

Colossians 1:9-14

The Gospel in Us and Through Us

Image Church // Prayers for the Church: Week 1

Introduction

Well Happy New Year Image Family!! For those of you that are joining us for the first time we're so glad that you're with us!

I hope 2021 is everything you ever hoped for and dreamed...

- NY resolutions in full swing...
- Hate to burst your bubble but **80%** of resolutions fail by the second week of Feb...
- Good news is that if you can make it **66 days** you have a chance, that's how long experts say it takes on average to automate a habit... So, there you go, good luck!!

Hey, listen we have a lot of exciting things happening in the days ahead... We're looking at how we can begin to phase back into a more normal flow an expanding our gathering opportunities...

Grateful for OHBC letting us stream here and have some RSVP seating but this is not the long-term plan- it's what we have available right now to be able to make this happen- so hang on a few more weeks, and stay tuned in as we go into the weeks ahead...

- Weekly update... imageatl.com
- Community Group... imageatl.com
- Make sure to participate in our gatherings!!

Well, this morning we're kicking off a new series that we're calling **Prayers for the church**... And we're going to be looking specifically at prayers that Paul prayed for the church in the NT and we're going to

be holding them up and asking that those same things would be true for us at Image Church in 2021...

Understanding that what he petitions for the church then, should serve as a framework of what we should be perusing and praying for today!

I think this is timely for us as we head into a new year... There is still a lot of uncertainty that lies ahead...

- What we need more than ever is to sit with open hands and open hearts and ask that what Paul prays would be true of us in the year ahead...
- We want the prayers of Paul to be the prayers and desires of Image Church!

This morning we're going to start by looking at the prayer Paul prays for the Church of Colossae, and we're going to key in on 3 specific things that he prays for them, and unpack the implications it has for us...

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Colossians 1

Now as you're turning there, I want to point out that there would have been **3 types of people that would have eventually head this letter:**

1. The person that is walking with the Lord
2. The person that has rounded 3rd and lost sight of home
3. The person that is not a follower of Jesus

I say that because I believe that **all 3** of those people are sitting right here this morning... And it's my hope that regardless of where you are, or how you walked in, that you will walk out today with a better understanding of who God is and what that means for you!

Let's start in **verse 1** because I want to set up this prayer that Paul prays...

Colossians 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother: **2** To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

So, Paul introduces himself, now he's going to address the church:

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **4** for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints **5** because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You have already heard about this hope in the word of truth, the gospel **6** that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and came to truly appreciate God's grace. **7** You learned this from Epaphras, our dearly loved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, **8** and he has told us about your love in the Spirit.

So, here's what we see so far the Church of Colossae that's doing pretty good, they're kinda like the model church... they have it all going on:

- Sound theology, they are bearing fruit, living in community —We'll see that in Paul's into in just a little bit...

But in the midst of that, there's been a recent influx of false teachers that were coming in and distorting the truth of the gospel, twisting things around and **adding** onto the message of Jesus putting a healthy church in danger of being pulled apart by false doctrine...

So, Paul writes them a letter **challenging the church to continue to stand strong on the foundation of the gospel!**

One of the things I want you to notice here is the powerful effects of the gospel! At the end of **verse 5**, Paul says the **Gospel** has come

upon the people in Colossae, and it's been bearing fruit since the day they **believe!**

And here's the cool part, I want you to see how they heard about the gospel... **verse 7: Though Epaphras!**

And you know what's even more amazing... you know how **Epaphras** heard about the gospel?? **From Paul!!**

- From what we know Paul has **never** preached in Colossae, in fact, he's in prison as he is writing this letter!¹

That's crazy! Are you seeing this, Paul faithfully preaches the gospel to **Epaphras**, Epaphras believes and then he takes the message of the gospel to Colossae where revival is happening and it's spreading like wild fire all throughout the city!

This is an incredible example of what it means to live on mission with the goal of making disciples! And what's amazing is the **domino effect** that comes from it!!

Listen, there's no telling how God can use our **faithful obedience** to further His message and His ministry... What kind of **domino effect** could it have at your job, in your neighborhood, here in **ATL** and even beyond? What could God do in this city?

We should look at what happened here with **Paul** and **Epaphras** and **Colossae** and be *challenged* to live this out, but also be *encouraged* that **if** we live this out that God can do the same thing here!!

Oh, would that be true of us in 2021...

But here's what you got, here's the set up for the prayer Paul is about to pray...

You have a church here that's doing pretty good, they're firing on all cylinders...

¹ Historical info from Ed Gravely: Colossians; Lesson 1

- Sound theology, they are bearing fruit, living in community
—We'll see that in Paul's into in just a little bit...

But in the midst of that, there's been a recent influx of false teachers that were coming in and distorting the truth of the gospel, twisting things around and **adding** onto the message of Jesus putting a healthy church in danger of being pulled apart by false doctrine...

