

Held Together:
By Specific Praying
Colossians 1:9-14, 2:1-5, 4:2-6

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Text Introduction: We began last week working our way through the book of Colossians. A key phrase of Colossians comes in Colossians 1:17, “And by Him all things hold together.” I love this phrase. This phrase speaks to the preeminence of Jesus. He is all things. If He is all things, He must be first place in my life.

So, we are working through this letter to discover all the ways and in all the things that He holds us together. Last week, we said, “He holds it all together by the Gospel.” The Gospel of Jesus Christ holds us together when everything around us is falling apart. Today, we discover a practical tool that God gives us to hold us together. The tool is prayer.

Every time I speak on prayer, read about prayer, think about prayer, I remember how I am still in the preschool of learning about prayer. I don’t think I am alone.

As Max Lucado wrote in his 2014 book, *Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer*:

I am a recovering prayer wimp. I doze off when I pray. My thoughts zig, then zag, then zig again. Distractions swarm like gnats on a summer night. If attention deficit disorder applies to prayer, I am afflicted. When I pray, I think of a thousand things I need to do. I forget the one thing I set out to do: pray.

To pray is the one thing that Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to do.

Today, I want to show three different passages in Colossians and use the contents of each passage to help us to learn to pray in a most specific way—specifically for other Christians, specifically for the church, and specifically for Gospel advance.

Specific Praying for Christians (1:9-14)

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. ¹⁴ We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in Him.

Here is a specific prayer for Christians. You can pray it for yourself, for others, or for your children. It is a prayer that helps hold everything together.

- Be Filled with the knowledge of His will.

When you think about it, is anything more important than knowing the will of God? But, the goal of knowledge is not to be puffed up. The knowledge has a goal so we continue to request.

- Fulfill the Calling of a Disciple.

Follow the logic. The knowledge leads to a “so that” clause. The “so that” is they would walk worthy of Him. When a person does that they will be fully pleasing to God, bear fruit, and be increasing in the knowledge of Him. Do you see the cycle?

- Be Strengthened with His power. (See also Eph. 1:20)
We said last week that there is a very close connection between Colossians and Ephesians. Paul wrote to both churches while in prison. As such, there is great similarity. I like to compare the places of similarity. In a similar prayer section that he wrote to the Ephesians, about God’s power, Paul wrote: “He demonstrated this power in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens.” Notice the kind of power available to the believer—the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead.
- Be Aware of God’s love. (See also Eph. 3:18)

Again to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote: “I pray that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of god’s love.”

Let me encourage us to take Paul’s prayer and make it our own as we pray for people. Don’t just pray God bless Steve, but pray this very prayer. You will discover that it is the kind of prayer that holds it all together.

Specific Praying for Churches (2:1-5)

So, let’s move quickly to a prayer that we can pray for the church. That seems to be Paul’s concern in Colossians 2:1-5.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. ²I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery—Christ. ³All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.

⁴I am saying this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments. ⁵For I may be absent in body, but I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see how well ordered you are and the strength of your faith in Christ.

In addition to praying for individual believers, we want to pray specifically for churches. The prayer is slightly different and seems to be communicated in the description of how Paul says he prays as revealed in Colossians 2:1-5.

- Filled with Encouragement

Encouraged people encourage. Conversely, discouraged people discourage people.

- Filled with Love for one another.

Paul has given thanks for the evidence of their love for one another, but here he prays for that continued love for one another.

- Filled with Truth so as not to stray from the Gospel.

Where do we get this encouragement? Where do we get this ability to love? Where do we get this strength to not veer from the truth? We get this from the hope that we have in Christ. We get this from the understanding that we have of who He is. We get this from our understanding of the Gospel.

Specific Praying for Gospel Advance (4:2-6)

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. ³At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison, ⁴so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. ⁵Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ⁶Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

How can we pray for Gospel advance?

- Gospel Opportunity
- Gospel Clarity
- Gospel Purity

So What?

Notice the descriptions of Paul's prayers.

1. Pray without ceasing.
"Since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you."
2. Pray as in struggle.
"I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you."
3. Pray with devotion.
"Devote yourselves to prayer."
4. Pray with alertness.
"Stay alert in it..." Pray with your eyes wide open.
5. Pray with thanksgiving.
"With thanksgiving." He is always good.

Praying—it's one of the tools God gives us to keep it all together.

What If? So What if?

What if...

Instead of talking about people, you talked to the Father about them?

Instead of judging people, you committed your life to pray more fervently for them?

Instead of giving up on someone, you decided to give yourself up in prayer for their repentance and return?

You see, it is impossible to be at odds with someone, to be their enemy, and at the same time be praying for them.

So, what if....

Instead of being turned off by someone's behavior, you turned up your prayer focus for them?

Instead of pouring on criticism of someone, you poured your heart out to God for them?

Instead of struggling with someone over an issue, you decided to struggle in prayer for the resolution of that issue?