

**How to say, "Hello, dear friend, I am praying for you."
Colossians 1:1-8**

INTRO:

How familiar are you with the book of Colossians?

Are there some people you just love to see because they always seem so happy to see you?

What are some of the reactions that people give when you say, "I'm praying for you?"

CONTEXT:

Paul wrote to the church in Colossae to fortify it against false teachers who might try to impose strict rules about eating and drinking and religious festivals. Paul shows the superiority of Christ over all human philosophies and traditions. He writes of Christ's deity and of the reconciliation he accomplished with his death on the cross. He explains that the right way of living in this world is to focus on heavenly things rather than earthly. God's people must leave their sinful lives behind and live in a godly way, looking to Christ as the head of the church (1:18). Paul wrote this letter while in prison.

TEXT:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. 3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf 8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

TEACHING:

1. "Paul... by the will of God." Why does Paul use this phrase to speak about his apostleship?
2. "Saints and faithful brothers (and sisters)..." What does Paul's language reveal about him?
3. "In Christ at Colossae..." The identity of these Christians was first and foremost that they were "in Christ" (cf 1:4) not that they were from Colossae. Why do you think Paul emphasizes the spiritual union between Christ and those who have trusted in him as Lord?
4. "Grace to you and peace" Grace is getting what you do not deserve, peace is a result of understanding the character of God and the promises of the Gospel. Peace is an internal joy and stability apart from circumstances. "From God our Father." The source of grace and peace is not from a substance or human relationship but from the God of heaven.
5. "We always thank God...when we pray for you" The phrase indicates a continuous action of thanksgiving in everything. These pastors are encouraging those under their care by reminding them that they care for them and they express that care through gratitude in their prayers toward God. Verses 3-8, in the Greek New Testament, are one (very!) long sentence.
6. "faith...love...hope" Notice Paul's favorite triad of virtues in verses 4-5. Notice also how many times the words God, Father, Jesus, and Christ are used just in this short section. What is the focus?
7. "having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus..." Who did Paul and Timothy hear this from? "Your faith" This term (pistis) may have three distinct connotations. Its background meant "faithfulness" or

“trustworthiness,” therefore, it was used of believers living godly lives. It was used of believers accepting or receiving God’s free offer of forgiveness in Christ. Finally, it was used in the collective sense of the Christian doctrine or truths about Jesus. Which sense is used here?

8. “the Love which you have toward ALL the saints...” notice the love doesn’t play favorites and, here, it is directed toward other believers.
9. “The hope... laid up for you in heaven” What is the hope and what is the comfort of having it laid up for us in heaven by someone else.
10. “Of this you have heard...” Notice that Paul is full aware that they already have this knowledge (specifically the doctrines of the Gospel) but that does not prevent him from reminding those Christians of who they are and what they have in Christ.
11. Paul reminds them that the Gospel is truth and that the Gospel is powerful “constantly bearing fruit and constantly increasing...” He keeps them mindful of the activity of God elsewhere and the activity of God in their own midst.
12. “heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.” What is the difference between hearing about the grace of God in truth and understanding the grace of God in truth?
13. “Epaphras” (cf. 4:12–13; Philemon 23). He was the founder of three of the churches (Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) in the Lycus River Valley and Paul’s representative (cf. v. 7). He was probably converted during Paul’s stay at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). His name was a shortened form of Epaphroditus which was etymologically related to the goddess Aphroditus. Another man by this same name is mentioned in Phil. 2:25; 4:18. However, he was from a different geographical area.
14. “your love in the Spirit” This is, surprisingly, the only specific reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter although He is, perhaps, alluded to in “filled” in 1:9 and “indwell” in 3:16. The object of the Spirit-engendered love may be (1) other believers; (2) Paul and his mission team; (3) Epaphras; or (4) all the above and even the lost.

APPLICATION:

1. Do you see your salvation as a result of the will of God? Your profession?
2. Do you address other Christians as saints or sinners? Faithful or fallen? Why or why not?
3. What does it mean to find your identity “in Christ” instead of something else? Do we do this?
4. Where do you seek out “grace and peace...” Does this reflect in your prayers?
5. Are you thankful to God for other Christians when you pray? Is this common or rare?
6. “Faith, hope, and love...” what are your thoughts on these virtues?
7. Would these be evident virtues in our own lives? our marriage? our church?
 - a. With regard specifically to Faith(fullness) in Christ? Love to others? Hope in Heaven?
8. Do you remind yourself of the truths of the Gospel? The power of the Gospel?
9. Why would it be important to be aware of God’s activity in other places besides our own local congregation? On the other hand, why is it crucial that we be aware of God’s activity right here at Broadview? Do we do a good enough job of knowing both of these areas?
10. Do you understand the grace of God to the same extent that you know about the grace of God?
11. Are you making efforts to better understand the grace of God?
12. Do you love others in the Spirit or in the flesh? In other words, do you fake the love, love out of manipulation, or do you have a genuine concern for the well being of others that could only be explained by God tunneling his love and compassion through your own person?
13. In the context of marriage, how do some of these things specifically apply?