

A Model of Prayer and Praise

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Open up with me, if you would, to Colossians. Colossians chapter 1.

If you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 983. I kind of wondered where we were going to go in kind of our next sermon series that we're working through.

And having worked through the book of Job this summer, I'm going to move to the New Testament and kind of pick up the pace, as it were, in terms of understanding the significance of thanks in prayer.

The significance of thanks in prayer. Many of you have probably heard about the name D.L. Moody and what God was able to accomplish through his life in ministry back in the 1800s.

But many of you may not be aware of kind of the humble beginnings of D.L. Moody and how unexpected really his time of ministry really would have been, considering where he came from.

[1 : 03] D.L. Moody dropped out of school when he was 13 years old. But he ended up being used by God to inspire students at Cambridge throughout his life in ministry.

D.L. Moody, when he got started, preferred to teach children. He understood and appreciated the receptivity of their hearts. And so his focus early on in his ministry was Sunday school ministry to children.

And yet God would use him then to speak to crowds of individuals, numbering in the thousands, men and women, boys and girls. And God would use this man in a mighty way.

He was a man who grew up in a farm in Massachusetts. He came from very meager beginnings, a poverty-stricken family, a mother who was devout to Jesus, a father who was an alcoholic.

His early life he was one who was given to money, had a love for money, but the Lord kind of changed his perspective. And while he was in Chicago wanting to make as much money as he could, he would be this up-and-coming businessman, God worked in his heart to change his life and help him understand the significance of gospel ministry.

[2 : 20] He was a man who was led to Christ at age 17 by a man by the name of Edward Kimball. Kind of a guy in the middle of obscurity, but used by the Lord through faithful ministry of this man.

Moody would build a foundation of evangelistic crusades and thousands of people would come and the newscasters and the media who would show up to these events were just awestruck at the fact that how do so many people assemble when the person up front is speaking at a fourth-grade level?

The ministry of the Word of God that was working and moving through D.L. Moody and his frailty, his humility, and his dependence on the Lord.

It was while D.L. Moody was in England and he was there under the ministry of an individual named Henry Varley. And in that message, Henry Varley would say, the world has yet to see what God can do through a man who has totally yielded to him.

And those words inspired D.L. Moody and he wondered, can I be that man? Can God use this meager man to make much of himself in terms of ministry?

[3 : 37] And by God's grace, I will be that man. And so when he died in December of 1899, thousands of people would come not to celebrate the one who had fashioned an empire, who had made lots of money, but one who had devoted himself entirely to the Lord and had been used by God in significant ways.

His life really is a clear testimony of what God can do in the life of an individual, a man or a woman, who commits themselves, devotes themselves to faith and prayer, to thanks and prayer.

And over the course of the next three months, that's where we're going to go. That's what we're going to focus on and concentrate on as we come to the book of Colossians, this little letter, and thanks and prayer kind of permeate their way through this little letter.

And it's my prayer that if God can do this in the life of an individual, what might God be able to do in the life of a congregation, a life of a people, a life of a body of individuals who have joined themselves to this objective.

And I trust, I'm praying, I want to encourage you for the next three months that in some way we devote ourselves to understanding what a life of prayer and thanks looks like and that we grow in some measure in embracing these disciplines to ourselves.

[5 : 06] I want to propose an experiment, as it were. I want to see what God might do in my life, what God might see, what might do in our church, what God might do in your community, in your workplace, in students, what God might do in your schools, in your co-ops, in your home school communities, wherever you might be.

What might God be able to do with the people that have devoted themselves to thanks and prayer? So for the next three months, I want to encourage us to commit ourselves to that in some way. And as a way to go about that, we've put together another study guide. Okay, and I know that we've done this a lot, but I want, I'm trusting, hoping, praying that this would be an invitation for us to participate together.

As you look through the New Testament, you see that the churches that flourish, that the churches that God uses mightily and powerfully are the ones that have one heart, one mind, one spirit. And so this is a way for us to come together in a united way, to learn what God says, and to embrace this for ourselves, for to be part of the conversation of one another, this fellowship for one another, encouragement, challenging, and embracing this together as a group.

[6 : 30] So I want to encourage you, I know that several of you are part of Bible studies, I know that several of you are part of small groups, I know that several of you have your own Bible reading plans, and so this is an extra, but I'm just inviting you to step in in a little way, maybe step in all the way to embrace this together so we can see what God might be able to do.

