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# Jesus Over Everything

## Victory Life Church

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Sunday, October 18, 2020 — Part 3 — The Work of Prayer

### Frame for Part 3 Message

The purpose of this message (Part 3) is to show how important prayer is in the Christian life. Our revelation of Jesus must work its way into the relationship we develop with Jesus and prayer is the primary way we nurture that relationship and the primary way we get involved in His work in us and around us.

### Introduction

We are in a series looking at how Jesus is over everything, the major emphasis in the New Testament letter to the Colossians.

### **Colossians 1:18 (ESV)**

And he is the head of the body, **the church**.  
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that **in everything** he might be **preeminent**. ("**supreme**")

Jesus is supreme over everything.

If Jesus is the supreme Lord, then what do we do about it now?

1. The Church **lives** under Jesus as the supreme Lord
2. The Church **worships** Jesus as the supreme Lord

**Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV)** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk in him**, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Jesus is sufficient for everything we need.

This is the gospel: Jesus is Lord (supreme) and is everything we need (sufficient). Our lives are to flow from understanding and working out these truths. If everything we are called to do must flow from this, then how do we practically live under His lordship and what does it mean to worship Him as Lord?

### Prayer is the Work

**Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)** And so, from the day we heard, **we have not ceased to pray for you**, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully

pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul is telling the Colossians to learn from his habits in order to endure through the challenges and difficulties of life and have impact in the Kingdom of God. This weathered Apostle is revealing something about the Christian life and how to make it in the long haul under the Lord Jesus.

The Christian life begins with and is sustained by prayer.

All of what encompasses our life in Christ (behavior, choices, priorities, vocation, etc.) begins with and originates from our relationship with Jesus, which is nurtured in prayer. Yes, the Christian life begins with prayer in that coming to faith in Christ and being born again definitely starts with prayer. But all the Christian life beyond that point is sustained by prayer. The Christian life is not a moral code or a series of feelings and experiences. It all begins with our relationship with Jesus and flows from that relationship. We nurture and mature that relationship by maintaining and growing a healthy prayer life.

You do not get where Paul got without a life of prayer. Paul was not shut up in a monastery praying. Paul was on the go, often providing for himself by making tents on the side when he wasn't preaching or imprisoned. His constant prayer came in the flow of life, not being separated from it. Prayer was Paul's habit and reflex.

**Colossians 1:9a (ESV)** And so, from the day we heard, **we have not ceased to pray for you...**

He is currently in a prison, suffering for Jesus, and Paul's emphasis to them is Jesus, and the way they join in on the work is through prayer. Prayer is not the warm-up or prelude. It's not obligatory when you think you have to be spiritual. For Paul, it's the premise of everything. Paul earns the right to speak into their life because of how he prays for them. Prayer is not a spiritual gift. Everyone is capable of praying. It's not for the elite or the articulate. It is the admonition to all who are in Christ.

Prayer is how everyone gets connected to God's will, His word, and His work.

1. Prayer connects us to God's Will

**Colossians 1:9 (ESV)** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be **filled with the knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Paul begins his prayer by showing his desire for them to be filled up with the knowledge of God's will. God has desires for us and His world. He has a will for each of us. But Paul isn't praying just that they know what God's will for them is individually. He is praying that they see God's grand will for the whole cosmos that is now revealed in Christ Jesus.

God has an opinion and perspective about what is going on in our world. He has desires for certain things to come about. His church is His vehicle to enact His will in this world and so Paul is praying that they see clearly what God wants and what He wills in the world. Prayer connects us to God's heart and desires. It's how we receive revelation on what He wants to do in our lives and in our world. Without prayer, we easily get distracted and off course, focusing more on what we want than what He wants. To be on the inside of His will, we must nurture a healthy prayer life.

