

Colossians 4:2-18

A New Mission

Image Church // Colossians #10

Introduction

Well good morning Image family, I hope you're doing well! If you have your bibles go ahead and turn to **Colossians 4**...

A few weeks ago we had our Covenant Members Class and from there we have received **13 new covenant members!** Over 40 ppl in SP!

We're going to be finishing up our series through the book of Colossians today...

- Teaser, we're going to be starting a series through the book of **Malachi** next weekend- going to be awesome, you're not going to want to miss it! *Some of you are like is that a book? You should be here!*

Alright so here's what we've got here in the book of Colossians...

- The church is doing well... but is getting pressure from the community to see Jesus as **a** thing, not **the** thing...
- **Epaphras** goes and reports this to Paul who's in prison... Paul writes this letter and sends it back with **Tychicus**...

Chapter 1: Great work... But this has been my prayer for you- that you would continue to grow in a deep abiding understanding of Jesus...

- Here's who Jesus is and here's what Jesus did...
 - Paul says this is why I labor...

Chapter 2: Paul says keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, continue to walk in Him, be rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith...

Then he addresses the pressures that the church is facing...

- Do not get distracted, remember the supremacy of Christ, the saving work of Christ, and your identity in Christ!

Chapter 3: Paul shifts away from addressing the false teaching and what to avoid, and starts talking about who they are called to be in light of their identity in Christ...

Paul shows us that when you place your trust in the finished work of Jesus, the old you died, and you're now hidden with Christ in God... Christ is now your life... (**Colossians 3:3**)

IOW: our **identity in Christ impacts our activity, reshaping our lives wholistically, transforming us from the inside out**...

- Personally, communally within the church, in our home, at our job, and in everything else that we set our hands to...

Because of Christ, we **have a different framework** for life, where we submit to the Lordship of Christ, living out what we've experienced in Christ...

Ultimately, what Paul's doing is reconstructing society... He's speaking to a church that exists in a hierarchal and patriarchal Roman culture... And he's calling them to a different way of living in light of the Lordship of Christ...

- He levels everything out under the Lordship of Jesus...
- He's cultivating a *new humanity that's centered around Jesus*...
- *This is what it looks like to live as a citizen of a heavenly Kingdom... This is what the church is called to be, this is who we want to be as a church*...

And this morning, we're going to see is how Paul finishes out his letter to the church... I think this section is really important because of **how** he finishes... Some of the most important things in life are said last...

- Like "I'm sorry" that's said at the end of an argument or...

- Like when you go through the drive-through at CFA: D. Coke?!?

Alright here we go...

Colossians 4:2-18

2 Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.

I love this... Paul starts the close of his letter with prayer, I think he does this to show us that prayer is **the means by which** we put into practice everything that he's laid out for here in Colossians...

It's through prayer that we ask God for the power to be who He's called us to be and do what He's called us to do!

- Paul's not closing out by pointing us to work harder but to consistently be depending on God through prayer...

Theologian **Norman Geisler** says: *Prayer is not a spiritual luxury; it is essential for growth. Prayer is as vital to ones spiritual health as brething is to ones physical healthy.*

This is why Paul's call here is to be devoted to prayer... Devoted:

- This means to preserver in an activity, to persist, remain faithful to a task, to attach yourself to something...

For many of us our prayer our devotion to prayer **only goes as far as the meals that we eat...**

- Which by the way is not even a requirement- *but man we're devoted to it...* Asking God to *bless the food meanwhile it's fried, processed and terrible for you...*
- *God's like don't put this on me!*

Prayer is not a ritual that we practice... It's a posture and practice of dependence that we're called to be devoted to...

Prayer at its most basic level is an act of submission of dependence on God.

This is why our devotion to it matters! To not pray is to not depend on God...

Let me ask you this: **what does your devotion to prayer say about your depencae on God?**

- For many of you, you wonder why you do't see more significant changes in your life, you wonder why your spiritual life is lacking and it's becasue you don't pray...
- You may not be saying this verbally but fiunctionally you're saying *I got this...*
- For many of you, you're operating in your own strength, rather than tapping into the power of God through prayer!

We are saved by the power of God, but the way that we continue in the Christian life is through the power of God! And the way that we do that is through prayer...

