

# Paul's Prayer: Rooted in the Gospel (Colossians 1:3-14)

## I. Introduction

### 1 A. This morning we're going to continue on in Colossians by looking at Paul's prayer at the beginning of the book in 1:3-14

1. But before we dive in, I want to return to our purpose statement from last week and remember what Colossians is about
2. Last week, we concluded that Colossians calls us to see how truly glorious Jesus is and to root all of our hope in Him knowing that He is true wisdom to meet our every need. This will prevent us from instead pursuing the hopes and purposes of this world and being captured by worldly wisdom.
3. This is what we're going to be looking for in Colossians, and Paul starts this emphasis right from the very start - from the first words of his letter Paul's going to be calling us to look at Jesus and find our hope in the gospel

### 1 B. Last week, I also gave an outline for Colossians that had eight points that describe the flow of the text

1. But, as I meditated on Colossians this week, I thought it would be useful to have an even briefer outline that would help us understand the themes of Colossians - so I've identified four points that roughly match the four chapters of Colossians
  - 1 a. Rooted in the Gospel (~chapter 1)
  - 1 b. Refusing Worldly Wisdom (~chapter 2)
  - 1 c. Renewed in Christ (~chapter 3)
  - 1 d. Relational Truth (~chapter 4)
    - e. These four themes are what Paul wants us to learn out of Colossians - we must be rooted in the gospel so that we refuse worldly wisdom and instead are renewed in Christ and this is a relational truth, one that happens in and through relationships.
2. We're starting the first section this morning - rooted in the gospel - which I'll break up into roughly four sections
  - 2 a. Thanksgiving and Prayer (Colossians 1:3-14)
  - 1 b. The Glories of Christ (Colossians 1:15-23)
  - 1 c. The Advance of the gospel (Colossians 1:24-2:5)
  - 1 d. And a Charge (Colossians 2:6-7)
    - e. The theme of this entire section is that the Colossians heard the gospel, they received the gospel and they need to keep living in the gospel
  - 3 f. So, we'll hear in Colossians 1:6 that the gospel came to the Colossians and bore fruit in them and in Colossians 2:6-7 Paul will charge the Colossians - *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*
  - g. Paul wants the Colossians to know the gospel and to root themselves in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he dives right into this theme at the beginning of His letter

### C. So this morning, we are going to look at Colossians 1:3-14 - Paul's prayer for the Colossians - and see how Paul is calling the Colossians back to the roots of the gospel even through His prayer for them

1. So let's read Colossians 1:3-14 together

- 1 *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing---as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.*
- 1 *And so, from the day we heard, 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, so 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. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

### 1 D. Proposition: Paul is thankful that the Colossians put their hope in the gospel and he wants them to keep growing in the gospel

1. The Gospel that Came to You (Colossians 1:3-6)
2. The Gospel that Bore Fruit in You (Colossians 1:5-8)
3. The Gospel that Keeps Bearing Fruit (Colossians 1:9-14)

## 1 II. The Gospel that Came to You: Faith, Hope and Love (Colossians 1:3-6)

### A. Paul starts Colossians, as he does many of his books, with a prayer of thanksgiving for the Colossians and their faith

1. But Paul's purpose can be seen in the interlude of his prayer - Paul breaks up his prayer into two parts, interjecting an interesting aside in the middle of his prayer, and this interjection tells us what was on Paul's mind as he prayed for the Colossians - Paul is happy because the Colossians had really heard the true gospel and the gospel really had changed them
2. So Paul thanks God for the Colossians' faith and, at the same time, reminds them that their faith was rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ and this is what they need to keep pursuing
3. So, as we look at the first part of Paul's prayer, I want to see two important truths that shine out in these first few verses: the Colossians have A New Hope and the Colossians should have the same Heartfelt Response that Paul does

