

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE
COLOSSIANS

DAY
22-28

DAY 22 - The need for Prayer

Read Colossians 4:2-4

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. **3** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **4** Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Paul now asks them to be a people of prayer. Prayer and thanksgiving are to be constantly a part of their lives. Prayer reminds us of our need for God and, as we have seen a number of times throughout Colossians (which are written out below), thanksgiving should always be the overflow of a heart that has been reconciled to God through Christ's death on the Cross.

Read the following verses from across the book of Colossians to see the centrality that thankfulness should hold in our lives.

Colossians 1:3

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you

Colossians 1:11-12

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, **12** and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Colossians 2:7

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, **7** rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 3:17

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 4:2

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

We can see here in Colossians that from the earliest days of the Church, prayer (and the effectiveness of prayer) has been at the heart of the Christian life. Paul started his letter by telling them that he was praying for them, and now he asks them to pray for him. He believes that his prayers and their prayers will make a real difference, in both their lives and mission. They are to 'be watchful' or stay alert, not becoming lazy or complacent in their praying. Prayer can be something that many of us find difficult, but we can have faith and take encouragement from this that our prayers are so important. We should persevere in prayer.

He asks them to pray that a way would open up for him to share the gospel from prison and then that he will be able to share it **effectively**. We see here the genuine humility of the Christian life. Paul was chosen by Christ to take the gospel out to the gentiles and he has *already* seen and done great things across the regions. He is also given the grace to write and teach the very words that will come to be large parts of the foundation (alongside the gospels and the teachings of the other Apostles) on which all Christian faith will be built.

Yet he needs *them*.

He needs them to *pray* for him.

There is no 'success' or 'status' in the Church that means we do not need prayer from one another. Prayer to be strengthened in heart and prayer to do the things Christ has called us to do.

We can learn from Paul here and be humble enough to ask for prayer because truly we all need it. This is not a sign of weakness in a negative sense, but a confident understanding of his need for Christ. What a joy it is for those who teach and preach the Bible (and indeed any of us) when someone comes and says 'I've been praying for you'. We can become those people today.

It's amazing how prayer also binds us together. The sense of togetherness and commitment we feel towards someone grows as we are invested in them through prayer.

Questions

Who have you prayed for in the last week?

Are you devoted to prayer?

What could a small step towards being more diligent in prayer be for you?

Do you pray for those who preach and teach the Bible in church?

When was the last time you asked someone to pray for you?

If you're honest with yourself, are there things that you think you don't need God's help with? What does Paul's example speak into that thought?

Actions

Spend a few minutes praying for those who preach the Gospel at Church that God would help to speak with revelation and grace.

Set aside a small part of your day where you will pray for 2 or 3 people every day.

Ask someone to pray for you today for something you are doing. Be humble enough to show that you need God's help.

Spend 30 seconds at the end of each day thanking God for our salvation and for something from your day.

DAY 23 - Reaching Out

Read Colossians 4:5-6

5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Having asked them to pray for him in his mission, Paul now encourages them in theirs. He speaks in very real terms about how to be normal people who are actually interesting and nice to be around!

The world needs to hear the message of Jesus Christ, but first they will see it (or not see it) in the lives of Christians. So they are to **'make the most of every opportunity'** to speak and act in a way that declares the saving and transformative work of Jesus Christ. There is wisdom to grow into in not being overbearing or judgemental when speaking to those outside of the Faith. They are to be gentle, good listeners who can have good, fun conversations that are a blessing to those around them.

He also encourages them that they should **'know how to answer everyone'**. He wants them to actually know, and be able to articulate, the truth of Jesus Christ. We've seen in previous chapters how this knowledge of the truth will help them to see false teaching for what it is. Here we see that it is also useful to be able to answer questions that friends, relatives or colleagues have about faith in Christ.

It can be helpful to have thought through some simple answers to some questions we might face about our faith so that we are ready to speak about the amazing reality of Jesus Christ to those around us in a grace-filled way.

Questions

Do you find it easy to share my faith when someone asks questions?

What would it look like to make the most of every opportunity in speaking/showing the love of Jesus Christ? Are there some opportunities that you are not taking at the moment?

Is there someone who is not a Christian with whom your conversations could be more full of Grace?

Actions

Pray for wisdom in your friendships and relationships outside of Church.

Look for opportunities today to be a **normal**, but grace-filled person to someone who is not a Christian!

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any conversations that you have that could do with being 'seasoned with salt' in order to help you to be wise in how you speak with someone who is not a Christian.

