

Colossians 4:2-18

Devote Yourself to Prayer

Section 1: Devote Yourself to Prayer

Prayer is a simple yet often neglected practice in the Believers life. But why should we devote ourselves to prayer? Because prayer is how we communicate with our heavenly Father. Communication is vital to any relationship. We communicate with God through Bible study (how He speaks to us) and prayer (how we speak to Him). Prayer should be a natural, expected part of the Believers life.

In our prayer life we should also be praying for others. Paul asked the church to pray on his behalf. But what is his request? To get out of prison? To have smoother travels? To have time for self-care? Paul asks for opportunities to speak the Word and to make it known...as he should. Maybe we should consider the types of things Paul asks for in prayer. His requests were always eternally focused...centered on proclaiming the gospel and seeing people saved and matured in the faith.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you consider yourself to be someone who is devoted to prayer?
- ❖ What types of requests consume your prayer time?
- ❖ Why is it important to be focused on eternal things rather than the temporary?

Section 2: Describing Fellow Believers

Messengers in the early church were very valuable. Persecution was very prevalent so any news of brothers or sisters in Christ doing well was an encouragement. Paul not only gives us update of the brothers and sisters doing well...he describes how they have been useful for the church.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How would people describe you as a believer?
- ❖ Are others encouraged and built up when they spend time with you? Why or why not?
- ❖ How are you planning on encouraging other believers this week?

Section 3: A Story of Redemption

We see in verse 10 that Mark (John Mark) is with Paul. Mark is described (with the others) as a coworker for the kingdom of God. Why is this significant? Because when we read through the book of Acts, we see a very different type of relationship between Paul and John Mark.

In Acts 12:12, we are introduced to John Mark. The disciples had gathered in his mother's house when Peter was in prison. Later in verse 25, we see that John Mark is joining Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. During Paul's first missionary journey we see John Mark give up and go back to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).

In Acts 15:26-41, we see that Paul and Barnabas split ways because of John Mark. Barnabas wanted John Mark to join them but Paul did not trust that he would stick with them. And that is the last we hear of Paul and John Mark in the book of Acts.

I wonder what John Mark's journey to redemption looked like? Since John Mark went back to Jerusalem after he departed Paul and Barnabas, I wonder if he was mentored by Peter. We see John Mark mentioned in 1 Peter 5:13 (CSB): She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does Mark, my son. If anyone could mentor someone through failure it'd be Peter.

Either way...we see that Paul and John Mark have reconciled and are doing ministry together again. We see Paul mention John Mark here in Colossians 4:10 and he also mentions him in 2 Timothy 4:11 (CSB): *Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry.* Not only is John Mark called a coworker in the kingdom, Paul also calls him useful in ministry. From Acts 15 to 2 Timothy 4 we see a very different perspective on John Mark. From deserter to writer of the gospel of Mark.

What do we learn from the John Mark story? God is never done with us. Even when we have times of utter failure...God is in the business of redemption. Therefore, believers need to be in the business of redemption. Paul was willing to give John Mark a second chance. Now...of course John Mark had to prove himself again. Which is an important step in being reconciled with others. You need to prove your repentance through your change of actions. Paul just didn't take John Mark's word for it. He proved himself with Peter and then later with Barnabas. Don't expect your journey to reconciliation with others believers to be an overnight process. Remember, forgiveness and reconciliation are two different realities.

While we are forgiven by God in the moment...we may not be restored to our calling right away.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ What role should redemption and reconciliation play in the life of the church?
- ❖ How should it impact our faith to know that God faithfully and patiently offers redemption to His people?
- ❖ Why should we patiently seek restoration rather than demand it instantly?

Section 4: Our Calling in Ministry

Paul encourages Archippus to *"Pay attention to the ministry you have received in the Lord, so that you can accomplish it."* God gives his people a calling specifically related to ministry. I often hear believers say, "I was called to be a doctor, teacher...etc." I rarely hear believers speak of their ministry calling. God has not given us a specific calling to advance ourselves in this world...we are given callings to advance the kingdom of God. Can being a doctor or teacher be an opportunity for ministry? Of course. We just need to make sure we are seeking God's calling on our lives not our personal ambitions.

Maybe God is calling you to become a missionary...or a teacher...or a pastor...or to work with children...or to work with teenagers. Remember, God has given you a spiritual gift specifically to be used in the building up of the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are for the church. You need to listen to the calling of ministry God has for you and accomplish it.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How much time do you spend considering God's call on your life?
- ❖ When was the last time you really prayed to the Lord about His calling on your life?
- ❖ Do you consider your job, family, home, city, neighborhood, etc. as a way to leverage the gospel into people's life? Why or why not?

Section 5: 4:18

Paul is writing this letter from prison. Which is pretty significant considering all that is contained in this letter. Even in chains Paul is making much of Christ. Circumstances don't determine the effectiveness of ministry. God is able to work in all situations. We simply need to be faithful followers that trust in His ability and power.

May His grace be with us all.