

Praying to Share Jesus

Colossians 4:2-6

Key Verse 4:2-3

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains."

Since we are studying 6 series of topical study, the first message was God is love. He showed his love among us by sending his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Last week, we studied the work of the Holy Spirit which is our power source to do the work of God. Today, we are going to study about "prayer". It requires deep and wide knowledge, and experience of prayer, but we concentrate on Colossians 4: 2-6.

1. Devote yourselves to prayer (2)

Paul wrote this letter to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse, he wrote this letter with his own hand while he was in chains. He was in chains because he had proclaimed the gospel of Christ. Let's read verse 2. "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Prayer is a conversation with God in Jesus' name. Prayer is the measurement of our faith. Prayer helps to focus our lives just like a magnifying glass focuses the sun light and give it power to burn paper.

What does it mean to devote yourselves to prayer? The meaning of "devote" is to dedicate or set apart. Many people devote themselves to athletic sports for the Olympics, or to study to gain a PhD. Likewise, as Christians we must devote ourselves to prayer.

In light of several Bible verses, we want to learn how we can devote ourselves to prayer. Epaphras was always wrestling in prayer for fellow Christians in Colosse. (Colossians 4:12) As Jacob wrestled with God at the Jabbok River, Epaphras always wrestled in prayer. When we come to God in prayer, Satan always hinders our communion with God by putting all kinds of human thinking in the way, reminding us about what happened yesterday making it hard for us to concentrate on prayer. In order to overcome Satan's hindrance, we have to be ready to wrestle in prayer so that we can be victorious. It's like hard labor but worth the struggle.

Samuel devoted his life to prayer for his people as an intercessory prayer servant and shepherd. (1 Samuel 12:23) When he failed to pray for his people, his heart was convicted as if he committed sin against God. Since God called me as a intercessory prayer servant, and shepherd for the lost souls in the campus, God gave me great desire to have the same attitude of that of Samuel that I want to devote my whole life to prayer for campus students, beginning with IIT campus. When I did not make time with God in prayer in the morning, God convicted my heart as if I committed a great sin against God.

Jesus is a good example as one who devoted himself to prayer. Though he is God, he humbly came to God as his Son in prayer. Jesus prayed not only for special occasions such as before the calling of the 12 disciples, or before his crucifixion, but also he prayed on a regular basis.

Jesus had worked very late at night to preach the good news of kingdom of God and healing the sick. The next morning, he did not make any excuses having slept late, but he started the day with

prayer. He devoted himself to prayer. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed." (Mark 1:35)

Isolated from his disciples, from the crowds, Jesus intentionally made time and found a quiet place in order to devote himself to prayer, and met God alone. Through devotion in prayer, he had deep communion with his Father, knowing his Father's will and plan which is the world salvation ministry, and having a very close co-working relationship with his Father in details.

What about us? Do we devote ourselves to prayer? God gave us 24 hours a day to everyone. How many hours do we set apart to prayer: 10 min, 30 min, 1 hour, 2 hours or none? I used to get up 10 min before going to work, rushing to leave the house. When I start the day without any word of God or prayer, I feel like I am going in to a spiritual war without having any weapons. I worked hard by depending on my own will power at the hospital, for the ministry, and at the end of the day, my body, and spirit were drained, exhausted, filled with complaints, ready to shout at anybody around me. It is like to clean the carpet with a vacuum cleaner that is not connected to the power source, the electricity. It looked like the carpet was cleaned, but nothing was done, the dirt was still in the carpet.

God did not abandon me, but he had mercy on me, and sent the Holy Spirit, to lead me to repentance of spiritual ignorance, laziness, stagnation and helped me to make a decision of faith to offer the first hour of the day to God, to devote myself to prayer. Gradually, God restored my prayer life to make it on a regular basis. I set my alarm clock at 5 AM regardless of my bed time, God helps me to get up every morning, attend the 5:30 morning prayer meeting, and after 2 by 2 prayers, I want to meet God alone in the small storage room. That is the time I can have deep communion with God, having a love confession to God as a beloved daughter to my Father, privileged princesses in my Father's kingdom, Sovereign Lord and servant, shepherd and sheep. During devotional time in prayer, God pours out his spirit, wisdom, love, inspiration, power, strength, and spiritual authority.

Let's read Verse 2b. "being watchful and thankful." The attitude of our heart should be watchful and thankful when we pray. Watchful means continual spiritual alertness, being very sensitive, being alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Being watchful in our personal spiritual life so that we can know what is going on in our lives and in the lives of others. We cannot afford to miss or ignore any of God's work so we have to be watchful.

Also being thankful is an essential element to prayer. Be thankful for God's grace, and his unconditional love for sinners. Giving thanks in all circumstances, this is God's will for us. Being thankful guides our heart open to the Holy Spirit, but complaining leads our heart open to evil spirits. We devote ourselves to prayer with the right attitude of heart, being watchful and thankful so that the Holy Spirit can work and dwell in our heart, so that we can have deep communion with God.

2. What do we have to pray for? (3-4)

Let's read verses 3-4. "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly,

as I should." Paul was able and experienced Gospel worker, but he did not depend on his own ability, his own zeal, or his own plan, but he humbly asked coworkers in Colosse to pray for him. He believed in the power of prayer that God will answer the Saints' prayers. What did he ask to pray for?

