

UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING TRUTH / Sunday School- May 2, 2010

Unifying Topic: A FAITHFUL COMMUNITY

Lesson Text

- I. Paul Greets The Colossians (Colossians 1:1-2)
- II. Thanksgiving And Prayer (Colossians 1:3-8)
- III. Praying For Spiritual Growth (Colossians 1:9-14)

The Main Thought: For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. (Colossians 1:9, KJV).

Unifying Principle: There are people in communities of faith who lack the power to lead worthy lives. Where and how can we connect with God's strength and glorious power? Paul tells the Colossians that their power as a congregation of hope and faith has come to them by their acceptance of the Word of Truth, the Gospel.

Lesson Aim: To help students appreciate know that Christ wants us to grow spiritually.

Life aim: To teach how Christians are to grow spiritually in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of God, being equipped with patience and endurance to joyfully share the blessings of God's kingdom through Jesus Christ.

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- 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother.
1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.
1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.
1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.
1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.
1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the spirit.
1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.
1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.
1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.
1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins.

HISTORY:

The majority hold that Apostle Paul is the author of this book. Colossians was probably written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome and some dispute that the letter was written from Caesarea of Ephesus. It was written to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ which are at Colosse (Col.1:2). The purpose was to combat an extremely dangerous and threatening heresy that was arising in the Colosse church.

The City of Colosse:

The ancient city of Colosse was located in the area known in the Bible as "*Asia Minor*". Another name for the region was "*Phrygia*". Today the country of Turkey covers this area. Colosse was one of three cities within sight of one another in the Lycus Valley, sitting by the Lycus River. The other cities, Hiera[polis and Laodicea, the chief city of the area, were only six miles apart. Colosse was twelve miles away and was the least important of the three. The city was about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. The Lycus valley produced olives and figs. Both Laodicea and Colosse had developed a beautiful purple-dyed wool. The name "*Colosse*" comes from the Latin "*collossinus*", meaning "*purple wool*". When the Romans came along, they built new roads that ended up causing the economy of Colosse to shrink and by Paul's day it was a small city.

The Church at Colosse:

Paul never visited Colosse so far as is known. The church had never seen his face and the book of Acts does not record a mission to the area. In Acts 19, we read of Paul coming to Ephesus and teaching for two years. The gospel was being preached to Jews and Gentiles from the entire region. Many people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ and turning from their sins. One of the Gentiles who received Christ during this time was named Ep-af-RAS (meaning "*lovely*" being based on the name of the Greek goddess "*Aphrodite*"). After being discipled by Paul and raised up in the ministry, he went to the town of Colosse and preached the gospel. Many of the Colossians responded to the gospel by receiving Christ. A

church in Colosse came about; was formed because Epaphras came and told them about Jesus Christ, and the Colossian Christians were being talked about all over the world for their incredible growth. They say that, he was also the area pastor of Laodicea and Hierapolis. The church met in Philemon's home, a convert of Paul (Phile.10). The church was primarily Gentile in membership, for they were aliens from God's promises to Israel. The church showed some strengths despite the heresy. They held "*faith in Christ Jesus*" and showed "*love to all the saints*" (Colo.1:4). They were bearing evangelistic fruit, reaching people for Christ (Colo.1:6).

Colossians:

In Chapter 1, Jesus is preeminent. Before you get anything – you need to know who Jesus is and what He's done. In Ephesians, the church is seen as the body of Christ. However, in Colossians, Christ is seen as the Head of the church. So, with that background, let us now begin our study of Paul's epistle (letter) to the Colossians.

LESSON:

Colossians 1:1-2 Paul Greet The Colossians

1:1 An Apostle

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother." "What is an apostle? The word apostle (*apostolos*) means a person who is especially sent to go among men as an ambassador or messenger. There are some who teach that there were only twelve apostles, but the Bible makes it clear that there were many who were called apostles that were not part of the original twelve (Acts 14:14, Rom 16:7; 1Cor 12:28-29; 2Cor. 11:13; Gal 1:19; 1Thes. 1:1 with 1Thes. 2:6). The Bible says that God... Eph. 4:11-13 "...gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." Until there is unity in our faith and our knowledge of Jesus, we will always need apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers to equip and edify us.

1:1 The Will Of God

Paul's call to the ministry was not one that he could brag about, for it was not his natural-born talent and desire - it was a command by the will of God; that is his profession and work was exactly what God wanted him to do. The profession Paul wanted did not matter; only God's will for his life mattered.