At the end of each of the week's lessons in the study guide, I put together something called the family corner, and here's a graphic of that family corner.

And all we're trying to do is have some simple questions that kids of every age can answer and invite them to think about the text in a way that is familiar, that's accessible for them, so you can start this family conversation.

It's meant to be a conversation starter. So even your entire family, all the way down to your toddlers, can be a part of this study together as we're making our way through the scriptures.

And I want to also encourage, I've put a key verse or two each week, I want to encourage us as a church to be memorizing God's word. And there may be some of you who might rise to the occasion in memorizing the book.

[7 : 49] Would some of you be willing to try to do that? Memorize, and especially young people, your minds are sharp, memorizing the book of Colossians. There are 95 verses, and there's 110 days between now and Christmas that we can do this.

So just a verse a day. You can have some cheat days, because there's some days extra that you can do this. And this is something I want to encourage us to do as a fellowship.

Verse one. Paul, an apostle, and I'm going to say this, and you're going to repeat it after me. Okay? So, Paul, an apostle. Paul, an apostle.

By the will of Christ Jesus. By the will of Christ Jesus. Excuse me. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. By the will of God. So let's try that again. We're learning it together.

That's okay. That's okay. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. Okay? Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. By the will of God. By the will of God. And Timothy, our brother.

[8 : 53] And Timothy, our brother. Hey, look. You got verse one. It's there. It's locked away. You can coast the rest of the day and pick it up tomorrow. So here we go.

We can do this together. And I believe this will be a strategic exercise for our fellowship. I don't know about you, but if there are two disciplines that I struggle in the most, it's the discipline of prayer and making sure that it's consistent and making sure that it's happening faithfully, regularly, day by day.

And the discipline of thanksgiving. I'm much more inclined to look at the dark side of life and say, ah! It's terrible! Ah!

Look at what's happening to me! Oh! It woes me! It's so awful! And the practice of thanksgiving in helping to call attention to the work of God even in hard things.

Even when things don't go your way, this is going to be good for us. And I just want to encourage us as a fellowship for the next three months. Can we do this together? That's my prayer.

[10:01] That's my goal. And here's the promise. The promise that's contained in this passage this morning is Paul will talk about the word of truth, the gospel that's come to them.

And listen to what happens when the word of God comes. It has come to you and it's come to a whole world. It is bearing fruit and increasing as it does among you since the day you heard and understood the grace of God and truth.

God's word will have its way. God's word will make a difference. God's word will change us if we surrender to it and come to know it.

And God delights in that work. And I trust that as we're doing this together over the next three months, we're going to see the evidence in our own lives, in the spheres in which we are, and as a congregation, how God can use his word to change us.

Thanks and prayer. All right. Colossians chapter 1. I think page 983, if you're there, in the Pew Bible. I'm just going to read the first couple of verses as an introduction, and we're going to see here in just the outset of this passage, Paul will set forth an example.

[11:17] We're going to see Paul's example kind of shining through. Just even in his opening introduction, what is Paul's example? What is he calling the people of this church to? Notice he says, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God, our Father.

Paul, an apostle. Paul was sent. He was a sent one. And Paul was sent by the will of God, and we see here Paul's example of being willing to be sent by God and willing to submit himself to God's will.

His willingness to hear what God says, to listen to God's will, to know what God wants for his life, to be sent out to embrace the cost and to do it willingly, to submit himself to God's will instead of his own.

I know that Paul is a familiar figure, and so to kind of do a little background on the apostle Paul may seem tedious and maybe unnecessary, but I think it's important for us just to remember who the apostle Paul is before we even begin this study.

Those of you who remember kind of going back to the birth of the church in Acts chapter 1, here the church gets started because of the work of God through his word in Jerusalem, and thousands of people come to faith in Christ.

[12:45] And so from chapter 1 to chapter 7, we kind of trace this work of God working in Jerusalem to build the church that's there. And then there's this figure named Saul, and we come to find out later that Saul is synonymous with Paul.

And now Saul is instrumental in chapter 8 of introducing persecution to the church. And because of Saul's work of persecuting the church because of his love for Judaism and wanting to stamp out Christianity, God actually uses the apostle Paul to make the church spread to the uttermost parts of the world.

It's called the dispersion. God uses him instrumentally in this seemingly negative way to get the word of God to now spread out from Jerusalem into the known world.