### 1 B. A New Hope

2. Paul's thanksgiving is focused on what he's heard about the Colossians - and he's heard that the Colossians are full of faith in Christ Jesus and love that is for all the saints
  - 1 a. Faith that exhibits itself in love is at the center of all of Paul's letters and really all of the New Testament - faith in Christ Jesus is the core of and *sine qua non* of Christianity and love is the ultimate evidence of faith
  - 1 b. Love, especially toward other believers, is the expression of faith in Jesus Christ - without faith in Christ there is no true love and someone who does not love cannot really believe in Jesus Christ - so faith is expressed or works itself out in love
    - i. (We're going to be drawing a little diagram that I think illustrates the truths Paul is pointing to in Colossians 1 over the next few weeks - if you want to copy this there is some blank space on the back of the bulletin)
  - 1 3 c. This unity of faith and love is found all across the New Testament, for example in Galatians 5:6 Paul says - *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*
  - 1 3 d. Or again in I Corinthians 13:2 - *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*
  - 1 2 e. And I Corinthians 13:13 - *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*
  - 1 f. Paul's thankfulness is for the fruits of the gospel - he can tell that the Colossians really heard and embraced the gospel because the fruit of the gospel is growing in their lives, they are full of faith and love
- 1 2. But then Paul gives a reason for the Colossians faith and love
  - 1 a. There is a really important word here in the middle of this section - 'because' - we shouldn't overlook words like these because they tell us what Paul is trying to communicate - prepositions are really important, especially to Paul
  - 1 b. Paul is going to tell us what caused the Colossians to blossom in faith and in love - they are expressing faith an love because of the hope which is laid up for them in heaven
  - 1 c. So, we can go back to our diagram and add another step, one that comes before faith and love
    - d. The Colossians faith and love grew out of a new hope, a new anticipation that they had received - they had been given something to hope in and hope had produced faith in them
    - e. Instead of the futile hopes that the Colossians had in this world before they heard the gospel, they now have a hope that is laid up in heaven - a hope that is imperishable and unchangeable, a hope that will never disappoint
  - 1 f. And hope is really important in this letter to the Colossians - Paul wants to emphasize this hope because it is this hope that drove them to faith - the more they focus on their true hope the more they will be driven to faith and love, but if they stray and start pursuing other, lesser hopes then the chain will be broken and their faith will waver
    - g. And, as we look across the New Testament, we see that hope is the essence of faith
      - 1 2 3 i. In Romans, Paul works hard to describe exactly what faith is and how it connects us to grace, and in Romans 4:16-18 Paul describes what faith is by giving us an example in Abraham - *That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring---not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"---in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."*
        - a) Hope in God's promise was the bedrock of Abraham's faith - Abraham heard God's promise and he wanted God's promise to be true for Him (hope), so he took hold of that promise through faith
      - 1 2 ii. Hebrews will put it more plainly, Hebrews 11:1 - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
        - a) Faith is rested on hope - hope hears the promises of God and desires them and more than desires them, hope says the promises of God are the only thing that could possibly save me, that could possibly fulfill me
        - b) And faith reaches out and says, those promises are mine and I will live in them, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction that God's promises belong to me so I'll pursue them wholeheartedly
        - c) And this is how hope fuels faith - hope is a desire, and inkling that the glorious things we hear in the promises of God might be ours and faith is the wholehearted pursuit of those glorious hopes

- 1 2 iii. And Paul says elsewhere that a lack of hope is at the core of those without Christ, Ephesians 2:12 - *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*
- 2 iv. But we didn't stay without hope because the grace of God has revealed hope to us - Peter will put it this way, I Peter 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*
- 2 v. And Peter says, if we have been given hope in Jesus then we need to place all of our hope in Jesus, I Peter 1:13 - *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- vi. And this is exactly where Paul wants to take us as we go through Colossians - we have been given a great hope in Jesus Christ and we need to put all of our hope in Him, we can't be mixing and matching with the hopes and desires of this world
- 1 h. So hope produces faith which works out in love
- 1 3. But Paul continues on in verse 6
  - 2 a. He says, of this - of this what? Of this hope - Paul is still talking about hope, he starts with a prayer of thanksgiving, but he gets so distracted by the word hope that he has to stop praying for a moment and remind the Colossians about how they received this earth-shattering hope
  - 2 b. They first came to know this hope when they heard the word of the truth, that is the gospel
  - 2 c. So, we can go back to our diagram and add another step - if hope produces faith which works out in love, then the gospel is what gave them hope
    - d. Their hope isn't an amorphous thing, hoping that God will do some sort of good for them, nor is it self-directed, hoping that God will give me whatever I'm desiring - no the hope that led them to faith in Jesus Christ is much greater than that - their hope was described to them in the gospel
    - e. The gospel - the word that tells us that though we have no right to expect anything from God except ultimate destruction, yet God gave to us an infinitely good gift in His Son who expiated the wrath of God and provided a perfect propitiation that has made God smile on us again so that now we can return, not in terror but in joy, not as condemned but as sons - this gospel is our hope, a hope of return and reconciliation, a hope of fellowship and joy, a hope of perfection and pleasure at the right hand of God
    - f. These things ought to be our hope, they ought to be our desire, these are the things that our soul ought to long for and we hear of them in the gospel - these are the promises of God that will drive us to faith
    - g. Any lesser hope, any lesser desire or longing isn't strong enough to cause us to grasp onto Christ through faith, other hopes are futile and deceptive and instead distract us from faith, they break the chain that ends in faith and love - our only hope is and must be in the promises of the gospel
- 1 4. So Paul's prayer of thanksgiving focuses on hope - hope had driven the Colossians to faith which was demonstrated in love and this hope had a solid and unchanging content - the promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but this leads us to our second point this morning: a heartfelt response

