



1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, 5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; 6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: 7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. (Col 1:1-8)

The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Preeminence

Paul minces no words in holding forth the Bright Light of the Person of Christ at the outset of His Epistle. After his salutatory greeting, he proceeds immediately to offer thanks God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – for they are One in Nature and Purpose. He has heard of the faith and love of God's people at Colossae and he offers thanksgiving prayer for those good attributes of the people. This brings us to examine our own approach to prayer. We may not hesitate to pray for those who are sick or in need, but what of those who are commendably doing the work of the Lord with zeal? Should we not offer those people their "roses while they yet live?" Roses can also represent our prayers for others:

*Wonderful things of folks are said
When they have passed away
Roses adorn the narrow bed
Over the sleeping clay
Give me the roses while I live
Trying to cheer me on
Useless are flowers that you give
After the soul is gone*

R. H. Cornelius

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." We are quick to express our wants but sometimes remiss in expressing our

gratitude. Just as Esau only considered the want of the moment and foreclosed his birthright, so do we too often pray only for the need that arises without a word of thanks for the common good of every moment of life. And we must remember in prayer those who are serving the Lord well on difficult and perilous missions fields or some other service of the Lord – not waiting until they have died of fevers, or been driven into exile. The prayer of thanksgiving given here by Paul also morphs into a prayer of praise to the Lord who has granted such blessings to His chosen people. "*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*" Those who labor with success in the fields of the Lord do so by the grace of God.

The church is not restricted by stone walls, but wherever the faithful are found: "... *the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.*" The saints are not important for their own persons, but for their relationship to the Savior who redeemed them. Jesus is the Preeminent of all Living – He has been dead for three days and now lives eternally that His believers may share the same benefit.

The soundness of any building is completely dependent upon its foundation. If the foundation is the shifting sands of public opinion and of the world, then the building will be as temporary as the world has always been. If, on the other hand, the foundation is solid rock – that Solid Rock of Christ- then its permanence is assured. It is the foundation that cannot be seen without digging about the base of the building. The church, and her members, stands erect and certain. When the passers-by wander nearby, they admire the building, but cannot see the foundation Stone. They must dig about the foundation to discover the reason for the steadfast nature of the Church. They must be assured of the source of our faith and our salvation.

So the great Foundation Stone is the Lord Jesus Christ and His Preeminence. Without Christ, there can be no Church. Without Christ, there can be no Christian believer. We are glad that the Lord Jesus Christ is Preeminent, for His nature is Love, and His burden is easy to be borne. If the Fallen Angel were the preeminent one, we should all suffer in misery and die without hope. But Christ has conquered that Adversary of our souls. So His Preeminence is the source of our thankfulness. The great Pillars of the Christian life are outlined in verses 3 through 8. Of course, those Pillars must find their footing on that Sure Foundation. "*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*" (Isaiah 28:16)

The Pillar of Prayer: "*3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.*" "Move, shoot, and communicate" are the three fundamentals of military combat. Though communicate comes along last in that slogan, it is by far the most important for victory on the battlefield; for if the elements of the army do not communicate, nothing else matters. The same is true for the Christian. We are soldiers in the great Army of God. He is our Commander and Captain of our souls. He knows the Battle Plan, and He knows the disposition of the enemy's force. So our hope depends upon His commandments. How do we communicate with God? By reading and studying the General Orders (Bible) He has issued; and by communicating with Him in prayer. The term 'Communion' itself disallows a one-way conversation. We make our petitions to God, but we also listen for His answer. When a soldier addresses the Commanding General, he does so with great respect and reverence. How much more so should the mortal address his Creator?

There are certain qualities of prayer that should be pointed out.

First of all, prayer is offered out of a believing heart. "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*" (Matt 21:22)

Secondly, prayer must be offered out of a seeking after the will of God and not our own wills. "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3) If we have taken upon our souls the Mind that was in Christ, we shall ask for those things that He is inclined to grant. (1 Cor 2:16)

Thirdly, prayer must be offered out of a heart not set upon sin, and with a Godly motive: "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" (Psalms 66:18)

Fourthly, prayer must be persevering. Why is this so important? Because we are like little children to whom our parents may be reluctant to say NO. If our prayers are not answered according to our petitions, perhaps the thing we pray for is either not edifying to our souls, or the time is not ripe. Remember, after prayer, we must also listen and meditate upon the Lord's response. He will not respond while we are out on a drinking binge any sooner than He will hear our prayers offered when we "*regard iniquity*" in our hearts. We must get to a quiet place where the Word of god is the ONLY Word we hear. We must pray unceasingly. "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always.*" (Luke 21:3)

Fifthly, we must pray with faith, hope, and love. "*Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.*" Faith, Hope, and Love are the main ingredients for the Christian Life and, yet, the greatest of these three is LOVE because LOVE covers ALL sin. "*And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love).*" (1 Cor 13:13) Love is the sign to the world that we belong to Christ: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" (John 13:34-35)

Pillar of Fruit: ". . . whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; 6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." Prayer is the salient nature of the Christian, but fruit also identifies the tree. The fruit we bear tells the world what kind of tree we are. Bear in mind, however, that it is the Tree alone that determines the kind of fruit WE are. If we are apples, than we must have come from an apple tree. And then what kind of fruit will our seed bear when planted? I suspect apple seed will bear an apple tree like unto that Tree from which we were plucked. "*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*" (Matt 7:17-20)

In these opening verses of Colossians, we find the great Foundation of our faith described in that Preeminence of Jesus Christ. If we are like Him, we need not worry so much about the correctness of our prayers for they will be offered for the things that it is His will to grant; and they will be offered out of a believing heart; and, lastly, they will be offered in Hope of a Righteous answer – whether according to our desires or not. ". . . *Thy will be done in earth.*" (Matt 6:10)

Finally, how do the lost acquire faith – how do we reach the people of that ‘other’ flock of Christ – chosen but not yet called? “*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 1So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*” (Romans 10:16-18) How did the word go out? We must not sit smugly upon the blessings of our salvation. I question the salvation of any soul that is not compelled to cry out concerning the great mysteries whereby he was saved! We must go forth as laborers and return bearing our sheaths. This is exemplified in the last two verse of today’s text: “*As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*” We, too, become fellow servants of Paul, timothy, Epaphras, Ryle, and others when we proclaim that same news whereby we are set free.