



Sunday, August 30th, 2026

Part 5: “Paul’s Encouragement in Prayer”

Colossians 1:9

The first Sunday of August we began this new study going verse-by-verse through the epistle of Colossians. If you’re just joining us here today or in the last couple of weeks, here’s what to know about this little book in the middle of the New Testament...

- 1. The Apostle Paul wrote this epistle (letter) to the church in the city of Colossae (in first century Asia / modern-day Turkey)**
- 2. The church in Colossae was likely planted by Pastor Epaphras who was from there but had heard the gospel during Paul’s time in Ephesus and returned home to share the gospel.**
- 3. The Colossians were immersed in a cultural environment of spiritual pluralism and syncretism and were being pressured to add these to their Christian faith - pressures we still face today in our culture.**

4. The purpose of Paul's letter was to encourage them for their faith and love and to not give in to the false teachers and the cultural pressures they were facing, remembering that Christ is enough.

5. To achieve his purpose for the letter, Paul highlighted the personhood of Christ and His sovereignty and sufficiency overall and for all, as well as the true identity of everyone who is "in Christ" (saved individuals).

Over the last several weeks we've dissected Paul's opening greeting in verses 1-8 and we've learned a lot about what I call Colossia Community Church, or CCC. We learned that they were...

- People of faith in Jesus Christ and they were faithful to the faith they proclaimed (not everyone is)
- They were a church who loved each other – they were marked by this godly love (not every church possesses this kind of love)
- They possessed a hope in the promise of the gospel that they would one day be with the Lord Jesus in heaven because of their faith in Him (not every church allows the hope of the gospel to shape their lives but they did)
- They were passionate about the gospel and because they were, it was producing spiritual fruit in their lives

(many churches in time lose their passion for the gospel and sharing it with the people of their community and beyond and as we noted last Sunday, when that happens, a church like that begins to die spiritually and eventually it ceases to exist altogether!).

For all intents and purposes from what we learn from Paul here, the Colossian Church was a great church with some really good spiritual qualities and they had a solid pastor in Epaphras.

Paul saw these qualities and praised them and gave the glory to God for His work in their lives. But as we've already noted earlier, they weren't without challenges and that's the primary purpose of his letter to them.

So after his opening greeting, before he gets to the part of his letter where he provides instruction and practical guidance for them, he just jumps into a prayer for them and this is where we are beginning today.

Look at your text. Verses 9-14 comprise Paul's prayer and it's like a gold mine of spiritual riches waiting to be dug up, filled with spiritual truths that will bring blessing and depth to our walk with Christ – but today we're just going to cover verse 9. (READ)

So just think about this for a minute with me, ok?! The greatest example and teacher of prayer in the Bible is who? Jesus, right? If you want to learn to pray read in the gospels what Jesus taught about prayer and follow the example that he set in the way he prayed.

But I would contend this morning that at least in the New Testament, the second greatest example of someone who taught on prayer and set an example for HOW to pray is the apostle Paul.

Paul stands as a spiritual giant in the pages of the New Testament. From his conversion on the Road to Damascus where the Lord personally hand-picked him to eventually be an Apostle and an emissary to the Gentiles...

To being the very first missionary of the Christian faith spreading the gospel from the promise land to the very halls of the Emperor of Rome – the mightiest empire ever to rule on planet Earth...

To eventually writing almost half of the 27 books in the New Testament under the Holy Spirit's guidance, I mean really, who would ever say no if they were given an opportunity to travel back and time and sit at the feet of this godly giant and learn the spiritual art of prayer?!

To be able to peak into his prayer journal to learn what made his heart and mind passionate for prayer, and the things and the people that he prayed about and how he prayed.

And yet, thank the Lord, we don't HAVE to do that. We have right here in our hands all God wanted us to have in order to be able to understand the power of prayer and the impact prayer can have in our lives and in the lives of others, through the example of the Apostle Paul.

Paul already early in his letter told the Colossian believers that he was literally always praying for them back in verse 3. Now here in verse 9 he says it again and emphasizes it a second time when he says, *“we haven’t stopped praying for you.”*

Do you know what this must have meant to the people in the Colossian Church? I mean, they hadn’t ever even met Paul. The Bible nowhere records that Paul had ever been to Colossae.

And yet this giant of the faith is expressing his deep love and concern for them and his faithful practice of praying for them. What a lift this must have been to their spirits.

It must have greatly warmed their hearts to hear this letter read in their worship service and to realize that they were the objects of HIS prayers. As a result a special bond was no doubt formed between Paul and these faithful followers of Jesus.

And that’s what happens when believers in Jesus pray for each other and with each other. No wonder God in His Word encourages all of us to pray for one another! Look at your notes. We’re told to...