### 1 C. A Heartfelt Response

- 3 1. Paul's description of the Colossian's faith, hope and love is not merely academic but emotional, and Paul cries out with an intense emotion right at the beginning of the book of Colossians - *We always thank God! ...*
- 2. I mentioned last week that hope was at the center of Colossians and we see that here at the beginning, but I also said that the book of Colossians focused on a specific attitude, thanksgiving, and we also see that here at the beginning of Colossians
- 1 3. Thanksgiving really closes the cycle that we've been describing through these first few verses - the gospel had given the Colossians hope which had produced faith that had worked out in love
- 1 4. And now that Paul hears of the faith and love of the Colossian church, he reacts in thanksgiving - God had done a great work in the Colossians to bring them to faith in Christ Jesus and to cause them to love all the saints
- 5. Faith and love drove Paul to thanksgiving and Paul's thanksgiving is ultimately to God for the promises of the gospel which had given the Colossians hope which had produced faith in them that had worked out in faith and in love
- 6. It becomes a glorious cycle - the gospel gives us hope which leads to faith which grows out into love which calls us to thanksgiving which brings our focus back to the gospel again which reminds us of our hope and deepens our faith, causes our love to grow and increases our thanksgiving
- 7. This is what is happening in Paul as he hears Epaphras bring a report back from the Colossian church and this is what Paul wants to see in the Colossians - if you want your hope to grow then let thanksgiving drive you back to the gospel!
- 8. Paul rejoices to see the true evidences of the gospel in the Colossians' lives and he wants the Colossians to rejoice in that same truth so that their hope is continually deepened in Christ

### 1 D. So, kids, here's your first kid's question for today: What is Paul thankful for?

- 1 1. And the answer is: That the Colossians heard and hoped in the gospel.

### 1 III. The Gospel that Bore Fruit in You: Always Increasing Everywhere (Colossians 1:5-8)

#### A. As we continue on, I want to think about Paul's interjection in the middle of his prayer for a few minutes

1. We tagged a little bit of Paul's interjection onto his prayer for thanksgiving because it called us to see that Paul's thankfulness was driven by the fact that the Colossians had heard the gospel and the gospel had given them hope
2. But I think there is a second dimension that we see in Paul's interjection - the gospel did not only come to them, but it bore fruit in them
3. So, I want us to see three things: when the Colossians heard the gospel, it bore fruit in them; Epaphras' journey to Paul was one small evidence of the fruitfulness of the gospel; and this is the nature of the gospel: to bear fruit

#### 1 B. When the Colossians heard the gospel, it bore fruit in them

1. As Paul continues on in verse six, Paul says that the gospel has been bearing fruit in the Colossians
2. Paul says that the gospel is bearing fruit in them and has been since the day that they heard it and understood it
1. Part of Paul's point here is that there was no doubt that Epaphras brought the real gospel to the Colossians because only the real gospel could bear fruit the way that Epaphras' gospel had
4. Since the gospel had produced genuine love and true faith in the Colossians, Paul had every confidence that the gospel that they heard was the correct and complete gospel - they didn't need anything beyond what Epaphras had brought
5. This will become important as the book continues because Paul's warning to the Colossians is not to add worldly wisdom to the gospel, and here he is building a foundation for that argument - they don't need to add worldly wisdom to the gospel because they already had everything they need, the true gospel was already bearing fruit in them

#### 2 C. Epaphras' journey to Paul was one small evidence of the fruitfulness of the gospel

1. Epaphras' trip back from the Colossians to Paul in prison is referred to at the end of verse 7 and into verse 8
2. Epaphras had been sent by the Colossians as a minister to minister to Paul's needs and to share the love of the Colossians with Paul
3. And Paul says that Epaphras has done this faithfully, and this is one reason why Paul knows that the Colossians abound in love for all the saints - the Colossians are living out that love toward Paul in Epaphras' journey
4. Their love in sending Epaphras to Paul is an evidence of the Spirit's work in their lives and so Paul rightly says that Epaphras has made known their love in the Spirit
5. So there are two faithful trips that prompted Paul to write this letter to the Colossians - first, Epaphras had faithfully brought and communicated the gospel from Paul to the Colossians and then second, Epaphras had faithfully brought and communicated the Colossians love back to Paul
6. The gospel was bearing fruit in the Colossians, and Paul knows because Epaphras came and showed him the fruit of the gospel in what he brought from Colossae