God will come and do a work in Paul's heart in chapter 9, that road to Damascus experience where God will come and will communicate to the apostle Paul and will lead him to faith in Christ.

And then from chapter 9 to the end of the book we're going to see the explosion of this church that's happening through the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. Really in many ways the apostle Paul is an all star.

[14:04] He's a superstar when it comes to this missionary work. And we see his missionary work that's happening throughout the book of Acts but just calling attention to what happens at the beginning of his second missionary journey.

You remember that he has kind of tried to go into Asia and I'll show you this map, okay? Actually the very beginning of Paul's journey, he goes to a little place called Lystra.

That's kind of in a circle at the bottom of the map. That happens to be the hometown of Timothy. He picks up Timothy there because of the ministry of his mother and grandmother and the confirmation of the church that was there.

He picks up Timothy and Timothy now becomes part of his missionary team. So the apostle Paul wants to go into the next logical spot. He wants to go into this region of Asia. But remember what

happens when he tries to go to Asia?

The Holy Spirit closes the door. So he's like, well, fine, let's go to Bithynia. That's kind of the next logical place. And God, again, closes the door so he can't go to Bithynia.

[15:10] Instead he goes to a place called Macedonia. And there he is in Thessalonica. That's kind of the second town in Macedonia that he goes to. And God's work is so mighty in Thessalonica that the Jews who are there we find in Acts chapter 17, 6.

It says, these men, speaking of the apostle Paul and his missionary team, have turned the world upside down and have come here also. God's mighty work through this man and his team. So he gets kind of kicked out of Thessalonica. He ends up making his way to Ephesus and his third missionary journey and we find this in Acts chapter 19 verses 9 and 10 speaking again of Paul's ministry now in Ephesus.

But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, let me just pause there for a moment. The apostle Paul would traditionally go into the synagogue and here in Ephesus he would teach in the synagogue for three months and the Judaizers who were there were not happy.

So they kind of pushed him out of the synagogue. And speaking evil of the way before the congregation he withdrew himself from them and took the disciples with him reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

[16:27] This continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord. Both Jews and Gentiles. Now, do you remember what happened on his second missionary journey?

How he wanted to go to Asia? He wanted to go to Bithynia and God said no? And yet the apostle Paul because of his heart to listen to God's will and to follow God's direction Paul said okay. Then where is it Lord? And he ends up here in Ephesus and God says my plan is better and so what's going to happen Paul is this is going to be kind of the seminary of Ephesus and I'm going to allow a number of individuals all across Asia to come here to this school and I'm going to send them out across all of Asia and Colossae happens to be one of the beneficiaries of the ministry of Paul to Epaphras who would then take that word of the gospel to his hometown to Colossae and God would build this church there in Colossae.

Paul refers to himself as an apostle. An apostle is a sent one. It's one who has been designated with this special role of sharing the truth.

sharing the truth of the gospel with others. Of course Paul wasn't part of the original 12. He wasn't even one of the replacements there in Acts chapter 1 when Judas needed to be replaced but the apostle Paul he calls himself kind of an apostle in kind of a distant time.

[18:00] He refers to the ministry that God has in his life to reveal his truth to him. We find that in Galatians chapter 1. where Paul says for I would have you Galatians 1 sorry verse 11 let's start there for I would have you know brothers that the gospel that was preached by me was not man's gospel for I did not receive it from man nor was I taught it but I received it through through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

So while the apostle Paul didn't wasn't a part of Christ's early earthly ministry there was this ministry that God has to Paul sometime later where God is revealing truth to the apostle Paul and setting him apart for this separate and special work.

It picks up in verse 15 which is the next slide but when he speaking of God who set me apart before I was born and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles I did not immediately consult with anyone nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days.

So there's this off and on ministry of God in revealing truth to the apostle Paul in this three year window of time. He was set apart.

God had separated him for a specific task an apostleship to the Gentiles as it were and the apostle Paul was receptive to God's will in his life and Paul will present himself as an apostle and I think there's several reasons and I'm just going to give you a couple.

[19:56] First, I think the apostle Paul in expressing himself as an apostle to this group of individuals wants to help establish his relationship to this church of Colossae.

Now we're going to find this out once we get to chapter 2 but the apostle Paul had never been to Colossae. He hadn't preached the gospel to there he hadn't planted this church and yet here he is this rich and deep relationship this affection that he seems to have for these people that he's never met and it's only because of the connection they have with Jesus Christ.

