Scripture: Colossians 1:1-8

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brothers 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. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit."

Devotional

In the popular last verse of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul talks of faith, hope, and love. Chances are you have heard this verse at a wedding so you are probably familiar that the greatest of those 3 is love. Now this does not mean that faith and hope are not important in the life of a believer. All 3 work together in harmony to produce spiritual fruit in our lives. Here in Colossians 1, Paul tells the church that he, "heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of the **love** that you have for all the saints, because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven." The Colossian church has a reputation of being strong in their faith, having love for their fellow believers and this is due to the hope that they have in Christ. When these 3 aspects are involved in the church, we start to see the church multiply. A Christian that has his life based on faith in Jesus, love for his neighbors, and hope for the future is not likely to fall short of what the Lord has called Him to be.

- 1. Our of faith, hope, and love, which of those 3 do you struggle with the most?
- 2. Why is love so important in the life of a Christian?
- 3. Do you think you have a reputation like the Colossian church? Do people know about your faith in Christ, your love for your neighbor, and the hope that you have in the Gospel?

Scripture: Colossians 1:9-14

"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 to the Father, who has qualified you 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."

Devotional

Many people will look at the Lord's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount as an excellent guide on how we should pray. I would definitely agree with that. I also think that Colossians 1:9-14 also paints a very pretty picture on how we can structure our prayers. By looking at what Paul says about praying for the Colossian church, we can see an outline of things that we can pray and thank the Lord for. You can never go wrong with asking the Lord to increase you in the knowledge of His will. Asking for spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord is an excellent thing. We should pray that the Lord would give us many opportunities and that we would take advantage of those opportunities to bear fruit for the Gospel. To grow in knowledge of the Lord is one of the most important things that we can know. Jonathan Edwards once said, "Of all the knowledge that we can ever obtain, the knowledge of God, and knowledge of ourselves, are the most important." We also know that the Christian faith is a marathon and not a sprint. We should pray to be strengthened by the Lord's power so that we may endure. Finally, we can thank the Lord that He has allowed us a share of the inheritance of our fellow saints, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and has transferred us to be in communion with His Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Questions

1. No questions today! Instead, using the above verses as a guide, spend some time in prayer with the Lord either as a family or in your own personal quiet time.

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-20

"15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Devotional

These are some of my favorite verses in all of Scripture. It is here where we see the glory of Christ in full display. He is over all things, He is sovereign over all things, He is King over all! Here we see what Abraham Kuyper meant when he said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" We don't have the space in this little devotional to talk about every aspect of this verse that I am in love with. Go back and read the passage again slowly and really breath in what Paul is saying about our Savior. If I had to pick just one verse for us to focus on it would be verse 18. "And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent." What does preeminent mean? That's probably not a word that you use in every day conversation. To be preeminent means to surpass all other things. This means that in Jesus, there is nothing else to gain, nothing else to get. He is above all things and before all things. As I have said before in other places, this means that Jesus is enough! If all you had was Jesus, that would be enough for you! He is the greatest possible gift that we could receive and the greatest love that we could ever get. John MacArthur said, "Christianity is very simple. It is about having Christ. And in not having Christ, you have nothing. And in Having Christ, you have everything."

- 1. What is your favorite verse in this passage?
- 2. What do these verses help to reveal to you about Jesus?
- 3. There are over 20 things in these 6 verses that Paul reveals to us about Jesus. Is there anything in this passage that you didn't know about Jesus?

Scripture: Colossians 1:21-23

"21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."

Devotional

In the previous verses, Paul exclaims the majesty of Jesus and His role in the universe. From there he jumps back to ground level and addresses the Colossians personally. By highlighting Christ's cosmic restoration, Paul is able to apply this to their own personal separation from Christ. However, that separation has been overcome by Christ's atoning death on the cross. Where they were once enemies, now they are friends and members of God's household. Paul knows just how important the Gospel message is. Paul has made it his mission in life to make the Gospel message known throughout the world.

- 1. Do you think that it is easy to take for granted just how much Christ saved you from?
- 2. What can we do to have a heart like Paul for missions?
- 3. Why do you think Paul mentioned the greatness of Christ before he mentioned the horribleness of our sin?

