

Colossians 1:1-14

Week 1 - Steadfast Prayer (Prayer, part I)

Icebreaker

This week, we're starting a series in Colossians. Colossians was written as a letter to the church in Colossae by the Apostle Paul. The letter, written in Rome, had to travel 1300+ miles before its eventual delivery in Colossae. As in so many of his letters, Paul made sure to balance teaching and correction with a helping of grace and encouragement. The significance of his approach, along with the importance of a reliable messenger, is summed up in the following video:

Alfalfa's letter to Darla (Little Rascals)

Colossae was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in what is now Turkey. It was part of an important trade route, which served as the catalyst for its multi-cultural, cosmopolitan atmosphere. Although the population was overwhelmingly Gentile, there was a significant Jewish population as well. Paul had not yet visited Ephesus when he wrote this letter during his first Roman imprisonment. The tone of his letter stands in stark contrast to his circumstances, offering unflagging encouragement and sound teaching.
Source: bible.org

Colossians 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

? What does it mean to be an "apostle"?

Colossians 1:3-8 (NIV)

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

? In verse 6, Paul mentions the growth of the gospel throughout the whole world. How is this an encouragement to the church in Colossae?

? What is the significance of Paul's mention of Epaphras?

? What other encouragement can you find in verses 3-8?

? Can you remember a time someone encouraged you early in your faith? What did they say or do?

Colossians 1:9-14 (NIV)

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, 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. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

? In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul writes: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." How does this passage in his letter to the Colossians relate to his words for the church in Thessalonica?

? In what circumstances do you find it most difficult to encourage others?

? Paul refers to each part of the Trinity in verses 9-14. What does he attribute to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and why is this significant?

? How can we follow the example of Paul in this passage as we walk through life with other Christians?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Who in your life is God calling you to pray for and/or encourage this week?

? What gospel truths/passages of scripture can you turn to when circumstances inevitably overwhelm your ability to encourage and pray for those around you?