

# The Hope of Glory:

An Exposition of Colossians

June 7, 2020

*Sermon 3: Praying for the Hope of Glory*

*Colossians 1:9-12*

**Opening Illustration:** What is more important, your temporal concerns or your eternal concerns? Now, both ARE important, but I am asking what is more important. What is more difficult to share with others, your physical aches and pains or your spiritual battle to hate and reject sin and to grow in your love for Christ?

In light of all of this, what is the focus of our prayer? I mean this especially in terms of what your prayer is for others and what you share with others to pray for you? What do we normally pray for? What do we normally pray about? Why is it that our greatest struggles are spiritual and yet the bulk of our prayers are temporal?

**ILL:** Being “that guy” at a prayer meeting. Back in seminary, the students would split off into small groups to pray. One time when the other students in my group were asking for prayer that they would get an “A” on the next test or that they would be able to go home for Christmas. When they asked me what my prayer request was, I said, “I just don’t love Jesus enough. I feel distant from, separated from Christ.” Everyone in the group rolled their eyes as if to say, “OK! Listen to THIS guy. I guess our prayers are not spiritual enough.” I really didn’t mean it that way...that was GENUINELY my prayer request! Please hear my heart today. I struggle in prayer as much as anyone.

## I. Introduction

- A. Prayer is so important to the Christian life.
- B. Prayer is so neglected in the Christian life.
- C. Prayer is often misunderstood in the Christian life.

**Point:** Sometimes I struggle with prayer meetings. Not just at this church. In fact, the prayer meetings at this church have been in many ways better than what I am used to. However, I struggle with prayer meetings because I feel like, in most instances, we are fighting in a spiritual war but asking for purely physical victories. Now don’t get me wrong! It is important to pray for physical things, and I don’t want to discount that. It is MORE important, though, to pray for spiritual things and very often these are the things that are neglected. For lack of a better term, we offer carnal prayers in a spiritual battle. Is it any wonder why the Church seems so anemic in this culture?

I think I can honestly say that I don’t remember a single prayer meeting in my life that truly focused on the things that Paul will talk about this morning. We have been poorly taught in prayer, and as a result we are poorly equipped to pray. I don’t say this to make you feel bad. I say this to my shame and with an eye toward your good.

## II. What does Paul do for the Colossians (v. 9a)?

- A. He prays
  - 1. Why does Paul do this?
    - a. Because Paul believes that it is necessary.
      - 1) As we heard last week, the conversion of the Colossians was only the beginning. It is the same in your life. Becoming a Christian is not the end of the war, it is the beginning. In light of this, we must pray for each other and we must pray for each other the right way.
      - 2) As James says, “...You do not have because you do not ask.” (James. 4:2) We cannot really expect to experience great success without asking God for it.
    - b. Because Paul believes that it is effective.
      - 1) Do we really believe that prayer does anything? I hope that we do! I hope that we understand that prayer is the means by which God will inestimably bless our lives.
    - c. Because Paul believes that it is reverent.
      - 1) Have you ever really prayed? I mean REALLY prayed! Have you ever had the experience in prayer in which you almost felt like if you opened your eyes you would see Heaven? Have you ever had times of prayer that were so powerful...so wonderful that you just never wanted to stop?
      - 2) What else could be more pleasing to the Lord than humbly asking for His help?

- B. What are we meant to glean from this?
  1. Prayer should not be our last resort, but instead that it
  2. Prayer should be our first response.

### III. What is his purpose in prayer (v. 9b)?

- A. That the Colossians would be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding.
  1. What does it mean to be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding?
    - a. It must mean something more than simply understanding something intellectually.
    - b. It seems to me, then, that this means that there would be some experience (affection?).
    - c. It seems to me that Paul is praying that there would be some effect of this wisdom and understanding.
    - d. Perhaps it would be better to say that this is not only getting more understanding, but that the understanding that we do have would have more influence (more power) over us.
  2. What does it mean to be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding?
    - a. This can be understood as the opposite of merely human (fleshly, carnal) wisdom and understanding.
    - b. In other words, this understanding is something more than what comes naturally to us. It is more than simply “common sense” or something like that.
  3. What does it mean to be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding?
    - a. This means that what Paul is praying for involves the mind.
    - b. This means that what Paul is praying for involves decision making and reasoning.
    - c. Paul is not just asking that the Colossians would be emotionally affected, but intellectually affected.

**Applicational point:** Let me encourage you to give thought to the things of Christ and to read good books that will help shape your thinking and draw you closer to Him. Book recommendation: “A Call to Prayer” by J. C. Ryle and the “Valley of Vision” by Arthur Bennet. Both will (in technical terms) knock your socks off.