Tim Lucas: *What if prayer wasn't to fill God in, but for him to fill us up? What if prayer wasn't about transactions and requests, but about renewing a relationship every day?*¹

Paul goes on to say that we need to **stay alert in prayer with thanksgiving...**

- **IOW:** Don't get lured away by the things of this world, dont become spiritually drowsy... *Rather stay alert in prayer...*
- *Could say here that prayer helps keeps us from being pulled away by the things of this world!*

One of the ways we do this is praying prayers of **thanksgiving...** **Thankfulness and gratitude** have been a theme for Paul... *The Gospel should make us grateful people...*²

- *Thankfulness combats discontentment, discontentment is the root of all kinds of sin...*

¹ Tim Lucas, *Honest To God*.

² Tony Merida, *Faithful Saints*

So when we *stay alert in prayer with thanksgiving* it keeps our focus on who God is and reminding us of what He's done for us...

- Prayer plays a vital role, helping us thrive spiritually!

Verse 3 then Paul says this:

3 At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, **4** so that I may make it known as I should.

Paul's asking for them to pray for an open door for the gospel...

This is so important for us to see... What we have to understand is that prayer is the starting line for the advancement of the gospel...

- Prayer is like a **swiss army knife**- there are so many ways to use it and so many things that God does through it... Here we see it's the advancement of the gospel!

In Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor: 2:12...

The wording of an **open door** is used- and in each one, what we see is that **God opens** a door for the advancement of the gospel...

And what Paul is showing us here is that **prayer is the means by which God opens the door for the advancement of the gospel**...

- Every major awakening in the Bible and in History was preceded by prayer...

Samuel Zwemer: *The history of missions is the history of answered prayer... I am convinced that when we stand before God...we will discover that every soul ever brought to a knowledge of Christ was in some way related to intercessory prayer.*

Here's my question, do we really believe that God's the one who opens up doors for the gospel to advance, do we really believe that God opens up hearts?!?

Do we pray like that?!?

- Do we ask God to open a door in our city?
- Do we ask God to open a door at our work?
- Do we ask God to open the door of people's hearts?

Example: prayed for my best friend for 10 years...

I wonder if the reason why the gospel isn't advancing more through us is because we're not asking God to open up doors?!?

- A great product here, won't do it, we need the power of God...
- A great missions plan won't do it we need the power of God...
- An incredible vision won't do it we need the power of God...

*When's the last time you prayed for God to open up a door for our church? When's the last time you prayed for God to open up the door of someone's heart?

You want to see God move- we have to become a people of prayer...

- I say all the time that our prayer team needs to be largest and fastest growing team at our church! Because we ride on the backs of prayer!

One other nugget here that Paul says that's really encouraging as a part of this is he asks for them to **pray that he would present the gospel clearly**...

- If anyone should be able to nail this it's him! If he needs prayer for this how much more do we need to be praying for it as well?!?

When is the last time you've prayed this?

- Some of you struggle with sharing the gospel- my question is how much do you pray about it?!?

It's the simple things like what Paul's holding up that we so often overlook and yet they have such a massive impact!

Alright now Paul's going to make a big shift...

Almost everything in this letter has been looking inward within the church... Now Paul's going to shift here to looking outward, outside of the church...

Look at verse 5:

5 Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.

A couple of things here: Paul says act wisely toward outsiders- **BTW:** I love how it's implied that your walking with non-Christians... He doesn't instruct them to engage, he's giving instruction as they do it!

Here's what he's saying when he says act wisely: Don't let non-Christians pull you away from the **truths** and **implications** of the gospel... Use wisdom...

Make the most of the time: Time is of the essence.. You have a short window of time here on earth, make the most of it... God has put you where you are for the purpose of being an ambassador of Christ...

- Leverage the time has given you to share the gospel and make disciples!

Verse 6:

6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

Paul is saying be gracious and winsome...

Example: How to make the best steak...

- The best steak just has salt on it... It enhances the flavor...

This idea of **season with salt:** He's not using it in the preservative sense... He's using it to point to making your conversation flavorful, enjoyable, attractive, winsome...

- That you know how to get into a conversation...
- That you're not boring dry and dull...³

³ Ibid.

Don't let your personality be an excuse... Find your lane and run in it... Every person is interesting because you have been uniquely created by God...

Be you... Look to relate through how God's made you...

- *Allow your interest in the gospel to make you interesting!*

This goes against the **give them truth** stance that so many have...

- People love to drop anchor on the give them truth in the nbad sense... you're a sinner... *They know!*
- *But where the miss is, is the truth of who God is and what Jesus has done.. The beautiful side of the gospel...*

Know how to answer them: means you're asking intentional questions to draw out things in their life to get to the gospel.. All of this was written with a missional lens...

