

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON 7th May am

Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ"

Pt 1 You're doing great! Keep going!"

Text: Colossians 1 verses 1-14

Scripture references from the ESV

Colossians 1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To the saints and faithful brothers^[a] in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

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. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ 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, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant.^[b] He is a faithful minister of Christ on your^[c] behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

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^[d] to the Father, who has qualified you^[e] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

As we celebrate the coronation of our king, our nation is experiencing a time of reflection, wondering what the state of the country is currently. Our church is also experiencing a unique period as Pastor Tim and Jo start their three-month sabbatical. It is a good question for us to ask too.

- **What is the state of Broadstone Baptist Church?**

In order to answer that, we need to understand what we are asking. Are we talking about the size of the church, what our leadership model is, what our building looks like or how we compare to the church down the road?

That type of question, though well-intentioned and of some value, comes from a worldly point of view, and the answer only tells us what the world thinks of our church and what it should be like.

- It does not tell us what God wants our church to be like.

If we are not careful, we can fall into the trap of allowing our church to be defined by man and not by God. The letter from Colossians will show us a different answer, and will bless us over the coming months.

Colossae had been an important town, but by the time Paul wrote to them, it was a shadow of

its former self. The church had not been started by Paul, but instead by Epaphras (v7).

It was not a big church, even by the standards of those days, with probably a maximum of 45 people,

so this letter was initially written to a small group of believers.

Nonetheless, the church had problems. That region was an area of great philosophical debate and ideas, which meant that different ideas and doctrines about Jesus were starting to appear. This led to a belief that some Christians had superior knowledge and therefore a 'special spirituality'. The world and outside influences were dictating what the church should be like.

Paul wrote to encourage them, and this letter will encourage us too. Rather than attacking those outside influences, he started by assuring the Colossians of the truth that is still valid for us 2000 years later.

1. **God is already working here, in us! (vv1-8 above).** Paul begins by calling them **saints** and **faithful brothers**. He was elevating this small church in Colossae, giving them a sacred fuller version of who they were. He may never have met them, but he called them brothers, because they are all **in Christ** and so they all have the same Father.

They have received every spiritual blessing that Christ has because they are 'in Christ'.

They are partakers in all that

Christ has, all that he was and all that he ever will be because they have received grace, the free gift of unmerited favour from God. It is not because of anything they have done or how smart they are, but entirely because of God's grace that they can receive a holy peace from God their Father.

With every word, Paul was reminding them of the miracle that God has done in Colossae and of the

reality of their position, brought into sonship by God's abounding grace.

It is easy to downplay the magnitude of what God has done, is doing and will do in us. Whether you have known God in a personal way for most of your life, or heard the good news of the gospel much later, it is a miracle for which you can praise God. If you are just starting to explore the Christian faith, that too is a miracle. Every church that has ever been founded is a miracle, and so often we take it for granted.

How can we be confident that this is God at work?

It is because what we have received can only be given by God.

Paul thanks God, not for the size of the church, their buildings or any financial support, but rather for their

faith, hope and love.

a) Faith (v4). The Colossians did not put their faith in anything that the prevailing worldly wisdom told them to put their faith in. Instead, they put their faith in Christ alone, which is truly something to praise God for. This does not come from us, but is a gift from the Father. That is why Paul thanks God and not the people. It is from the Father that their faith derives and that is true for us too.

b) Love (v4). This is not love of things, or love of self, but **love for all the saints**. The Colossians were displaying a self-sacrificing love, not just for the people they naturally got on with but for **all** the saints. This can only happen supernaturally. It comes out of a love that overflows from the love that we have received from the Father in Christ and we are empowered to love in that way by the Spirit.

The church is being bound together from and through the love of God.

Christian love has shaped many facets of our society today in practical ways, but it was not the activity it produced that Paul was commending. It was the love and their

changed hearts. The miracle of God's love had been poured out on them, and it was overflowing to one another.

c) **Hope (v5)** All of this springs from hope – not a vain or vague hope, but a sure and certain hope. That hope was laid up not by any work of man, but by Christ himself. It is a heavenly hope, eternal and perfect. It is a hope that goes beyond anything man can imagine. It has already been won and there is nothing that has to be done to obtain it.