## 2. Prayer connects us to the God's Word

**Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord**, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Paul's statement, "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord", or "live your lives in such a way to be worthy of Jesus," can make many Christians nervous. This idea of "walking" is the same used in Colossians 2:6 where Paul is encouraging them to "walk in Christ" the same way they "received Christ", by submitting to Him as the supreme Lord. Here in chapter 1, Paul is seeding this idea that for us to "live under Jesus as Supreme Lord" means that our lives, our behaviors and our decisions matter. He prays that we live in a manner that is worthy of the Lord who saved us and is maturing us. How do we do that and not become legalists?

Paul knows that we are incapable of "acting our way" to perfection. We looked last week how Jesus is both supreme and sufficient, in that what we cannot do ourselves, Jesus does in us. We do not live under Jesus' Lordship by trying to behave properly. We recognize that we are "in Christ" and it is He in us that matures us. Everything we need for life flows *from Christ* and is *in Christ*.

**Colossians 1:3-6 (ESV)** We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when we pray for you**, since we 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. Of this you have heard before in **the word of the truth, the gospel**, 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**,

It is the gospel, the Word of Truth, that bears the fruit. The gospel is bearing fruit around the world, but Paul's **prayer is that the gospel will bear fruit in their lives**. It is the gospel that transforms, we can pray for it to take root and bear fruit. It is "hearing and understanding the grace of God" (the gospel) that enables us to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is a gift to the unworthy that makes you worthy.

**Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)** And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: **bearing fruit in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

We looked last week at how abiding in Jesus is what makes us bear fruit. Prayer is one of the ways we abide in Him. It is also how we increase in our intimate fellowship and relationship with God.

**John 15:5 (ESV)** *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever **abides in me and I in him**, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

It's God's power that produces in us fruitfulness, patience, and joy; prayer activates this. It activates it in our lives and in other people's lives. What if our relationships were facilitated and strengthened through prayer? What if we recognized that prayer is the primary way we activate God's work in each others' lives? Don't give up on your prayers.

### 3. Prayer connects us to God's Work

By emphasizing prayer, we are keeping our focus on the God who is at work. Prayer is our participation, while it is God who is doing the primary work.

**Colossians 1:12-14 (ESV)** giving thanks to **the Father**, who has **qualified you** to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **He has delivered us** from the domain of darkness and **transferred us** to the kingdom of his beloved Son, **in whom** we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The power is not in the one who is praying, but the God to whom we are praying.

It is not all on you and your ability. Your confidence is not in your ability to pray, but in the God whom you pray to. The people who are powerful in their prayers are not those who are the most eloquent or charismatic, as if praying louder automatically increased the effectiveness of prayer. The people who are the most powerful in their prayers are those who recognize that the power lies in God and not themselves.

Precursor to the “dangerous temptations” that Paul warns the Colossians of (“let no one enslave you...judge you...disqualify you”), he gets them to focus on God who has done this work for them. Paul ends this prayer by connecting them to God’s work, and to see that it is Him who has done these things in them individually and them collectively.

## Conclusion

The Christian life begins with and is sustained by prayer.

Prayer is a key theme in the letter to the Colossians. Paul started with prayer, showed them what he was praying and how he prayed for them, then ends the letter with encouraging them to keep praying, and then requesting them to pray for him.

**Colossians 4:2-4 (ESV) Continue steadfastly in prayer**, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, **pray also for us**, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Prayer is critical and central in us being connected to God’s work and His Word. It activates the power of God in us and those we are praying for. Learning to live under Jesus as Supreme and Jesus being Sufficient for all that we need is experienced deeply through the work of prayer.

**Colossians 1:9-14 (KNT)** For this reason, from the day we heard it, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We’re asking God to fill you with the knowledge of what he wants in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This will mean that you’ll be able to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Lord, and so give him real delight, as you bear fruit in every good work and grow up in the knowledge of God. I pray that you’ll be given all possible strength, according to the power of his glory, so that you’ll have complete patience and become truly steadfast and joyful. And I pray that you will learn to give thanks to the father, who has made you fit to share the inheritance of God’s holy ones in light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son. He is the one in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.