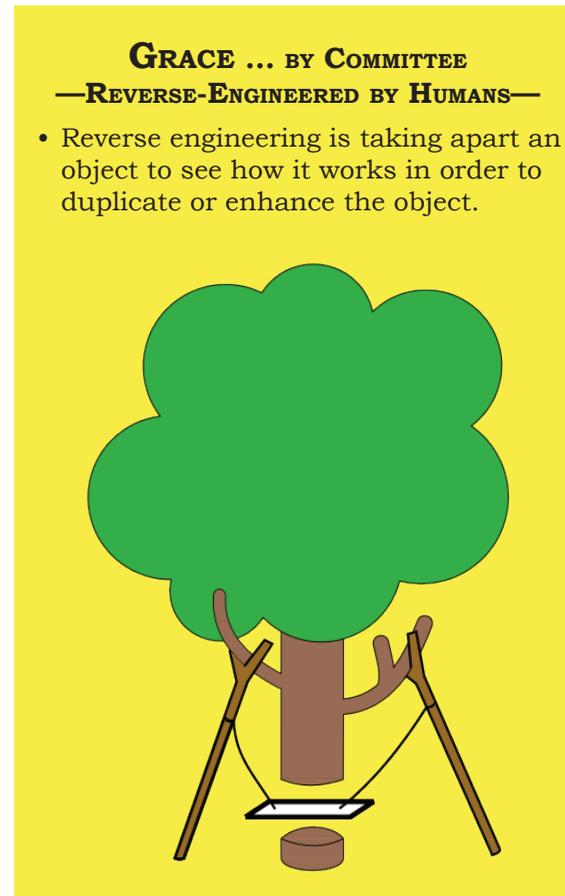


COMMENTARY ... WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN ...

- (Colossians 1:6b NIV) 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.

The rapid progress of the gospel in the early days has ever been the amazement of the historian. **Justin Martyr**, about the middle of the second century, wrote,



“There is no people, Greek or barbarian, or of any other race, by whatever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell in tents or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered in the name of the crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things.” Half a century later **Tertullian** adds, “We are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill

your cities, islands, camps, your palace, senate, and forum. We have left you only your temples.” **R. H. Glover** (The Progress of World-Wide Missions, p. 39) states, “On the basis of all the data available it has been estimated that by the close of the Apostolic Period the total number of Christian disciples had reached half a million.” [Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). Exposition of Colossians and Philemon (Vol. 6, p. 51). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.]

5b–8. Now with respect to this hope Paul continues, of which you have previously heard in the message of the truth, namely, the gospel. Since the apostle himself explains this statement in verse 7, little comment is needed here. The main idea is still thanksgiving for the blessings bestowed upon the Colossians. Note, however, that though this is Paul’s chief thought, there is here a certain implication. A warning can easily be read between the lines, to this effect, “O Colossians, I gratefully testify that with respect to this glorious hope you have heard a message that was true, uplifting, and fruitbearing (5b, 6). Hence, do not allow yourselves to be led astray by teachers of false doctrine. Cling to the truth that was proclaimed to you in the gospel.” On the meaning of gospel see N.T.C. on Philippians, pp. 81–85. This is the gospel which made its entrance felt among you, 31 as indeed in the entire world it is bearing fruit and growing. The Colossians are being reminded of the power (cf. Rom. 1:16) and successful course of the gospel, as a

reason for gratitude. Here, too, there is the implication, “Don’t you remember the mighty change that occurred when the message of God’s redemptive truth made its first appearance among you? That gospel needs no addition or supplement. Its influence is being felt in ever-increasing measure, both extensively, invading region after region, and intensively, producing fruit upon fruit in hearts won for Christ. Do not attempt to exchange God’s powerful work for man’s beggarly elements” (cf. 2:8). [Ibid. (Vol. 6, pp. 50–51).]

To this specific instance of fruit-bearing the apostle now returns by continuing, so also among yourselves from the day you heard and came to acknowledge the grace of God in its genuine character. The main note is still thanksgiving. The inference is, “So, Colossians, do not destroy this fruit-bearing tree. Do not listen to those who are trying to deprive you of the great blessing that has come to you.” Not only had they come to know the truth, they had come to acknowledge it, and this from the very day they had first heard it. Such acknowledgment is more than abstract, intellectual knowledge. It is a joyful acceptance and appropriation of the truth centered in Christ. This truth concerns nothing less than the grace of God, his sovereign love in action, his favor toward the undeserving. They had come to acknowledge this grace of God “in its genuine character,” unattenuated by philosophical vagaries or Judaistic admixtures. [Ibid. (Vol. 6, p. 52).]