He's an apostle of Christ Jesus and here is a church and this church is a church that is receiving this ministry of the word and they have also been brought into community with Paul and of course in community with God through faith in Christ.

So Paul wants to help establish this connection with this group of believers and second he wants to establish his authority with them that he is one who has been set apart by God to reveal truth and to help speak into their situation.

Third it helps to affirm the legitimacy of their fellowship. Now here we are at the very beginnings of this church movement that's taking place and as we know what's taking place in Jerusalem and then in other places is the apostles are the ones who are kind of primarily responsible for establishing these churches and yet Colossae now happens to be a primary example of a church that's been planted apart from apostolic authority apostolic presence and the apostle Paul wants to provide legitimacy to this group of believers not because of how it was established by apostolic authority but it was established by the ministry of the word and so subsequently generation after generation we're beneficiaries of the word and the ministry of that word to us and we're connected in that way as well to the apostle Paul.

[22 : 07] Paul was he was an apostle by the will of God. Knowledge of God's will is going to be a huge a huge thrust a huge theme through the first couple of chapters because this is a church that wanted to identify wanted to have that secret knowledge that hidden knowledge and Paul's like hey you don't have to it doesn't have to be a secret anymore because God has delivered it to you it's open he wants his will to be clear to you and in verse 9 we're going to get there next week Paul will say we have not ceased to pray for you asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will God wants his will to be clear to be accessible to be known and so Paul becomes an example an example of one who has received the word one who has submitted to the word and now he's coming to present that word again to this church but Paul is also an example of serving with others and I just want to touch on this briefly Paul was not a lone ranger

Paul was not this pioneer that did things alone he wasn't the kind of guy who thought well I'm going to get this taken care of because look at me look how great I am no the apostle Paul understood the significance of serving with a team he recognized that it wasn't wasn't inherent the strength of ministry wasn't inherent to himself it was a strength that came as he would commit himself to the Lord and God would work through this team notice Paul says in verse 1 an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy our brother Timothy is this special individual we were acquainted with him last fall we worked through 1 Timothy the letter and Timothy as we saw was the kind of guy who had this ability to endear himself to others Paul would send him into the hardest situations it seemed and he was a consensus builder but also one who knew the truth of the gospel and was happy to share it with those he served in Philippians chapter 2 verse 19 to 22 we kind of get this resume as it were as Paul is commending his disciple his son in the faith

Timothy he says I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state for I have no one like minded who will sincerely care for your state for all seek their own not the things which are of Christ Jesus but you know his proven character that as a son with his father he has served with me in the gospel this gigantic applause of the apostle Paul in affirming and confirming this young son in the faith Timothy and likely the apostle Paul does this because he knows that eventually there he is in Rome and he's imprisoned there in Rome that likely he's going to have to turn the ministry over maybe to Timothy or that perhaps Timothy will represent Paul and help to lead this church at some point down the road as he's making his way back home to Lystra there's no details given to us why the apostle Paul includes Timothy but it's clear that the apostle

Paul wants the church to be acquainted with Timothy given the fact that there may be some relationship in the future the apostle Paul was not a one man team the apostle Paul understood the significance of working with others he set the example he set the example of God working in and through others to be a conduit of this message of the gospel to the world and then we find that he refers to them as saints he sets the example by referring to them as saints and you might say why is that so important in verse 2 to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae grace to you

and peace from God our father he addresses this church and I believe he does this strategically so he can call attention not to something that is inherent to them but is something that God has done for them because as we continue in this little letter we're going to see this was a church that was dysfunctional as you could believe it was a church that was messed up in so many different ways and yet the apostle Paul calls them saints and faithful brothers to call attention to the work of God in their life not a work of their own the word saint may conjure up a number of different ideas the Catholic church for example has something called sainthood and just recently just about a year ago in the previous July there's a young man by the name of

