

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14  
The Supremacy of Christ  
Sunshine Beach & Tewantin 19-6-22

---

How do you pray?

God, please help my sick friend.

God, please give me a good test result when I visit the doctor.

God, please fix my family.

God, please get rid of my wrinkles.

God, please don't let the stock market fall any further.

You've all heard the little child's prayer haven't you?

God bless Mummy, God bless Daddy,

God bless my baby brother and I guess my annoying sister,

God bless our dog Fido,

and God, please look after yourself, or else we're all sunk!

There are many ways people pray.

What do you think about the way the Apostle Paul prays in today's reading from Colossians?

What an amazing passage! What an amazing prayer!

Paul introduces his prayer in v3, *"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people..."*

And then there is a second round of prayer beginning in v9 *"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..."*

What a truly inspired prayer it is! What a truly inspired epistle the whole of Colossians is!

Today we commence a new series in this much loved little book of Colossians. The title is "Supreme - the Christ of Colossians". It's all about the supremacy of Christ in every way.

Colossae is a town in Turkey inland from Ephesus on the west coast. Paul hadn't visited the town when he wrote this letter so he didn't know the people personally. It doesn't stop him writing in a very personal way however. Epaphras is the man who most likely planted the church in Colossae. There are a couple of references to him in the epistle and one in today's reading you may have noticed. Paul has learned about the situation in the Colossian' church through his friendship with Epaphras. You'll see that in verses 7 and 8. He can pray with such confidence about the Colossians because of all that Epaphras has told him.

So how do your prayers compare with the Apostle Paul? What is it that produces prayers like we see here in Colossians 1?

I think you'll find the answer in the passage – what makes the difference is the gospel.

The Apostle says in the last part of verse 5 that they have heard the true message of the gospel and in verse six that this gospel is bearing fruit in them as well as the rest of the world. It is the gospel which makes a difference in the way we pray and of course in every area of our lives. It is important therefore to have clarity about the gospel.

Paul writes this letter in order to give the Colossians clarity. There were people influencing the Colossians with a false gospel that was leading them astray. Scholars call it the 'Colossian' heresy' and Paul deals with it especially in Chapter 2. We could sum it up in what he writes in Chapter 2 verse 8 - it is teaching which depends on human tradition and the basic principles (elemental spiritual forces) of this world rather than on Christ. There will be more on that later in the series. Perhaps we could simply sum it up as anything that does not exalt Christ.

In our own day what is the human tradition and the basic principles of the world which does not exalt Christ? It is probably the age old heresy of people thinking they can work their way into acceptance with God through their good works. I'm not sure how many times I've heard it said, *"As long as I try and do my best, surely God will accept me in the end."* It sounds very sincere and humble but in actual fact does not honour God because it doesn't accept God's way of salvation through Jesus. It doesn't recognise the cross and what it cost Jesus to die for our sins. It is very human centred thinking rather than being God centred.

The Apostle Paul in Chapter 1 verse 5 talks about *'the true message of the gospel'*. That's our Pew Bible NIV version. An earlier NIV edition and many others say, *'the word of truth, the gospel.'* So we can think of this gospel as *'the word of truth'*; or as our Pew Bible puts it *'the true message of the gospel.'*

So what is this gospel which is 'the word of truth' or 'the true message'?

We could go to the multitude of tracts that are out there or to the solid volumes of systematic theology that deal with it.

But let's look at the passage in front of us. What is foremost in the Apostle's mind as he writes to the Colossians -

V4 It's about having faith in Christ Jesus

V5 It's about having a hope stored up in heaven which produces faith and love.

V6 It's about truly understanding God's grace

V8 It produces a love in the Spirit.

V12 It's about sharing in the inheritance of his holy people in the Kingdom.

V13 It's about redemption, the forgiveness of sins and being rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of the Son.

There is a lot there isn't there? Far too much to fully unpack this morning. I want to suggest that we see here both the heart of the gospel and the fruit that it produces.

The heart of the gospel is the supremacy of Christ.

The fruit is multifaceted - faith, love in the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins.

Through it all do you notice this joy and certainty Paul has about a relationship with God. It's not about him trying harder and then hoping God will accept him in the end. It's all about God and what he has done in Christ. Paul wants to exalt and glorify God.