#### 2 D. But, at the center of this paragraph, Paul makes a very important point - this is the nature of the gospel: to bear fruit

1. Paul's focus here at the beginning of the letter is on the Colossians and the evidence that they had really heard the gospel
2. But as he rejoices in the gospel's fruit in the Colossians, he can't help but make a universal statement of the gospel
1. We see it in verse 6 - *indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing*
4. The gospel is bearing fruit and increasing in the Colossians because that's what the gospel does everywhere - the nature of the gospel is to bear fruit
5. Fruitfulness and a true understanding and trust in the gospel go hand-in-hand - where there is no gospel, there is no fruitfulness and where there is no fruitfulness, you can be sure there is no gospel
6. But the reverse is also true - if the gospel is present then it will assuredly bear fruit - this is what the gospel does
7. There is no such thing as a Christian who doesn't bear fruit - who doesn't grow in holiness and faith and love - because everywhere the true gospel goes it bears fruit
8. And this is why the fruit of the gospel is such a good indicator to Paul that the gospel really came to the Colossians - the only way that this sort of fruit was produced in their lives was by the power of the gospel working in them
9. And it must be this way - if the power of the gospel wasn't working in them, then they wouldn't have any part in the gospel
1. 10. The nature of the gospel is that it always bears fruit - the message of Christ is, as Paul says elsewhere - *it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for [faithfulness], as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*
2. 11. If the gospel is the 'power of God' then it can't fail to change those who hear it to cause them to live in faith for faithfulness

#### 1 IV. The Gospel that Keeps Bearing Fruit: Walking in a Manner Worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:9-14)

##### A. After Paul's little detour in verses 5-8, he returns to prayer and prays a prayer of supplication for the Colossians

1. Paul's desire for the Colossians is that everything he has heard about their hope, their faith, and their love will continue to be true - his desire is that they would keep bearing fruit in the gospel
2. So Paul prays three things for the Colossians: he prays that they would be filled with God's wisdom; that they would be strengthened by God's power, and that they would be thankful for God's gift

##### 1 B. First request: May you be filled with God's wisdom

1. In verses 9-10 Paul makes his first request - *that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so 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.*
2. Paul's first request has an object and a purpose - the object is to know God's will for the purpose of pleasing Him
- 1.3. We'll start with the object - *that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*
  - 2 a. We could break this into two parts - spiritual wisdom in order to know God's will
    - b. Paul only uses the concept of spiritual wisdom a couple of times in his writings, one of those being I Corinthians 2 which we read earlier which contrasts the wisdom of the cross of Christ with the foolish wisdom of the world
      - 1 i. So Paul concludes in I Corinthians 2:12-13 - *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.*
        - ii. Spiritual wisdom is the Spirit opening our eyes to the truth and power of the gospel - to understand with spiritual wisdom is to see that the cross of Christ stands at the center of all things and all wisdom flows from it
        - iii. So, when Paul prays he must have in mind the Spirit's work of directing us to the cross of Christ - we understand how to please God by understanding the gospel well, by understanding the story of Christ's cross well
        - iv. This will be the test that Paul comes back to in Colossians 2 when he warns against worldly wisdom - we don't please God by borrowing the wisdom of this world that is not rooted in Christ - knowing what pleases God comes from having our eyes on the gospel, not on the world
      - c. But, as we have our eyes on the gospel through the power of the Spirit, we continually understand more and more of what pleases God, what God's will is
  - 1.4. And Paul wants the Colossians to understand what pleases God because his request has a purpose - *so 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*
    - a. Paul wants the Colossians to know how to please God so that they do please God, and he says this four different ways
    - b. First, he desires for them to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord - the hope of the gospel is a great and gracious honor, one which we cannot be worthy of, but also one when we have received it we ought to handle it worthily
      - i. You could imagine a poor beggar on the side of the road that is passed by a king and the king turns, gives him his most expensive robes to put on, hands him a purse of gold and puts him in the king's chariot
      - ii. It would be a travesty for the beggar to despise the great gift that the king gave him and to go back to living like a beggar - instead it would honor the king to go live in a manner worthy of the gift that was given him
      - iii. Living in a manner worthy of the gift isn't earning the gift, it is a recognition of how great the gift was - and Paul says that we ought to be like that beggar, we ought to be in such awe and wonder of the gift that God has given that we desire to live out God's purposes in our lives, we desire to conform our lives to the image of Christ
    - c. But then Paul give another image - we should be fully pleasing to God
      - i. This is the most straightforward description, Paul wants us to know what God wants so that we can do what God wants, so that we can be a pleasure to Him - and that ought to be our goal, we should want to please God
    - d. Third, Paul says that he wants us to bear fruit in every good work - again this is a synonym to the last two descriptions, but it helps us get just a little different view on the topic
      - i. To be pleasing to God or to live in a manner worthy of God's gift in Christ is to let the gospel bear its fruit in our lives, to let the gospel change us and transform us so that the faith and love that comes from the gospel flows from our lives
    - e. Then, finally, Paul says that he wants us to be increasing in the knowledge of God
      - i. Again, this is a synonymous statement, but it adds a lot of depth to the last three statements
      - ii. Our ultimate goal is to know God, to see Him in His glory and to rejoice
      - iii. But to know God is to know what God wants and to do what God wants - to know God is never merely knowledge, but is action - to know God is to know Him as an obedient child knows his father
      - iv. So Paul wants us to know what pleases God so that we can do what pleases God so that we grow in relationship with God and know God more
      - v. And all of this comes from knowing God's will with spiritual wisdom and understanding - seeing the world through the eyes of the gospel