First, Paul asked to pray that God may open a door for the message. We cannot get in the house unless the door is opened for us. Our heart is the door for the gospel. Jesus stands at the door and knocks, if any one hears his voice and opens the door, he will come in and eat with us and we with Him. (Rev 3:20)

While Paul was in prison, his actions were restricted, but the message of the gospel could not be confined by the Roman authority. So he asked the others to pray for him so that God may open the doors of the hearts of others who were with him as fellow prisoners and even the prison guards so that he may proclaim the mystery of Christ to them too. We must also pray for ourselves too, so that God may open the doors of many students' hearts so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ this upcoming semester at IIT campus. It is impossible for us to open the door of another's heart. Only God can open people's heart. So we have to devote ourselves to prayer asking God to open students' hearts, so that we can proclaim the mystery of Christ.

Also, door refers to the door of a country. Also this door can only be opened by God. Let us pray that God may open the door of Muslim countries and Communist countries so that our missionaries can proclaim the mystery of Christ freely someday.

Some of us remember, back in the 1990's how much we prayed for Russia. At that time, the iron door of communism was still tightly closed. No one could imagine that the door would be open for the gospel, but we prayed with faith. We prayed persistently without giving up. As our prayer, we ate Russian bread, drank Russian tea, Jim Rabchuck sang "Moscow Nights" at every Friday meeting and students danced a Russian dance at our Christmas worship service and every UBF, HBF and CBF conferences. We prayed persistently for 10 and amazingly God answered, and He opened the Iron door of communism so that the gospel could be preached. We thank and praise God who answered our persistent prayers for Russia. Since then, God opened the door wide open and He sent many missionaries to Russia, and the mystery of Christ, the gospel, has been preached to many students who have been raised as Jesus disciples and spiritual leaders.

Second, Paul asked to pray for him that he may proclaim the gospel clearly (4)

Verse 4 says, "Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." When Paul was free, he had preached the gospel boldly, without compromising; he was not intimidated at all even before the king as he should have been. Even in the prison, he wanted to proclaim the gospel as clearly as he could. So he asked for believers to pray for him that he may proclaim the gospel clearly and boldly. There was a danger that he could be intimidated by the Roman authority that would cause him to withdraw into himself with a very low profile. But he challenged the hostile environment to proclaim the gospel clearly, without compromising. This is our mission to give prayer support for our missionaries in Muslim countries, China, North Korea, and especially the new pioneering ministry such as Ison Hong and Vincent in Malaysia so that they can proclaim the gospel clearly holding on to the core of the gospel, without compromising or being intimidated, and not

withdrawing themselves from any situation. Also we must never forget to pray for us in America and ourselves too so that we can proclaim the gospel clearly to the students of IIT campus this upcoming fall.

3. Be wise (5-6)

Let's read verses 5-6. "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Outsiders means non-believers. God wants us to be wise all the time so that we may not miss any opportunities to win every possible soul to Jesus that we can. In order to win one soul to Jesus, Christians have to be wise to make the most of every opportunity. For missionaries, to overcome language problems and cultural barriers, they must be wise with the gospel. As I prepared this message, I realized that my English had to improve. I have to master it so that I can share Jesus with IIT students. I also have to be wise in the way I act toward students in order to win them over to Jesus. It wise for me to master the language so that I can make the most of every opportunity. Please pray for me, as well as the missionaries in foreign countries, so that we may master the native language and overcome cultural barriers.

Also, our conversation should always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, this is another way of being wise to win souls to Jesus. When we talk, what we say comes from what is stored in our hearts. If our heart is filled with the grace of God and the word of God, our conversations will always be full of grace and the word of God. But if our heart is not full of God, then our conversations will be full of dark things. When my heart is filled with the word of God and someone touches me, I react with the word of God. But if my heart is filled with complaints, anger, filthy language, I react with complaints and anger and filthy words come out from my mouth. We must get rid of ungodly things from our heart such as: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language (Col 3:8) Instead, we have to store the word of God by memorizing, reading the word of God in daily basis as our routine. After memorizing 1 John 4:4-21, the word of God is stored in my heart that it comes out at any time; convict my heart with word of God.

Our conversation should be seasoned with salt. Salt preserves food from spoiling, and preserves my life, other's life, and society from being corruption. Food seasoned with salt is very tasty and delicious. God calls Christian to be salt of the earth that we have to be a salty Christian so that our society, our country can be preserved by our salty Christian. If salt loses its saltiness, it is no longer good for anything. Our conversation should be seasoned with salt, as tasty, flavored conversation with truth of God.

How can we be salty Christians seasoned with salt? Salt is the truth of God. When we live by obeying the word of God, we can be salty Christian, and our conversation can be seasoned with salt. How can we be wise? How can the door be opened? How can we proclaim the mystery of Christ clearly? This is the answer. We have to devote ourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. I sincerely pray that God may send us the Holy Spirit so that we may devote ourselves to prayer so that God may open the door to the IIT campus and enable us to share Jesus clearly this fall.