

SO THAT YOU MAY BEAR FRUIT AND GROW

Colossians 1:1-14 (Key Verse: 1:10)

“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,”

In today’s passage we are going to look at the introduction of Apostle Paul’s letter to the Colossian church. Apostle Paul wrote this letter while in prison in Rome to the Colossian believers to help them overcome challenges posed by false teachers. Through Epaphras the people of Colossae received the gospel of Jesus Christ and were transformed by the word. However, due to the rise of false teachers in Colossae, confusion arose among the believers on whether Jesus is sufficient for salvation, and these hindered them to produce fruit and grow as Christian believers. Through this introduction Apostle Paul begins to help the Colossian believers by reminding them of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which was preached to them, and produced great work in their lives. Apostle Paul continued and prayed for them to hold on to Jesus Christ who is all sufficient for their salvation.

May God be with us all today, to receive one word, be renewed in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, overcome all the noise that we hear in this world filled with false promises about how to live a happy life and be saved. May God help us through this passage to live to please Jesus, bear fruit and grow as his faithful servants.

The passage begins with Apostle Paul’s greeting to the Colossian believers in **verse 1-2** saying: *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.* Through this greeting Apostle Paul emphasized that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, not by his qualifications or achievements but by the will of God. This means he was not writing his own ideas or opinions but the words that Christ Jesus wants them to hear. From the very beginning Apostle Paul emphasized Jesus Christ, meaning everything about the church points to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Apostle Paul referred to Timothy who was his spiritual son as his brother and introduced him as a co-author to this letter. Through this we can see how Paul recognized the great work of God in Timothy. Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Timothy could be raised as a great servant of God and used mightily to transform lives of many lost souls.

Furthermore, Apostle Paul in his greeting, he referred to the Colossian believers as God’s holy people, faithful brothers, and sisters in Christ. The Colossian believers were sinners like you and I, but Paul referred to them as God’s holy people. By the grace of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, the sins of the people of Colossae are wiped clean. Because of Jesus they are God’s holy people, because of Jesus you and I are God’s holy people. Nothing additional to Jesus was required to make them clean, Jesus alone was sufficient to make them clean and to make us clean into God’s holy people. Furthermore, God’s will in saving us is that we may have peace and joy as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, and so Paul emphasized this grace and peace in his greetings.

After the greetings, Apostle Paul shared with the Colossian believers thanksgiving topics concerning them. Let us look at **verse 3-5**: *“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel!”* Although Apostle Paul had not met the Colossian believers, he was so moved by them and continually gave thanks to God and prayed for them. Apostle Paul was moved by the spiritual blessings that God granted them, yes, they might have been blessed with material blessings, but Apostle Paul specifically mentions the spiritual blessings which are faith, love and hope. Apostle Paul mentions these blessings because, they are the ones that truly matter. What we need the most is spiritual blessings. That is why today we so often hear of depression, of suicidal cases of people that seem to have everything materially. This is because material blessings cannot truly fulfill and sustain us, what we need is spiritual blessings.

Now how can we understand these spiritual blessings? First the people of Colossae had faith in Christ Jesus, this means not just believing a doctrine, but meeting Jesus personally and putting our trust in him. Faith in Jesus means to accept what Jesus has done for us, to love him, to trust in him, and to grow in relationship with him more and more.

Secondly, Apostle Paul mentioned that the Colossian believers were filled with love for all God's people. What does this mean? Because of their faith in Christ Jesus, they could love others, before they could only love the lovable, like their spouse, children or some people who meet their criteria. But because of Jesus, who sacrificially loved all sinners unconditionally, they Colossian believers could be changed to love all God's people. Indeed, when we truly have faith in God and experience his love we can not help but love his people. This is because the love of God is contagious when we experience it.

Lastly, Apostle Paul gave thanks God for the hope that the Colossian believers had in the kingdom of heaven. Because of the hope in heaven, the Colossian believers could live by faith, they could love God's people. Hope in heaven is the source of power for our lives. When we have hope heaven, we can endure all kinds of trials and hardships. Many people today put their hope in worldly things, wealth, physical strength, abilities, but these hopes cannot be our ultimate hope for they are all perishing, spoiling and fading away. But hope in heaven is eternal. This is our lasting hope. With this living hope in our hearts, we can give ourselves fully to God and serve God's people with sacrificial love. This hope is like an anchor for our soul.

Now how did the Colossian believers get their hands to these blessings? They received these blessings from the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. During his missionary journey, Apostle Paul came across Epaphras who was a Pagan believer, and when Paul preached the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ he was transformed into a Christian believer. And God used him mightily as a minister who established the Colossian church and preached the very same gospel of Jesus Christ, and the people were transformed and blessed with spiritual blessings of faith, love and hope. In the same way the gospel continued to grow like a mustard seed throughout the world. Even today the gospel continues to grow, we are a living proof of the power of the gospel. It is amazing how the gospel spread and grew at Wits UBF through a young Korean couple who came to South Africa as missionaries, raising campus students who today are used as faithful servants of the God's ministry.

