

## Engage

Thursday 5 November 2020

# The Fruit of the Gospel

Colossians 1:1-14

## BEFORE MEETING TOGETHER

Watch the Bible Project video: Colossians, an Overview <https://youtu.be/pXTXIDxQsvc>

## OPEN

Think of a time when you saw someone's life radically change for the better.

*How did you react to the change? What did you think and say about that person? To that person?*

## STUDY

**Read Colossians 1:1-14.**

Since Paul himself was the one who brought the gospel to this part of the world, he wants them to know that he's thanking God that it is taking root with them, and he wants to tell them how to nurture it and help it to bear more fruit. The fruit, in fact, has already begun to appear, and it's interesting to see that this is what Paul focuses on when he tells them how he heard about the new church coming into being.

*What qualities does Paul see in the lives of the Colossians that indicate the gospel is bearing fruit in their lives?*

*How do those qualities reflect the good news of Jesus Christ?*

Paul assumes an unspoken contrast here. The behaviour which marks out so much of our society—lust, anger, lies and so on, which split up families and communities—is being replaced by kindness, gentleness, forgiveness and an acceptance of one another as members of the same family, even where there were major differences of race, background and culture. This, as far as Paul is concerned, is the true sign of God at work, and he is thrilled and grateful to hear about it.

The seed which was planted in Colossae was what Paul describes as "the word of truth, the gospel" (5). This word is powerful. When it is spoken, God himself works through it, spreading the plant of new life, colour, fragrance and fruit in every place.

*To what extent would you say the fruit of "the word of truth, the gospel" is evident in your own life?*

*Looking at this passage, what would be the reasons for a lack of spiritual fruit?*

The gospel doesn't just produce a new religious experience for those who might like such a thing. It brings about something much greater: nothing less than a new creation. When people become Christians, God implants into them a new sense of his presence and love, his guiding and strengthening. This sense needs nurturing and developing. New Christians need to

understand what's happening to them and how they must cooperate with the divine life that has gently begun to work in them. Paul, in prison, can help this process in two ways: by writing, as he is doing, but supremely by prayer.

Whether you're a new Christian yourself, needing to grow in the faith, or a Christian leader, wanting to nurture those in your care, Paul's prayer for the new church in Colossae provides a wonderful pattern (9-12).

*What does Paul pray concerning the will of God (9-10)?*

*Why is understanding God's will important for spiritual growth?*

*What does Paul specifically pray for the Christians in Colossae (11f)?*

*Look over Paul's prayer in 9-12. What would it mean for someone to pray these things for you? Think of specific areas where you need those prayers.*

*Who do you know that needs your prayers modelled on 9-12?*

The climax of Paul's prayer is that the young Christians will learn the art of thanksgiving. What Paul most wants to see growing in the church, as a sign of healthy Christian life on the way to maturity, is gratitude to God for the extraordinary things he's done in Jesus and the remarkable things he is continuing to do in the world and in their lives. Spontaneous gratitude of this kind is a sign that they are coming to know and love the true God.

*When, why and how do you most frequently thank God?*

## PRAY

Pray that what Paul heard about the Colossians will also be said of you and your Christian fellowship. Pray that you will be marked by wisdom, love, faith, hope and a spirit of thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

## NEXT TIME

Christ Supreme: Colossians 1:15-29

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, Dale Larsen, and Sandy Larsen, *Colossians & Philemon: 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups, For Everyone Bible Study Guides* (London: SPCK, 2009), 13–17.