

“Pray Without Ceasing” - Colossians 1: 1-14

This morning we are going to meditate in the Epistle of today: Colossians 1: 1-14. Here the Apostle Paul speaks about prayers. “Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together”. Amen

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Dear Christian friends:

The people of God are to be a praying people. Pray without ceasing, Scripture tells us, and we have good reason to pray, for God promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14 “If My people, who are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek My face, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Martin Luther called prayer the heartbeat of the Christian - the stronger the prayer life is, the stronger the life and faith of the Christian.

God's people are to be a praying people. And prayer gives us the opportunity to go to God and to ask for His help, not only for ourselves, like the man who prayed, “God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife, we four no more” No. We pray on behalf of those around us: family, church members, our friends and ask God to pour out His blessings upon them. We pray even for those who harm us in one way or another. Samuel once told the people of Israel “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.” (1 Samuel 12:23)

We see that same attitude in Paul in our text today as he says to the people at Colossae “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.”

Friends, we can learn a very valuable lesson from St. Paul, for like him we should remember the needs of those around us at home or the church family in Christ. He begins many of his letters as he does this letter to the Colossians, assuring his church family that he remembers them in his prayers. And there is something special that comes from knowing that other people are praying with you and for you. We have had members at Faith and at Grace who have had to deal with some very difficult situations in their lives, and these people have said that one of the things that helped them was knowing that the people at church were praying for them.

In our text of last Sunday we were reminded to bear each other our burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. Prayer is one way that we can help others to bear their burdens. And in prayer we can give thanks to God for the great things He has done, not only for us, but for others as well.

That is the first thing that Paul tells the Colossians “³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶which 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,”

Paul and Timothy praise God that the Colossians have heard His word and that the word has worked faith in the hearts of the Colossians, a faith that shows itself in the loving, caring attitude that the people have for one another. That is something we all can and should do - we should give thanks that God has called many faithful people together in His church.

Because our human nature, sometimes we feel discouraged because the attendance at church is low or because it does not grow faster as it should be, or we are discouraged because others they do not give their time, talents, and their treasures to build up the church. Those are valid concerns, but we should see the big picture. We need to remember and thank God for the great blessings we have experienced through the years by the members who serve their Lord so faithfully in His church.

When you pray, be like Paul, and give thanks to God for the great things He has done in calling the members of our church by faith to be part of His family. And thank Him for the love and service that so many of our people have offered to the glory of His name. But there was more to Paul's prayer for the Colossians than mere thanksgiving.

Paul and Timothy asked God to give the people what they needed as well. They prayed for the people's continued growth in faith. Paul says “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, ¹⁰so 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. ¹¹May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.”

This is the prayer we need to pray for each and every member of our church. We need to pray for our family in Christ and ask God to build us up so that we might serve Him as we love and serve one another. We need to pray that we continue being faithful in our attendance at worship and in our stewardship of God's blessings to us. We need to pray that from our faithful hearts we show love and concern for each other.

Friends, we live in a day and age when it seems that people have less use for the church all the time. That should concern us, because when our brothers and sisters in Christ start to lose contact with the church, they often lose their contact with the saving Word of God. That is why we need to pray for our family in Christ as Paul prayed for the Colossians. We need to pray to our God, asking Him to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

But are we asking God for His help? Are we asking Him to fill each and every one of us with a knowledge of His Will so that nothing else may be replaced for His Will in our lives? Are we asking Him for the wisdom and spiritual understanding that we need that we may know how to live a Christ-like life? Are we asking Him to help us and all our brothers and sisters in Christ to walk in a manner worthy of our great calling as His children?

Friends in Christ, one of the great things that we can do here is to pray for the people of Grace. As you know each Sunday we have a bulletin and in it there are names of people who need our prayers. We have a calendar with important days for the members, and we have also a telephone directory with the names of the members at Faith and Grace. Some of them we do not know personally, but that does not matter. All are children of God who need our prayers.

Here at this church each Sunday we rotate Grace's names and pray for them. I suggest, you use the same method when you pray at home. We do not need to know their specific issues, but all of them need prayers. Some of them are sick, or have other problems, or are facing challenges at work or school, and others are going through spiritual battles with doubts if they are in right path regarding their spiritual life.

I encourage you to pray for all of them each day or every week. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ and need our prayers. Then we would see new dedication to the Word of God and new growth among our people. And that is a good idea. It is simple, it is practical, and it is necessary. We know that God promises to answer the faithful prayers of His people. We know that He wants to help and bless us in all things. We know that He does give His strength to His people. And we know all that He has done for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds us "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." We do not need anything else for our salvation, but the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ.

Friends, Christ died and rose again so that we might be forgiven, so that we might have life with God. He has set us free from the sin that would condemn us so that we may live for Him. And

that is why we should pray, not only for ourselves, but also for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are closer or far away, that our church may be all that God has intended for it to be, or as Paul says “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.’

We should all be praying for our church and its people, asking God to help those in need, to heal those who are sick in body and in mind, and to build us up together in faith and love that we all might serve Him as faithful children. Please pray for me and pastor Scholz as your pastors because we too face difficulties at home and in our ministry. One of the daily devotions say “there will be more power in the pulpit when there is more prayer in the pew.” Let us commit ourselves to regular and faithful prayer for the spiritual and physical needs of the people of our church and its pastors, as Paul prayed for the people of Colossae.

Perhaps in the future here at Grace we can create a prayer chain group. This groups would pray in times of trouble or distress in the lives of the people of our church. I personally think that it would be wonderful if we had a prayer chain group at Grace. After all, God's people are to be a praying people, praying for their own needs, but also for the needs of our entire family in Christ.

Friends in Christ, let us pray for one another, knowing that our God does hear and answer the faithful prayers of His people. Amen.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord,
and Savior. Amen.