

Colossian 3 Series #13

“Devoted to Prayer”

For in Jesus all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and you are in Him who is the head of all rule and authority having been made full, in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh (old self) by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 2:9-12

Being a Christian goes beyond just believing a particular statement of faith. It goes beyond agreeing to the values of the “club” charter. That only makes you “Christin-like”. True Christians are those who have been supernaturally transformed at the core of their being. This is a resurrection by the working of God as glorious as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In light of such an instantaneous transformation at the core and the promise of complete transformation of soul and body, Paul calls for a corresponding response. The ten subsequent instructions are impossible without this internal transformation.

Since God transformed our core in keeping with His nature, it naturally follows that we would live differently.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

- 1. Pursue (seek) and Ponder (Set your mind) things above i.e. things of eternal nature.**
- 2. Purge (Put off) the mental programming and behaviors of the old self 3:5-11**
- 3. Put on (adopt) the new thinking and behavior of the new self 3:12-14**
- 4. Permit (continually) the peace of Christ to rule your heart with gratitude. Col 3:15**
- 5. Permit (continually) the word of Christ richly dwell within you. Col 3:16**
- 6. Portray (represent) Christ in EVERYTHING we say and do 3:17**

Last week’s sermon in a sentence...

Gratefully represent Christ to the world in everything we do and say.

God calls us to live as highly specialized ambassadors of the Kingdom of Christ.

Earlier Paul told the Colossians...

give 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. Colossians 1:12-14

Not only are we citizens of the kingdom of Christ currently living in a foreign culture, but we are deeply loved and divinely equipped ambassadors representing the values of our new kingdom by words and deeds and encouraging defectors of the kingdom of darkness.

Represent Christ by our Christ-like INNER CHARACTER

Represent Christ by our Christ-like DEEDS

Represent Christ by our Christ-like WORDS

Represent Christ by our Christ-commissioned MESSAGE AND MISSION

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; AS the Father has sent Me, I also send you." John 20:21

7. Pattern the household after God's blueprint 3:18-4:1

- **Wives** submit to husbands

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Colossians 3:18

- **Husbands** love wives without bitterness

Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Colossians 3:19

- **Children** obey your parents in all things

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Colossians 3:20

- **Fathers** do not provoke you children

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Colossians 3:21

The word translated "discouraged" is to be without passion.

Fathers don't suck the passion for life out of your children by how you treat them or by neglecting them. Ephesians adds the positive side of this admonition.

Fathers, don't stir up anger in (provoke) your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

"Instruction" comes from the same word used in two other places in the letter. This is the word "admonish" or "to put into the mind or thinking".

- **Bondservants** serve as to the Lord

*Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And **whatever you do**, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Colossians 3:22-25

Here is another "whatever you do". This does not just apply to slaves but anyone who works for or serves another. It is never about just serving people. It is about serving God by serving people. How? With sincerity of heart, fearing God, working heartily, serving without expectation of earthly reward.

- **Masters** treat bondservants justly and fairly

Masters, furnish your bondservants with what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. 4:1

You are also accountable to someone. You are not free to do whatever you want.

8. Pray continually with alertness and thanksgiving.

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison, so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. Colossians 4:2-4

The term translated "devote yourselves" carries the idea of "courageous perseverance" "to persist obstinately in", "to endure even in the face of opposition", "enduring strength".

The fact that it is a command issued in the present tense only adds to the level of intensity already conveyed in the term itself. Paul calls for prayer to the greatest intensity language can communicate. Think Olympic athlete!

The early church greatly multiplied because of their devotion to not only prayers of all kinds, but to the apostles teaching, fellowship, and breaking of bread.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers. Acts 2:42

It was not just a mere occasional activity but continual devotion. Paul called for continual prayer with thanksgiving from the Ephesians 6:18-19

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints... Ephesians 6:18

The text indicates that prayer is the means by which we keep alert to temptation and difficulty. “stay alert”! Paul also affirms that prayer should always be offered with an attitude of thanksgiving. Many of the Biblical calls to prayer include an added admonition to thanksgiving. An attitude of thanksgiving prevents demandingness with God. We let our requests be made known; we don’t demand He do whatever we ask Him. Job ran into trouble when he got to the place where he demanded that God explain Himself. At that point, God set him down and basically informed Job it was none of his business. Job abruptly came to grips with the sovereignty of God. He understood that God has no obligation to answer to anyone but Himself.

