

Season of Prayer 2017

For State Missions and the Janie Chapman Offering
For State Missions, Missions Education, and Great Commission Living

Sermon Outline Pray, Proclaim, Permeate

Scripture: ² “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison – ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.” Colossians 4:2-4, ESV

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Let Me Be the One Colossians 4:1-6

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Colossians is an admonition to move from observance of rituals and ceremonies to living life as patterned by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Aware that there were elements of Jewish and Gnostic beliefs heavily influencing the culture, Paul wanted the Colossians to focus on the inward beauty of Christ and their relationship with Him and not the outward expressions of the religious rituals.

Paul had expressed in great beauty his adoration of the incomparable Christ in the beautiful hymn in Colossians 1:15-20. The Christological hymn establishes the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior of the world, creator of all and in whom all is held together. Nothing is needed outside of Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul moves through the first three chapters challenging one's personal relationship with Christ and personal relationships with family. In Chapter 4 he begins by challenging the masters to treat their slaves with the same love that their Master Jesus treats them. The underlying message is that masters and slaves should come together as fellow workers in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to all their families and acquaintances. When servanthood to Jesus Christ is understood by all, the focus can be on reaching those far from God with the Gospel of Christ.

Paul then transitions to present a challenge to everyone about serving Christ and living exemplary lives. He wants them to grasp how tremendous it is to be chosen by Jesus to work and serve in His Kingdom.

Imagine how a slave would have felt if his master chose him to be a partner in the Gospel enterprise with him. Every one of us loves to be chosen. Remember how nerve-wracking it was when teams were being chosen. We would stand there and in our mind we were crying out, "Pick me, pick me!" Remember the thrill of how great it was to be chosen. There was never a

better day than the one when we were chosen by the coaches or team leaders to be on their team. What a thrill it would be for our Lord if He could hear each of us say, "Pick me, Lord Jesus, pick me." What a great day it would be if we could leave this place knowing that we have been chosen to serve on the Lord Jesus' team and we have accepted the challenge! If we are to be the ones chosen, we will have to practice four disciplines:

I. Let Me Be the One Who PREPARES for Service

Whatever we do in life, we must spend time in preparation to be able to perform the task. Paul spent years in preparation by studying at the feet of scholars, learning on his own, and growing through experiences in business and life. Even in his old age, in prison, little hope of ever being released, he told Timothy, "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments." (II Timothy 4:13) Preparation helps us to be aware of what the Bible says, of what we need to repent, and to what particular duty we are to report.

Preparation is the discipline of life where we become disciples of Jesus. Discipleship is the process of life from our salvation to the grave whereby we are constantly seeking to learn more, walk closer and closer to our Lord and find ways to share our experience with others.

In preparation, we will want to read the Bible to let God speak to us through the experiences of others and allow His Holy Spirit to let us see the needs in our own lives. When we read and listen, we realize our sinful conditions and we seek forgiveness so we can be pure vessels as we seek to do His will. As we become prepared, we report for duty to do the things He has shown us through our time of preparation.

O Lord, let me be the one who is best prepared to do the greatest work there is to do.

II. Let Me Be the One Who PRAYS for Guidance

Never should we assume that we know all there is to know about prayer. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Paul always encouraged his readers to pray more and pray continually. He says in verse 2, "Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving." Prayer will first lead us to give thanks to the One who has given us everything - our health, our strength, our very breath, all we are! Pray for awareness as the doors open for the opportunity to share the Gospel. It is very important to pray for our awareness when the opportunity is before us and not like Jacob in Genesis 28:16, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it." God knows when and where the opportunities are. Our prayer is to be that we will not miss any opportunity that He places before us.

Praying for guidance sounds like the noble thing to do. Yet, when we understand the full scope of prayer, we know that it is more than telling God what our concerns are and praying for the things we need. Certainly prayer is this, but prayer is also allowing God the opportunity to speak into our lives and give us direction. It is true that God wants to reach the whole world, but we cannot reach the whole world. We can only reach our world - our sphere of influence. That is what we ask God to give us full awareness of.

Let me be the one who prays for extreme clarity of what God wants to show me. Let me be the one who is prepared and prays so I can proclaim...

III. Let Me Be the One Who PROCLAIMS Christ to the World

Few Christians would argue that the greatest gift ever is the gift of salvation. Therefore, for those of us who have received the gift, the message we proclaim to the world is simply how this great gift of salvation has changed our lives. Paul

refers to this as the mystery of Christ (v. 3). It is a mystery how God could love us so much and give us this great gift free of charge. Because we are firsthand recipients of the greatest gift ever, the proclamation should be natural for us to tell others what He has done for us.

Baptist missions and ministries have been energized by stories that have resulted from the gospel being proclaimed. The story of the Swahili language church in Spartanburg is just one example of how God takes one who is willing to proclaim and uses him for His glory. This story is a great example of how missions is first a state of being and then of doing. Once we are a genuine follower of Jesus Christ (being), we have to share by proclaiming what He has done for us (doing).

Preparation leads to prayer and prayer leads to proclamation and together these lead us to permeate every fiber of our network with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

IV. Let Me Be the One Who PERMEATES Every Fiber of My Network

We talk about our sphere of influence, our circles of concern, or our network. Whatever we want to call it, we must permeate every fiber of our network. Every person we touch should see that we are different; we are not and cannot be like others because of the difference Christ Jesus has made in our lives. Paul says in verse 5, we are to “walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time,” which literally means redeeming or buying up the time because it is so valuable. Don’t waste the time or opportunities we have to permeate darkness with the light of our Lord Jesus.

He also says that we are to permeate our network as salt permeates. Whatever salt touches, it affects. Whatever a Christian touches, it should affect. We permeate by sharing, sending, starting and serving. If each one of us takes our privilege as a slave of Christ seriously, we will eventually permeate the whole. That was Jesus plan and the reason He said we were the salt of the earth, yeast that would change the whole, and the light of the world.

Conclusion

Today, it is not a matter of what our brother or sister will do. It is a matter of how we will respond to what the Holy Spirit says to us in this moment.

Do you realize today that you have been chosen to prepare, pray, proclaim, and permeate the world? How wonderful it would be if every Christian today could live the prayer, “**Lord, Let Me Be the One!**”

Please note: In using this outline, add South Carolina facts provided to you on the State Missions Fact Sheet. Use stories found in the *Leaders Guide* throughout the sermon. Show clips from the 2017 Season of Prayer for State Missions DVD as appropriate.