

1-8-23

Colossians 4:7-18.

Our challenge for 2023:

Speaking to God about Ourselves and Others.

- **Being devoted in it.** Aiming to be faithful about it. **“Pray without ceasing” 1 Thess. 5:17**
- **Being vigilant in it.** Vigilance means to be watchful, attentive, aware, being alert, eyes open, against spiritual drowsiness or distracted. **“Watch and be sober” 1 Thess. 5:6**
- **Remembering/reminding oneself to pray with thankfulness.** Gratitude is a stimulus to prayer. When we see answers to prayer, we will pray more. God has given us so many things. We can thank Him for His presence, His provision, His pardon, His promises, and for His purposes.
- **Ask for God for open doors to share the gospel.**
- **Ask for clarity.**

Speaking to Others about God.

- **Be Wise. “Walk in wisdom”** To be wise in the way we walk means that we’re careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the gospel. When we pray, God will give us open doors. Let’s not shut them by our behavior.
- **Looking for Opportunities. “Redeeming the time”** Am I making the most of the opportunities I have every day? I need to try to accomplish as much spiritual good as I can in all my relationships.
- **Be Gracious.** We need to be more like Jesus, who was the perfect embodiment of both truth and grace. Even when He dealt with sin, He spoke words of grace.

Luke 4:22, “And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph's son?”

- **Be Refreshing.** Salty speech makes people thirsty for more. We should be talking about Christ in a way that makes someone’s mouth water! Be appetizing!
- **Be Ready.** We must resist being the same as the world, so when we mix it up with others, as believers we are to set the standard, be different, in a humble, lowkey way. And be ready to give the answers that they are looking for.

How many made these their New Year’s Resolution? Many of us probably need to hit the reset, and that is ok!

I spent 3 years reading, researching, interviewing, and writing about God’s Church and how I see it today. It was truly fascinating, enlightening and I learned a few things, and this morning we will look at one of those things I learned.

You ready to be impressed, and beside yourself?

We Need Each Other. (Bam!) God designed His Church in a way that we need each other. God never intended His people to come into a building, put money in the plate, have no interaction with each other, say hello and get out. One of God’s purposes for His Church is to meet our needs, and I know this

will be hard for some of us to swallow, but He knew we would need each other. We cannot do it by ourselves. Some try to do it by themselves (they aren't the sharpest knife).

1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." ESV

Read verses 7-18.

Observations:

1. Paul did not operate alone.
 - According to Warren Wiersbe, Paul mentions over 100 people by name in his New Testament letters. In **Romans 16**, there are 26 people listed. Here, in **Colossians 4**, he mentions 10 individuals. Paul was not a lone ranger but functioned as a member of a team.
2. Friendship is part of discipleship.
 - Our sanctification should extend to all our relationships. As we live out the supremacy of Christ in our lives, it will affect our interaction with others. In fact, our friends can help us grow. The church was created to be a community of interdependent people.

Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

3. People are more important than plans/programs.
 - It's important for us to remember that ministry always flows along relational rivers. I've made mistakes when I've put programs above people.
4. People being different is beneficial to us.
 - Included among Paul's friends are a doctor and a runaway slave. He had friends who were Jewish in background and others who didn't even know who Abraham was. He was closer to some than others, some were givers, and a few were goers, several were old, and a handful were new, some were up to the task while others bolted from their beliefs.

What can we give to each other? How can we be the type of friends that God desires us to be?

I. We Must be Faithful.

- Paul lists off 10 faithful brothers, 5 Jewish and 5 Greek in **verses 7-18**. Tychicus (**verses 7-8**) had been with Paul for several years. He accompanied Paul from Ephesus (**Acts 20:4**) as he returned to Jerusalem and possibly was a citizen of Ephesus. He had labored there with Paul for those three years. Tychicus was to carry the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians (**Eph. 6:21-22**). This man had a long and dangerous journey ahead of him
- Onesimus (**v. 9**) was the runaway slave of Philemon, whom Paul had won to Christ. The apostle was now sending Onesimus back home to Colosse. (**Philemon**) He and Tychicus traveled together, with Onesimus carrying the precious letter to his master, Philemon.
- Aristarchus (**v.10**) was a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (**Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2**). Being Paul's fellow prisoner meant either that Aristarchus attended Paul, or more likely, that he was incarcerated with Paul (probably also for preaching the gospel). Paul also called him a fellow worker (**Phile. 24**).
- Mark (**v.10**), the cousin of Barnabas, was a companion on Paul's first missionary journey (**Acts 12:25**). He was later Peter's associate (**1 Peter 5:13; Acts 12:12-13**). Though Mark deserted Paul on the first missionary journey (**Acts 15:37-39**), Paul here commended him (**Phile. 24**), as he did later (**2 Tim 4:11**).