## 2 C. May you be strengthened by God's power

1. Paul's second request comes in verse 11 - *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy*
2. And again we can split his request into two parts - an object and a purpose - may you be strengthened so you can endure
3. In this request, I want to consider the second half first - what does Paul mean 'for all endurance and patience with joy'
  - a. Endurance and patience are very similar words and they can both have a range of meanings
  - b. Both of them can refer to enduring through trials and tribulations and are often used that way - so Paul could be praying that the Colossians endure when painful things happen
  - 1 c. But both words can also be used simply to waiting with hope - continuing to grasp onto the same hope until the hope is fulfilled, no matter how long that wait may be
    - 1 i. For example, the word here translated 'endurance' has this meaning in I Thessalonians 1:3 where it is translated 'steadfastness' - *remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*
    - 1 ii. And the word here translated 'patience' has this meaning in Hebrews 6:12 - *And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*
  - d. Notice that both words are wrapped up in the concept of hope, and I think it is this meaning that Paul is aiming toward - he wants the Colossians to keep grasping onto the same hope forever, to keep grasping the hope of the gospel until Jesus returns and substantiates their desires
  - e. And this can incorporate the first meaning as well - he wants them to continue hoping in the promises of the gospel whether it is through trials and tribulations, or merely through the test of time - he wants them to hang on
  - f. And this is why endurance and patience accompany joy - the more we are grasping onto the hope of the gospel, the more we experience the joy of the gospel, regardless of what is going on around us
  - g. Paul wants us to have endurance and patience holding onto hope, like a long-distance runner looking toward the prize at the end of the race, and he wants us to have joy through it all
- 1 4. So Paul's request is that the Colossians would be strengthened with all power, with the might of God Himself, because He knows that such grasping to the hope of the gospel is far beyond us on our own
  - a. Paul's laying out an endurance race before us, but none of us are capable of finishing this race on our own - we won't be able to keep holding onto the hope of the gospel by our own power
  - b. We need God's power to fill us if we want to run the race of life with endurance holding onto the hope of the gospel, otherwise we will stumble and fall, we'll grasp onto a lesser hope that seems to give more immediate satisfaction and our joy in the gospel will fade
  - c. So Paul prays, "may you be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might!"

## 2 D. May you be thankful for God's gift

1. Paul's last request comes in verses 12-14 - *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*
2. Once again we return to one of Paul's themes - thanksgiving - their growth in the gospel should flourish in thanksgiving which leads them back to the gospel, and this is Paul's prayer for them
3. He wants the Colossians to see how great the gift that God has given them is:
  - a. Though they were infinitely unqualified, God has qualified them to have a share of the inheritance of the saints, a share of the inheritance of Christ
  - b. Though they were slaves in bondage, God has delivered them from the domain of darkness
  - c. Though they were exiles and enemies, God has transferred them into the kingdom of His beloved Son
  - d. Though they were rightfully under God's wrath, God has redeemed them and forgiven them in His Son
4. And Paul wants them to be overwhelmed with thanksgiving for how much God has done for them in the gospel
  - a. If they cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving, then they'll never want to move off of these glorious truths
  - b. So he prays that they would be giving thanks to the Father who has done all of this for them
5. But also, and this is a preview of next week, here at the end of his prayer Paul is pointing to the truth that Jesus is the center of the gospel - the kingdom belongs to Christ and it is through Him that we have been delivered, redeemed and transferred and given an imperishable inheritance
  - a. So, this is where we'll pick up next week - if Jesus is the center of the gospel, then the more we see His glory, the more we will hope in the promise of the gospel