Then Job answered the LORD and said, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:1-6

There is nothing really complicated about this command. Given the fact that we have been made alive by the gracious King and privileged to be called to a glorious inheritance in this kingdom as beloved children of God, it goes without saying that we would want to engage in continual grateful conversation with our glorious King.

We talk to Him about how much we adore Him (praise).

We talk to Him about how grateful we are for His goodness to us (Thanksgiving).

We talk to Him about our personal struggles and needs while on assignment in a foreign and culture. (Personal petition)

We talk to Him about the mission and fellow ambassadors (intercessory prayer).

Paul even urged the Colossians to talk to God about the success of his mission. Specifically, he asked them to talk to God about an open door of opportunity to share the good news and then for the courage to actually speak what he should speak. It is one thing to have an opportunity to speak, and another to actually speak.

PRAYER

Prayer is not so mysterious at face value. Prayer is simply talking to God. God did not intend prayer to be viewed as a parachute to be opened only in case of emergency. Neither is prayer only a criminal cringing before an unmerciful judge. God designed prayer as a dependent child conversing with its loving Father expressing admiration and gratefulness and explaining their present need for help for family and friends. Put simply, prayer is continual communication between a needy creature and a loving Creator who also happens to be our Heavenly Father. Our moments in prayer should never feel like an obligation or duty that we dread to do. Rather, we should view prayer as a privilege that we desire to do because of the goodness of our God and the greatness of our need.

At times, we pray long and hard because the heaviness of our heart longs to linger longer to share our deepest hurts and seek His dynamic help. We pray longer because we want to pray longer, not because someone has convinced us that long prayers are more effective or somehow more spiritual. Talking to God should be as natural and enjoyable as it was to communicate with our spouse in the early days of courtship. Can you remember back that far?

Prayer or talking with God is not like a forced daily one hour conversation with the principal or boss that we would rather avoid. It is an ongoing conversation a beloved friend or partner who has demonstrated unconditional acceptance and has promised to share all their time and resources to accomplish mutual goals. The greater the personal need, the longer the desire to talk. The deeper and more secure the friendship, the greater the desire to share our deepest self.

The problem with many of us concerning prayer is that our relationship with God has not progressed to this level of intimacy. We are not sure of His love. In our approach, we are not certain whether we will get a helping hand or a frightening fist. We have not taken the time to get to know Him. Therefore, any admonition to pray more or pray longer only heaps more guilt and does little to motivate us to pray. It is similar to demanding we eat more squash because it is good for us when we really don't like squash.

Jesus spent His whole life in direct communication with the Father. Prayer was not part of His life, it **was** His life. I don't plan on launching into a whole series on prayer although we could probably use it.

The big question is, "Why should we pray?"

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER -- WHY PRAY?

Prayer is talking with God concerning all levels of life. It is talking about the same things we might share with any other significant person in our life.

Words of admiration and encouragement.

Words of gratitude.

Words expressing how we feel about that person.

Words expressing personal feelings and needs concerning ourselves and others.

Learning effective communication with God will continually be both simple and complex; understood and yet mysterious. Given the importance the Bible ascribes to prayer, you can expect Satan to continually try to thwart it. Satan may allow us to talk to men about God. But he gets nervous when we begin to talk to God about men. Satan may even condone reading our Bibles. But he cringes when we pray about what we read. Satan may even encourage us to get involved in some ministry. But he will fight against a ministry that knows the power of persistent prayer. He knows that without prayer we will continue to function in the strength of the flesh. Seven days without talking to God makes one weak. Why should we pray?