Carlo Acutis who is a teenager teenage computer whiz who was kind of the first millennial to be sainted to be canonized and there is this process of canonization that will take place in the Catholic church to call attention to the unique holiness of an individual the first part of that process is to recognize them as a servant of God and there's a local bishop five years after this individual's death will investigate their life and will document the different aspects of their life that were unique and he'll report them to the next person down the road the next part of the phase is venerable this is where an individual is found to have lived a life of heroic Christian virtue then you get to the stage of being blessed and a miracle is attributed to this person's prayer it must be verified by the church and then finally they're going to be canonized and a second miracle must be confirmed after which the Pope will formally declare this person a saint well this is not the sainthood that Paul has in mind the sainthood that Paul is referring to does not owe their status to personal holiness and performance but it looks to Jesus Christ as the only one who can ever merit the kind of standard that God would desire it's not about personal achievement it's about the work of God and what Christ has accomplished through his perfection he calls them saints and faithful brothers to draw attention to what Christ has accomplished for them in spite of them it's important for a group of believers who were brought up thinking that they had something to achieve and maybe you've come from that that Christian background that you have come to think that you owe

[29 : 05] God something that there's something for you to do in order for God to recognize you and to show kindness to you but the apostle Paul sets the example by helping us understand there's nothing that we bring to the table except a heart that is willing to receive forgiveness a heart and life that's willing to embrace the righteousness of Christ so once Paul sets the example now we find in verse 3 to 8 we find his thanks in prayer Paul's thanks in prayer and I think this is an example too he becomes a model to this church right at the very beginning of what's really important in verse 3 he says we always thank God for you excuse me we always thank God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you notice that Paul's thanks is to God thanks in prayer are essential but it's important to remember and the apostle Paul understood the significance of thanks being to God and this was something that was true of the apostle Paul's life we see this in almost every letter the apostle Paul wrote

Romans 1 8 to 10 first he says I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world for God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you and then to the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1 4 he says I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus in Ephesians 1 15 and 16 he says for this reason because I've heard of your faith in the Lord and your love for all the saints I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you in my prayers to the church of Philippi in Philippians 1 3 and 4 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy then in 1 Thessalonians 1 2 to 3 we give thanks to God always for all of you constantly mentioning you in our prayers remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord

Jesus Christ this I believe is the secret one of the secrets to the Apostle Paul's fruitfulness in ministry he was a man who understood that if God's work was involved that God's work would prevail so he submitted himself to pleading for God to do the work that only God can do in the lives of those that Paul shared the gospel with and he's thankful for this church he's thankful for this church in spite of their deficiencies he's thankful for this church in spite of their theological shortcomings and they're significant matter of fact as we work through this the heresy that was kind of making its way through Colossae and through Asia and through this church was kind of like a foundational salvific kind of problem where we're kind of cut across the grain of saving faith and yet

Paul was still thankful for them they were dependent on human tradition this church was bound up in legalism this church appealed to mysticism and worship of angels they also seem to have a problem with purity we're going to find in chapter 3

Paul says put to death sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire anger wrath malice slander obscene talk and lying what kind of church is this is it possible is it possible to be thankful for a church like this and Paul says yes it's it was not a model church but Paul is able to be thankful because he's thankful to God that's the key he's thankful to God you see the apostle Paul knew that what was happening in Colossae was not Epaphras' work it was not Paul's work it was God's work and so as God was working in the hearts and lives of these individuals the apostle Paul could thank God for that work and he could entrust the matter to God to know that when God begins a work that God will also complete the work so he could be thankful for this church to God in spite of all the deficiencies because he knew that God was going to continue to carry it through but notice he's also thankful for the word of God he's thankful for the word of God we see that in verses 4 to 6 notice since we heard of your faith in Christ in the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven of this you have heard before in the word of truth the gospel which has come to you and is increasing in the whole world it's bearing fruit in increasing as also does among you since the day you heard and understood the grace of God in truth did you catch that the apostle Paul it's easy to see that at the very beginnings of this we would tend to run to well Paul is celebrating this work of faith he's celebrating this love for the saints he's celebrating this hope for heaven and we would say well look what God is doing in this church and that is true we need to understand though that God is doing this work through his word that he doesn't credit that Paul doesn't credit the people so much as accrediting the power of the word of God to bear fruit and increase as it always does faith is anchored in Christ they do have love that pursues the saints they do have hope that looks forward to heaven these qualities are true but the apostle Paul wants to draw attention to the progress of the word the power of that word to do the work that's intended to do you've heard this before and Paul draws attention to the significance of hearing notice that in verse 4