POINT:

There is only one profession for any believer: the work God wants him to do. God has put every believer upon earth for a specific task. If the believer chooses some profession or job other than the work God wants him to do, then he is out of the will of God. He is not fulfilling his God-given purpose for being upon earth.

The profession chosen by God for Paul was that of being a minister, in particular, an apostle. He was sent forth by God, to do the will of God. He does not go forth on his own or by the authority of other men. His profession and authority are both of God.

1:1 Brotherhood

Paul mentions Timothy, a young disciple or student of his. Timothy had joined Paul to learn all he could about the ministry and to serve right along side of Paul. The relationship mentioned by Paul was not that of a student or disciple. It was not even that of a fellow preacher, teacher, or administrator. It was that of being a brother in Christ. This stresses a significant fact: that there are many different relationships in life—relationships such as:

- Employer and employee
- neighbor and neighbor
- teacher and student
- friend and friend
- Worker and worker
- merchant and merchant
- minister and parishioner

All relationships of life are important and have their place in the welfare of society, but there is another relationship that is essential: that of the brotherhood.

POINT:

A man does not walk as a solitary figure upon this earth. He walks among people—people just like himself. Thus a man who walks aloof does not understand life.

Paul knew that brotherly relationships were essential. Paul and Timothy wrote several epistles together - Paul dictating and Timothy acting as amanuensis - copying down what Paul said. Treating one another as brothers is the secret to peace in both the world and the church.

1:2 Saints and Faithful

Paul is writing to saints and faithful brethren that are set apart from the world making a clear distinction in their level of spiritual maturity. Thus, saints are believing sinners set apart from sin to holiness, set apart from Satan to God, thus being consecrated for God's sacred fellowship and service. In other words we are called to be what we are.

<http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/colossians/02.html>

- A soldier must by his posture and behavior, live up to his vocation.
- A rich man should not believe his resources by living the life of a pauper.
- Christians, too, must live up to their name and calling. However:
 1. Being carnal saint—refers to worldly; those who are controlled by human nature rather than by God; following after the flesh (appetites, smoke, drink). However, these carnal saints or believers may or may not continue on with the Lord Jesus. They may continue at a slower pace. Some in the Colossian church were not continuing on. They were not fully committed. Therefore, they were running the risk of falling into the error of false teaching and turning away from Christ. The point is this: a person can be a carnal believer or carnal saint within the church. When a person truly comes to know Christ, he is just beginning his journey with the Savior, a journey that has a much higher level of spiritual growth to reach.
 2. Being a saint and faithful brethren—refers to those who have set their lives apart for Christ and had continued on. They were loyal and steadfast in their allegiance and they held firm against the attacks of worldliness and false teaching. They were not shaken by the temptations of the devil or by the urges of the flesh. This letter was written from Rome by Paul, while he was in prison. Thank God for faithful saints and leaders.

Grace To You And Peace

Every one of Paul's epistles contains this greeting in the first few verses. First of all, we must understand what grace is. Grace is God's unmerited favor on us. In other words, He loved us when we were unlovable. He gave us the gift of salvation when we were completely undeserving. He provided forgiveness for our sins while we were still in our sins. And it is only after we understand grace, that we will experience true peace. That is why Paul was always using the phrase ("*Grace be unto you and peace from God...*"), and why he always used it in that order. Life has two basic spiritual needs—Grace and Peace. Therefore, he possesses all the inner strength and confidence that are needed to overcome and to walk joyfully in the world, regardless of circumstances. Remember this is a letter and he introduces himself, who it's to, and speaks blessings over their lives. And the blessings always come from God.

Colossians 1:3-8 Thanksgiving And Prayer

1:3. Paul begins by saying that he and Timothy were always thanking God for them and praying to God about them. This is a power-packed passage that covers the great pillars of the Christian life. You know pillars are strong supports or the foundation of an organization or society. The great pillars are good reasons for giving thanks to God. This stirs Paul to thank God that the pillars exist in the lives of the Colossian believers. The Colossian believers could not exist as a church without the foundational support of the pillars. Paul gives thanks to the only living and true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This means something of critical importance: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is exactly whom He claimed to be.