- Jesus was a common Jewish name. This companion of Paul's was also called Justus ("righteous"), also a common name (**Acts 1:23; 18:7**).
- Epaphras (**verses 12-13**), Dr. Luke (**v.14**), friend, doctor, and author of the book of Acts (**Acts 1:1**), Demas (**v.14**) who eventually deserted Paul (**2 Tim. 4:10**), brothers at Laodicea, and Nympha, a woman who hosted church in her home, Archippus probably the son of Philemon (**Phile. 2**), was ministering in Colosse, possibly in Epaphras' absence. Paul exhorted his readers to tell Archippus to see to it that he completes the work ("the ministry") God had given him.
- Did you know that the chief virtue of a believer is faithfulness?

1 Corinthians 4:2: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."

- God does not ask us to be brilliant or beautiful but longs for us to be faithful.

II. We Must be Servants (of the Lord)

- Our chief responsibility is to be servants. What can we give to each other? First, be faithful, to God, to your family, to church, and to others. Second, be a servant of Jesus'. Where would Jesus be serving? In the community, His family, His disciples, and His church.
- All too often we are busy serving ourselves, our own selfish ambitions and have little time to serve anything or anyone else.
- Paul tells us how we can serve each other. Look at **verse 8**, do you see it? Testimonies of how God is moving. Or needs that are needed. Also, by bringing comfort to him, also in **verse 11**, **"they have proved to be a comfort to me."**
- When was the last time you were an encouragement or comfort to someone in the house of God, in His Church? Whether it was words, actions, or a shoulder to cry on. We need each other! We need to be an avenue of comfort.

III. We Must be Lifting Others in Prayer.

- **Read verse 12-13.**
- We have already met Epaphras in **Colossians 1:7**. He was the evangelist who first launched the church in Colosse and labored in teaching and shepherding as their first pastor. He is called a **"bondservant of Christ."** This word in Greek is better translated, **"slave."** A slave of Christ recognizes that all of one's possessions, aspirations, and time belong completely to Jesus.
- The **"laboring fervently"** is better translated as "wrestling or struggling". The verb "wrestling" can be translated, "agonized" and is the same word used for the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. This battle metaphor pictures prayer as a struggle.
- Notice that he's praying for the believers in Colosse that they would stand firm against the false teaching and that they would become mature in their faith, having the full assurance of eternal life by grace, not works.
- Prayer is hard work. Praying that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. He didn't pray only when it was convenient or when he had nothing else to do. Of the 10 people Paul lists in this chapter, only Epaphras is commended for his fervency in prayer. That doesn't mean that the others didn't pray but it does suggest that prayer was his major interest and ministry. Some of you here this morning is discovering that your primary ministry is prayer. May God bless you and increase your tribe! Keep doing what you're called to do.

IV. We Must Come Together.

- **Read verses 14-18.**
- We need each other and must come together for church, to do life, and to be reminded of God's Word.
- The letter "**from Laodicea**" may well have been the Book of Ephesians. Since the New Testament had not yet been assembled, the young churches circulated the different letters among themselves. Just as churches back then needed to respond to Scripture, so do we.
- We need to reflect Jesus. We need to live out loud for Jesus! Are you reflecting Jesus in an obvious and authentic way to those who don't yet know Him?
- Remember those who are suffering. Paul tells the Christians at Colosse in **verse 18** to "**remember my chains.**" Paul did not sit down with his laptop in a comfortable office when he wrote these words. You can almost hear the chains clanking on his manacled wrists as he writes. Friends, we often forget how much people suffered in order to bring the Word of God to us. As we learned from **Colossians 1:24**, when the gospel is carried to the ends of the earth, it is always accompanied with difficulty.
- Receive and Give Grace. Look at the last part of **verse 18: "Grace be with you."** Did you know that every single one of Paul's letters begins and ends with a word of grace? It's his trademark. These bookends of grace summarize the entire letter of Colossians.
- Recommit Your Life to the Supremacy of Jesus. I want to close this morning by giving you the opportunity to recommit yourself to Jesus. Do you need to receive grace for the first time, or do you need a fresh start? Jesus does not just want to be prominent in your life; He deserves to be preeminent. Is He?
- We're called not to outrun each other, but to run together. We need each other because we can't make it on our own. And we need Jesus, or our sins will consume us.

Conclusion

Why Church? Because we NEED each other.

How can I be a better brother, pastor, husband, father, or friend? Be faithful, to God first. Be a servant, one that sets the example, shares testimonies, and needs, and be a comfort, encouraging to one another. I need to be wrestle/struggle more in my prayer life.

Come together to be reminded of God's Word, and this will allow me to reflect Jesus. Remember those who are suffering. Receive and Give Grace. And recommitted my life to the Supremacy of Jesus.