

## Colossians 1.<sup>3-14</sup>

### 2. 'Kingdom'

#### Background

It's unlikely that Paul had actually met many of the believers in Colossae, and as a result what he says here in relation to these believers comprises a great statement of the characteristics and privileges of *all* believers wherever they live and whoever they may be.

When he addressed them in the opening couple of verses as those who, although they were 'in Colossae', were more significantly 'in Christ', he was pointing to the fundamental *relationship* which a believer has with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our trust in the Lord Jesus brings us not only into a new relationship, however, but into a new *realm* as well – the kingdom of God: it's this which is the underlying theme of this second passage. And it is 'simply the best' – the best kingdom, as Paul will explain through these verses.

This kingdom is described here as, first, 'the kingdom of light' (v.12) – a reference to both the spiritual illumination which the Spirit of God gives, and also the moral transformation which He effects in the lives of His people: and also 'the kingdom of the Son He loves' (v.13), a reference to the one through whom entrance to the kingdom has been secured and by whom the kingdom is ruled.

You should note how this kingdom is characterised fundamentally by fruitfulness and growth: Paul speaks first of the gospel as 'bearing fruit and growing' (v.6) and then subsequently speaks of the Spirit's work in the lives of believers in identical terms, referring to their 'bearing fruit' and 'growing' (v.10). It's worth noting, too, how this parallels so closely the teaching of Jesus and His parables of the kingdom, which very often precisely reflect this note of growth and fruitfulness.

The first part of the passage (vv.3-8) highlights the relationship with the Lord Jesus which brings us into the kingdom. Paul shows how the believer's relationship with Jesus is *characterised* (making it clear that the relational trust which unites us to Jesus is always characterised by three inseparably interwoven strands of faith, love and hope): and he then explains how that relationship was *created* through the ministry of a man called Epaphras, who almost certainly himself hailed from Colossae.

The second part of the passage (vv.9-14) sees Paul praying for the believers at Colossae: it's worth noting how he prays for them, in terms of the content of his prayer, and worth considering the extent to which (if any!) our praying reflects the same concerns and emphases. If you're able to get hold of Don Carson's book, '*Praying with Paul: a Call to Spiritual Reformation*', chapter 6 (entitled, 'The Content of a Challenging Prayer') expounds this passage very helpfully.

The whole passage is enormously instructive and repays careful study: keep in mind that the theme is that of the kingdom, and if you're not able to cover all the 'days' I suggest that you focus your thought and discussion around '**days**' (2), (5), and (6). In each case I've added further questions.

## 1) Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September – gratitude

Read [Colossians 1.3-4](#)

*“.. we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ..” (Col.1.3)*

Today’s service of thanksgiving for the life of the Queen reminds us of the importance of gratitude – and of the need to *convey* that gratitude, both to the Lord, the Giver of all good gifts, and to those, like the Queen, whose faithful lives impact us for good.

What was it about these Colossians (whom, in the main, Paul had never met) which occasioned his gratitude to God?

How easy do you find it to pray with gratitude for those you’ve never met?

**Prayer:** *As the faith and the love of the Queen are remembered with gratitude today, O God, stir afresh in the hearts of our nation a similar trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## 2) Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September – gospel

Read [Colossians 1.3-5](#)

*“.. the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you ..” (Col.1.5)*

The three ‘legs’ of our relationship with Jesus which give our lives stability and poise – faith, love, hope. Never one without the others: trust in Jesus involves all three, and each both generates and is sustained by the others. The ‘true gospel’ is 3-dimensional!

What did Paul mean by saying that the Colossians faith and love sprang from the hope they had?

The faith, hope and love of the Colossian believers arose through their hearing ‘the true message of the gospel’: how and when did you hear that ‘true message’?

To what extent was the stirring of *hope* in your heart the effect of your hearing that message?

What is the ‘hope’ to which Paul alludes, and how does that hope buttress your faith and fuel your love?

In what ways does that hopefulness inform the way you live and the way you respond to people and problems?

