

Being an Authentic Church

Session 3

April 28, 2024

Growing in Christ

Session Point: We should encourage and help one another grow in Christ.

Session Question: Why do we need others to mature in Christ?

Session Passages: Colossians 1:9-14,21-29

The Setting for Colossians. Along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon, Colossians is known as a “Prison Epistle” (Col. 4:3,18). Paul likely wrote all these letters during his first imprisonment in Rome (about AD 60–62; Acts 28:30-31). Colossians focuses on who Christ is and what He has done. Paul argued against false teachers who expressed wrong ideas about Christ, and the apostle urged the Colossian believers to remain true to Christ.

Colossians 1:9-14

Connection to The Point: Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of others.

For this reason, For this cause (v. 9). This refers to Paul’s previous statements (vv. 3-8) as he expressed thanksgiving to God for the Colossians’ faith.

Since the day we heard this, Since the day we heard about you, Since the day we heard it (v. 9). Paul echoed his words in verse 4 by thanking God for the good news Epaphras had brought about the Colossians’ growing faith.

Do not cease to, Haven’t stopped, Have not stopped (v. 9). Paul, Timothy, and other coworkers continued asking God for His blessings on the Colossian believers.

Praying for you, Pray for you (v. 9). Paul constantly prayed for fellow believers (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15-16). Praying for other Christians is one way we can help one another grow in godly character and fruitfulness.

Asking Continually ask (v. 9). Paul, Timothy, and other coworkers continued asking God for His blessings on the Colossian believers. “Asking God” was commonly used as a synonym for *praying*.

Filled, To fill (v. 9). Although verse 8 is the only specific reference to the Holy Spirit in Colossians, it is God—through His Spirit—who does the filling (Eph. 5:18-21). Being *filled* means “to be controlled” by God’s Spirit.

Knowledge of his will (v. 9). God reveals His will to His children. This knowledge grows out of an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ and results in right living (righteousness).

Wisdom and spiritual understanding, Wisdom and understanding (v. 9). The terms *wisdom* and *spiritual understanding* are synonyms referring to what God gives to believers. It involves the ability to both think and act in a godly, spiritual way. The believer’s part is to put himself in the position to receive what God gives. This comes from prayer and understanding the truths of God’s Word.

Walk Live (v. 10). In the Bible, the word *walklive* usually describes a person’s lifestyle. In this context, verses 10-14 describe how the believer should live in obedience to God.

Worthy of the Lord (v. 10). The Greek word for *worthy* points to the appropriate way believers are to live. The ways of *the Lord* are the standard for evaluating the believer’s behavior.

Fully pleasing to him, Please him in every way, All pleasing (v. 10). This phrase echoes “worthy of the Lord.” Believers are obligated to live in a manner that fully conforms to God’s will, thereby pleasing Him (Eph. 5:1-2).

Bearing fruit, Being fruitful (v. 10). The New Testament often speaks of *bearing fruit being fruitful* as characterizing the believer’s lifestyle (John 15:5,8; Gal. 5:16-26).

Every good work (v. 10). Good works refer to those actions which flow out of one’s salvation through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18,25; Eph. 2:10).

Growing Increasing (v. 10). This growth is called *sanctification* (becoming holy; growing to spiritual maturity) and results from such actions as prayer, Bible study, and living out one’s faith guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:22; 2 Tim. 1:14).

The knowledge of God (v. 10). Through understanding God’s Word, God’s will, and living out the Christian life, the believer grows more and more in his knowledge of God and how to apply that knowledge/understanding in his life.

Being strengthened with all power Strengthened with all might (v. 11). To be *strengthened* is to be enabled. *Power Might* means force in the sense of miraculous power. The word for *all* means complete or unlimited, and further describes God’s power that believers have access to through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

According to (v. 11). This refers to the source of the believer’s power—God.

Glorious might Glorious power (v. 11). The word *glorious* further describes God’s power. The Greek term for *might* may differ slightly in meaning from “power” in that *might* The term *power* describes the ability to control/exercise force—to have dominion, sovereignty. Christ’s resurrection demonstrated this power and might (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 1:18-20).

So that you may have Unto all (v. 11). This phrase may suggest the purpose and/or result of the exercise of God’s power and might.

Great endurance, Patience (v. 11). The Greek term for *endurance patience* refers to the ability to persevere through the experiences and trials of life.

Patience Longsuffering (v. 11). The Greek term for *patience longsuffering* refers to a calm state of mind maintained as one experiences the trials of life, particularly those brought about by other people.

Joyfully, Joyful, Joyfulness (v. 11,12). The Greek term for *joyfully joyfulness* means cheerfulness or gladness. It explains how to respond by “giving thanks.” (v. 12).

