

All age 12th February

Reading – Colossians 1 3:14

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵the 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 ⁶that 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. ⁷You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

⁹For 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, ¹⁰so 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, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,¹²and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

To the Children - "do you think you are growing right now?" You are! You are a tiny bit taller than they were 5 minutes ago!

Get a parent of one of the children up to the front. Ask child if Mummy/Daddy is still growing taller? Wait for answer, explain that they aren't (at least, vertically!) They are a "grown-up."

Unlike physical growth, faith need never stop growing! Imagine if our faith grew bigger and bigger, until it was even taller than Hannah's Dad!

Sometimes it can be easy to be content with where we are in our faith, and to think that we "have enough" or "know enough". We might think that once we've said yes to Jesus, that there is nothing else to be done. We might consider ourselves to be as "grown up" as we're going to be.

We're in a relationship with Jesus. I hope when I'm married I will know and love my future wife more with every day, and I want that to be the case with Jesus too.

The Bible clearly shows that growing in faith is important. Paul in 2 Thes 1:3 says "We ought always to thank God for you brothers and sisters, and rightly so because **your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.**"

The faith of other believers is also an encouragement – 1 Thes 3:7-8 "...we were **encouraged** about you because of your **faith**. For now **we really live**, since you are standing firm in the Lord."

These passages show the importance of growing in faith, and the danger of getting stuck or becoming stagnant.

What does this growth look like? Col 1:9-11 sums it up:

“...we have not stopped praying for you, and asking God to fill you with the **knowledge** of his will through all spiritual **wisdom** and **understanding**. And we pray this in order that you may live a **life worthy** of the Lord and may please him in every way: **bearing fruit** in every good work, **growing** in knowledge of God, being **strengthened with all power** according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...”

Summary:

- Know God better – fall in love with him more – like the marriage analogy
- Lives that glorify him – link to giving and serving which is the series we’re in at the moment – the way we live our lives is an outworking of our faith. Faith without works is dead, so it cannot simply be an internal feeling but must also manifest in external actions.
- Bear the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- Be strengthened to face challenges.

None of this growth is done alone. Faith itself is a gift from God (Eph 2:8) – it is not something we can simply generate within ourselves, but is a partnership as we respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The important thing from our perspective, I believe, is to move away from the temptation to think that we are now spiritual “grown-ups” – that we have finished our growing.

I don’t wish to sound critical or condemning – saying we need to grow in faith is not a criticism of our current position, but an appraisal of the place God wants to take us to. Scripture is full of examples of men and women who grew in faith from an already high starting point. Example - David slew Goliath as a boy – his faith in God and trust in his protection of him must have been enormous! And yet, that was just the start of his journey to become Israel’s greatest King. His faith grew (with wobbles) until his greatest desire was to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 27).

The earnest seeking of more of God, the desire to dwell in his house, the drive to, as Vicar Paul puts it, to pursue the presence of Jesus, are all things we, as God’s people should be cultivating in our hearts. We are not yet complete - are we, as Paul writes to the Philippians - “pressing on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me?”

God knows us even better than we know ourselves. We’re going to spend some time in prayer now, thanking God for the ways he has grown our faith and coming before him for guidance in how he wants us to continue growing.