1:4. They heard of their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints. It's so good when you hear good things. Paul commends the Colossians for their faith, love, and hope laid up. The great pillars of Christian life are of faith and love. The basis of our love is not how lovable others are, but how much God has loved us. We don't have to force ourselves to love the people in the church; we just need to let God's love flow through us. **The great pillar of faith** is faith in a particular person: and that is the person of Christ Jesus our Lord. What is there about Jesus Christ that makes faith in Him so superior to faith in other great leaders or faith in the great qualities of human life? Stated as simply as possible, **Jesus Christ brings us in touch with God** and makes it possible for God to adopt us as sons and daughters. We must always remember: the Father-son/daughter relationship with God does not automatically exist. Jesus Christ is able to bring any person who is spiritually fatherless to His father, however, you will have to want Him. Jesus Christ has the right to ask His Father to adopt the fatherless person. And Jesus Christ makes a Father-son/daughter relationship possible between God and the believer. The point is this: faith in Christ Jesus assures a person of God's wonderful presence and blessings. It means that:

- God looks after the believer as a father looks after his child.
- God helps and directs the believer through all the trials and temptations of life.
- Now the believer has the very strength of God at his disposal as he faces life day by day.
- And the believer is assured of living with God forever and ever.

Another way to look at the great pillar of faith is: Faith in Christ is like a sphere, an area, a territory, a world in which the believer lives and believes; in which he lives, moves, and have his being in that world of faith in Christ. He does nothing that his faith in Christ forbids, and this faith becomes his very world, the great pillar of his life.

1:4b. There is **the great pillar of love**. The love being spoken about is not the natural love which all men should have for one another. This is the love which believers hold (embrace) for each other. One giving himself to love as Christ loved; proclaiming that he will live to the ultimate degree; he will sacrifice himself for men even as Christ sacrificed Himself. The love is stirred by the Holy Spirit, that is, the believer's love is supernatural love. The Holy Spirit who lives

within the believer, arouses the love of God within the heart of the believer. The believer is actually stirred to love others by the Spirit of God. The point is this: believers possess a great love for all men—the very love of Christ. But they possess a very special love for fellow believers. Why? Because they have all committed themselves to follow the same Lord. They all live and move in the faith of Christ, in the same sphere or world of faith. There is bound to be a very special attachment and love by the same Holy Spirit. As stated, a true believer has a special love for everyone on earth, but he has a very special love for his fellow believers. This means that there is no room within the church or among believers for:

- Division
- Envy
- Strife
- Cliques
- Criticism
- Hard feelings
- Grumbling
- or Argument.

In conclusion, faith and love are the two great pillars of the Christian life. The person who has faith in Christ Jesus and loves as Christ loved is the person who constructs the two foundational pillars of life.

1:5. The great pillars have one great basis, the believers **hope**. The hope that God gives, is the reason we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ., and go to such limits to love one another. The hope or reward is the hope laid up for us in heaven. What is that hope?

- It is the hope of being raised from the dead and being given a new and perfect and glorious body—a body just like Jesus.
- It is the hope of the Lord's return and of being with the Lord Himself forever.
- It is the glorious inheritance we are to receive from God as sons and daughters of His.

Note that the "*word of truth*" and "*the gospel*" are both mentioned in verse 5. They are the same. Man cannot find hope—not a permanent or eternal hope any place else. The only lasting hope ever offered to man is found in the Word of truth of the gospel—the Word of God. It is not false, but it is Truth. The gospel is the truth of God. This means that hope offered to man is true; not a desire or guess that may or may not be true. Paul is addressing all the believers together, saying that the hope you have laid up (stored up like a treasure) you've heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. What he's saying is, "*Don't believe the false teachers; believe what you've heard from the word Epaphras preached to you.*" What qualified Epaphras to proclaim the gospel? First, he heard the gospel himself and experienced its power personally. He knew firsthand what it was to be brought out of darkness into light.

This wonderful encouragement, lets us know that, the gospel, this "*word of truth*" or "*grace of God in truth*" which had come to Colosse through Epaphras was "*heard*" **v6**. Epaphras did not simply lead the Colossians to Christ and then abandon them. He taught them the Word and sought to establish their faith **v7**. Then he declared (*informed, made plain and clear by giving a report*) this (*sacrificial*) love (*like God*) of the Colossians to Paul in the Spirit **v8**. How else could we manifest a "*God*" like agape love, except by the supernatural enablement of His Spirit? The idea of the preposition "*in*", means in the sphere of, or in a sense in the "*atmosphere*" of (the Spirit). Think of a fish, in what atmosphere are they most "*alive*"? The water of course! As long as they are "*in*" the sphere or "*atmosphere*" of the water, they function as God intended. By analogy, the same goes for believers who as they learn to dwell more and more in the "*atmosphere*" of the Spirit, bring forth the fruit of the Spirit which includes love. When you learn about something, you want to share it. This hope laid up in heaven is for the individual (the whole world) who gives up his heart and life to pursue the hope. Therefore thanksgiving is in order. Paul can't help but thank God for the Colossians; for their faith, love and hope; and hearing about how the gospel has brought about fruit in their lives.

