

March 14, 2020 WholeLife Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2800 N Orange Ave Orlando, FL 32804
Paul's Letter to the ~~Colossians~~ Orlandonians: Matters of Prayer Colossians 4:2-6 by Andy McDonald

Twelve weeks ago, March 14 we began exclusive online worship. Here are some things I said that first week that I want you to hear again 12 weeks later.

Because of our concern for one another we are foregoing our regular assembly. I hope that you are sitting comfortably with your family or friends. Free of any normal Sabbath responsibilities ... that you are being still and knowing God.

I hope last evening as Sabbath arrived at your place you welcomed this time of rest. For me part of Sabbath is to go TV less and what a blessing to have space in my life to escape the never ending news about the virus, and simply rest in my Father's care.

One of my Dad's favorite songs was Day by Day and in the second verse are these words for us today: "The protection of his child and treasure, is a charge that on himself he laid. As thy days thy strength will be in measure, this the pledge that to me he made." God cares about each one of us. Despite the virus God is still in charge and our confidence and hope and stability is in him. Jesus invites us, Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Those words are ever true. Before the virus and during this time and all the way until he who started a good work in you brings it to completion.

Let's pray, Father right now I pray for the Holy Spirit to invade the Whole Life Church family wherever they are. Though we are physically separated in this time of crisis may you create in each of us a sense of connectedness, togetherness, unity in our mutual connection with you and your seeking a connection with us. May this time of worshipping at a distance remind us of the great gift we easily take for granted of the joy and privilege of life together. May we be inspired from this gap in direct fellowship to both seek it and commit more to it going forward. Now from your word to us in Paul's letter to the Colossians, remind us of the importance of prayer and how to best introduce others to you. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

Today is the last in our series of messages from Colossians so let me give a quick summary of our learnings from this book.

Paul reminds followers of Jesus Christ everywhere of what God has done.

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom, got us out of the pit we were in, and forgave our sins."

This is the essence of the gospel story. God's great kindness towards us sinners and what he has done for us.

We talked together about remembering our own story of hearing the wonderfully freeing good news and the lightness that came to us like we were walking on air. But that then complete in Christ, his full bucket of righteousness given to us, either we did it to ourselves or some well meaning saint told us that Jesus' bucket of righteousness was nice but not quite enough we needed to add something of our doing to it. And the lightness may have vanished. And when we tried to add something to Jesus completed work it just sloshed out some Jesus. We are complete only "in him."

The second week we recognized the beautiful truth that Jesus has reconciled everything in heaven and on earth to the Father through his blood on the cross, and this includes you and me.

Getting right with God isn't our work, IN CHRIST we are right with God because quite apart from anything we did, do, or will do God through Christ reconciled all things to himself.

Here's what God says through Paul in verse 22 of chapter 1 "As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault."

All of our perfection is in Christ. Life becomes increasingly complex, harder if you will, but it also becomes better. And the reality is that eye has not seen or ear heard, neither has it even entered our hearts what God has planned for us.

The God of scripture the God we discover in our Bibles ALWAYS invites, always calls to the future. Nostalgia longing for the way it was demonstrates a fear factor not a faith factor and this is a message we need from God in our world turned upside down.

The third week of this series we learned the value of suffering.

I said, when something like a pandemic arrives at our doors, all our hopes and plans and confidence in the idol gods of self-reliance come crashing down and maybe just maybe we turn to the real God.

And we shift from focus on our suffering to instead suffering, agonizing in prayer for others, that they might come to know about God's great kindness towards us sinners.

Because of what God has done for us in Christ we discovered the fourth week that we can live in freedom from rules. Rules and following rules can never get us right with God. We gravitate towards rules because we imagine we can follow them and get ourselves worthy of God.

Scripture is clear that following the law, following rules can never set us right with God, that is something he had to do. The rules are just to remind us of our need of God and his grace. All we need is Jesus, he is all sufficient.

Just a couple of weeks ago we were reminded of how we are to live in the world as people not held captive by the rules, but at the same time we have died with Christ to our old life and we have been raised with Christ and our lives are hidden in him.

And when we mess up, which we will, we don't throw in the towel. We don't beat ourselves up but we turn to Jesus. We must remember the little quote from Steps To Christ: "We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our short-comings and mistakes; but we are not to be

discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God.”

Why is this so? Why are we cast off and forsaken for messing up?