DAY 24 - Faithful Tychicus

Read Colossians 4:7-8

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. **8** I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.

Paul is here drawing his letter towards a close. He does this similarly in lots of his letters, but sending greetings from, and instructions about, people who are working with him for the sake of the Gospel. We see again and again across the New Testament that friendship and teamwork are at the heart of Paul's mission to spread the gospel and to build the churches. Paul is not alone in his work, the gospel takes teamwork both in prayer and in practice.

Here we meet **Tychicus**, who we can see from his description in verse 7 is dependable and faithful. He is the one who is trusted to carry this letter to the Colossians, to share wider news about Paul and to encourage their hearts. We can see from **Ephesians 6:21-22** that he is also the one who carried these same responsibilities to Ephesus:

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. **22** I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

In **2 Timothy 4:12** Paul says that he has: 'sent Tychicus to Ephesus'.

We see in Tychicus qualities that help make us a blessing to others and the work of Christ.

Paul first describes Tychicus as a 'dear brother'. Before any work, he is dear to Paul like family. They have been bound together in Christ and then in the bonds of friendship.

Secondly he is said to be 'a faithful minister'. For Paul to say this means he would have been a consistently hard working servant of Christ, who is diligent in both his work and his discipleship to Christ.

Thirdly, Tychicus is a 'fellow servant in the Lord'. Paul's (like anyone's) ministry is not a solo effort. Although Paul was given a unique role by God, even he sees himself as part of a team of people sharing and carrying the Gospel.

This is the kind of dependable person that Paul would send his letter and instructions with. Tychicus will also 'encourage your hearts'. He carries information as well as a heart of friendship and care that will encourage them into their very hearts.

This is the kind of person that Christ desires us to be so that we can be dear friends, faithful ministers in whatever context we are in, and be those who can encourage each other's hearts.

Questions

Do you ever feel like you don't need anyone else in your life with Jesus?

Could someone say similar things about you as Paul does of Tychicus?

Are there steps you could take to be like this?

Is there someone in your life who sounds a bit like Tychicus? How could you encourage that person?

Who do you need to invest in a friendship with?

Are you a diligent and reliable worker?

Actions

Encourage someone today either in person or a phone call or message.

Invite the Holy Spirit to show you where you need others in your life and work.

Put some time in your diary to see friends to continue to build those life giving relationships.

DAY 25 - Onesimus and Philemon

Read Colossians 4:9-11

9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. **10** My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) **11** Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

Having looked at Tychicus yesterday, today we see many others who are working alongside Paul. We shall turn our attention to Onesimus.

Onesimus is described in similar words to Tychicus and is sent also to tell the Colossians what is happening where Paul is in prison. Onesimus is an interesting person though, because he is the subject of another one of Paul's letters in the New Testament: the book of Philemon. We'll read the letter to Philemon in a minute (and we referenced it on day 21 when looking at slavery), but we can piece together from Colossians and Philemon some of Onesimus's story.

It seems that he was a slave owned by Philemon. He has run away from Colossae, (or has been sent away) and has come to know Christ through Paul's teaching from Prison. He has, as is to be expected through the power of the Gospel, gone from the position of a slave to being 'our faithful and dear brother'. He has been changed from a slave into a brother because of Christ.

In Philemon we see that Paul is sending Onesimus back to Colossae (possibly at the same time as the letter to the Colossians is taken), and to the household he was a slave in. He and his master Philemon are now both Christians and Paul was publically asking Philemon to change his attitude or behaviour towards Onesimus.

Exactly what Paul has in mind is not totally clear (possibly freeing Onesimus, forgiving him some debt that he owed, or allowing him to return to Paul), but what is clear is that the power of the Gospel is to radically transform the relationship between slave and owner. Paul leaves the decision to Philemon, but with a very strong encouragement because of the truth of Christ.

Read Philemon to see the remarkable impact the gospel has had in these very real and complicated lives.

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,
To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker— **2** also to Apphia our
sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in
your home:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, **5** because I
hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord
Jesus. **6** I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective
in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the
sake of Christ. **7** Your love has given me great joy and encouragement,
because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what
you ought to do, **9** yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as
none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ
Jesus— **10** that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my
son while I was in chains. **11** Formerly he was useless to you, but now he
has become useful both to you and to me.

12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. **13** I would have
liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me
while I am in chains for the gospel. **14** But I did not want to do anything
without your consent, so that any favour you do would not seem forced
but would be voluntary.

15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— **16** no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. **18** If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. **19** I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. **20** I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. **21** Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

22 And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. **24** And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Questions

Are there people you look down on even though they are equals in Christ?