Paul is thankful that they heard that he heard of their faith in Christ in verse 5 this church had faith love and hope because they heard the word of the truth of the gospel in verse 7 they learned it it was made known they heard it from Epaphras in verse 8 the apostle Paul draws attention to hearing of the church's love for him in the spirit all of these significant things that the apostle Paul is hearing because it's a it's a work that happens through the ministry of the word of God maybe you've heard the famous quote of Francis Assisi it's accredited him he says preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words have you heard that before meaning let your actions speak for themselves the apostle Paul would say that's not enough the ministry of the word is not only important it's essential the ministry of the word is vital it's only through the ministry of the word can God ever change a life

[36 : 56] Romans 10 17 the apostle Paul will say so then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God so this this church was changed yes but it was changed by the ministry of the word of God and that's what the word of God does that's what it will always do to a life that has submitted itself and yielded itself to the work of the word in their life Peter will say in 1 Peter 1 23 having been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible through the word of God which lives and abides forever for all flesh is like grass in all its glory like the flower of grass the grass grass withers the flower falls but the word of the Lord remains forever and this word is the good news that was preached to you it's the word of God that will change it's the word of God that will help to provide this regenerative work in our life to draw us to spiritual life in him the gospel is dynamic and this church is a beneficiary of that ministry of the word of God just like the rest of the world has been and I love how

Paul puts it to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 8 and 9 when he says this remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead the offspring of David as preached in my gospel for which I am suffering bound with chains as a criminal but the word of God is not bound what an encouragement the apostle Paul is stuck in prison he's chained to the walls or in prison somehow he is unable to get out he's unable to spread the message of the gospel but that doesn't matter because the word of God is unleashed the word of God can't be hindered the word of God will have its way and our confidence in the word of God is what will allow us to enjoy the benefits of that work in our lives in that work in our families in the work wherever we are God does his work through his word and

finally we find Paul's thanks for the spirit his thanks for the spirit verses 7 and 8 says just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant he is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the spirit

Paul is rejoicing to God because he sees the evidence of the spirit's work in the lives of these individuals by the way it's a work that only the spirit can produce the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace it's a work of God in our life and as the apostle beloved apostle John will say in his letter in 1st John chapter 4 7 and 12 he'll talk about the significance of love in confirming and establishing us as a people of God beloved let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love and in this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him and this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins beloved if God so loved us we ought also to love one another no one has ever seen God if we love one another

God abides in us and his love is perfected in us this love in the spirit this spirit empowered love of this church is showing up and the apostle Paul is celebrating that work in their life because he knows that God is the one who's done it I want to pray for us I want to close in just a song and a challenge and then I'll dismiss you Lord thank you for Paul's example today Paul's example of knowing your will and surrendering to it and his desire to lead with thanks and praise and prayer God I pray that we would learn from his example and that we would use this little letter to the Colossian church to challenge us to be those kinds of people so that we can also enjoy the benefits the benefits of the ministry of your word to us and that message of your word that is shared with the people around us

God I pray that you would do your work that we would be humble servants of yours bowing before your will seeking to to know your will for us and following after it in Jesus name amen would you sing together praise the father praise the father praise the son praise the spirit spirit one God of glory majesty praise forever to the king of king!

[42 : 47] I encourage you just to close your eyes right now and just have a time between you and the Lord so go ahead close your eyes I just want you to consider these words praise the father praise the son praise the spirit three in one what does that mean how does that show up obviously it shows up as we praise the Lord together in song but it's not meant to be contained here it's not meant to stay here it's meant to be part of the everyday process of life as you're praising God with all that you are apparently the average person spends about two and a half hours a day on social media and the average adult watches about three hours of TV a day the average daily gaming time is one to two hours per day and that's probably really conservative you add that up that's about six and a half hours a day now I know that not all of you it's not reflective of everyone in this room but I wonder if we were willing to give up an hour of that time each day we think we need to veg out just recharge

I wonder if we can find real refreshment real peace with God in his word and that's what I'm going to encourage us for the next three months for the next three months each day that you're going to say God I give you I give you a portion a very meager portion an hour a day Lord and I'm going to tune my heart to your word and I trust that you will work with us through Colossians as we seek to cultivate together this heart of thanks and prayer and watch what God might do oh Lord I pray that your spirit and your word and your presence would be clear to us God I pray that you'd help us to press in forgive us God for the deficiencies of our own lives the inconsistencies and Lord I pray for myself in the next three months Lord help me help me to understand the significance and the privilege of spending time with you and the power that comes through prayer and through thanks and I pray that you would bless me and bless this fellowship with seeing the mighty work of God among us in Jesus name amen God bless you trust you have a great week go in peace