So, Paul writes them a letter **challenging the church to continue to stand strong on the foundation of the gospel!**

Here's why this is important- We have seen some incredible things in the short lifespan of our church here...

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Let's keep reading, and look at Pau's prayer here in verse 9 ...

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, **10** so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, **11** being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. **13** He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. **14** In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Ok let's unpack this, 3 things Paul prays here that we want to be true of us in 2021... The truths that we want to take root in us here at Image Church...

1. That we be captivated by Christ

Paul says in **verse 9**:

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are **asking** that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...

Now I know for some of you, you just got **derailed** because you saw the phrase "**His will**" ...

It's easy to read the Bible with a "**what's in it for me**" mentality... We see phrases like this and we immediately jump to our life and what this means for the direction of our life, career etc..

But when we do that, we're missing what Paul's actually getting at here, which is **not the next steps of your life, but the current direction of your eyes!**

Ephesians 1:9 says that God's will has been revealed in Christ...

When Paul talks about being filled, he doesn't give a list of things of things to do, or a path to walk, **but a person to look at...**

Paul's going to make this even more clear in the second half of **chapter 1** as he lays out the Supremacy of Christ...

So right out of the gate, as Paul writes this letter to the church of Colossae to challenge them to **stand firm** in the midst of **opposition** and **false truth**, he's telling them that he's been praying that they would be rooted in the knowledge of who Jesus and what he's done...

We have to understand that the same thing is true for us today... The only way that we can stand firm in an ever-shifting world that is constantly approaching us with lies that go against the very core belief structure of Christianity is by being firmly rooted in Christ...

That's why we're always going back to the fact that **belief in Jesus isn't a one-time-thing, but the continual posture of our lives...**

Gospel:

Every day we have to preach the gospel to ourselves, that by nature we are sinful, wicked and separated from God. And there's nothing that we could do to change that.

Our destiny by default is death and eternal separation from God that is a direct consequence of our sin... **We are rebels** because we said no to God by saying yes to sin... We **deserve destruction** because of who we are and what we have done...

And yet, at just the right time we see the will of God unfold, as He Jesus comes to earth to do what we could not do, live a perfect life that's free from sin...

And not only would he live the life we should have lived, but He would die the death that was meant for us as the penalty for our sin...

Jesus **substituted** himself in our place in his life **and** in His death... And then He rose from the dead, offering new life to anyone who **believes** in Him...

Meaning, that there's no longer separation for those who believe, there is only **sons** and **daughters** with limitless access to the God of the universe!

That's the *good news* of the gospel, and Paul's praying that they would be **filled** by that message of hope offered **ONLY** in Christ!

And Paul's praying that because he realizes that they are in danger of being *lured* away from being **filled** by Christ as they look to the things of the world!

The question for us this morning is: **where are you looking to be filled?**

What worldly lies are enticing you away from Jesus?

- A job, a house, fanatical security, relationships, maybe a girlfriend/boyfriend, marriage, comfort, your preferences??

None of these things will ever **fill** you, they just leave you feeling empty, and if your honest you've realized that, and you've recognize that there has to be something more...

I don't know what you walked in here with, I don't know what you're experiencing, but your only hope for standing firm in an ever-shifting world is by trusting in Jesus... Some of you need to do that today!

And listen, there's a big difference in knowing *about* Jesus, and being **completely filled by Jesus**... Surrendering everything you, not some of who you are, before Him in light of what He's done for you! And here's the incredible thing... when Paul says "**We are asking that you may be filled...**"

- In the original language is in the "**Devine passive**" meaning that God's the one who does the work, not you! You just receive what's been offered in Christ!

And as you continue to look to Jesus, He will continue to fill you!

And what you will find is that in Christ, through the power of the **Holy Spirit** in you, you're able to discern truth, rejecting the lies of the world.²

So, our responsibility is to receive the filling that God provides for us, and we do that by continuing to put ourselves in position to be **reminded** of who God is and what He offers us in Christ!

- Local church, the vehicle... specifically:
- Gathering...
- Community...
- Word...

² Moo, D. J. (2008). *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (p. 94). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

- Prayer: Paul starts his letter with prayer showing the importance of asking God to fill us!
 - **Piper says:** “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that our lack of prayer was not from lack of time.”

For those of you that are a Christian, are you putting yourself in position to be filled with the knowledge of God?

A lot of you desire to be closer with God, or maybe right now you feel spiritually empty... Are you taking the time to be filled with the knowledge of God through the avenues that He has given us??

Example: I don't know if you have ever heard show of married at first sight... there's **no love there because they don't know each other!!**

The goal of the first petition is to be filled with a **deep understanding of Christ.**³

As you begin to grow in the knowledge of God and you begin to see the very character and nature of God and it begins to shape who you are.

