THE FRUIT BEARING GOSPEL
(Colossians 1:3-8)

INTRODUCTION

The Bible has much to say about being fruitful and bearing fruit. God’s very first command to Adam and Eve was “be fruitful and multiply.” Jesus said in John 15:5 “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Bearing fruit takes time; sometimes it takes a lifetime. It takes time to take a fruit tree from a sapling to a mature, fruit producing tree. One time, a young man, walking along a dirt path, came upon an old man bowed to the ground planting pecan trees in a field. He stops and asks the old man, "Why would you plant pecan trees? They’ll take so many years to mature that you’ll never enjoy the pecans." The old man responds, "I plant these trees because all my life I’ve eaten pecans from trees I did not plant."

In our Colossian passage this morning we see a man named Epaphras who sowed the seed of the Gospel in the town of Colossae. The gospel was planted and was bearing FRUIT. God had been planting the seed of the Gospel for many years before Epaphras came on the scene. God began planting the Gospel in Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” He planted the seed of the Gospel in His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:2 NIV “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." God planted the seed of the Gospel when Isaiah foretold of the One whom Isaiah said in 53:5 NIV “…was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” God planted the seed of the Gospel when Jesus announced at the beginning of His earthly ministry in Mark 1:15 NKJV "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." God wants to continue to plant the Gospel for He said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.”

When Epaphras preached the Gospel in Colossae it was used by the Holy Spirit to convert and regenerate many of those that heard and believed. This gospel was bearing fruit all over the world. Paul says in verse 6 “as indeed in the whole world it [the Gospel] is bearing fruit and increasing.”
This is what the Gospel was designed to do – to bear fruit unto God.

In this paragraph (3-8) we will consider Paul’s response to what God was doing in this church. We will consider what kind of fruit the Gospel was bearing. And we will hear about some of the attributes of the Gospel. Let’s take these points in reverse order.

SOME ATTRIBUTES OF THE GOSPEL

In verses 5b and 6 Paul states three attributes of the Gospel. Let me read it again out of the ESV version:

"Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which 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,"

First, the Gospel is called the word of TRUTH. As William Barclay writes, "All other religions give us guesses about God, but the Gospel gives us the truth about Him.” Now that is a great statement. All religions talk about God, but none give the truth about God. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Bible, gives us the truth about God. The Gospel is the word of truth.

Next, the Gospel is about the GRACE of God. In hearing the Gospel the Colossians “understood the grace of God in truth.” The Gospel is not so much telling us of the demands of God; that is the function of the law of God. The Gospel tells us of the grace of God. The Gospel is the message that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to accomplish salvation for us and to give us eternal life as a free gift of grace. As Zach Hicks of the Cathedral Church in Birmingham, AL, states it, “the Gospel is what Jesus did for us that we could never do for ourselves.” Think about that. Repeat.

Your salvation is not based on what you can do for God; it is based on what Christ did for you that you could not do for yourself. You cannot appease the righteousness of God by any work of yours. Jesus did when He went to the Cross. Salvation is a free gift. God uses the preaching of the Gospel to bring us to faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit used the Gospel to regenerate the believers. This is by grace!

The Gospel is meant to be PRODUCTIVE. It is meant to bear fruit. The Gospel was bearing fruit among the Colossians. Paul says, “in the whole world it [the Gospel] is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you.”
The Gospel is productive because it is powerful. As Paul writes in Romans, “It is the power of God unto salvation.” The Gospel is meant to bear fruit and to grow and increase in our lives. Jesus taught us that the Gospel is meant to be productive in the parable of the Sower and the Seed. Remember how he talked about 4 types of seeds?

(Mark 4:3-8 NKJV) "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. {4} "And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside... "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. ....And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ....But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

The Gospel is meant to bear fruit in our lives. If the Gospel is not bearing fruit and increasing in a person’s life or in a church it is not the Gospel’s fault, it is the condition of the soil. There are Christians whose lives don’t bring forth much fruit, because their hearts are not cultivated and tended to correctly in order for the seed of the Gospel be productive in their lives!

These are three attributes of the Gospel that we need to understand. The Gospel is truth. The Gospel is about God’s grace. The Gospel is meant to produce fruit.

THE FRUIT OF THE GOSPEL

What kind of fruit does the Gospel produce? Paul speaks of three kinds of fruit in this passage that the Gospel brings forth. In the ESV version verses 4 and 5 reads:

since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Faith, love and hope. These are the three primary fruits that the Gospel will bear in a person’s life. These are the three great virtues that Paul mentions several other times in his writings. The classic one is I Corinthians 13:13:

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
When Paul heard of their “faith in Christ Jesus” he knew that the Holy Spirit was working through the Gospel to grant spiritual life to them. The proof that the Holy Spirit had regenerated them is that they had “faith in Christ Jesus.”

The central message of the Gospel is Jesus Christ. God’s intention for revealing the Gospel to mankind is that our faith would be put in His Son Jesus Christ.

