

11. Learning How to Pray for Others

We are beginning a new series of topics today about the lessons we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from the book of Colossians. Our children will learn these lessons best as we teach them and then illustrate what we are teaching by our own example. Our children carefully observe how we put what we teach into practice by the way that we live. If we provide a good example of what we teach, it will help them grow to spiritual maturity, because of the fact that they have seen how these lessons have changed and transformed our own lives.

Paul began this letter as he did most other letters with a personal greeting. Colossians 1:1-2 says, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul realized that the only reason he was an apostle was due to the fact that it was the will of God that he be an apostle. Timothy joined with Paul in sending this greeting to the Christians that were in the city of Colosse. Paul rejoiced in the fact that the saints in Colosse were also faithful. We see that Paul wanted them to experience both grace and peace from the Father and also from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wanted the Christians in the city of Colosse to know that he continually prayed for them. Colossians 1:3-6 says, “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.” Here, we see that Paul was very thankful for the way that the Christians in the city of Colosse had become Christians and had grown in the Lord. We will see that Paul had not personally met these Christians but that he continually gave thanks for them.

As Paul gave thanks and prayed for the Christians in Colosse, there were three things for which he was especially thankful. We see that he gave thanks for their faith, love and hope. Here, we see that these were healthy growing Christians. They had placed their faith in Christ. They had developed a love for all of the saints. And they were filled with hope and confidence as they looked forward to the day when they would be in heaven with the Lord. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” We see that these were healthy Christians because all three of the things that abide were present in their lives. When we know that we are saved by faith and learn to walk by faith, we have a strong trust in the Lord. As we think of the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins and that He is coming back to take us to heaven, we have a strong hope. However, love is greater than even these two because these two will be completed when Christ takes us to heaven. However, the love of Christ for us and our love for God and for others will last for all eternity.

The Colossians had these three things because they had responded to the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel means *good news*. The Greeks had previously used the word to speak about good news when they heard word of a victory that their armies had won in a battle. However, Christianity

gives the word a much fuller meaning. The Gospel is the good news that Christ defeated Satan by His death and resurrection. Through that death, He paid the penalty for sin. Through His resurrection, Christ defeated the power of death. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 says, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Colossians knew that they had victory through Christ.

The Gospel had come to the Colossians just as it had come to people in many other places. We also see that everywhere the Gospel went, it was bringing forth fruit. Romans 7:4-5 says, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” Before we placed our faith in Christ, our lives were bearing fruit that produced death. Once we come to Christ, we are able to bear fruit to God. Everywhere the Gospel was shared it was bringing forth fruit to God.

We also see how the Gospel was brought to the people in Colosse. Colossians 1:7-8 says, “As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.” In Colossians 4:12, we see that Epaphras was originally from Colosse. That verse says, “Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Epaphras had apparently met Paul when Paul was in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:10 says, “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” After becoming a Christian and learning from Paul in Ephesus, Epaphras had returned to his home town of Colosse to share the Gospel in that area of Asia. The result was that people believed and a church was formed.

We see two key characteristics of Epaphras. Paul called Epaphras a fellow servant. The word that is translated “fellow servant” is from the word that means bondservants who both serve the same master. Here, we see that Epaphras considered himself a bondservant of Christ. Epaphras was also a faithful minister of Christ. 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” Epaphras was faithful in his service for the Lord. When Epaphras arrived in Rome, he told Paul about the love that the Colossians had because they were learning to be led by the Holy Spirit. This good report about the Christians at Colosse caused Paul to be very thankful for them.

We go on to read the prayer of Paul for the Christians in Colosse. Colossians 1:9-12 says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” We see that from the time that Paul heard about the salvation of the Christians in Colosse that he began to pray continually for them. He

prayed for several specific things as he prayed for them.

First, Paul prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will. The word translated “knowledge” means *a deep or complete knowledge*. Colossians 3:10 says, “And have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” Here, we see that as we are being renewed in knowledge, we come to a real understanding of the will of God. Second, Paul prayed that the Colossians would be filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding. Wisdom is received from the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” The Holy Spirit will give us wisdom and spiritual understanding as the Holy Spirit teaches us to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

Third, Paul prayed that they would walk worthy of God being fully pleasing to Him. The word that is translated “worthy” speaks of walking in a way that is pleasing to God. Paul prayed the same thing for the Thessalonians when he said in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, “That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul wanted all Christians to learn to walk in a way that was pleasing to God. Fourth, Paul prayed that they would be fruitful in every good work. Timothy was instructed in 1 Timothy 6 to tell people not to depend on their uncertain riches. Instead 1 Timothy 6:18 says, “*Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.” We want to help our children understand that Christ calls us to be known for good works.

Fifth, Paul prayed that they would be increasing in the knowledge of God. “Increasing” means *to grow in our knowledge of the Word*. Peter told new Christians in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” In fact, every Christian needs to be growing in their knowledge and obedience to the Word of God. Sixth, Paul prayed that they would be strengthened with might according to His glorious power. The word that is translated “might” is most commonly translated “power”. Christ used that word when He told the apostles in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We pray our children will depend on the power of the Spirit.

Paul also gave thanks to the Father because He has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. Here, we see that Christ so changes our lives that He makes us qualified to share in all that God has for us. Romans 8:17 says, “And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children also learn to pray for these same things for others.