

Day 170, Colossians 4

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on Christ's words, letting them flow out to others, and praying for open doors for ministry.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Romans 16:3, Colossians 3:16, Colossians 4:3, Colossians 4:12

Topics: "Christian Community", "Prayer Life"

Description

David Servant emphasizes the importance of letting the word of Christ dwell richly within us, teaching and admonishing one another with songs that are full of Jesus' words. He highlights the early church's focus on the Gospels and the significance of praying for open doors to share the mystery of Christ. Paul's mention of Epaphras as a man of prayer and the faithful brother Onesimus serve as examples of praying for the advancement of God's kingdom. The mention of Nympha having a church in her house underscores the value of small churches in making disciples.

Transcript

Because today's chapter in Colossians is a little sparse in content compared to the previous chapter, I'd like to begin today by returning to something Paul wrote in chapter 3:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (3:16).

As I have so often said during our journey through the New Testament, it was not the epistles that were the early church's focus. Most of the Christians of Paul's day, for example, never read his letter to the Colossians, or the majority of his other letters. What we are currently reading was intended to be read only by the Christians in Colassae and Laodicea (4:16). The early church was focused on what we find in the Gospels---the words of Jesus---and so they should have been, because His words were what He said we should focus on (Matt. 28:19-20). Thus the rationale for Paul's admonition to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (3:16).

One reason we are all to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within us" is so that it can then flow out of us to others, and particularly to others in Christ's body. Even the songs we sing when we gather should be full of Jesus' words, so that they teach and admonish all who are present. Sadly, so many modern "worship" songs---in contrast to many great hymns of the past---are light and fluffy, containing very little substance that might teach or admonish anyone. Compare the lyrics of Holy, Holy, Holy to the lyrics of That Guy in

the Sky. (Not actually a song title, but you know what I mean!)

Paul mentions prayer several times in today's reading, and his words help us understand what we should be praying for. He requests that the Colossian believers pray that God would open a door "for the word" so that Paul and his companions might "speak forth the mystery of Christ" (4:3). God is the one who opens doors of opportunity for the gospel, and He often does it through the supernatural power of the Spirit. As we have studied Paul's ministry, we have observed that phenomena repeatedly. And why did God open all those doors for Paul? Obviously, prayer had something to do with it. May I request that you pray for open doors for me to minister God's Word? And why not pray the same thing for yourself while you are at it?!

Paul names Epaphras, who was perhaps the apostolic founder of the church in Colassae, as a man of prayer who always labored earnestly for the Colossian believers, that they might "stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (4:12). There is another valid prayer request.

In both Paul's requests for prayer and Epaphras' prayers, it was the advancement of the kingdom of God that was in view. Compare those prayers with the requests often listed in church bulletins or mentioned at prayer meetings. We should be praying prayers that align with the words, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!"

Paul also mentions a man named Onesimus who would be traveling with Tychicus to Colossae to deliver this very letter to them (4:9). According to Paul, Onesimus was a "faithful and beloved brother" (4:9). Don't forget his name, because he is the focus of Paul's letter to Philemon, which is next on our reading list, and which was written at the same time as Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians. Onesimus was a runaway slave whom Paul had won to the Lord in Rome, an "open door" during his imprisonment!

A lady named Nympha, who apparently lived in Laodicea, had a church in her house! She is not the only one (see Rom. 16:3-5, 14-15; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philem. 2). As far as we know, most churches met in houses during the first three centuries of the church. Little churches are nothing to be ashamed of! They are great places to make disciples!

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