NOTES:

*“Pray at **all** times in the Spirit, with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for **all** the saints.”* Romans 6:18

“First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone...”. 1 Timothy 2:1

And when you look at the Bible as a whole, you see plenty examples of God’s people faithfully praying for each other...

- Job prayed for his friends (Job 42:10)
- Moses prayed for his brother and sister Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12:13)
- Samuel prayed for Israel (1 Sam. 7:5,9)
- David prayed for Israel and Solomon (2 Sam. 24:17; 1 Chron. 29:18-10)
- Hezekiah prayed for Judah (2 Kings 19:14-19)
- Isaiah prayed for the people of God (Is. 63:15ff)
- Daniel prayed for Israel (Dan. 9:3-19)
- Ezekiel prayed for Israel (Ezek. 9:8)
- Nehemiah prayed for Judah (Neh. 1:4-11)
- Jesus prayed for his disciples (including us) (Jn. 17:9-24)
- Paul prayed for many believers at various times (Rom. 1:9-10; Eph. 1:16-19)
- Pastor Epaphras prayed for the people of his church in Colossae (Col. 4:12)

So look at what Paul says at the beginning of verse 9, *“For this reason, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you.”* For what reason is Paul talking about here? What had he heard?

He's referring to the report Pastor Epaphras had shared with him about the believers in his church back in Colossae. About their faith and love and all the things mentioned in the first 8 verses.

From the day Paul heard this report from Epaphras, he started praying for them and he was consistent in his prayers. Yes, they were doing well spiritually-speaking, but that's not a good reason NOT to pray for someone. He prayed for them anyway!

It seems like it's easy for us to start praying for someone when something difficult or bad occurs in their life. But Paul didn't wait for those circumstances to happen to the Colossians before he started praying for them.

And I think Paul's example shows us that God wants us to pray and keep on praying for the people in our lives – our family members and our neighbors and co—workers and friends, and especially our church family.

If we would faithfully pray for them even when everything seems to be going great in their life, it would help them stand strong when things AREN'T going so great in their life. Does that make sense?

It's all about being proactive in prayer as well as being reactive in prayer. Both are necessary. Why?

Because the truth is, all of us have either just come out of a difficult season in life, or we are currently enduring a difficult season in our life, or sooner or later we'll find ourselves going through a difficult season in our life – that's the way life works.

So you can never have enough people praying for you! And we should never stop praying for each other! And that's the first encouragement about prayer we learn from Paul...

Paul's Encouragement in Prayer

(Slide) 1. God's will is that we pray consistently for each other – Col. 1:9a

Praying for each other links us together with the spiritual bonds of Christ Jesus. It builds unity among us and binds us together because it reminds us that we're not on this Christian journey alone, we have a family, the family of God who are there with us and for us, lifting us up to the Lord in prayer.

I feel sorry for believers in Christ who have little to no solid connection with a church family. They basically have no spiritual support system to help them through all the joys and sorrows and valleys and mountain-top experiences of life.

They don't have a lifeline to turn to when difficult circumstances and decisions come their way. How many of you remember the gameshow, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire"?

Contestants had to answer a series of questions and they had several lifelines to assist them with guessing the right answers – including they could poll the audience, and they could phone a friend and get advice.

The body of Christ serves as a lifeline to every believer who is willing to live in fellowship with fellow brothers and sisters in their local church and support each other in every way including and especially with prayer.

If you don't have a church family like that, we would love to be your church family. Jump in and join us. We welcome you with open arms and open hearts. We're far from a perfect church, that's for sure, but we would love to have you join us in following Jesus Christ!

So again Paul shows us that our prayers for each other shouldn't begin when we hear that someone has cancer or has lost a loved one or that a couple is considering divorce.

Circumstances like these should move our prayers into overdrive that's for sure, but it should be our personal practice to already be in prayer for the people of our church family.

And there's a two-fold super-sense that we have to develop with the help of the Holy Spirit to pray consistently for each other...

(Slide) We Must Develop...

- 1.) A God-consciousness - an attitude or awareness to view everything in life in relation to God.**

So if you meet someone tomorrow that you've never met before, some of your earliest thoughts of them naturally should turn to wondering where they stand with God? Do you sense that they know the Lord as their Savior? Do you sense God is somehow working in their life?

If you hear about a terrible situation that has occurred – a death, a natural disaster, whatever it might be, one of our earliest reactions should be to pray for the people involved in that situation because God can help them in their time of need.

Or if we become aware of something good that someone has experienced, we should join them in our hearts and prayers in praising and thanking God for His goodness to them.

e.g. When Charlie our little granddaughter was born back in June, we received lots of encouraging texts from people not just congratulating us (like we did anything), but praising the Lord and thanking Him for His goodness in her birth. Those texts were special to us.

We were experiencing the goodness of God in our family, and they were feeling the warmth of that goodness from a distance.