Because we are not saved by our good works and our obedience and we are not lost by our bad works our disobedience. Our salvation is the work of God.

Last week we were struck by the ignorance that can be ours in our 21st century understanding of things that to our ears sound almost shameful and repressive but to 1st century citizens were amazingly progressive.

With the proper understanding we could see that God calls his followers to treat others, wives, husbands, children, parents, masters, slaves, EVERYONE better than themselves because God loves all. And Christians are called to an ever enlarging circle of the collective we, tearing down the walls of us and them, making the world a better place for all of us.

Today we turn to just four verses that wrap up the teaching portion of his letter. Chapter 4:2-6

Devote yourselves to prayer. The word translated “devote” is a strong word meaning to have constant vigilance, perseverance, be persistent, pursue, be diligent.

Eugene Peterson in The Message paraphrases it “Pray diligently.”

NLT Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. NIV Being watchful and thankful.

I don’t ask this to condemn but to awaken and motivate. What grade would you give yourself on diligence, devotion to prayer with watchfulness and thankfulness?

It is always interesting when we devote ourselves to pray the subject matter of our prayers! If you are curious whether your prayers are self-centered, try writing a few prayers without mentioning yourself! It is very revealing about where our minds most naturally turn.

Paul seems to have one primary focus for our prayers. While he invites, “And pray for us too.” The prayer is really anything but self focused.

“Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. And remember to pray for us too, that God will open a door and give us many opportunities to preach the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that every time I open my mouth I’ll be able to make Christ as plain as day to them.”

I’ve been to lots of prayer meetings, and I’ve heard thousands of prayer requests but I can’t recall hearing requests of this variety.

Safe trips, blessed food, aunt Sue’s upcoming operation and uncle Bill’s smoking habit, and good weather for the picnic.

Opportunities to share the mystery of God’s great kindness for us sinners and to do so clearly? Not yet on the list!

In just a few minutes following this message we are going to share in what we've come to call communion. It is the common table, the common mission to serve. But it is "The Lord's table." Our community, our communion with one another. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.

In this amazing letter of Paul, he invites us to recognize our position in Christ that creates community and then to work for others to come into community with us.

It isn't something we make happen, it is truly God's mysterious work, but we get to help. His counsel might change abusive evangelism into a winsome type.

"Live wisely among those who are not Christian. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and effective. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation. And if you are gracious you will know how to answer everyone."

Our efforts to have others join with Jesus, to love people into a lifelong friendship with God Paul seems to imply is not about telling them stuff but graciously engaging with them so they have questions they want answered.

Paul is excited about the fellowship the communion of the saints at Colossae and at Orlando. He wants us to realize who we are in Christ, not beat ourselves up, love one another, and carefully invite others into our community.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination we celebrate the Communion Service at the end of each quarter. We are a month early but that is good. In the way Jesus instituted this service he modeled that all are welcome at his table. Even Judas was there. Perfection wasn't a requirement. That night Peter would deny Jesus, Judas betray him, and all the disciples who had sat at the table would desert Jesus and run.

At church when we celebrate this service in preparation we participate in Jesus institution of the washing of feet as symbol of humility and turning away from selfishness, self-serving, and self-righteousness. You may want to practice this in your homes now and if you don't you might talk about the meaning. Then we celebrate our Lord's work on our behalf recognizing his broken body and shed blood for us and his call for us to give our lives with him in ransom for many.

So come to the table of the Lord.

Video and Songs

Father we have shared in the recognition that our community is in what you have done for each other making us brothers and sisters of one shared loaf and one cup of sacrifice. Bless each one as we have shared in this time of unity and continue your miracle of making us one to work together to make your world a better place until the time when all things are made new. Amen

Home church. Private worship café Offering

Now bless us. Bless us in our role as creature and you as creator. Draw us into the unity that is ours with one another because of our un



What part of our series on Colossians did you feel was important for you to hear?

How do you resonate or not with our saying “all we need is Jesus”? Does something still say “but what about the rules?”

How important right now do you think it is to be reminded that nostalgia is fear based while looking to the future is an act of faith?

What do you think/feel about the idea that even when we are overcome by the enemy we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God?

How devoted to prayer with watchfulness and thanksgiving are you?

What would change in your thinking if we prayed for God to open doors for us to clearly share the mystery of Christ?

How would Christians reputation change if “evangelism” was more about listening and answering questions than persuading?

Who might God be wanting you to listen to and get answers for?



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