I. PRAYER FACILITATES INTIMACY WITH GOD

Communication is a critical building block to developing intimacy with anyone. There can be no closeness without communication. No Intimacy without interaction. No relationship without relating. No walking together without talking together. No caring without sharing. Communication encompasses three crucial elements—talking, listening and understanding. If someone stops talking (honestly sharing) or someone quits listening and trying to understand, the walls of bitterness and misunderstanding soon arise and the quest toward intimacy becomes blocked. This is true concerning any relationship. It is equally true concerning our relationship with God.

1. I share of myself

Talking with my loving Father must flow out of the deeper levels of my soul.

I Share my general observations about life and events.

I share my opinions and thoughts and ideas.

I share my feelings

2. I learn of Him

I learn what He has done. I learn who He is, His character, His likes, His dislikes. I learn of His love for me. I realize His care. I learn of His plans and desires. Much of this comes from His letter to us (the Bible). Some comes through meditation and quietness before Him. Prayer, both public and private, is that communication that facilitates intimacy with God.

II. PRAYER FOSTERS HUMBLE DEPENDENCE

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. By designating prayer as the key that unlocks His wonderful heavenly storehouse of blessing, we are ever reminded of our total dependence on God. Christ instructed us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." The act of coming to God for the daily necessities of life, be they physical or spiritual, forever illustrates my dependence on Him for everything. It is when I become self-sufficient that I become cold toward Him. Jesus scolded the Laodicean congregation...

'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Revelation 3:15-18

God knows that if we are not continually dependent on Him for our daily needs, we will become arrogant and self-sufficient. When we become self-sufficient, we become ungrateful and cold toward God and the things that concern Him sometimes without even realizing it. When we, through our conversation with God, realize how weak we are, and how strong He is, we are better able to recognize our dependence on Him.

Why ask if He knows what I need already?

1--The very act of asking demonstrates the vital attitude of humble dependence necessary for Him to answer.

We generally know what our children need and want. Yet we desire their dependent relationship and are delighted when they ask and we are able to supply in response to those petitions. This builds relationship.

2 – Acknowledgment of helplessness and vulnerability deepens our sense of intimacy.

3--The act of asking builds relationship

The Western mind approaches the issues surrounding prayer through functional eyes. If God will accomplish it anyway, why pray. It gets done! If we arrive at a product, who cares about the process? Yet God is just as interested in the relational aspects of prayer as He is the final product. The process itself is as important to Him as the end product.

To the Western mind--

Since God knows everything anyway, there is nothing I can, or need to tell Him that He doesn't already know.

To the Eastern mind--

Since God knows everything already, I can talk to Him about anything. Just because God already knows what we need and what is going to happen is no reason to abandon the practice of asking for daily needs and expressing feelings. He delights in the sharing and petitions of His children. He seeks those who worship Him and serve Him in spirit and truth. (John 4)

III. PRAYER FURTHERS GOD'S ETERNAL WORK

God accomplishes **His** plan through **our** prayers. This is a massive mystery. Why would an infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing God subject the outcome of His plan to the cooperation of finite, weak, short-sighted and sometimes rebellious creatures?

It is because of His power that He can still accomplish His plan using such creatures. It is His compassion for His creatures that delights to include them in eternal matters. We play an intricate part in God's plan for the universe. We effect eternity by our prayer. Won't God act whether I pray or not? Does God's plan really depend on the prayers of neglectful saints? James seems to assert that possibility?

"You don't have because you don't ask." (James 4)

We do not see some things happen because we neglect prayer. We do not receive certain blessings because we fail to pray. There are many places in Scripture which illustrate the cooperation of the divine and the human in this eternal drama.

IV. PRAYER FORTIFIES THE SOUL AGAINST TEMPTATION

"Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41

Continual communication with the Father enables us to be alert to the schemes of the enemy. It keeps us connected to the commander and chief and the source of our strength. If we are talking and listening to God, there is less chance to hear from the enemy.

V. PRAYER FACILITATES PEACE IN THE HEART AND MIND

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

God promises that when we talk to Him about our anxiety to Him in prayer, His peace acts as a guard over both our heart and mind.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

Action?

Talk – Talk – Talk with God with alertness and thanksgiving.