

The Garden of the Gospel

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Colossians 1:1-14

A friend of ours brought some daffodil bulbs to plant in our back garden. My wife and I were raised in the city and gardening was not our hobby. I think Sevan will ask our friend to help us to for planting these bulbs. I am looking forward to seeing the result in a couple of months.

Why did I start my sermon with planting bulbs or seeds?

It is the week of Thanksgiving. I was not raised with this tradition but I enjoy it so much. This is a precious time to remind us that we should always be thankful in all circumstances. It is a time to remind us how blessed we are. We just finished the beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, those starving for righteousness, who are pure in heart...and so on. None of those are material things, none. During this week I was asking to God to lead me to see beyond the material blessings. To see God's kingdom and His righteousness, and everything else will come to it place after that.

Let us examine today's passage:

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians of Colossae from the prison. He was most likely imprisoned in **Ephesus**. But he was not alone. **Timothy**, his beloved son in the faith, was with him, as well as several others who are mentioned in chapter 4.

1. Paul is Thankful and Prayerful

³ **We always thank God**, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when **we pray for you**, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

...

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the

Lord, fully pleasing to him: **bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;** ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² **giving thanks** to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Colossians 1:3-5; 9-12 ESV)

A. Paul (and his friends) are thankful that the seeds of the Gospel are bearing fruit.

There is a garden in Colossae. In this garden, God used Paul and his friends to plant the seeds of the Gospel.

-Paul is thankful to God for **the testimonial lives** of the church of Colossae.

Our friend who gave us the daffodil bulbs will come to our house soon to check things up. She will just check the fruit.

-What kind of fruit did Paul find?

Paul heard about their faith, love, and hope- the fruit. N.T. Wright says:

“The faith which reached out to grasp what God offers in King Jesus, the Love which binds the community together; the hope that looks eagerly forward to the time when God completes what he began in Jesus.”¹

Let me say it in my words:

“Faith in Jesus Christ, the hope of heaven, and the love manifested in their lives.”

We studied the book of James this year. We discussed that **faith cannot be genuine** if **it is not manifested in our lives**. The church of Colossae bore this fruit.

Paul is thankful for the Colossians’ love toward Jesus and each other.

B. Paul is Prayerful:

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when **we pray for you,** (Colossians 1:3 ESV)

⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Colossians 1:9-10 ESV)

Paul said: And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you...

So many times we pray for things we need. We pray for our spouse and children, we pray for our friends; we pray for health; we pray for protection.... Those all are legitimate needs.

Please notice what is the content of Paul's prayer:

We pray, asking that you may be filled the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

As you pray for people, remember to ask God for spiritual blessings as well.

2. You have heard:

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. (Colossians 1:5b-8 ESV)

A. Who was the messenger? B. What did you hear, hear what?

A. Who was the messenger?

Scholars think that Paul did not establish the church in Colossae. "As far as we know Paul never visited Colossae, at least not at the time he wrote this epistle; he had only "heard" about the church at Colossae (1:4,9; 2:1).

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,(1:4) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you (1:9) For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face (2:1)

“Nevertheless, it was a product of his ministry and beautifully illustrates his commitment to impart his vision of reaching others with the powerful message of the gospel.”²

He is thankful that his **disciple Epaphras** (“a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf” Colossians 1:7) became an instrument of God to bring the seeds of the gospel.

Question for you: How did I hear the Gospel The Word of the Truth?

How did you hear about Love of Jesus?

Who was God’s instrument who brought you the Gospel?

-In 1989 I was at the Lausanne II Conference in Manila, the Philippines. There were 6000 church delegates from all over the world. One of the speakers asked the audience: “Who became a Christian through a pastor?” Few hands went up. But when the speaker asked: “Who became a Christian through a lay person?” Most of the hands went up.

The question I asked myself. **Am I thankful for the person who invited me to know the Love of Jesus?**

Can I ask you please examine your life and find who invited you to know Jesus, and write to him/her a note of appreciation? If that person is not alive, share the story with someone.

B. What did you hear, hear what?

It is important you we hear the Word of God;

⁵Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,.....Since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras... (Colossians 1:5,6

The word of the truth, the gospel,the grace of God in truth....

Badvelis of this church has one agenda:

- Teach the Word of God
- Teach the Word of the Truth, the GOSPEL
- To understand and experience God's grace in Christ Jesus, and pass it to each other and to the outside world.

3. Thankful for the Grace (inheritance)

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12-13 ESV)

Paul is thankful to God that these believers were delivered from the darkness into the kingdom of His Son (inheritance). He uses the word "qualified." No one is qualified to be a child of God. He has qualified us to share in the inheritance through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, In Whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

This morning I am inviting you to this Thanksgiving table prepared by our Lord Jesus Christ. None of us are qualified to approach this table. You cannot earn it. It is only His grace.

Please examine your life before you come to this table.

Do I know Jesus Christ personally? Is he my Lord, Savior and King?

If you never asked him to be in your life, today is the day, don't postpone it.

If you have him in your life and you like to confess a sin that is not brought to the cross of Jesus, this is a good day to do it. God wants your heart, not your outside appearance.

Come to this table with an attitude of thanksgiving. Maybe this year was a very tough year for you. Maybe you lost someone; maybe you found out you have a tough sickness in you.... I don't know how was your year. But this table invites you come and open your heart to Jesus.

Come to the table.

1 N.T. Write, Paul for Everyone The Prison Letters, p 144

2. <https://bible.org/seriespage/background-colossians> First, Paul spent three years ministering the word in Ephesus from the lecture room of the School of Tyrannus. It was during this time all of Asia heard the Word (cf. [Acts. 19:8-10](#), 26; & 20:31). Ephesus had three great attractions that brought people into the city from all parts of Asia. It was a seaport town, a center of commerce, and, with the temple of Diana, it was also a center for idol worship. Second, while on a visit to Ephesus, a young man from Colossae named Epaphras evidently heard the gospel from Paul and was converted. It appears that he was not only saved, but that he was trained and prepared by Paul to go back and plant a church in his hometown of Colossae (1:7; 4:12).

The story of the establishment of the church at Colossae illustrates an important truth. "God does not always need an apostle, or a 'full-time Christian worker' to get a ministry established. Nor does He need elaborate buildings and extensive organizations."¹² Through Paul's vision for training others for ministry, God took two men and sent them out to reach and build others in Christ in at least three cities of the Lycus Valley.