**John 3:17-18 ESV**  For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The Gospel says that Jesus died for my sins and was raised again. The Gospel says that “in Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” The Gospel is all about Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. Faith in Christ is the first fruit of the Gospel.

Now there is another fruit of the Gospel that God is looking for. And that is love.

Paul heard of the Colossians had **LOVE** for all the saints. Epaphras had told Paul of their love in the Spirit (v. 8). When Paul heard that they had love for the saints, he knew that the Holy Spirit had opened their understanding, granted them the faith to believe the message and trust in Jesus Christ. Love is the ultimate evidence of the work of the Gospel in our lives. “Without love our faith is empty. Without love we are nothing.”

Note that he says they had **“love for all the saints.”** It is noteworthy that he includes “all.” Some saints are easy to love. Others are more difficult. But if the Gospel is bearing fruit in our lives we will love all the saints.

John, the apostle puts it this way, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.”** (1 John 5:1 ESV)

The Colossians not only loved Jesus, they loved all the saints. Someone has said that there is a basic principle of love, **“We love what the one we love loves.”** If you love Jesus, you will show love to what He loves. He loves the church. He gave Himself for the church because of His love. If the Gospel is bearing fruit in our lives it will be shown by our love for the church, not the institution, but for the people gathered to grow in their faith and love.
Finally there is the fruit of hope. Paul saw that these Christians had **hope** and that hope was giving them enduring power. “Hope” is always forward looking. It is looking forward to the things to come. It is counting God’s promises as their greatest joy and expectation. They were looking forward to “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” The Gospel gives us hope for the future and if it is bearing this fruit in our lives we will always allow that hope to be our anchor through the ups and downs of this life.

Their hope in God’s promise for the future, along their true faith in Jesus Christ, and their genuine love for the church gave Paul assurance that the Gospel was bearing fruit in their lives. This is the kind of fruit the Gospel is to bear in our lives.

**PAUL’S RESPONSE TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN COLOSSE**

A quick word about Paul’s response or reaction to what he saw in the Colossians? His response was to give **THANKS** to God for his work in them. Verse 3:

> We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Paul gave glory to God and gave thanks to God for what was happening in the little church in Colossae. Paul was thankful for seeing the evidence of the fruit of the Gospel in that church. Paul knew that God was at work when he heard about their faith, love and hope for only God can create that in a bunch of sinners.

This type of thanksgiving should always be a part of our prayers. We are to be aware of what the Gospel is doing in our lives, our church, other churches, and other places around the world and give thanks to God. For these things are the proof that God is at work.

**WHAT USES ARE WE GOING TO MAKE OF THIS PASSAGE?**

As I mentioned last week “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is **useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.**” These four basic ‘uses’ of Scriptures are the basic purposes God has given us His Word. This is how God wants to use all Scripture in our lives. It is helpful whenever we read, study, or hear the Scriptures preached to ask ourselves, “What are some ways this passage can be used in our lives?”

The teaching of this passage that I have focused on is that the Gospel is to bear fruit in our lives. The Gospel is the good news of the truth about Jesus. The
Gospel is about the grace of God. The Gospel is what the Holy Spirit uses to produce fruit in our lives. The fruit of the Gospel is faith, love, and hope.

To many who hear the Gospel it doesn’t even penetrates their minds. There is no spiritual understanding, so they reject the Gospel as that important. They resist it. They became even hostile to it. To others the Gospel gets into their mind but it never gets into their heart. They know it. They can explain it, but it never penetrates their consciences with conviction. It never reaches their affections, nor do they exercise their wills to totally trust in Jesus alone for their salvation. They do not wholly lean on Jesus Christ alone for their relationship to God. They believe that they are enough and can do enough good things to keep God happy with them. They need to put all their trust in Jesus Christ.

When it comes to love of all saints, this can be very convicting. They need to accept all those for whom Christ died as brothers and sisters. They need to show love for all the saints, not just the ones who are lovely and loveable.

To many the Gospel is not their hope. Their hope is in their health, their possessions, their happiness. They need to come to the place of seeing that their hope is in heaven. It is being with Jesus for all eternity. What is your hope? What do you confidently expect to receive in heaven?

Again this passage can be used in our lives to teach us much about God’s working and will in our lives. It teaches us about the power of the Gospel. What use are you going to make of this Scripture this morning?

What do you hear God speaking to your heart about through His Word this morning? What decisions do you believe God wants you to make this morning?

- Do you need to clarify the genuineness of your faith?
- Do you need to make your love more inclusive? Do you need to clear up any bad or strained relationship with a fellow brother or sister?
- Do you need to spend more time meditating on your future hope in heaven than you spend on your future vacation, your future retirement account?

Whatever decision you need to make, take it to the Lord and ask for His help in making that decision.

Paul writes, “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing.” Is it bearing fruit in your life? If not, then ask God to work it more in your life.

Amen? Amen!