils, Shabat, tithes, etc**
- **OT: The church (saints)** - **Different from the world. Belonging to God**. Called out/set apart.
 - There is **no special class** of Christian saints. Not bestowed upon death.
 - You don't earn it through works. You're declared it by grace
 - **Every true Christian is a saint**. **You're either a saint or you aint!** (start calling each other "saint so and so"...) (**positional** (one time) | **progressive** (ongoing) **sanctification**)
- **Faithful brethren** = (**pistos adelphos**) - All born of the same womb and committed to the same cause. **(A Family!)**
 - **Like a sports team putting on the same jersey; part of something bigger.**
 - Though Paul never met them, he heard reports (in a moment (v. 4))

V. 2 - In Christ | in Colosse

- **Two locations!**
- Spiritually, In Christ - This is the sphere of their existence. **Planted** as a Gospel community!
- This is who they are now. *The old has gone / new has come.* They are now **IN CHRIST**
- **The problem** is they are also, physically, in Colossae. This is where the tension is found.
- Colosse was a Greek city on a big trade route with many influences (*Greek and Jew*)
- Spiritual climate? A melting pot with many influences. (*will dig in as we progress*)
- **Dual Citizenship** - *You and I!* A Christian always exists in two realms/spheres/realities.
- In this world we move from place to place, person to person, but wherever and with whomever, we are always in Christ. Citizens of another world, yet holding an address here as pilgrims.
 - **Outward circumstances** don't control our peace or joy. Being **In Christ** does.
 - We can endure pain, opposition, work, difficulty with faith and hope as unto the Lord.

Sadly, Colosse didn't carry on. It declined significantly after the early Byzantine period and was largely abandoned by the Middle Ages. Muslim stronghold in Honaz, Turkey (99% muslim)

V. 2 - Grace to you and peace from God our father

- **Two greetings!** Grace and Peace (Common Pauline language)
- Grace (*Charis*) = *unmerited favor (from "chairō" = rejoice, charity)* - *very fitting, we all need it!*
"The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out." (DL Moody)
Grace illustrates God bending down to a lost humanity in His loving compassion.
- Peace (*Eirene*) = *Serenity / completeness from God.* (*cushion of the sea*)
- Blending Greek and Hebrew greetings = *Favor (charis) and completeness (Shalom)*
- Actually, it is very much rooted in the OT. *Numbers 6:24-26* - *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."*
 - Aaronic Benediction = *cHanan & Shalom* = **Foundational to covenant relationship!**
- In the NT - Always in that order. Grace of God before Peace *with* God (then, peace *of* God).
- Humanity's tragedy is seeking peace apart from God: *material, pleasure, comfort, fame, etc.*
- True Grace & True Peace is only found in a relationship with **God, Our Father**.
- *John 14:26-27* - *"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*
- Grace & Peace - given by the Father; accomplished by the Son; experienced by the Spirit

The Colossian church had been planted as a Gospel community. Brothers & sisters **in Christ**.

Gospel Watered (verses 3-5a)

Here, Paul encourages their faith! Typical of Paul to praise the church before exhorting them.

V. 3 - We give thanks

- Giving thanks (*eucharisteo*) = gratitude. (*yadah*) = giving thanks in prayer = **OT worship**.

V. 3 - To the **God and Father** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**

- This is where thanks is directed. Even Jesus did. (**Feeding the multitudes, Last Supper, etc**).

V. 3 - **Praying always** for you

- **Common for Paul**. **Pray without ceasing. Pray with thanksgiving. In all things give thanks.**
- **Always** - means it was **a lifestyle**. Not sporadic. Living with an attitude of prayer.
- **For you** - *What would you pray for in this moment if you were Paul? He's in a cold prison. Food? Safety? Deliverance? Personal, selfish prayers?*
 - Paul prays and gives thanks for **a group of believers he's never met**. **Thanking God** for **growth in others**. **Develop this habit**: At dinner... Prayer list... Daily journal...
- *When you find out someone has been praying for you? Wow! **The Apostle Paul!***

When did Paul start praying for this church?