Giving thanks to the Father Giving . . . thanks to the Father, Giving thanks unto the Father (v. 12). The remainder of verse 12 Verse 12 provides reasons why believers should express thanksgiving to God the Father. Paul used the phrase *giving thanksgiving thanks* repeatedly as the appropriate response for what God has done for believers (Eph. 1:16; 5:4,20; Col. 3:17).

Who has enabled, Who has qualified, Which hath made us meet (v. 12). The Greek term for *enabled meet* means to make able or to qualify *qualified* means to make able. God takes the initiative in salvation and all the believer receives from God comes through the atoning work of Christ on his behalf.

Saints (v. 12). The Greek term translated *saints* refers to those who are holy or set apart. Paul’s favorite designation for Christians, saints are holy ones set apart for God in Christ.

Inheritance (v. 12). The Greek word for *inheritance* refers to a part, portion, or heritage. The believer's inheritance is the result of his or her salvation. This inheritance refers to all the blessings the believer receives through Christ, both in this life and in the life to come. Because this inheritance comes from and is the result of the actions of God, believers are guaranteed they will receive it.

The saints (v. 12). The Greek term translated *saints* refers to those who are holy or set apart. Paul's favorite designation for Christians, saints are holy ones set apart for God in Christ. **His holy people** (v. 12). The Greek term is also translated "saints" and means to be set apart. Paul's favorite designation for Christians, saints are holy ones set apart for God in Christ.

Kingdom of Light (v. 12). This refers to God's kingdom either on earth or in heaven or both (John 8:12).

Rescued Delivered (v. 13). The term describes deliverance from an opposing force that may be physical (2 Tim. 3:11) or spiritual (Matt. 6:13).

Domain of darkness, Dominion of darkness, Power of darkness (v. 13). This refers to Satan's sphere of influence, generally the world system that stands in opposition to God, and specifically the hearts of those who don't make Jesus their Lord (Acts 26:18). *Darkness* also symbolizes unbelief and the absence of God.

Transferred, Brought Translated (v. 13). To *transfer Brought To translate* means to move from one place to another. In this context, Paul referred to believers being moved at the moment of conversion from Satan's "domain of darkness dominion of darkness the power of darkness" to God's "kingdom."

Kingdom (v. 13). The term refers to the exercise of God's authority and the realm over which He exercises that authority. God reigns in heaven and on earth in the hearts of believers. Jesus ("the Son his dear Son") inaugurated the coming of the kingdom in His presence and ministry (Mark 1:15).

The Son he loves His dear Son (v. 13). This phrase refers to Jesus, who accomplished salvation in obedience to the Father's will (John 5:20; 10:17; 15:10), and through His actions demonstrated Himself to be the rightful ruler of the kingdom (Phil. 2:10-11; Col. 2:14-15).

Have redemption through his blood (v. 14). To *have* refers to a present possession brought about by a past action. Believers possess salvation because of belief in Christ's sacrifice *through his blood* on the cross (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:15). *Redemption* refers to the payment of a price that secures the release of a slave. Prior to salvation all people were slaves to sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:16).

Forgiveness (v. 14). The term in this context refers to the act of freeing/liberating someone from guilt or punishment, in this case from that related to sin.

Colossians 1:21-23

Connection to The Point: We are to stand firmly grounded in Christ.

The Setting of Colossians 1:21-29. Verses 15-20 describe Christ's authority and superiority over all creation and may be an early Christian hymn. On the basis of who Christ is and what He has done, Paul described the impact of Christ's life on believers including himself as an apostle.

Once Sometime (v. 21). The word *once sometime* refers to the relationship of alienation and hostility all believers had prior to salvation with God based on their thoughts and actions.

Alienated . . . hostile, Alienated . . . enemies (v. 21). To be *alienated* is to be estranged from someone. To be *hostile enemies* is to be an enemy, adversary, a foe hostile to someone.

In your minds, In your mind (v. 21). This phrase and the next one reveal the status of all people before they are reconciled to God. Alienation and hostility indicate one who is far away, separated from God in his thinking and in direct opposition to Him in both word and deed (described more fully in Rom. 1:18-23 and Eph. 2:12; 4:18-19).

Evil actions, Evil behavior, Wicked works (v. 21). Wrong thinking leads to evil actions. Paul described this progression more completely in Romans 1:21-32.

But now, Yet now (v. 2221). The words *but now, yet now* indicate the dramatic change in status for believers due to God's reconciling action in Christ (Rom. 6:22; 11:30; Eph. 2:13; 5:8).

