

Session 5

November 15, 2020

COMMITTED TO PRAY

Colossians 1:3-12

Prayer is often called the great mystery. We are not really sure *how* prayer works. We are only sure *that* prayer works. Or are we?

How sad that all too often, prayer is the “go to” discipline...only when all else fails! Dr. Adrian Rogers was fond of saying, “There is no failure in the Christian’s life that is not first the failure to pray.” He once wrote, “I believe when we get to heaven, one of the things that will amaze us is that we prayed so poorly, and we prayed so little, while we were here on earth.” Let’s face it, while we all agree with him in principle, we seldom pray sufficiently in practice. So how do we spend less time “wringing our hands” and more time “bending our knees?” By being “all in” in our commitment to pray. In this passage, Paul gives us some help for effective praying.

WHY they were praying (vv. 3-6). Notice that Paul did not say “*if* we pray for you,” but rather “*when* we pray for you.” This indicates the apostle’s *thankfulness* in praying (v. 3), as well as his *faithfulness* in praying (v. 3) for this church, which was likely founded by his fellow servant of the Lord, Epaphras. Notice that those enduring Christian traits—faith, hope, and love (I Cor. 13:13)—not only characterized the congregation at Colossae but were reasons for Paul’s celebration and intercession on behalf of this church. The church had a good reputation in the things that really mattered. He heard of their *faith* in Jesus Christ, their *love* for all saints (v. 4), and their *hope* reserved in heaven (v. 5). Moreover, the church was firmly gospel-centered. They had heard the truth of the gospel, responded to it, and recognized they were part of the fruit-bearing that came along with it; a harvest that was spreading around the world. Such bright and godly characteristics thrilled the heart of Paul and sent him to his knees in prayer. For reflection: *Notice that Paul was not simply praying with intercession for the negative issues in the church but was praying with affirmation for the positive aspects of the church. How much time do we spend affirming the good we see in God’s people?*

WHO they were praying for (vv. 7-8). Paul’s encouraging affirmation didn’t stop with the church but extended to its leadership. Little is known of Epaphras (who is mentioned only a few times here and in Philemon 1:23), but what is known is significant. In these few verses, Paul refers to him as an *effective teacher*, who is *dearly loved*, a *fellow servant*, a *faithful servant*, an *intercessor* on the church’s behalf, an *advocate* for the congregation, and a proud *witness* of their love. The implication is that Paul’s prayer includes Epaphras, and by extension, fellow servants of the church. For reflection: *Last month was Pastor Appreciation month. Did your church honor its pastor and other leadership? Did you know that one of the greatest encouragements that you can ever give is, “Pastor...we are praying for you”?*

WHAT they were praying about (vv. 9-12). The apostle’s devotion to the congregation which he never met (see Col. 2:1) is displayed again in these verses. We see it in the *continuity* of Paul’s praying (“we haven’t stopped praying for you”), as well as in the *content* of Paul’s praying. The phrase “We are asking” in verse 9 indicates continual action. These are *ongoing requests* for the church, that Paul prays for in an *ongoing way*. Several specific petitions are

mentioned. In verse 9 he prays for a deepening of their knowledge of God's *will*, and for their spiritual *wisdom*. In verse 10, he prays for their *walk* with the Lord, their effective *witness*, and their good *work*. In verse 11, he prays regarding their *power*, their *perseverance*, and their *patience*. He finishes the section by directing all praise and thanksgiving back to the Father who is responsible for it all (v. 12). For reflection: *While these requests are technically offered in regard to the church at Colossae, are they not desirable traits for all churches...even yours?*