

GROWING

why growth matters, what it looks like and how it happens

“All over the world this gospel is growing.. ”
[Colossians 1.6]

‘Growth’ is the theme of this series of studies, and it’s begun with the prayer that it will prove to be a real growth point in our life, and lives, as God’s people here.

Growth is expected among God’s people, since the God who makes alive is the God who also makes things grow: and growth is exhorted upon them, as something which is neither occasional nor optional.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

You can find the background to this series on the website.

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1. Colossians 1.1-14 [w/b Sunday 10th September]

'Growth and the gospel of God'

Paul clearly expected 'growth' and he makes that clear through this first chapter of his letter to the church at Colosse.

While addressed to this particular church, the letter was clearly intended for a wider church constituency (see Col.4.16 – and indeed the preceding verses of that chapter): and the very existence of these different churches bore its own witness to the remarkable way in which the reach of the gospel had already spread far and wide through the Roman Empire.

It was not just numerical or geographical growth, of course, which Paul expected, but also *spiritual* growth in those who had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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1. **Read Col.1.1-14.** Against the background of this passage it may be a timely exercise for you to take stock and consider what growth there has been in your life as a follower of Jesus.

As you look back over the past year can you see and say that has there been growth in your walk with the Lord?

How has that growth been evidenced?

Can you identify how that growth has happened?

2. Read Colossians 1.3-6a. It's clear that Paul prayed for his fellow believers: and it's clear, too (as we'll see – questions 6 and 7), that his praying had a part to play in their growth in Christ.

Do you know of people who make a point of praying for you?

As you pray for others are you careful to reflect thankfully on God's work in their lives?

Is there someone (or are there some people) to whom you might drop a note today to let them know that you pray for them with gratitude for their faith, love and hope?

3. Read Col.1.3-6a. Paul very often, as here, highlights the upward, outward and forward dimensions of our new life in Christ – faith, love and hope.

How does Paul characterize each of these? Why do you think he 'amplifies' each in these ways?

Are you 'stronger' in some of these (faith, love and hope) than others? With which do you struggle most – keeping focused on Jesus, being committed to your fellow believers, or anticipating heaven?

4. Read Col.1.6. The gospel has been 'growing' from day one! It's always a great encouragement to be reminded of the way in which the work of the gospel goes on apace to this day.

In what ways are you aware of the gospel 'bearing fruit and growing' – (a) in your own life: and (b) throughout the world?

Might more be done at Gilcomston to keep us informed about the continuing progress of the gospel throughout the world?

5. Read Col.1.5-8. Paul here identifies how the 'fruit' of faith, love and hope has been brought to birth in the lives of the believers at Colosse.

If the Colossians "*learned it from Epaphras*" from whom would you say that you learned it?

Read Psalm 1.1-3: How have you found the 'word of truth' (Col.1.5) issues in 'fruit' in your life? And what is that fruit?

6. Read Col.1.9. The faith of the Colossians was 'watered' by the prayers of the apostle Paul.

What is it that Paul was praying for these believers from the start?

Do you pray for others along such lines?

7. Read Col.1.10-14. These verses make clear what it was that Paul was concerned to see in the lives of the believers at Colosse.

What four aspects of a life 'worthy of the Lord' and pleasing to Him does Paul specify in these verses?

How are these cultivated in our lives so that they become defining characteristics of us?