Scripture: Colossians 1:24-29

"²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

Devotional

Verse 24 is a verse that has confused Bible scholars for centuries. What does Paul mean when he says that he is filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the church? Considering that Christ's death was completely sufficient for our redemption, why would Paul make the statement about filling up what is lacking? I have heard it described like this: Paul is not saying that Christ's atonement was not sufficient. However, he does realize that Christians are called to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. This is why we see Paul say that he rejoices in his suffering because he has embraced the call to suffer for and with Christ. Paul has embraced the calling to carry his cross and follow Jesus. Paul is not adding to the work of Christ's atoning death, but in a sense, he is partaking in it. Think about the book of Acts and how the apostles rejoiced in the fact that they were able to be beaten and imprisoned for the name of the Lord. He is rejoicing that he would be considered worthy to take part in suffering for the name of Jesus now so that others may see the love of Christ in action, therefore, he is able to say that he is filling up what is lacking. John Piper summarizes it like this, "What's missing is the in-person presentation of Christ's sufferings to the people for whom he died. The afflictions are lacking in the sense that they are not seen and known among the nations. They must be carried by ministers of the gospel. And those ministers of the gospel fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ by extending them to others."

Questions

1. Do you believe that Christ's death paid for your sins in full or do you think that you still owe something in order to be saved?

Day 6

Scripture: Colossians 2:1-5

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ."

Devotional

One thing that people seem to forget is that when Paul wrote this letter, he had never even met the church in Colossae! But look at how much he loved and prayed for this church that he had never even met. Isn't this a different heart than what many of us have towards other Christians that we don't know? How often do you stop and think about all the good that a church that you don't even go to is doing? One thing that is lacking today is a heart for believers around the world. We can be all too me-centric in our worldview. But you are not the only Christian in the world and your church is not the only church in the world. Is your heart open to what other Christians are doing around the world? Are you even aware of the battle that many Christians face in third-world countries over their faith? Check it out sometime. It can be some pretty scary stuff. We are called as Christians to love our neighbors and we need to remember that are neighbors are not just the people that live next door, look just like us, talk just like us, and act just like us.

Questions

1. No questions for today! Instead, spend some time praying for the Churches in your community, in your nation, and around the world. Ask the Lord to give you a heart for these people that you may not even know.

Scripture: Colossians 2: 6-15

"6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

Devotional

It can be a dangerous thing to add things into Christianity that aren't supposed to be there. If you take things out of the Gospel, you have a false Gospel and if you add things in, boom, another false Gospel. This has been a danger since the Church first popped up almost 2,000 years ago. Here we see Paul addressing philosophies, traditions, and demands that some were trying to add into the Gospel message. Once again, Paul makes clear what the Gospel truly is: Jesus is fully God and fully man. He died for our sins on the cross and was raised from the dead. By trusting the Lord in faith, God has made us alive along with Christ and has forgiven us of our sins. The debt that we owed for our wickedness has been nailed to the cross. Christianity is not just a list of rules and moral life changes. It is a complete transformation that relies solely on Christ to bring about. Like Paul says, it is such a transformation that it is the equivalent of moving from being dead to being alive again.

- 1. How much of the Gospel that you believe do you think is really part of the Gospel?
- 2. Why do you think we try to add extra things into the Gospel?
- 3. What are some ways that we can avoid adding in unnecessary things in the Gospel?

Day 8

Scripture: Colossians 2:16-23

"¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. ²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh."

Devotional

How often do we let outsiders opinions shape our faith? I think we live in a generation that is constantly looking for approval and does not want to shake the status quo. A Christianity that does not challenge and convict the world is not true Biblical Christianity. Christians are supposed to raise the world's eyebrows. Those that don't have a relationship with Christ should be able to look at us and see that we possess something that they don't. Instead of letting the world shape your faith, let your faith shape the world. What would the world look like today if each and every Christian on the planet was not ashamed to speak out the truth of their faith? Stop looking at the world to approve of your faith. It never will. Knowing that, be bold in your witness and don't let the world tell you how to live. Let the One that has overcome the world guide you in what you are supposed to do.

- 1. In what ways do you think the opinions of others influence your beliefs?
- 2. Do you think the world would look substantially different if every Christian spoke out about their faith?
- 3. What are some ways that your faith can influence the world around you?

Scripture: Colossians 3:1-4

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Devotional

What does it mean to seek the things that are above? Just as we have died with Christ, we have been raised with Him. Because Christ is in Heaven and we know that one day we will be with Him, we should have our minds set towards those things. We should be looking to the things of Heaven and not of the world. To seek the things that are above is to seek the things that Christ seeks. What does Christ seek? Christ seeks to do the will of His Father (John 4:34). So, if we are to seek the things that are above, that means that we are to seek the things that are in line with God's will and are pleasing to Him. Some struggle with discovering what God's will is for their life. The Bible makes it pretty simple in 1 Thessalonians 4:3," For this is the will of God, your sanctification." God's will is for you to grow in the image of His Son and to grow closer to Him. If that is what we are seeking, we will never be looking for the wrong things

- 1. What do you think it means to seek God's will?
- 2. What are some ways that you can make sure that you are pursuing God's will?
- 3. Prayer Challenge- For a few minutes, pray that God would continue to motivate you to seek His will.

Scripture: Colossians 3:5-11

"⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."

