

Let us pray.

God, thank you for your word of truth, thank you for your Holy Spirit who illuminates this word and gives it life, and through it gives us life and joy and understanding. Please God, send your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to your word and make us more like Jesus through it. Please Lord, use me, and protect me from error, for the good of your people and the glory of your name.

Today we are beginning a series on Colossians that God willing will take us through the next eight weeks or so.

We begin at the beginning, and I want to say from the start that we have a goal, an out-come that we have been praying will come about by this sermon, and our series on this letter to the Colossians; and it is the same prayer that Paul prays for the Colossians; that God might **fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,** 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,** ¹¹ **being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,** ¹² **and giving joyful thanks to the Father.**

That our the prayer, the goal and where we are going through the next 8 weeks.

Today is the first sermon and we begin with the text found in the first chapter of Colossian verses 1-14. Now a word about the letter and the people. We learn that Paul is writing to a Christian church at Colossae V1, that it isn't a church that he planted but one that he has heard of because of their faith and love V4 and V7. Paul's desire for the Colossians is summed up by him saying in verse 28 "That we may present everyone mature in Christ". And that really is what we are aiming to become by God's help through this series.

My aim today with this sermon is that: 1 we would be humbled unto dependence by how much we need God, 2 that we would be lifted high with encouragement because of the Gospel, and 3 that our walking and living in this world to please God would flow from points 1 and 2; our dependence on God and what He has done for us in Jesus on the cross.

God will do it in us so that we can live a life worthy of the Lord. I pray that with this goal in front of us we may be set on course to learn His will for us in this season at St Matts.

SO PLEASE open up your bibles to Colossians 1-1-14, and look with me.

1 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.

³ 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 ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

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, 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, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Go to verse 3 **“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you”**

I love how he starts! **“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you”** I wish all my texts and emails to other Christians started like that! **“Dear _ I always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when I pray for you”**

And why is He thanking God for them? Verse 4 **because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people.** Paul and Timothy have heard of the faith of the Colossians, not their faith in a church name or a charismatic leader or a program but their faith in Christ Jesus, they had heard also of the love that the Colossians had for all of God’s people that’s what they were known for, their love for fellow Christians especially!

I want you to notice the way the Colossians were walking and living. Their faith in Jesus which I take to mean; they know He is the savior from heaven and they believe that He died for them. And this belief tinged or colored or flavored their daily lives because Paul heard about it. If their belief had been a private, secret and only personal thing He wouldn’t have heard about it.

And their love for all God's people or the ESV says "all the Saints". Which I understand as they had a love for fellow believers with regard to race, class, or Church.

And Epaphras writes to Paul telling about how this group from the church were sold out in their faith for Jesus and they were constantly together looking for opportunities to build up one another. And they were so consistently about these activities and practices that Epaphras knows them for it, so he writes to Paul. And Paul reads this letter and goes "THANK YOU GOD!".

How are they doing it? We should want to know how they do it so that we can follow their example. **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 ⁶ that has come to you.**

The faith in Jesus and the love for all God's, the two notable characteristics of the Colossians, Paul says, springs forth from the hope stored in heaven, and the Colossians came to hear and know that hope because of the true message of the Gospel!

The Hope stored in heaven for the Colossians is the source of strength for their faith and their love for all the people of God. And they came to know this hope through the Gospel.

What is the Gospel that gave this Hope to the Colossians? Have a look at verses 13 and 14, what a sentence! I mean how much depth and hope and goodness can you fit in to one breath. **For**

he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

THAT'S GOOD NEWS! That is a Gospel! **He has** rescued us- Who? Our Heavenly Father, Almighty God. Has **rescued us from the dominion of darkness**- He has broken open the darkness and unshackled us from the dominating and ruling power of darkness and lifted us up with strong arms. And He has brought us to a new Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. In this verse redemption is the 'forgiveness of sins' the forgiveness of sins is us standing before the Mighty King with an incalculable debt to him with no power to pay it. And he says, rather than a death sentence, "I will pay it" " I will die in your place to pay for it, and so we are redeemed. I hope you find that to be really good news.

Now church, you know that after He was crucified, and resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven where He sits at the right hand of God,

so let me ask you?!?

What Hope have you got stored in Heaven, Christians? Whom YOU came to know because of the Gospel?

JESUS! Jesus is the hope from whom springs faith and love for all of God's people flows! And our hope is both present and future because we long, and the Colossians longed, to be with

Him where He is. And to please him now everyday in the way we live. And we know him because of the Gospel.

Please tell me are you following me here? This is so important! This is where this changes from merely a letter that we read because it's a good thing to do and becomes a life changing, routine breaking, mind renewing, God-inspired word for our good.

Can you see how the Gospel and a future and present hope in Jesus would lead to a life marked by deep faith and a love for God's people?

Now here is a short time for self reflection. Consider your life, and your work and your interaction with the church of God. What source do you draw on to live? Where do your good works come from? **1 Min**

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 ⁶ that has come to you.

The Hope stored in heaven for the Colossians is the SAME source of strength for the Victorians in Panton Hill for their faith and their love for all the saints. And WE have come to know this hope through the Gospel.

Their hope in Jesus was the fountain bubbling up with faith in Him and their love for one another. Our hope in Jesus can be our source for living and expressing faith and genuine love for not just this church but all the churches. In fact, I must go so far

as to say that there is no other hope that will enable us to live in that way. None. Only Jesus can.

Now here is the second point and it is the point that concerns our growing and maturing as a church and as individual people in this lifestyle. Look with me at verse 9. What is Paul praying for?

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives

Who fills? God

Whose will? Gods will

How shall we know His will? Through all the wisdom and understanding

Who gives the wisdom and understanding? The Spirit

Great! But how does that have anything to do with growth? Look at verse 10 because it has EVERYTHING to do with growth! There is no growth but by the Spirit! Look!

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, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father

May we see how reliant we are on God for anything of value! Like little dependent children we go to our Father to ask, “please Daddy help us grow!” And He doesn’t hold back, He loves to see us grow. But in our own strength we can’t and won’t.

May this message make us humble, that any attitude of self-sufficiency that is common in our culture and in our area would be put to death by the Spirit so that we would go to our heavenly Father for every good and perfect gift.

Let me recap so we can see where we have been.

-We have seen that a life that is pleasing to God can only come about by Jesus death for us, which we saw in Verse 14

“redemption the forgiveness of sins”, this is the Gospel

-It produces in us hope in Jesus that we would be him, and this hope produces faith in him for life and love for all God’s people we saw that in verse 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 ⁶ that has come to you.**

- Then we saw that to grow in this, and to please God, to live a life worthy of him the Holy Spirit must give us a knowledge of God’s will Verse 9, **We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.**

DO you see how dependent we are on God?

How great His provision is by giving us a gospel and His Spirit?

Please do not panic and don't despair that you are not in control. Jesus is faithful. His Holy Spirit, the very Spirit in this room loves you and wants you to grow and bear the fruit of the Gospel, that is a strong faith in Jesus the Christ and to have a deep love for all the saints, and a sustaining hope in Jesus who is stored in heaven.

Would you please take 3 minutes, have this bible open to the passage we have just looked at, and examine yourself, take an honest look at yourselves and please take this opportunity to come before the God who loves you from head to toe. And I want to challenge you to ask two questions, one to yourself and one to our Father in Heaven:

1. Am I dependent on God in Jesus for hope, faith and good work? That is to yourself
2. Please God fill your church with the knowledge of your will by your Holy Spirit

Take some time and then I will pray for us.