Did you notice how the Trinity is woven through this passage; to pick up on our theme from last week.

#### The Father

V2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

V3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V12 giving joyful thanks to the Father...

#### The Son

V1 Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus

V2 To the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ

V3 God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

V4 We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus

V13 From darkness we have been brought into the Kingdom of the Son.

- There are five references here to either Jesus, Christ or the Son.

#### The Spirit

V8 talks about the Colossians love in the Spirit

V9 talks about knowing God's will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives

Can you see how the focus here is on God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit but especially, five references to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not human beings that are at the centre, it is God. There are many messages out there exhorting us to be better people but let's be absolutely clear this is not the gospel.

The gospel is about God, and what God has done through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. This is true spirituality.

But this doesn't mean that we are totally passive. There is plenty of action that we are called to in this passage. Paul calls it the fruit of the gospel.

Twice Paul uses the word fruit in this passage.

v6 The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.

V10 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.

The specific fruit Paul mentions in this passage is:

V4 A love for all of God's people

V5 Faith and love

V6 The church growing in numbers

V8 Love in the Spirit

V9 Wisdom and understanding that comes from the Spirit.

V10 Good works

V10 Growing in the knowledge of God

V11 Being strengthened with all power so that we might have great endurance and patience

V12 Giving joyful thanks to the Father

So I hope you can see in this passage that the gospel is important

ie. the fact that Jesus Christ is supreme.

The fruit of the gospel is important,

ie. the love in the Spirit, the good works.

Listen to this illustration which comes from Tom Wright.

When Susan bought the house, there wasn't much growing in the garden.

A few tatty little shrubs; a mouldy rosebush or two; the tree that had been bent sideways by a storm and left to grow crooked. It was a depressing sight.

A few days after she'd moved in, a friend came to visit and brought some seeds for the garden. They were special he said; not what you'd expect. Once you'd sown them and watered them, plants would grow vigorously, and would quickly cover a large area with beautiful flowers. But that wasn't all. Amongst the leaves would be delicious fruit.

When that appeared and ripened, then you'd know the plants had come to stay.

Within a week or two the garden was transformed, and Susan decided to get rid of the old plants and let the new ones flourish. They quickly filled the space with colour and perfume, she telephoned her friend. What on earth was this new plant? It wasn't in any of the gardening books she'd ever seen. Ah, he said, it's new. It's transforming gardens everywhere. You're part of a whole new world.

My friends the seed is the word of the gospel, and it makes attractive, fruitful churches like the one in Colossae.

I want to finish however by talking about one other fruit and that is PRAYER, because the whole of this passage is really about prayer – Paul's prayer for the Colossians.

Paul's prayer in fact is itself evidence of gospel fruit.

Paul is totally focused on God and others.

Concerning God -

He is overwhelmed by God's grace shown in Christ. It has brought redemption and rescued people from the dominion of darkness and brought them into the Kingdom of the Son he loves v13.

Concerning Others

He is full of joy and thanksgiving that this gospel is producing fruit in the life of the Colossian church. They have faith in Jesus Christ and love for all God's people v4. They are showing love in the Spirit v8.

It is like a recreation of the garden of Eden!

As I said at the beginning what a magnificent way to pray.

How do you pray?

Are they arrow prayers throughout the day for immediate needs?

Are your prayers about your immediate family and friends?

There is nothing wrong with arrow prayers or praying for immediate needs, but just make sure you are a Gospel prayerer.

When you hand control of your life over to Jesus Christ as Lord, you should notice a change in the way you pray. There should be a new focus on God and others after the pattern of Colossians 1.

Why not use this passage from Colossians 1 as a template for your prayers this week. In your daily prayer times have this passage open and as you pray for people and needs in our church and our world. Pray in the way the apostle Paul prays here.

Be a gospel Christian  
praying with a gospel heart.

So why don't I offer a prayer like that now.

Father I thank you for the word of truth, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you Father for rescuing us from the dominion of darkness and bringing us into the Kingdom of your Son.

Thank you for the hope we have in the gospel, and for the faith and love that spring from that hope. Thank you that this gospel is bearing fruit amongst us and growing throughout the whole world.

Lord may we live a life worthy of you, pleasing you in every way, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray.  
Amen.