Look for natural bridges to the gospel...

- Look to relate... Point to your hope, your drive, your motive, your perspective and framework of life in light of Jesus and the benefits that come from it...

Ok, now Paul's going to wrap up with his letter by giving a shout out to the crew and there's a cool implication to this what I'm going to show you on the back end, but let's walk through this quickly...⁴

Verse 7:

7 Tychicus, our dearly loved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and so that he may encourage your hearts.

⁴ Sources for info/insights gathered in this upcoming section from: Tony Merida, *Faithful Saints*, Ed Gravley, *Lesson 8*.

Tychicus is the one who's delivering the letter back to Colossae- Epaphras reported what's going on to Paul, but he ends up staying and Paul send back **Tychicus**.

9 He is coming with Onesimus, a faithful and dearly loved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

Onesimus was a slave that had done something wrong and run away from his master, who lives in Colossae his name is **Philemon** (a book of the bible written about this)... **Onesimus** had gotten saved and is coming back with **Tychicus**... *He is one of you!*

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, as does Mark, Barnabas's cousin (concerning whom you have received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), **11** and so does Jesus who is called Justus. These alone of the circumcised are my coworkers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Aristarchus - was a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey... Had been through a lot with Paul, riot, ship wreck... *My guy right there...*

Mark - the cousin of Barnabas, companion on 1st missionary journey, later Peter's associate... Cool story there because Mark is the reason why Paul and Barnabas split ways... Mark deserted Paul at one point... Paul didn't want Him to come on another journey and Barnabas did... Now Paul and Mark are good!

- God uses crooked stick... Wrote a book of the bible, back on mission here...

Jesus - a common Jewish name, a fellow worker in the kingdom of God...

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. He is always wrestling for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills. **13** For I testify

about him that he works hard for you, for those in Laodicea, and for those in Hierapolis.

Epaphras: Founder of the church in Colossae, prayer warrior... Also does ministry in the neighboring towns that are listed here...

- See a cool network of Churches...

14 Luke, the dearly loved physician, and Demas send you greetings.

Luke- Wrote the gospel of Luke and Acts... Was with Paul alot!
Cleaned a lot of wounds for Paul I'm sure!

15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her home.

See the importance of women in the bible here, specifically Nympha:

One of the many women in the NT that played an important role in the spreading of the gospel... She opened up her home for the church to meet!

16 After this letter has been read at your gathering, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. **17** And tell Archippus, "Pay attention to the ministry you have received in the Lord, so that you can accomplish it."

Archippus: My dude had to be surprised when his name came up!

- Probably the son of Philemon lives in Colossae...
- Important challenge to him here...

18 I, Paul, am writing this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Here's what I want you to see here at the end: Each of these people plays a role in the advancement of the gospel, and they do it through the local church... Is that true for you?

How are you participating in the mission of the gospel through this local church?

- Serving?

- Leading?
- Encouraging?
- Praying?
- Missions long term?
- Leveraging right where you are now?

Are you being faithful to fulfill **your ministry**?!?

Will you be defined by your career or your calling?!? These men were remembered by their faithfulness to their calling...

- Their work was not easy but it was worth it...
- We are here today because of their faithfulness, who will say that about you?!?

One other name in here: Demas verse 14: *didn't talk about him,*

- **2 Timothy 4:10:** *because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica...*
- *Will this be you?!?*

We have a new identity and a new mission: it starts with prayer and leads to faithfulness in our mission!

Conclusion [VAMP]

Gospel... Present and talk about the implications...

Some of you are here today and you're not connected to a local body...

- A Christian is saved from something to someone, Jesus... And being saved to Jesus means that you become part of His church- His body...
- Some of you need to take a step of commitment to become part of the local church...
- Some of you need to reorient in your commitment to this local church...
 - What we see here is not one foot in and one foot out, what we see here is a deep commitment to Jesus that plays out communally through the church!

- The church is a movement of people who are believing and beholding Jesus!
- Some of you need to become part of that!

Some of you are here and you're not a believer... When you look at what a Christian is called to be in the book of Colossians, none of it characterizes your life...

- You've been around religion, you grew up in church or around the church, ***you've been in proximity to the things of Jesus but you've never surrendered to the person of Jesus...***
- Knowing about Jesus, praying a prayer, being a good person, none of those things save you...
- This morning there are some of you here that need to surrender to Jesus for the first time...
 - You need to be saved from your sin and saved to the person of Jesus!

Pray