V. 4 - **Since we heard** = when **Epaphras came with news to Rome**.

Vv. 4-5 - **Faith, Hope, and Love** - This is the Apostle's short way of **defining genuine Christianity**.

V. 4 - Your **faith** in Christ Jesus

- **Faith (pistis)** = not just mental belief. Not just emotional concern, but **resting fully. Deep trust**.
 - The kind that **Abraham had in Genesis 15** (*God promises land and descendents*) - His faith was accounted to Him as righteousness.
- **In Jesus Christ** - this is (He) the **object of our faith**. It's a specific kind of faith. When someone says they have **faith** - **Faith in what? Faith in who? In Christ, and Christ alone**. (*this is something that **Charlie Kirk lived for** - this is what people are flooding to church looking for*)
 - Romans 10:17 - *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*
 - **Saved by faith, then walk by faith. (seek to grow in this)**

V. 4 - And of your **love** for all the saints

- **Love (agape)** = Not a fluffy, ambiguous concept (*this word gets so abused*) - but a **dedicated sacrificial living**. **True saving faith in Christ must result in a love for God's people**.
 - Rooted in **Old Testament Covenant** Jesus summary = **Love God, Love people**.
- Love is **an evidence of salvation**. John 13:35 - *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*
- **All the saints** = *How many? Yes, **all**. Even what's his name, who did that thing?* Yep. We've all met people who claim to be devout Christians, but lack this key part of the Christian faith.
 - This is what made the **early church so enticing to the world**. **Jew and Greek, Male and Female, Slave and Free** - all living **rich koinonia together**. **One in Christ**.
 - **Present tense**: **Rooted in love, then walk in love. (seek to grow in this)**

V. 5(a) - Because of the **hope** which is laid up (**reserved**) for you in heaven

- **Hope (elpis)** = a **confident expectation. A blessed assurance**. It's the opposite of despair.
 - Rooted in **OT Theology** = (**Qavah**) to wait on, look eagerly for, expect (**Is: 40-31**)
- This hope is **laid up (apokeimai)** = *Tucked away. Reserved. Stored for safe keeping. **Locked in the vault!** **Death is just a doorway into resurrection life**. We have everything to look forward to. For the believer, **the best is yet to come**.*

- 1 Peter 1:3-5 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to **an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." - **Let's go!**
- This **hope of heaven** is not just a distant thing that we sit and wait for, it **changes us here and now**. Titus 2:11-13 - "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age**, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"

Worldly people are without hope, **because they are without God**. Those outside Christ, have no hope. Living only for the here and now. We look at the world's struggles and know it will end. We help others.

How do you know a Gospel community is growing in sanctification? **Faith, Hope, and love**. This leads to a harvest of righteousness...

Gospel Harvested (verses 5b-8)

In this final opening section, The Apostle Paul **celebrates the Gospel's success** and fruit among them

V. 5(b) - Of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel

- Here, the **Gospel** is defined as the **Word of truth**. For the early church, this **cost them their lives**. Stephen was stoned, James was beheaded. Original Apostles, Polycarp, **Charlie Kirk**.
- Interesting that **love is not separated from truth**. It's deeply connected. **Truth confronts**. That's why people were killed. **It confronts what is false, and it confronts the flesh**.
- **Jesus is the truth. (John 14:6)**. **John 17 = Jesus prays**. *Given the word. The world hates them. Not of this world. Send into the world.*
 - John 17:17 - "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."
 - **You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free! Whom the son sets free!**
- Being **anchored in the truth of the Gospel** is **THE MOST IMPORTANT** thing in this life. **Spiritual war**.
- **Gospel (euangelion) = good news! Glad tidings!** Salvation is available to lost sinners of which I am one...