Colossians 1:9-14 Praying For Spiritual Growth

At some point Paul had been visited in prison by Epaphras, pastor of the great Colossian church. Apparently, he felt a need for some counsel and advice on how to handle the false teaching that had seeped into the church. This is the purpose for the letter to the Colossians; to encourage the church and its believers to get rid of the false teaching and to continue on with Christ. Being in prison and unable to reach them, what could he do? Only two things:

1. He could write them and share the Word of God in a letter.
2. He could pray for them.

Paul did both. The present passage covers his prayer. He asked three things; All three requests are needed by every church and all believers, in particular those who face false teaching.

1. Prayer Request 1: to **know God's Will**—"*to be filled with the knowledge of God's Will*" (1:9). It is not enough to hear of God's Will, but our desire is to be filled with the knowledge of God's Will. Nothing is to flow through us nor out of us that is not of God's Will. God's Will involves all of life, everything we do every moment of every day. The point is this: God tells us how to live life, and what He tells us is **His Will**.
 - i. Therefore, we are to study what God has said. We are to study and learn until the knowledge of His "*Will*" just floods our lives to such a degree that doing His "*Will*" flows out into our conduct and behavior.

- ii. As we study, wisdom and understanding has to be established within us. "*Wisdom*" (*sophia*) is the ability to judge rightly; having insight. While "*Understanding*" (*sunesei*) is the ability to comprehend; applying the basic principles to decisions. How? By studying the Word of God! Think about how little most people know about God's Will. Is it any wonder that so many have been deceived by false teaching? That so much of our ministry is superficial and formal? "***Through wisdom is a house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches***" *Prov.24:3-4*.

2. Prayer Request 2: to walk worthy of Christ (1:10).

This is a critical point for the believer. After doing what we just talked about, we got to walk it out. There is a difference between hearing and knowing something and then having the ability to do that something. The critical point is putting what we know into practice. We are to live out the will of God; we are to practice and do the will of God including myself. Knowing the will of God is of no value until we have committed our lives to do it. "*Walk*" (*peropatesao*) means that we set our lives—our behavior and conduct after Christ. "*Worthy*" (*axios*) means to have the weight of or comparing the value of. Our walk is to weigh as much as the walk of Christ. We are to live equal to; we are to live up to; we are to live with the same glory as, all of what God has called us to be! Our conduct is to conform to the will of God as much as the conduct of Christ. We are to live a life just as worthy as the life of Christ. The will of God is to control our behavior as much as it did the behavior of Christ. Christ is the pattern and we are the copy. The copy is just like the pattern (*Wuest*). There is only one way. We must be totally committed to do two things.

1. We must be "***fruitful in every good work.***" No person is pleased when we do only half of what He says. To please anyone we have to do all that He says. How much more true with God!
2. We must grow in the knowledge of God. How? We walk with Him: associate, fellowship, and share with Him. The more we walk with Him, the more we "***increase in the knowledge of Him.***"

3. Prayer Request 3: to possess the power of God; "*strengthen with all might*" (1:11).

This is seen by asking two questions:

1. What good is it if the believer knows God's Will, but he does not have the power to do God's Will?
2. How can the believer walk worthy of Christ if he does not have the power to do God's will?

Many in the world believe that man has the strength within himself to become spiritually strong; that it is a matter of the will and discipline; that man can apply himself and conquer the circumstances of life. And, to some degree, this is true. But man's flesh fails in three critical areas.

1. The flesh cannot become perfect; neither can it do anything about perfection.
2. The flesh cannot conquer death.
3. The flesh cannot do what this verse says; it cannot be patient and longsuffering against all the traumatic trials and temptations of life and be joyful at the same time in itself.

Where does such power come from? From God, and we secure His power through prayer.

1. God's power gives us a spirit of "***patience***" (*hupomonen*); endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, constancy, perseverance. Rather it is His Spirit that stands up, quickens our spirit, and faces the trials of life.
2. God's power gives us a spirit of "***longsuffering.***"
3. God's power gives us a spirit of "***joyfulness***" through all the trials and tribulations of life.

