



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, July 10-16 (C) – Colossians 1:1-14

Focus: *Pray Unceasingly for Others*

word of life

“In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.” (Colossians 1:3-5 NRSV)

Read Colossians 1:1-14

Most of the letters found in the New Testament, such as the letter to the Colossians, began with the common pattern of identifying the author in the first sentence followed by words of thanksgiving. Note this letter was from both Paul and Timothy. Both sent their greetings to the Colossians and praised their work. What a unique and extraordinary opportunity it must have been for Timothy to assist Paul on his missionary travels.

1. *What would it have been like for Timothy to accompany Paul in his missionary work?*
2. *What might Paul have gained to have an assistant like Timothy by his side?*

When considering the emerging church of the first century, it is interesting to track which group of Christians received letters and the purpose of the letters. Not all churches received letters from Paul, Timothy or the other apostles. When reading the letters included in the New Testament, such as Colossians, it is helpful to identify the primary issue facing the recipients.

3. *From the opening verses of Colossians, what appears to be the purpose of this letter?*
4. *What mood is established in these opening verses?*

Word had traveled to Paul and Timothy about the Colossians—both their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for others. Rather than sit, basking in the promise of heaven, the followers of Christ in Colossae were bearing fruit not only within their own community, but also the whole world. The news of their faithful living must have been welcomed information to these two missionaries. Paul and Timothy were well aware that not all who heard the gospel message of Jesus Christ received it positively.

Faith in Christ comes first, followed by a transformation in the believer by the Holy Spirit into a person who loves and leads a life worthy of the gospel message. With faith comes an understanding of God which manifests in action. Love is increased. But followers of Christ are also a work in progress, trying to apply faith within daily life situations. Christians are not to wait inactively and passively hope for heaven.

Apparently, the Christians in Colossae did not merely talk about love. Instead, they applied the gospel message and became an embodiment of the love of Christ. The Christian leader named Epaphras witnessed the change in the Colossians and told others, including Paul and Timothy about their love.

5. *When have you experienced the love of Christians to such a degree that you wanted to tell others about that love?*

God acted, bringing the Colossians out of the power of darkness, and changed their lives. This good news about the Colossians evoked praise, thanksgiving, and prayer from Paul and Timothy. They prayed unceasingly for the Colossians, praying for wisdom, understanding, strength, patience, and joy.

6. *How might the Colossians have responded to the news of these prayers offered on their behalf?*

Word among us

It is hard to know when Rimi's eating disorders started—maybe it was in middle school or even earlier. Rimi somehow felt she could control the chaos in her life by controlling her own eating. Her family found a residential clinic which specialized in eating disorders and took Rimi there for help. With tears, the family said their goodbyes.

Rimi's grandmother prayed unceasingly for her granddaughter. In addition, Rimi's grandmother daily mailed cards to Rimi signed, "I love you. I am praying for you. Love, Grandma." She wanted Rimi to know that she was not forgotten, but held in prayer.

1. *What is it like to be with someone going through difficulty?*
2. *What does it mean to pray unceasingly for someone facing difficulties?*
3. *How does the pray-er change when praying unceasingly?*

Often we associate praying unceasingly with times when we or others are faced with challenges, illness, temptation, and trials. In some situations, there is nothing else we can do but to pray. And so we keep a vigil of prayer. Each breath becomes our intercessory prayer. Every moment of our life becomes an uninterrupted prayer.

But when we are not living on the edge of crisis, praying unceasingly can be easier said than done. Too often, our minds race from one topic to the next without direction or boundary.

Paul and Timothy provide an example of Christians who pray unceasingly for other Christians, not because there is a crisis or challenge, but to encourage the continuation of good. Paul and Timothy offer their deep-felt thanksgiving for God's actions with the Colossians. Their prayer is for wisdom, understanding, strength, patience, and joy for the Colossians.

4. *Why did the Colossians "need" unceasing prayers?*
5. *Do you think Paul could have limited his prayers for the Colossians? How so?*
6. *Who controls our prayer life – we or the Holy Spirit?*
7. *How do you discern what God wants you to include in your prayers?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

In baptism, our family expands to include all brothers and sisters in Christ. Often we remember those in the Christian family and beyond who have a specific need. There is also a sacred privilege to pray on behalf of other Christians who are strong in faith and bear the fruit of love. That prayer is one of thanksgiving for all that God has done and will do.

8. *What prayers of thanksgiving fill your heart today?*
9. *How might you encourage others in their faith journey?*

Prayer

God, thank you for the faithful witness of others who share the love of Christ. Amen

last word

Practice praying unceasingly.

Daily Faith Practices

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