V. 6 - Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world

- Present among you (*as if a traveler has come to them*) and is **doing a work among you**. Paul can testify **it's happening everywhere! (hyperbole)** (*before printing presses, radios, internet, airplanes*) - a **few uneducated fishermen in an upper room turned the world upside down!**
- Consider how **a single dandelion seed can float on the wind**, land far away, and then multiply into a whole field of yellow blooms. The gospel is like that—what starts small in one heart or city can spread across the world, bringing life, beauty, and transformation everywhere it takes root.

The word of truth has life in it (Heb 4:12). Like a seed that gets planted and brings forth substance!

V. 6 - And is bringing forth fruit

- **Is bringing forth** - present and active among them. The Greek reads **constant and ongoing**.
- **Bearing fruit** (*karpophoreo + auxano*) = agriculture abundance. A mighty, multiplying harvest.
- There's a potential connection here to **Genesis 1:28 - "Be fruitful and multiply" (creation mandate)**
 - General to humanity (physical children)
 - Israel called to be fruitful in the land (spiritual children)
 - The Church is called to be fruitful in the world (Gospel)
 - **What Adam failed to accomplish, Christ and His gospel achieves.**
 - **The Gospel now fulfills this creational and covenantal blessing.**

A single seed can produce thousands of apples. That's how a family is changed. A city. A nation.
Exponential growth - from Jersauelm to the world.

The **Word of truth** has life in it and promotes growth!

- Isaiah 55:10-11 - "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, ...and waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."
- **There is power and life in God's Word!**

V. 6 - **As it is also among you**

- Paul has **heard** this life changing Gospel work that is happening around the world is "**among them**" - To hear this from the great Apostle Paul. that the **harvest is confirmed at our church!**

V. 6 - Since the day you **heard and knew** the grace of God in truth

- **Heard** (*akouo*) and **Knew** (*epiginosko*) - **Listened and recognized**. Heard and understood. Evaluated and experienced. **From head to heart** = **Life transformation**.
- **Grace of God in truth** = grace is found in **truth, not apart from it. (the world has this wrong)**
 - And much of this letter will be to **combat false thoughts and false doctrines**.
 - **Truth** (*aletheia*) = in context = without adultery or compromise (a clean pure seed)

V. 7 - As you also **learned from Epaphras** ...a minister of Christ **on your behalf**

- A guy who was willing to put his own neck on the line. Travel to Rome. Hang in prison with Paul.
- Go back and make disciples. Share the Word of truth. **We need more of these men and women!**
- Salvation is by God's grace, but **He uses human instruments**. Not angels, not dolphins, not birds, not garden gnomes... people!
- Romans 10:13-15, NIV - "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" - **Be like this!** (men's women's youth, children's small groups)
- They **learned** (*manthano related to mathetes*) = disciple, literally a learner. This indicates Epaphras gave them **a systematic comprehensive insurrection in the Gospel**, not some wobbly, rickety, makeshift flimsy thing. **A solid rock teaching in the truth.**

Paul mentioned **one other thing he heard** about this church:

V. 8 - "Who also declared to us your **love in the Spirit**"

- **Love.** Apparently, this was *the report Epaphras gave to Paul in prison*. Like a proud Papa.
- This is **how you can tell** the pulse of a genuine church. **Love (1 Cor 13).**
- **In the Spirit** - **Gal 5 - fruit of the Spirit is LOVE. (not a worldly version, but in the Spirit)**
- **Romans 5:5** - "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
- **1 Cor. 13:13** - "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love."

Closing

The Gospel brings forth life and fruit in this world. That's why people are flooding to churches.

- **John 15:8, ESV** - "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."
- *Has the gospel been truly planted in your life? (salvation)*
- *Are you daily watering the gospel through faith, love, hope, and prayer? (sanctification)*
- *Are you joining Christ in the harvest by sharing the gospel and serving others? (evangelism)*

Altar Call?

PRAY