God has done three great things for man. If we concentrate upon these three things the depth of what God has done will erupt in our lives for good and we will "***give thanks to the Father.***"

1. God has given us an "***inheritance***" (1:12). Sometimes we can fall into the trap of thinking that we have to do something to earn God's favor. The truth is you already have it. You have it through the blood of His dear Son Jesus. You have it because it was predestinated, that is foreordained. The fact that God would take sinners—totally depraved sinners—and save them will cause praise upon praise, and then give us an inheritance—that of being made the very heritage of God, the very possession of God is truly outstanding! It was predestinated that Jesus would go to the cross that we would receive the inheritance. Inheritance always comes after death.
2. God has "***delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son***" (1:13). Picture a person trying to walk and stumble through a world of darkness. The power of darkness is a kingdom, a realm, or world, but also a power, actively enslaving man and standing in opposition to the light. However, the Father Himself has "*delivered*" (*erusatō*) meaning rescued or snatched us from darkness and "***translated***"

(*transferred, brought*) "**us into the kingdom of His dear Son.**" Remember, that if there is the power of darkness, there is the kingdom of Christ's light, existing. And God's kingdom is greater!

- a. His rule and reign already exists in the spiritual world, in heaven.
- b. His rule and reign already exists in the hearts and lives of believers in this physical world.

Why did God do that? Because of His great love for us! How did He do that? Through His only begotten Son dying on the cross and rising from the dead! He did it for us! **He delivered us!**

3. God "**has redeemed us through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins**" (1:14). The contract of sin was death for the sinner's life. The ransom God paid in full was with the shed blood of Jesus for our penalty of sin. The blood had to come from the Perfect Lamb, the spotless Lamb of Jesus; no other way. He bore the bondage of sin through His blood and sin's penalty was broken!
 - a. Any person who truly believes that Jesus Christ died for him is forgiven his sins.
 - b. God takes his faith and counts it as the death of Jesus Christ.
 - c. God sees the man as being in Jesus Christ, as being in the death of Jesus Christ.
 - d. God counts the death of Jesus Christ for the death of the man.
 - e. Therefore, the guilt and penalty for breaking God's laws are completely removed.
 - f. The man's sins and guilt are sent away or washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul was allowing them to see that he was still praying for their growth, and their maturity. And, he was still giving thanks to the Father for what He had completed in them through His Son Jesus.

SUMMARY:

Paul's authority for writing this letter is found in his identity as "*an apostle (one sent) of Jesus Christ.*" Paul refers to his apostleship because he is unknown to the Colossians. This refers to his authoritative title, signifying equality with the Twelve, because he has seen the risen Christ. It refers to the dignity of his office; he is clothed with authority and endowed with power. His appointment was not by the Twelve, by religious leaders, by his family, nor by himself. This is an assertion of his divine authority. As an act of courtesy, Paul includes Timothy in the salutation. Timothy was not an apostle; he was a brother, Paul's spiritual son. In this letter he speaks to the saints and the faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse.

As he greets them, he says "*Grace be unto you.*" He's saying Grace gives you what you don't deserve; mercy withholds from you what you do deserve. Grace always precedes peace. "*And peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*" speaking of the calm tranquility of the heart amidst disturbing circumstances. The source of grace and peace is from God. In other words, he's setting the atmosphere by giving assurance to those in Christ.

After "*Grace*", and "*Peace*", come "*Thanks*" because there is much to be thankful for. Thanksgiving precede (comes before) intercession; praise precede prayer and also follows. He lets them know that there is a continual prayer for them since hearing of their faith in Christ Jesus and the love they have for all the saints. Love is the evidence of faith and love is the characteristic mark of Christianity. He lets them know the reason for their love—the hope laid up for them in heaven—there is an absolute certainty of its possession in the future. (Paraphrasing): "*You heard this word of truth from Epaphras, before *Gnosticism crept in, but I'm just reassuring you. You know this word because you began to bring forth fruit; you began to increase since the day you heard it.*" The grace of God was fully apprehended and should have made them immune from Gnosticism.

NOTE:

*Gnostics valued the accumulation of knowledge; a know-it-all religion whose leader taught that salvation comes through a special or secret knowledge of God. Gnosticism taught that the body was either evil or did not matter. They expressed this belief in one of two ways: either by living a life of extreme self-denial or, in contrast, by self-indulgence. The word Gnosticism is not in the Bible. Biblical writers argued against people holding ideas that later developed into Gnosticism.

