



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 06.08.2023

“Remember my chains”

Preacher

Ps. Nathan Bean

Scripture

“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.

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant[a] in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our[b] circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews[c] among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.”



Colossians 4:2-11,18

Thought

As we reach the end of our focus on Paul's letter to the Colossian Church, we also read Paul's final remarks to the Church in Colossae. As with the rest of Paul's writings, there is much to learn from what Paul says, how he says it, and also the nature of the situation in which he is writing.

As we read through the final few verses of Colossians, Paul inadvertently makes a very important point; you can't do the Christian walk alone. From verse 7, right through to the close of his letter, he talks of other Christian brothers and sisters who are vital to his faith, and the faith of the Church. Paul had others investing into his life, strengthening his soul, encouraging and challenging him. We need to do the same! We all need people around us, not just people who agree with us, but people who have a passion for Christ and can help us on our faith journey. If Paul, one of the greatest writers of the early Church needed this, how much more might we?

Paul also reminds us of the importance of gratitude. As with last week's message, we are called to be both prayerful and thankful. These two concepts feed into each other, they go hand in hand. The more we pray, the more thankful we become, and the more we are thankful, the more we seamlessly enter into prayer with the giver of all good things.

Prayer generates gratitude, and gratitude folds back into prayer. It's an upward cycle of the Father helping us to understand what He is doing in the world, and us being thankful for His goodness in all situations and seasons.

When we are mindful about being thankful, it cultivates a spirit of gratitude. In a world where our default is to complain and criticise, thankfulness is medicine to the soul. A thankful spirit shuts down our complaining, our longing for more than we have or need, our focus on the small things. We stop complaining about the things that aren't right and are rather thankful for the things we do have.



Gratitude moves us from sitting back from the world and pointing out all the bad things, the ugly things, the not-so-nice things, to a position of seeking and finding the good that God is doing in the world and in our lives. True gratitude acknowledges that we can have a thankful spirit right now, regardless of circumstance or season. It's acknowledging the presence of God and His goodness in our lives and circumstances right now.

Paul exemplifies the heart of this in the closing verses of Colossians by mentioning that he is writing from a Roman jail. He did not lead his letter with this, He didn't plead for his personal needs., rather he asked for prayer so that people's hearts would be open. What if where you are, right now, is where God wants to bring his grace and power? Not when things change, not when things get better, not on the other side of a miracle - but right now?

Could it be that His grace is sufficient, and His power made perfect in weakness? Oh that we would have the wisdom to know the season we are in; To know when to pray for release and when to realise that God has grace and purpose in the midst of the shadows.

As Paul closes his letter to the Colossians, he turns to talk about having an answer for others. After writing extensively about the importance of understanding who Christ is and growing up in Him, He then turns to talk about having an answer for others. Not pushing and projecting on to those who haven't asked to hear, but being ready with a gentle answer as to why we have faith. As we journey with others and shine the light and love of Christ, they ask questions, and we answer. A transformed, thankful heart, enveloped with kindness and love is attractive. People want to know more, and so, as we become more Christlike, we naturally attract those around us to ask questions - and we need to be ready with answers.

Like salt, we enhance what is already there. Are things better because you're there? Does your life draw others towards Christ? Regardless of season and struggle , you are different. There is a life, a love, an attractiveness which isn't fake or manufactured, but comes from the deep well that only Christ can dig in a heart willing to be transformed into His likeness bit by bit and day by day.



And so we let the process happen. To look to the face of Christ and acknowledge His supremacy in our lives. To know His power, His transforming grace and to let it become a witness to others who desperately need to know the hope and grace of God.

As we continue to grow up into Christ, we are mindful of Paul's closing words - to remember his chains. To know that God is present in our situation, no matter how challenging, and He can do great things right here and now in the midst of the mess as we look to him, being changed day by day, clothing ourselves in His kindness and compassion, go out in joy, being led forth in peace, to make a difference in our worlds.

Discussion Points

1. If nothing in my world or situation ever changed or improved, what could I still be thankful to God for?
2. Who in my world challenges me, journeys with me and encourages me in my faith? Do I need to make proactive changes to develop this?
3. Why do you think people were attracted to Jesus? How do we best influence those around us in our worlds?

Personal application + Prayer

Lord,

May you use me where I am. Take this frail life and let it shine for You. May I know the wondrous fullness of Your love as it transforms me day by day, and may I ever be grateful for who You are. Let my life shine, and may I always look to You and point to You, whether in freedom or in chains.

Amen.