- B. How might we emulate Paul’s example?
  1. We can pray for each other that the things of Christ truly affect us.
  2. We can pray for each other that our Christianity would be truly experiential.
    - a. Obviously, I mean “experience” in the best sense.

**Point:** Sometimes, in our desire not to be ruled by our emotions or feelings, we may be fooled into thinking that Christianity is merely something intellectual. We may be confused into thinking that the Christian life is simply a matter of not being confused in our thinking. We may have an immediate distrust of the experiential. However, Christianity is meant to be experienced. It is not a philosophy, residing fully in the brain. Christianity is meant to do something...to affect something in us. Now, I am not talking about crazy, bazaar or ecstatic experiences. I mean the genuine, affectionate life-change that we know we are supposed to be experiencing. Why aren’t we? Maybe because we spend more time praying that our uncle’s cousin’s neighbor’s wife’s friend at work would be relieved of her lower back pain.

### IV. What does Paul pray for the Colossians (vv.10-12)?

- A. Generally: That they would walk worthy of the Lord.
  1. What does this mean?
    - a. This means that the result of spiritual wisdom and understanding is a way of life that can be called a “worthy” walk. It is:
      - 1) consistent,
      - 2) obedient,
      - 3) worshipful
      - 4) etc.
    - b. This means that we need to be praying for one another in order that our lives would be worthy of being called a blood-bought servant of God.
  2. What conclusion does this force us to?

a. Could it be that the reason why we see so much weakness in obedience, so much powerless profession in Christianity is that we have been so distracted in prayer?

B. Specifically:

1. That they would be pleasing to Him.
  - a. Literally, “unto all pleasing.”
  - b. We should be praying that our brothers and sisters in Christ would show such power that God is truly and sufficiently blessed and pleased by their lives.
2. That they would be productive in Him.
  - a. Bearing fruit
    - 1) This is that the gospel would have a bigger impact through them in producing Christian obedience.
  - b. Increasing in knowledge
    - 1) This is that the gospel would become clearer and clearer intellectually and experientially in the lives of God’s people.
3. That they would be powerful in Him.
  - a. The Greek word “dunamis (dunamij)” is used twice here in different forms.
  - b. At the very least, Paul is praying that the Colossians would be experiencing a truly dynamic walk with Christ.
4. That they would be patient in Him.
  - a. Anybody who needs patience knows that they need it from God.
  - b. This life (the Christian life) is very often discouraging. We need God to grant us steadfastness and patience.
    - 1) Steadfastness is simply persevering in a direction regardless of discouragements.
    - 2) Patience is simply waiting for the desired result.
5. That they would be appreciative for Him.
  - a. I know that this doesn’t start with a “P”, but we barely pronounce the “a” so I thought I would get away with it. 😊
  - b. What is important to notice here, again, is that the Christian life is really a life lived to the glory of Christ. He is our focus. He is our source.
  - c. Praise God that the Holy Spirit Himself prays for us because we don’t pray as we should.
    - 1) **Romans 8:26** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;
  - d. Praise God that Jesus Himself prays for us because we don’t pray as we should.
    - 1) **Romans 8:34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

V. To what does this call us?

A. Pray for me!

1. I am not too proud to ask that you pray for me!
2. Sure, pray for the small things.
3. Please pray for the big things.
  - a. That I would walk closely with the Lord.
  - b. That I would grow in my hatred of my own sin.
  - c. That I would grow in my gentleness with the sins of others.

**Quote:** *I would echo what John Newton once said, “Without a doubt I can take the Bible in my hand, and force myself to read it; I can kneel down, and I can see I ought to mourn: but to understand and attend what I read, to engage my heart in prayer, or to be duly humbled under the sense of so dark and dissipated a state of mind; these things, at some seasons, I can no more do than I can raise the dead;”* Newton, Works I:395

B. Pray for yourselves!

1. Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - a. I can’t help but think that in the matter of spiritual growth, in the matter of pleasing the Lord and spiritual power, etc. that you have not because you ask not!

- b. At bare minimum, in the cause of spiritual growth, it is better to ask and not receive than not to ask in the first place. We know that if we ask anything according to God's will (1 John 5:14) that He hears us. Our growth in Christ must be His will, so ask!
2. Pray for those in your life who are lost.

**C. Pray for each other!**

1. Pray that they would please the Lord.
2. Pray that they would be productive in the walk with Christ.
3. Pray that they would be endued with power from on high.
4. Pray that they would be patient and gentle with each other.
5. Pray that the ministry of Calvary Bible Church, in all it's ways, would be only and always:

To the praise of His glory,  
Amen