The Colossians were not "*secret Christians.*" Their trust in Jesus Christ was demonstrative (expressed), for the Apostle could say of them, "*We give thanks...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.*" It was the kind of faith that others could see and talk about. It was noticeable, rather than questionable. What kind of faith did they have? The Apostle identifies the content of this faith as "*faith in Christ Jesus*"; faith that is focused upon a living Person, God's Son. For true faith:

- looks to the righteousness of Jesus Christ in fulfilling the law,
- the satisfaction of Jesus Christ bearing the judgment of God at the cross,
- the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to atone for sins,
- and the resurrection of Jesus Christ to impart life to spiritually dead men.

Is your faith resting firmly in Christ Jesus? Therefore, a real faith will certainly be seen in "*the love which you have for all the saints.*"ⁱⁱⁱ Here was a mixture of people in the Roman empire, living in a prosperous area of Asia Minor. Laodicea was known for its industry of wool-dyeing, Hierapolis was known for its recreation-oriented hot springs, and Colosse was known for its strong Phrygian population, a people given to idolatrous paganism. With the mixture of wealth, recreation, and paganism, the Colossians heard the gospel and found their whole attitude in life changed. Now they had a love for one another. No longer were they wrapped up in the self-centeredness of typical existence. Their delight was found in the sacrificial care for their fellow-believers. What is the key to this kind of love? Paul adds, "*and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit*" (v8).

Paul states that "*hope*" is the reason for their faith and love: "*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*" The idea of "*hope*" does not mean a wishful thinking, as it is used so often in our day. It is anticipation, expectation, and an awaiting of fulfillment of that which is certain.

Peter said that God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Hope has an aim based upon the promise of God and the work of Jesus Christ. It is staking your life on God's truth and believing in it, than to stake your life on what you can see. That's hope! That's because we have evidence; to be convinced, that it's true!—And its in The Word of the Truth of the Gospel.

How did Paul endure the most grueling of times with a spirit of joy and patience? His life was rooted in hope of what was ahead through Jesus Christ. The word that came unto the Colossians was personal, yet it came to the world also, universally. The Word brought forth fruit in them; grew and increased in them, but not the world. Epaphras, one that had experienced that change, brought that word unto them. Another thing about the gospel is that it's by faith, it results in love, it rests in hope, it reaches the world, it reproduces fruit, and it's rooted in grace.

Lastly, the truth of gospel is reported by men! Here Paul introduces Epaphras and he's thankful to Epaphras, calling him our fellow servant. You know why? Because somebody had to take the gospel to the Colossians and Epaphras had done it. What did you learn from Epaphras? You learned, the grace of God in truth—the gospel! We are Christ's witnesses. We go out and testify of Him and the Spirit of God connects the message with others. We leave it up to the Holy Spirit. Just make sure you stay connected.

From verses 9-14 is Paul's "*Intercessory Prayer*" for them. "*For this cause...since the day we heard it we have not ceased to pray for you. We desire you be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*" Sometimes we wonder how to pray for missionaries and other leaders we have never met. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. His prayer teaches us how to pray for others, whether we know them or not. Father I pray for those that are reading this prayer ...

- That they to be filled with the knowledge of "**Your**" will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding **v9**.
- I pray that they might live a life worthy of "**You**", one that pleases "**You**" in every way; bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of "**You**" **v10**.
- Strengthen them with all might according to "**Your**" glorious power so that they may have patience and longsuffering with joyfulness **v11**.
- Now I give "**You**" thanks Father for all that "**You**" have done: qualifying them in the kingdom of light to share in the inheritance "**You've**" given **v12**.
- I thank "**You**" for delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of "**Your**" dear Son **v13**.
- I thank "**You**" for the redemption through "**Your**" blood, even the forgiveness of sins **v14**.

When you don't know how to pray for someone, pray the Word! **Verses 9-11** is the Intercessory Prayer. **Verses 12-14** are the Benefits God has secured for us when Christ died on the cross. That's why you begin to Thank Him. Understanding Truth and Living Truth has to go hand in hand. We cannot do one without the other. We will have to know the "Will of God".

APPLICATION:

Very simply, the **Will of God** is to give thanks, to do right, and not to do wrong. Start walking right to please Him. His Holy Spirit will lead. When you get God's leading, do it - before you change your mind.

ⁱ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/51%20Col/2009/51%20Col%2001a.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://rondaniel.com/library/51-Colossians/Colossians0101.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.southwoodsbc.org/sermons/colossians_01.01-08.php