- **Example:** When you start a new job you have no clue what's going on or what to do but the more that you understand your new roll the more it begins to shape what you do.

In 2021 would we be filled with the knowledge of Christ... Would we be captivated by Christ and Christ alone...

Let's look at the next thing that we want to be true for us as a church in 2021...

2. That we would be compelled by Christ

³ Moo, D. J. (2008). *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (p. 93). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

Paul prays that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will... **Christ**... Why? For what reason?

Look at verse 10: **so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God...**

I want to stop and make something clear:

*We have to see the **order** of this...

- The filling happens before the walking...
 - We do not try and do good works **for** God and hopes that He will accept us...
 - We don't try and be a better person
 - We don't need to be more religious

Listen, being a good person or going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than sticking my head in the oven makes me a sweet tatter casserole...

- It's just doesn't work like that...

This passage is very clear in the order... It's not do good things **for** God so that He will accept you...

Its God has already offered you acceptance in and through Christ, and when you understand that and you believe that good works **flow out** of you in response to what Christ has done!

I don't want you to miss that because one is the gospel the other is Religion, Religion will kill you-

Jesus came to destroy religion... Religion says do, Jesus says done!

2 Corinthians 3:18 says, **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”**

See we are transformed by beholding the glory of God that's been revealed to us in Christ, recognizing the nature and character of God...

Seeing His: Grace, mercy, Love, compassion, kindness...

See, when you recognize that, when you understand who God is, and you begin to get to know Him and what He has done for you it **changes everything**...

The question for you is *are you being compelled by the knowledge of God and what He has done for you through Christ??*

- **Example:** The fact that I know Xfinity has terrible customer service changes the way I interact with them...

If you really know God then it changes the way you interact with the world!

Take a step back and look at your life, what's driving you right now?

- If you know God then you know his love and scripture tells us in **2 Cor. 5:14** "***That his loves compels us***" ...

Here's the problem: There are a lot of people that ***claim*** to be Christian, which according to this passage means that they're ***pursuing*** a deeper knowledge of the character of God that should result in ***striving*** to walk in a manner that pleases God and bearing fruit as they continue to grow in their relationship with God...

And yet, nothing in their life reflects this at all...

What's the disconnect here???

- Your heart naturally wants to be compelled by the things of this world: sex, money, power...
- **You love the things of this world more than you love the God who made them!**

- You love sex more than you love God, which is why you're ok sleeping with your girlfriend/boyfriend or looking at Porn...
- You love money more than you love God, which is why your job controls you...
- you love success power or popularity more than you love God... which is why you will do anything to get it regardless of what that means ethically...

For others of you: You're ***not compelled*** to advance the message of Christ that's been *entrusted* to you as His follower...

Some of you are here this morning and you're not living a life on mission with the goal of sharing the gospel with your coworker, friend or neighbor...

You have lost sight of who God is, and right now He's not the one compelling you...

Paul's petition is to be filled with the knowledge of Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit so that we ***can*** walk in a manner that pleases God bearing fruit... like we've said before, ***fruit is the outward evidence of an inward transformation...***

Now, do we always get this right?? Of course not... And it's in those times of failure, in the times when we fall short, when we're looking to be filled by the things of the world, or being compelled to run after the things of the world that we have to remember... ***That we are complete...***

Which leads us to point #3:

3. That we would remember that we're complete in Christ

Paul is going to bring this full circle for us here in **verse 12:** where he says: **12 ... [The Father]** has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. **13** He has rescued us from the domain of

darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

14 In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Address identity struggle here...

Walk through:

- He has rescued us from the domain of darkness
- transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.
- **14** In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We need to give thanks that even when we fall, He is still faithful... Jesus has done everything necessary to save you... meaning that God's not sitting in heaven with a "Check list" that we have to complete before we get there...

For those who have trusted in Christ you are complete, you are full, you have been rescued, you are a son or daughter, God has brought you back to Himself, your sins have been forgiven!

Conclusion [VAMP]

Appeal for Baptism

You know one of the most beautiful pictures of that is... Baptism...

Jesus gave us baptism as a **picture** of our completeness in Him... when I baptize I say... " ..."

The question is, will you be faithful to make this declaration... Are you willing to make known who you are in Christ so that others can experience Christ?

When you are baptized you put the gospel on display!

The first identification you make with Christ's happens through baptism. That's where you say, "*I'm not ashamed to identify with Jesus and what He has done for me and in me.*"

BAPTISM Paul will say in **Romans 6:3-4** is:

- "Baptized into His death, and Buried with baptism." What does that mean?
 - It means that you're grabbing the cross and saying, "I am not ashamed."

Are you ready to do that?

Apply the text...

1. That we would be captivated by Christ

2. That we would be compelled by Christ

3. That we would remember that we're complete in Christ