It is a hope that is stored up for the Colossians and for anyone who has heard the true message of the gospel (**vv6-8** above). Paul affirms that the Colossians have heard the same Gospel message from Epaphras that all other true believers have heard. Their fruitfulness is increasing, not just in the number of people being saved, but as a deeper transformation takes place, as they become more Christ-like, increasing in faith and love.

The message of the gospel speaks to the universal sinful condition of all people, regardless of culture, when they lived and their background. The Gospel shows everyone their need for a Saviour, in order that they might be united in Christ and co-heirs in the glorious hope that he has won for us all.

It is a miracle for them and for us that God chose for us to hear, understand and place our faith in the Gospel. We are hearing the true Gospel and that Gospel is bearing fruit, because we have our hope placed in this miracle of miracles.

All of this is revealed to us in the beautiful word of God but now is not the time to stand still. There is more.

2. **We can ask God to work in us all the more! (vv9-12).** Paul is asking that the church would continually be filled with knowledge. What they need is to know God more intimately, in the same way that human relationships develop over time as people get to know each other better. Paul's prayer is that the Colossians would get to enjoy God for who he is. This would instil godly wisdom and understanding and would lead naturally to lives that are worthy of

God, glorifying him and pointing more and more people to him. The Colossians are not to stand still and do nothing.

The Christian life is not a passive life. It is an active life.

It is a life that is increasingly filled with the intimate knowledge of God.

That life will be a life that is pleasing to God and worthy of him (v10)

- a) **It will be a life that increasingly bears fruit.** God will be seen working through the Colossians in all that they do. This is already happening but Paul prays that it will be so more and more. As their lives reflect the life of Christ, so more people will be drawn to the faith and love of the church. Paul prays that this will be a constant on-going reality.
- b) **It will be an increasingly knowledgeable life.** As they live out that life, Paul prays that they will gain an even more intimate knowledge of the Father. Paul's expectation is that followers who are truly seeking to live out this life will naturally open themselves up to even more knowledge of God. This is evidenced in our church too, where people who seek to live fruitful lives, serving and ministering to others, are often those who are learning much more about God as they serve. They understand their need of him and learn to trust him.
- c) **It will be an increasingly powerful life (v11).** It is a walk that is strengthened with all power, according to **HIS** glorious might. That is a lot of strength poured out into us! It will empower us to hold fast to the true Gospel and resist influences that might cause us to disregard it. Perfect endurance will enable us to endure hard circumstances but also to be patient with one another in daily life.

How is it possible to live this life of ever-increasing knowledge, fruitfulness and power?

It sounds as if Paul is asking too much of us all, but he is praying this for the Colossians because he is assured of two things that he knows the Father joyfully gives his children.

- 1) **His Spirit.** The holy Spirit works in us and reveals the knowledge of God's will to us. The Spirit has a chosen means by which he primarily communicates with us, connecting us to the Father and that is through **his Word, the scriptures, which are God-breathed.** As we read scripture, the Holy Spirit brings the ink on the page to life and makes it cut through to our heart. Through this, he corrects us when we are going down the wrong path, and reveals new truths about God that we had

not grasped before. In this way, we will come to know him more intimately and our hearts will conform more and more to his heart. The Spirit does this by constantly pointing us back to the cross.

2) Jesus Christ. It would be true that the life we are being called to is impossible, were it not that God has given Jesus Christ. (vv12-14 above). We are more than qualified to live out this life and to ask for more! Because of this inheritance, which is our secure hope, we can joyfully and thankfully start living this life now.

- We are not held captive by the domain of darkness, but are already in the kingdom of the Son
- We are free from being defined by the world. Instead, we are being defined by God.

Paul can pray that God will grow more in them, and in us, because he knows what Christ has achieved.

We are free to live the life we are designed to live!

Over the next three months, as we study this letter to the Colossians, we will see more and more the reality of this. We

will look at what has been achieved in Christ:

- the fulness that has been won
- the ever-increasing faith and love

All of this comes from a deepening view of our secure hope.

The question at the start was:

What is the state of Broadstone Baptist Church?

As we work through this letter, we will be able to see how we measure against the answer that matters:

**Broadstone Baptist Church is rooted and built up in Christ
and is seeking to grow more and more in him.**

Over this time, and continually, please pray for the church as Paul prayed for the church in Colossae.

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^[d] to the Father, who has qualified you^[e] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.