Devotional

Paul is reminding us of 3 important things in this section (I know that there are probably more, but we'll stick with these 3). The first is that the wrath of God towards sin and sinners is real. It isn't something that may happen, it is something that will happen. The wicked cannot stand in God's presence and all that are enslaved to sin will have to face judgement. Fortunately, Paul reminds us of the second important thing: we were at one time sinners, but now that we have come to faith in Christ, we are no longer subject to His wrath. We have taken off the old self of sin and put on the new self, which is Christ's righteousness. The third important thing that Paul reminds us is of our unity through the Gospel. "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." Christ love extends beyond political, social, racial, and geographical boundaries. He has created us to be one in Him. To wrap this all up: The wrath of God is real but we can be redeemed by Christ's atoning work, and are united in one body, the Church.

- 1. Why do you think Paul goes from talking about redemption in Christ to the unity of the church?
- 2. Do Christians need to fear the wrath of God?
- 3. Do you think it is more important to tell people about God's wrath towards sin or our hope in redemption?

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

"12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Devotional

Paul summarizes practically all of Colossians 3 with verse 17. "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." There are 2 things in this verse that I want us to look at. The first is that we get the simplest explanation of what it means to live out our Christian faith. To do everything in the name of the Lord is to be the hands and feet of Jesus here on Earth. To go out in the name of the Lord is to go out with His authority. The second thing is that we have access to God the Father through Christ the Son. Where there was once a dividing wall between man and God, Christ has torn it down so that we may be reconciled to the Father. Christ has brought us near so that we may share in His relationship with His Father. What an amazing gift! Not only were we reconciled to the Father, the Father was reconciled to us.

- 1. What do you think it means for a Christian "to put on love"?
- 2. How can we let the love of Christ guide us in all that we do?
- 3. How can we make sure that the peace of Christ is ruling in our hearts?

Scripture: Colossians 3:18-4:1

"18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. ¹Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

Devotional

Here is something that I am certainly not a master in. I know that I do not love my wife in the way that the Bible tells me to. I'm pretty sure that if we are honest as husbands, none of us love our spouses like we should. People tend to look at this verse and say that it is outdated for society today. Society has a big problem with the word submit. What I want us to gather from these verses is that each and every person is under a master. Every human being is accountable to God. This means that where the Bible speaks of submission, it is ultimately done so that we can better see how we are to all be in submission to God. If we are tripped up by some of the language here in Colossians 4, it may be helpful to look at Ephesians 5. These 2 letters are very similar in their structure. Paul says in Ephesians 5:25, "husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Husbands are called to love and serve their wives, just as Christ loves and serves His Church. When we read of wives submitting to the husband, we shouldn't read it negatively. If everything is as it should be in the marriage, the wife will submit to the husband because the husband has submitted to Christ. When we see this in action, we see a marriage that is covered in love, sacrifice, and service. We can only serve one master and that Master is in Heaven.

- 1. Why do you think society only focuses on the submission of the wife and not the sacrifice (and submission to God) that is required by the husband?
- 2. When you serve others, do you realize that you are serving FOR the Lord?

Scripture: Colossians 4:2-6

"2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Devotional

In Paul's closing instructions to the church, he tells them to continue being steadfast in prayer, to pray for him and his ministry, to walk in wisdom toward outsiders, and to speak graciously. Colossians has been a letter that is filled with practical life advice for us as believers. It is easy for us to neglect time in prayer. Prayer should be so natural to us that it should be like breathing. If you stop breathing, don't you usually do all that you can to start breathing? If we go a long time without being in communication with our Heavenly Father, shouldn't that concern us? Martin Luther said, "to be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." As we pray, we need to remember those that are serving the Lord here and around the world. Let us pray for their safety and for boldness to declare the Gospel and to serve others. Finally, we are reminded to show grace in our words. We know that words can hurt. We have been saved by the gracious Word of God and our words should be an extension of the grace that He has shown to us. It may take some time to do well, but it is something that we cannot push aside.

- 1. What are some ways that you can remember to make time for prayer?
- 2. What do you think Martin Luther means when he says, "to be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing"?
- 3. Who are some Christian leaders (pastors, missionaries, etc.) that you are thankful for and could be praying for?

Scripture: Colossians 4:7-18

⁷Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Devotional

Ministry is not meant to be done alone. Not even just ministry, Christians are not meant to be alone. Paul had an entire team of faithful brothers and sisters that he relied on. Christ did not come to save a person; He came to create a people. A people that rely on one another and work together to advance His kingdom. We are united through our Lord and our Savior. Let us rejoice that we are apart of a kingdom and a family that is composed of our brothers and sisters in the faith all over the globe and all throughout time!

Questions

1. No questions today! Instead reflect on everything that you have gone over in the last 2 weeks!