Although the Colossian believers were blessed with spiritual blessings of faith, love, and hope, Epaphras reported to Paul a growing challenge of false teachers affecting the Colossian church and clouding it with confusion concerning their salvation. Because of this, their spiritual growth was interrupted, they could not produce fruit and grow further in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today as well, even though we might identify as Christian believers, we may be affected by our surroundings and elements of false teachers, prosperity and be let to think that we need more than Christ Jesus. We might be let into thinking that we need a good job, we need a degree, we need to be liked or loved by our managers, colleagues to feel a sense that we are saved, and as a result compromise our spiritual being to gain these worldly promises.

When Apostle Paul heard about these challenges of false teachers, he prayed persistently. Let us look at **verse 9**: *"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,"* When the Colossian believers heard the gospel, they began to grow well. However, false teachers came and presented fine-sounding arguments. Then the Colossians were confused by many human ideas which could lead them astray. They needed correction, today as well we need correction. Through Paul's prayer topics, he could give the Colossian believers a right direction to overcome these false teachings. His first prayer topic was that God may fill them with the knowledge of his will. Paul did not pray that God would remove all the false teachings from the Colossian church. Rather, he prayed for the Colossians to be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all wisdom and understanding. Today as well, Paul's prayer for us is not for the bad things to go away, but rather is that we may grow in deep knowledge of the will of God.

As Paul prayed, he went on to reveal our purpose as Christina believers. Let us look at the **key verse 10**: *"so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."* In this key verse we discover the purpose of Paul's prayer, the purpose of the letter's introduction, the very reason why we should be filled with the knowledge of who God is, why we should have deep knowledge of the gospel. As human beings we were created to live a life worthy of the Lord, we were created to please God. However, because of sin men fell from living according to their purpose and lived for themselves and for their own glory. It is through the gospel that God in his wisdom planned and executed a mission to restore all mankind, to live

for him and please him. God in his great sacrificial love and grace saved us from the power of sin. When we truly receive this grace deeply in our hearts, we can live a life worthy of the Lord, we can live to please him.

What kind of a life is worthy for the Lord? How can we please the Lord? Firstly, we can please the Lord by bearing fruit in every good work through sincerely sharing the word of God with others, praying for others, being disciplined in serving God's ministry and raising others faithfully through Bible studies and testimony writing, caring for God's people with love. Furthermore, we can please God by growing in knowledge of God. Growing is knowledge of God does not only mean participating in Bible studies each week. But rather it means to sincerely receive the word of God deeply in our hearts, filling our hearts with the deep desire to know God, spending time with God through prayer and meditation, fully depending on God in every area in our being.

Furthermore, in **verse 11-12** we learn that we can please God by being strengthened with his glorious power, to resist evil and persevere in doing good. In this world there are many reasons why we should do the wrong things for our benefit, sometimes it looks like loss when we do the right thing. But as Christian believers, we should persevere in doing good, we should depend on the glorious power of God to overcome, and when do this God is pleased.

Again, Apostle Paul added that to please God we should give joyful thanks to the Father. No matter our circumstances, we have no reason to complain, rather we have a clear reason to give joyful thanks to the Father, because He has qualified us to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. The word "qualified" implies that there is a standard. When we apply to schools, or for a job, we need to have the right qualifications. To enter the kingdom of light we need the right qualification. We were alienated from God and had no part with him or claim on his promises. We were objects of God's wrath, living by our own desires and plans. We were by nature deserving of his wrath. But God, because of his great love for us, made us his children. Only by his grace we were saved, he rescued us from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus, his one and only Son whom he sacrificially gave for us, for our redemption and forgiveness of sin. We have many thanksgiving topics. But none of them is greater than that his grace that qualifies us to become his children and heirs of his kingdom.

Conclusion

From today's passage, we have learnt that our purpose as Christian believers is to live a life worthy of the Lord and to please him in every way. We have learnt that to please God means to bear fruit and to grow in the knowledge of God. We have learnt that the way to bear fruit and grow in the knowledge of God comes when we sincerely receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus alone is sufficient for us to live a life worthy of the Lord and to please him. We have learnt that our joy, sense of purpose comes from living a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing him, our joy comes from producing fruit for the Lord and growing in his knowledge.

As the year begins many people have year resolutions and goals to grow professionally, in their business, academically, their physical health and many others. Although all these might be important, from today's passage we have learnt that what is most important is to have a resolution to live a life worthy of the Lord and to please him. May God have mercy on us to sincerely receive the gospel of Jesus Christ in our hearts, bear fruit and grow in the knowledge of God.