**Prayer:** *Thank You, Lord, for the message of the gospel: may my living today reflect the upward look of faith, an outgoing attitude of love, and the forward look of hope.*

## 3) Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September – growth

Read [Colossians 1.3-7](#)

*".. the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world .." (Col.1.6)*

God makes things grow! And because it is His, the gospel is invested with a wonderful capacity for fruitfulness and growth. Already there were churches all over the Empire, and that fruitfulness and growth, in every sense, continues to this day!

In what ways can the gospel be said to be bearing fruit and how have you seen that 'fruit' being borne in your own life?

When a society has deliberately turned its back on God and His Word, can we nonetheless expect to see gospel 'growth'?

**Prayer:** *You will build Your church, Lord Jesus! Thank You that You have continued to do so through the centuries, and that You have called me to share in that work.*

#### **4) Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – grace**

Read [Colossians 1.7-8](#)

*".. Epaphras .. a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf .." (Col.1.7)*

Epaphras illustrated God's grace (v.6). It seems he was from Colossae, had travelled to Ephesus and been converted through Paul's preaching; returning home he'd shared the good news with others, resulting in the birth of the Colossian church.

In what ways can you be described as 'a faithful minister of Christ' on behalf of the gospel?

Why does Paul see fit to add the phrase 'in the Spirit' after referencing the Colossian believers' love?

**Prayer:** *Grant me grace today, Lord, to minister faithfully in Your service: and by the power of Your Spirit may my words and deeds alike be infused with Your love.*

#### **5) Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September – specific**

Read [Colossians 1.9](#)

*".. we have not stopped praying for you .." (Col.1.9)*

How easy it can be to commit to praying for another, and how hard to maintain that commitment. How easy, too, to pray in very *general* terms rather than in the more specific way Paul evidences here. 'What do you want Me to do for you?' [asks](#) Jesus.

What 'strategies' have you devised which help you to sustain a commitment to pray for others?

To what is Paul referring when he speaks of 'the knowledge of His will'?

**Many who are drawn to faith in the Lord Jesus in our contemporary society have little or no 'knowledge of God's will' – and consequently, too, they have**

all sorts of questions! Are there ways in which we as a fellowship might better ensure that believers are being filled with the knowledge of His will?

*Prayer: Lord, lay afresh on my heart today those for whom You would have me pray: may they and I may be growing in our knowledge of Your will, by Your Spirit's grace*

## 6) Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September – character

Read [Colossians 1.9-12](#)

“.. that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way ..” (Col.1.10)

The gospel which is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world will be bearing its fruit in your life as well, if you are a believer: your growing in the knowledge of God has as much to do with growing Christ-likeness of character as anything.

What does it mean to ‘live a life worthy of the Lord’?

What is the sort of fruitfulness to which Paul is pointing when he prays that they may ‘bear fruit in every good work’?

Read [Psalm 92](#): what practical lessons does that psalm teach as to how we may ‘still bear fruit in old age’ (v.14)?

Have you grown in your knowledge of God (v.10) in the past year?

How has that growing knowledge of God affected the way you live your life?

Why are the qualities of endurance and patience so important in the life of the follower of Jesus?

*Prayer: My heart's desire, Lord Jesus, is so to live that I bear fruit for Your glory: give me strength for the challenges of today, and gratitude for Your grace towards me.*

## 7) Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September – rescue

Read [Colossians 1.13-14](#)

“.. He has .. brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves ..” (Col.1.13)

The gospel proclaims the liberating power of God in Jesus: He not only delivers us *out of* the dominion of darkness (illustrated by Israel's slavery in Egypt), but *into* the kingdom of His Son (illustrated by the ‘good and spacious’ promised land) ([Ex.3.7f](#))

How has your being rescued by the Lord in this way changed your experience and your whole manner of living?

What is the difference between ‘redemption’ and ‘the forgiveness of sins’ (v.14)?

*Prayer: May the worship of Your people throughout the world today be a celebration of Your great rescuing grace. Rise, again, O Lord, and rescue those in darkness.*