Grace Group Study Guide

 Greater **>** Week 3

Colossians 1:9-14

Paul’s words “for this reason” in verse 9 give us reason to reflect back on the text of the past two weeks. Let me remind you first and foremost that Paul’s main theme in writing to the Colossian church was to direct them to the preeminent, all-sufficient Savior, Jesus Christ. The message is: Christ is all you need. Even from the very beginning, Paul takes every opportunity to point these folks to Christ. He acknowledges in his thanksgiving the good report that Epaphras had given him: That they possessed an abiding faith in Christ Jesus; their hope was not in things of this earth, but in Heaven; that they possessed a true agape love for all the saints.

The believers in this church were still very young in their faith with the most “mature” probably having been in the faith for no more than 5 years. **Think back on your faith journey – what were those first few years like?** Do you remember the joy, the enthusiasm, the way in which you unashamedly shared your faith with others? What about prayer? How has your prayer life changed since those early days?

Verses 9-14 are one continuous sentence in the Greek and that sentence gives us a wonderful illustration of what intercessory prayer looks like. Consider these things that Paul prayed for the Colossian believers – he prayed they would:

* Be filled with the knowledge and wisdom of God and His will.
* Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects.
* Bear fruit in every good work. Increase in the knowledge of God.
* Be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might.
* Attain all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father.

Chances are very good that this is a very different prayer than we are used to praying for others. Even during our time of intercessory prayer on Sunday mornings, most of our time is spent praying that negative things in people’s lives would be turned into positive things. That sick folks would be healed, that broken people would be made whole, and that those in need would receive provision. There is certainly nothing wrong with those prayers – we’ve seen God honor those prayers in amazing ways. But what about praying for things unseen? Praying for those things in a person’s life that can’t be measured by a doctor or by a bank or by a lawyer?

In some ways perhaps it is similar to preventative maintenance on a vehicle. You take care of things before they can happen. That’s not to say that this is a magic formula that is going to prevent anything bad from ever happening. But the truth is, how often do we wait for something bad to happen or devastation to occur before we seek out the prayers of the saints? **What affect would there be on our lives if we knew others were praying for us in the same way that Paul prayed for the Colossians?** How encouraging to know that brothers and sisters in the faith are petitioning El Shaddai (God Almighty) on our behalf.

Here’s my challenge for you and your Grace Groups – pick someone in your group and commit to praying this intercessory prayer for them **every day.** I know that is asking a lot, but here’s what you do – take a piece of paper, notecard, post-it note or something similar and write that person’s name and the points of Paul’s prayer as listed above. Put that paper in a prominent place: on a mirror, in your car, on your refrigerator – wherever you need to put it in order to see it EVERY DAY. When you see it, take a moment and pray this prayer for that person. It’s a tremendous thing when you know that people are specifically praying for you. When you get in the habit of praying for your one person, add more.

Charles Spurgeon makes a wonderful connection between the ministry of intercessory prayer and the way in which it is a demonstration of that “love for all the saints.” He says, *“Intercessory prayer is to be esteemed as an invaluable proof of love, and as the creator of more love. The man who will truly pray for me will certainly forgive me readily if I offend him; he will relieve me if I am in necessity; and he will be prepared to assist me if I am engaged in a service too hard for me. Give us your earnest prayers, and we know that we live in your hearts. How sweet it is to be permitted thus to manifest our love to one another! When our hand is palsied we can still pray; when our eye grows dim we can see to pray; when by sickness we are altogether laid aside we can still pray; and when we meet with cases in which we are unable to help, and yet are moved with sympathy for a brother, our sympathy can always find one open channel, for we can pray, and by prayer call in the aid of one whose help is effectual. Therefore, by your love to your Lord, and to all those who are in him, I beseech you abound in intercessory prayer, as the apostle did.”*

So the call, brothers and sisters, is to abound in intercessory prayer – just as Paul did. Let’s JUST DO IT and then be amazed at how this practice can affect our relationships with others and the ministry of Grace Community Church.

**Memory verse**: “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you…”

- Colossians 1:9a, NASB