## 1 E. So, kids, here's your second kid's question for today: What does Paul pray for?

1. And the answer is: That the Colossians would keep growing in the gospel.

## 1 V. Application

### A. Our prayers ought to be infused with the gospel like Paul's were

1. Most of our example of prayer in the New Testament comes from Paul, and as we've seen this morning, Paul's prayers were gospel-saturated - they dripped with the truth of the gospel and they yearned with the hope of the gospel
2. And I think that ought to be our first application this morning: our prayers should sound like Paul's prayers
  - a. That doesn't mean we have to use the same words (although that actually can be a very good thing), but we ought to have the same heart and the same desires and the same goals and the same thankfulness that Paul did
  - b. So, my question to you is: do your prayers sound like this? Are they gospel-driven, gospel-centered, Christ-exalting prayers? Or are they dull, worldly-centered prayers?
  - c. If we want to know the hope and the joy of the gospel, then it should start in our prayers - do we want the gospel?
3. But, I think we should also note that this isn't a private prayer, but a very public prayer - Paul's public prayers were gospel-saturated - so don't just pray gospel-saturated prayers by yourself, pray them with your family and with your church
  - a. I think it is too easy to let our corporate prayers become less and less gospel-saturated and more concerned with the simple things of this world, but when our prayers revolve around the gospel we encourage each other to desire the gospel and we cry out to God to keep His promises in the gospel
  - b. So let's strive for all of our prayers to be filled with the same gospel-longing that Paul had

### B. Our hope needs to be set fully in the gospel

1. This application is going to really be one of the main applications of Colossians and we're going to come to it over and over again, so I'm not going to spend much time on it this morning
2. But that is what Paul is building the foundation for - our hope is found in heaven it is kept there, and Peter would tell us, therefore set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the gospel
3. So my question to you is, have you set all of your hope in the gospel? Or are there things you are still hoping in in this world? Is the only thing you ultimately desire is for Christ to return and bring you to Himself, or are you rejoicing in things in this world and looking to things here to give you hope?
4. It's really easy to give a 'right' answer to this question, but I'd ask you to go home this week and really meditate on this - are there other things you are hoping in? Have you set your hope fully on the Gospel?
5. And I'll give you a hint, in fact, I'll answer the question for everyone this morning - there are things we are hoping for in this world, because none of us is perfect yet - if you go home this week and meditate on this question and decide that you are perfect in this area, I would say you probably just don't know yourself very well
6. We aren't perfect in this, but we should be setting our hope fully on the gospel, making it a continual action of our mind to fill our minds with Christ and the hope that he gives us and we should be identifying and strangling other foolish hopes
7. The gospel should be our only hope! Our only hope should be that, if we are faithful, Christ will one day return and bring us to Himself! Anything else that we are hoping in, desiring, finding our joy in is merely a distraction from this great hope!
8. So be setting your hope on the gospel - be identifying those things that you still hope in in this world and be cutting them off so that the gospel is your only hope

### C. Our lives need to keep bearing the fruit of the gospel

1. Paul tells the Colossians that the nature of the gospel is to bear fruit and he prays that it would bear fruit in their lives
2. And we ought to remind ourselves of this - that the gospel needs to keep changing us
3. If you're here as a Christian this morning, then you have claimed that the gospel came to you and that it bore fruit in you, but, if so, then it needs to keep bearing fruit - the gospel isn't done with you yet
4. So we ought to be chasing joyful obedience more-and-more, obedience that is fueled by gospel hope - we ought to desire ever-increasing Christ-likeness, the fruits of the Spirit should be continually growing in our lives
5. This is, ultimately, a work of God - as Paul so often tells us - but he also tells us that we work by God's power
6. So we need to set ourselves to this goal - not as drudgery, but in joy because of the gospel
7. Christ has given us an infinitely incredible gift, it should be our joy to go live in that gift