Reconciled (v. 2221). When a person puts his faith in Christ, he is *reconciled* to God. The believer moves from the state of hostility with and separation from God to one of peace and fellowship with Him as His adopted children. This change of the individual's relationship with God is only possible through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

By his physical body through his death, By Christ's physical body through death, In the body of his flesh through death (v. 22). Paul emphasized the importance of Christ's incarnation in God's reconciling believers, likely to address the issue of false teachers in the Colossian church. The only way to God is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Specifically, Christ's willing sacrifice through the *death of his physical body* the *death of Christ's physical body* the death of His physical body made reconciliation possible.

To present you . . . before him, To present you . . . in his sight (v. 22). This phrase indicates the purpose of Christ's reconciliation. To receive God's favor, the person being presented must meet God's requirements: to be holy, faultless without, blemish unblameable, and blameless free from accusation, unproveable. That is possible only through Christ's righteousness, not through any person's efforts (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Because Christ lived a perfectly sinless life and became the atoning sacrifice for sin, God imputes Christ's perfect righteousness to the account of every believer (Heb. 9:26; 10:12).

Holy, faultless, and blameless Holy . . . without blemish . . . free from accusation Holy . . . unblameable . . . unproveable (v. 22). The Greek term for *holy* refers to being set free from sin and set apart with a purpose (Eph. 1:4). The Greek term for *faultless without blemish unblameable* refers to being pure or innocent, faultless without blemish (Phil. 2:15). *Blameless Free from accusation, Unproveable* describes the behavior of believers, especially leaders, being free from accusation blameless (1 Tim. 3:10).

Remain . . . in the faith, Continue in your faith, Continue in the faith (v. 23). In this world genuine faith begins at conversion and perseveres to the end of the believer's mortal life or until Christ returns (Phil. 1:6). Jesus Himself aids the believer in perseverance (John 15:5; Rom. 5:1-5; Phil. 2:12-13). *Faith* used with the definite article "the" in this context refers to the Christian beliefs regarding salvation in Christ.

Grounded and steadfast, Established and firm, Grounded and settled (v. 23). To be *grounded established* is to be stable. To be *steadfast, firm, settled* refers to being immovable or settled steadfast. The two terms point to the foundation of faith—Jesus Christ Himself (1 Cor. 3:10-11). Persistence in faith with its resulting Christ-like behavior is a consistent theme in Paul's writings (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:5-6,13-14,22-25).

Are not shifted away, Do not move from, Be not moved away from (v. 23). Paul contrasted the stability of the gospel message with the errors about Christ taught by false teachers in Colossae. The phrase *are not shifted away, do not move*

from be not moved away from points back to the phrase “grounded and steadfast in the faith, in your faith, established and firm, in the faith grounded and settled.” True believers will remain in the faith. Those who leave the faith were never true believers to begin with (1 John 2:19).

Hope (v. 23). In English the word *hope* implies some doubt; not so in Greek. The term may be better translated as “confidence.” For example, as Christians we have the confidence that physical death brings us into Christ’s presence (2 Cor. 5:8) and that we have an eternal home in heaven (v. 1).

The gospel (v. 23). The word *gospel* refers to the salvation that is available only through Jesus Christ. This is the gospel the apostles preached which the false teachers at Colossae had corrupted with errors about Christ.

You heard . . . has been proclaimed, Ye have heard, and which was preached (v. 23). The mission of Paul and his coworkers was the proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:2).

I, Paul, have become a servant of it, Of which I, Paul, have become a servant, Whereof I Paul am made a minister (v. 23). From “Paul the persecutor” to “Paul the preacher” was a dynamic shift in the focus for Paul’s life. The transformation begun on the Damascus road (Acts 9) led Paul to change his entire life’s mission: he became a *servant* (minister)*minister* (servant) of the gospel.

Colossians 1:24-29

Connection to The Point: Paul’s goal to bring others to maturity in Christ.

I rejoice in my sufferings for you, I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you (v. 24). Paul’s response to suffering beatings, stonings, imprisonments, and other consequences for proclaiming the gospel was to *rejoice* because these sufferings enabled him to identify with Jesus his Lord who also suffered (Rom. 8:17). Paul viewed his suffering for Christ as beneficial for the believers in Colossae even though he had never met them personally.

Completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions, I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh (v. 24). Because the world (those opposed to Jesus) could no longer make Jesus Christ suffer physically, they made His followers suffer. Believers’ union with Christ can include suffering (John 15:18-21). Christ’s mission was completed—salvation was accomplished through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross. What is *lacking behind* most likely refers to the afflictions caused by the world’s extreme hatred for Christ and those who belong to Him (Rom. 8:17-18). Paul’s sufferings were not redemptive. But the afflictions he suffered (and all other believers suffer) continue the work of Christ in that they occur as believers proclaim His gospel of salvation to the entire world.

