



Growth Group Questions: May 28, 2023: “The Work of God and Prayer”

Context

The apostle Paul loved to come up with lists. He didn’t just talk about being clothed in righteousness in chapter 3, but goes on to describe exactly how we are to clothe ourselves (see v.12). In this chapter Paul calls the Colossians to be diligent in prayer, and he adds some qualifiers to that. Pray persistently, pray watchfully and pray thankfully. More lists!

The Colossians were to be devoted to prayer. This was to be a characteristic, or marker, of their lives. Along with being devoted, though, they were called to be watchful. They were to pay attention the world around them, as well as to their own lives. It is easy for us to lose our way and “not sleeping” keeps us attentive to the things of God. Finally, prayers should be marked with a sense of thankfulness. We don’t just pray for victory, but we pray from a place of victory. Paul understood this and encouraged the believers to pray with thanksgiving because of the work that Christ had accomplished on the cross.

Paul also wanted the believers to pray for him and his outreach efforts. He knew the importance of people praying for him. He knew that we go further together and that we really do need one another.

As we move into verse 5, Paul talks about living wisely in the world. He offers three more ideas about what living our faith in the world is to look like. Our behavior around non-believers matters. The world does notice how Christians live, and when we do not honor Christ with our actions, we do a disservice to the kingdom of God.

Paul says we should not miss opportunities to share Jesus (v.4) and finally, Paul talks about the way in which we speak (v.5). He encourages the believers to make sure their conversations are full of grace and seasoned with salt. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13) Jesus had shared that his followers were the salt of the earth and their task was to preserve enhance his message of good news. Paul uses this same image in challenging the early church to “season” their words with “salt” as they shared the message of Christ.



Scriptures and Quote:

Colossians 4:2-6

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ 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. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Psalms 42:1-2

¹ As the deer pants for streams of water,^{[[SEP]]}
so my soul pants for you, my God.^{[[SEP]]}
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.^{[[SEP]]}
When can I go and meet with God?

Matthew 26:36-41

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." ⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

2 Corinthians 6:3

³ We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.

Ephesians 4:29

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

"He (Tim Keller) didn't fight a culture war against that Manhattan world. His focus was not on politics but on "our own disordered hearts, wracked by inordinate desires for things that control us, that lead us to feel superior and exclude those without them, that fail to satisfy us even when we get them." He offered a radically different way. He pointed people to Jesus, and through Jesus' example to a life of self-sacrificial service." - David Brooks (New York Times)



Questions:

1. In Colossians 4:2, the Apostle Paul tells us to “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? What does that look like to be devoted to God in prayer?
2. Pastor Paul said that when the Apostle Paul told us to be “devoted to prayer,” it was not a suggestion but an imperative. Why is prayer so important to the life of a Christian?
3. What other Bible verses speak of the importance of prayer in our lives?
4. In Colossians 4:2 and again in Matthew 26:41, we are told to “watch and pray.” What does it mean to “watch and pray”?
5. In 2 Corinthians 6:3, the Apostle Paul tells us to “put no stumbling block in anyone’s path so that our ministry will not be discredited.” What does this mean? What type of stumbling blocks might we inadvertently put in the paths of others and how might they discredit our ministry as Christians?
6. What does it mean to “let your conversation be always full of grace” and “seasoned with salt”? (Colossians 4:6)
7. Pastor Paul told us that it was important for us to point people toward Jesus. What does that mean? How do you point someone to Jesus?
8. Pastor Paul also said that if we do not devote ourselves to prayer, we will struggle to point others to Jesus. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
9. If we are to be devoted to God in prayer, we must seek to grow in our prayer lives. What are some ways in which we can strengthen our prayer lives? What are some things you have done that you believe have helped you to be more devoted in prayer?