Do you see anyone as 'better' or more important than others (including yourself) because of worldly standards?

Are there people in our lives that we still treat as though we are not equals in Christ?

Actions

Pray and invite God to help you to see others (and yourself) as God sees them, not higher or lower than anyone else in Christ.

Invite God into your most complicated relationships and ask him to work on your heart in them.

DAY 26 - The Apostles' Teaching

Read Colossians 4:12-17

12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13** I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. **15** Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." **18** I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

We again see continued from this final passage of the letter to the Colossians, the community nature which Paul is ministering within. We also see his commitment to sharing those relationships with them and to demonstrate how there are people with him who love and care and support them. Some of those people (like Epaphras) they already know, but others (like Paul himself) they have probably never met. In spite of this they are all connected through Christ into the same family and mission of the Gospel.

We also see that those in Colossae are not just connected to Paul and his fellow workers, but they are connected to other Christians in other cities because of their shared participation in Christ. Paul's letter to them is also for the Christians in Laodicea and vice versa. Paul's teachings are to be circulated around the cities as they are all growing into maturity wherever they are.

We see the beginnings here too of the anointing on Paul's life as an Apostle: his teachings would not just be written *to* those in Colossae or Ephesus or Corinth...but would also be *for* the Church of Jesus Christ more widely and ultimately for *every* Christian for all time.

The letter ends with a request to remember his chains. This could be both another example of Paul asking for prayer, or more generally asking those who are free not to forget those who are suffering for the gospel.

The final words remind them (and us) of the source and sustaining power of Jesus Christ in and through all of life. He simply writes: '**Grace be with you**'. Amen.

Questions

How much do you allow the Apostles' teaching to define your life?

Who could you pray 'grace' over today?

Are there people you know who are suffering that you have simply forgotten about? Could you reach out to them today?

Do you see the value and importance of the Church community in your discipleship to Jesus?

Actions

Pray for someone today. Message them and encourage them.

Read one of the New Testament letters in one go (it could be Colossians) and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you from God's Word.

Read Acts 2 and see how the Apostles' teaching has always been foundational in the life of Christians.

DAY 27 - Full of the Holy Spirit

Read Colossians 1:9-11

9 For 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, **10** so 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, **11** being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.

Paul's prayer from Chapter 1 reminds us of our need for the Holy Spirit. At the heart of the Christian life is the work of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding and to strengthen us with all power. God lives in us by His Spirit.

In **John 14:23-27** Jesus said:

23 Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. **24** Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. **25** "All this I have spoken while still with you. **26** But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. **27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

In the book of Acts we see the incredible impact that the Holy Spirit had (and can still have) in the lives of Christians.

In Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, he speaks of the fruit that comes from a life being transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Read **Galatians 5:22-25** to see that fruit:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

We cannot become the people we are called to be, or do the things we are called to do without the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Questions

Have you ever prayed to receive the Holy Spirit?

When did you last ask the Holy Spirit to fill you?

Do you ever feel like you need God's help to live as he calls us to live?

Where do you need God's help in your life?

Actions

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

In a moment of challenge or difficulty, take the chance to pray and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Pray Paul's prayer from the passage we read over someone today.

Read **1 Corinthians 12** and see how the Holy Spirit gives gifts to us in the Church to bless each other. You could pray to receive one or more of these gifts to bless others.

DAY 28 - Colossians

Read Colossians

Today let us read all four chapters of Colossians in your own Bible with two thoughts in mind of things to look for, both of which are central to the Book:

1. Anything that I can give thanks to Jesus Christ for
2. Anything that could help me grow in maturity in my faith

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Read through the book and stop each time you get to one of these two things. Pray, or write down your thoughts as you go. In this book, as in the rest of the New Testament, there is the power of God to transform our lives and the world around us.

Spend some time in worship and prayer as we seek to grow in Christ and live a transformed life of love.

Amen.

Next Steps

You could continue to read **Colossians** for the next week, maybe trying to memorise particular verses or passages that have impacted you.

We've seen throughout this letter how Jesus Christ truly is supreme over everything. Spending some time now in one of the Gospels would be a great way to fix our eyes on Jesus and allow him to continue to speak to us.

If you've found the context of Paul's life or the Early Church interesting then you could read the book of Acts and see the accounts of the gospel spreading into the world.

You could also read **Ephesians** which was written by Paul to the church in Ephesus and which is similar to Colossians in many ways (it may even have been the letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in Colossians 4:16