For his body . . . the church, For the sake of his body, which is the church, For his body’s sake, which is the church (v. 24). Paul identified Christ’s body with the church—all believers of all times who have made Jesus their Savior and Lord (Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 12:27).

I have become its servant, Whereof I am made a minister (v. 25). In addition to being a minister of the gospel (v. 23; see Rom. 1:1; Eph. 3:7), Paul viewed himself as a *servant* (minister)*minister* (servant) of God and God’s church, the body of Christ.

God’s commission, The commission God gave to me, According to the dispensation of God which is given to me (v. 25). The term *dispensation, commission* refers to a plan, commission, or stewardship. God commissioned Paul specifically to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5; 15:16; Eph. 3:8).

To make the word of God fully known, To present to you the word of God in its fullness, To fulfil the word of God (v. 25). Paul's specific commission was to proclaim the gospel (*the word of God*) to the Gentiles who had never heard it.

The mystery (v. 26). The Greek term for *mystery* refers to something formerly hidden and now revealed. In this context it refers to God's actions in providing salvation to the Gentiles in addition to the Jews (Eph. 3:1-7).

Now revealed to his saints, Now disclosed to the Lord's people, Now is made manifest to his saints (v. 26). *Now* likely refers to the age beginning with Jesus's birth and continuing through His second coming. Through Paul's ministry of sharing the gospel with the Gentiles, God revealed this mystery to His saints (all believers) the Lord's people (all the saints).

God wanted to make known among the Gentiles, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles, To whom God would make known . . . among the Gentiles (v. 27). After Paul's experience with Jesus on the Damascus Road and with Ananias (Acts 9:1-18), he understood his mission was to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16).

The glorious wealth of this mystery, The glorious riches of this mystery, The riches of the glory of this mystery (v. 27). God's love for all the world (Gentiles in addition to the Jews; John 3:16) was a *mystery* that began to be revealed in Jesus's life, death, and resurrection but was more clearly seen in Paul's mission to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Eph. 2:11-22). Here Paul described this wealth of the gospel message as *glorious the riches of the glory* (magnificent, brilliant). and elsewhere as "incomparable, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Christ in you (v. 27). The union of the believer and Christ beginning with the conversion aspect of salvation and growing through the sanctification aspect (growing to spiritual maturity) describes Christ's and the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, giving God's unlimited spiritual power to all believers.

The hope of glory (v. 27). This *hope* is the confident assurance each believer has in the present, particularly of God's life-long presence in his life, as well as his future glorification and an eternal home in heaven (Rom. 8:18-25).

We proclaim him, He is the one we proclaim, Whom we preach (v. 28). Paul, Timothy, and his other coworkers continually announced the gospel message. Christ was always the center of Paul's proclamation (1 Cor. 1:23).

Warning and teaching everyone, Admonishing and teaching everyone, Warning every man, and teaching every man (v. 28). Paul described his proclamation with two words: *warning*, *admonishing* of God's judgment of unbelievers and *teaching* the gospel of salvation and Christ's commands to everyone they encountered.

Wisdom (v. 28). In this context, *wisdom* is the ability to use spiritual knowledge in practical ways to grow towards maturity in Christlikeness. Paul was likely addressing the false teachers in Colossae who saw themselves as experts in wisdom but whom Paul recognized as deviating from God's truth (Col. 2:4,8,16-23). Christ is the source and foundation of all wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24).

So that we may present everyone, That we may present every man (v. 28). Paul expressed his purpose in the proclamation of the gospel. Although Gentiles were the focus of Paul's preaching, he also proclaimed the gospel to Jews. The one to whom all believers will ultimately be presented is Jesus at the end of the age (2 Cor. 5:10).

Mature in Christ, Fully mature in Christ, Perfect in Christ Jesus (v. 28). Although the Greek term is sometimes translated "perfect," the idea of "fully mature" *fully mature* ("complete" or "whole") because of Christ's indwelling presence in the believer's life is a more accurate description of Paul's ultimate goal in proclaiming the gospel (v. 22; Phil. 3:12-15). The Greek term translated *perfect* in this context has the meaning of being "fully mature" ("complete" or "whole") due to

Christ's indwelling presence in the believer's life which was Paul's ultimate goal in proclaiming the gospel (v. 22; Phil. 3:12-15).

Labor for this, To this end I strenuously contend, Whereunto I also labour (v. 29). The Greek term for *labor, labour* describes working to the point of exhaustion. The pronoun *this*, The phrase *to this end Whereunto* refers to Paul's proclamation of Christ so that every believer can be presented as fully mature in Jesus Christ (v. 28).

Striving with his strength that works powerfully in me, With all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me, Striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily (v. 29). Paul repeatedly balanced his efforts for Christ (striving) with God's working in and through him, recognizing that his strength came from God alone (Phil. 2:12-13; 4:13).