When Paul looked around the world, everything he saw prompted him to pray in some way, because He knew no matter what the situation might be, Jesus is the always the answer. Jesus is always worthy to be praised.

This requires conscious effort on our part to train our mind and our heart to respond to everything in life with a God-consciousness. Paul heard about the faith and love of the Colossian people even though he had never met them, and with a God-conscious heart he prayed for them.

(Slide) We Must Develop...

2.) A people-consciousness – an attitude or awareness of the people around us and their needs, especially their spiritual needs.

The world around us is full of people who cross our path each day and they have needs – they're insecure, they're afraid, they feel insignificant, they don't feel accepted, they have physical needs, emotional needs, and most of all spiritual needs.

And this includes the people right here this morning in our church family. We all have needs and in some cases, those needs aren't being met, or not to the extent that we need them to be.

Developing a people-consciousness requires us to be ready to pray for someone or with someone at any time during our day that God sends them across our path, or across our mind in our thoughts.

It means being ready right here on Sunday mornings to pray an encouraging prayer for someone that God has brought here to this service that needs His help in their life.

If there's anything that should distinguish a gathering of Christ-followers of any size from just 2 people to millions of people, it should be that since we worship the same God – the Lord Jesus Christ – then prayer should be the natural thing for us to do together because we serve the same Master.

This place is the place we come to together to worship the Lord on Sunday mornings and Jesus said the place of worship of Him and God the Father, is to be a house of prayer.

Preaching? Yes. Fellowship? Yes. Worship? Yes. But most of all, above everything else, God wants a local church family to be a house of prayer, a people who pray whenever they gather in His name.

Fellowship, we ARE a house of prayer. Perhaps there's someone today who you have spoken with already or who you will be speaking to before you leave.

Do you possess the God-consciousness and the people-consciousness to see that person and their life and their needs through the lens of God and His Word?

Are you ready, whether it's when we prayer together in this service, or when you're talking with them out in the lobby or in the parking lot, to pray with them?

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A.lways S.top A.nd P.ray

We have a prayer mantra here at Fellowship. It's called A.S.A.P Prayers: Always Stop and Pray (Say it out loud with me). Whether in person or on the phone or on some other device, Always Stop and Pray.

Don't tell someone you'll be praying for them. You'll forget and then you'll feel guilty. No, just stop in the moment when it's obvious a need has been expressed and pray for them no matter where you are.

Later in this letter, Paul tells the Colossians very directly and God is telling us the same thing this morning...

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“Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.”
Colossians 4:2

e.g. We recently had a friend who stopped by our home for a brief visit and while she was with us, we learned of her continuing battle with cancer. So before she walked back out the front door, we stopped and had the privilege of praying with her right there on the spot about her cancer battle.

Being devoted to prayer means developing an ever-increasing God-consciousness – seeking to see situations and the world around us through the lens of God Himself – a God who has said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28).

Jesus is the answer to every need every living, breathing human being on this planet has and when we are people-conscious we will seek to stay alert in prayer by praying for the people around us,

And the needs around us in our neighborhoods, on capitol hill in Des Moines, and in the seat of our government in Washington D.C., and for the unreached peoples of the world.

It means funneling situations around us through the funnel of the Word of God and understanding them through what God has already said is truth and what is right and wrong.

It means responding and reacting to situations in a Christ-directed way, the way He responded when He was here and the in the way He taught us to respond as His followers.

Paul's Encouragement in Prayer

(Slide) 2. Encourage others by letting them know you are praying for them – Col. 1:2, 9; Eph. 1:15-16

Twice here in the first 9 verses of his letter to the Colossians, Paul told the Colossian Church that he was praying for them, AND he tells them what he was praying for them about. We'll see the specifics on that in a couple weeks.

But this was Paul's calling card to many of the people and churches he wrote letters to. Look what he said to the church in Ephesus...

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"This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers." Ephesians 1:15-16

That's almost verbatim what he said to the Colossian believers as well. Paul cared for people and knew the greatest thing he could do for them was to pray for them and to tell them he was praying for them.

So his example and the point is this: you can literally raise the morale and be a beacon of encouragement to someone else not just by praying for them, but also when you tell them that you're praying for them and specifically what you prayed for.

e.g. I received a text this week from a long-time member of our church. She had known my father well, he and my mom are founding members of Fellowship.

This week was the 24th anniversary of my dad's passing, and she was letting me know that she missed him and was praying for me this week. She lost her father a few years and we texted about seeing both of our fathers again in heaven.

Just a simple, short, and encouraging text reminding me that someone was praying for me and what they were praying about. That's the power of prayer and of encouraging one another by telling them that we're praying for them.

That's the power of a church family who consistently prays for one another and is devoted to prayer. That's the power of possessing a God-consciousness and a people-consciousness in our walk with Christ. That's Paul's encouragement to us today in prayer.