

Sermon Outline

“Continue Steadfastly in Prayer”

“Desperate” series, Part 4 – Colossians 4:2 – Joshua Harris – October 31, 2010

Main Idea: If we really believe that we can do nothing apart from Jesus (John 15:5), then we would pray more. Desperate people pray.

Colossians 4:2 – “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

Watchfulness in prayer is being aware of where I am in God’s bigger plan and what his priorities are.

1. The word for “watchful” means being awake or alert. This same word “watchful” is used in the New Testament in several places to talk about the return of Christ. We are to be alert and watching for Christ’s return (see Matt. 24:42 and 1 Thess. 5:2-3, 6).
2. Being watchful and awake means looking for and praying for God’s purposes to unfold during this time in human history. It means not being asleep spiritually and living as if more money and more comfort is what matters most. It means praying for more people to love and worship Jesus. It means praying for the tearing down of lies that oppose the gospel. It means praying for the fame of Jesus to spread into every nation of the world so that Jesus will return.
 - a. If our prayer list is all about getting a bigger house, a bigger vacation, and a diet that will make us skinnier, then we are sleepwalking our way through this life. We need to wake up and see what God’s priorities are.
 - b. We need to wake up and realize what is going on around us. There is a spiritual struggle for the souls of the people in your family and this community. There is a world dying in its sin. There are whole nations where tens of millions of people have no Christian witness, where people don’t have the word of God in their language. There is a devil who is destroying marriages with pornography and ruining children with molestation every day.
 - c. When we see the spiritual stakes, when we wake up and recognize that this life is not a game but a war, we will pray with urgency. It won’t be a boring endeavor. We will see that only God can rescue.
3. It is an incredible thing that God includes us in his work. He tells us to ask him to act. He tells us to cry out to him for justice and righteousness and revival to flood our world. But we will never pray these kinds of prayers if we’re not watchful, if we’re not awake to the spiritual realities of the day in which we live.

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Thanksgiving in prayer is having an eye for God's gracious activity in my life.

1. Thankfulness is closely tied to being watchful. Our watchfulness is not just watching for the attack of the enemy. We are also to be watchful for the gracious work of God in our lives.
2. God wants us to pray as people who are always on the lookout for the good God is doing. Do you see how this orients us to God? When we give thanks we acknowledge where God has already been at work. We remember that he's with us. We remember that he is acting.
 - a. The same can be true of our prayer lives. If we're only focused on whether or not God is answering our prayers, we will completely miss the ways that God is at work.
 - b. That's why our prayer needs to be watchful WITH thanksgiving. Thanksgiving makes us aware of the surprising and unexpected ways God is working in us and around us.
3. Prayer apart from watchfulness and thanksgiving can become self-centered duty and drudgery. Our prayers become small and we lose the sense of awe and wonder at the adventure God has called us to. But when we see God's greater purpose that we're part of, when we look with thankfulness for all that he's done and all that he will do, prayer becomes a joy and delight. There is nothing more amazing than participating in the work that our great God is accomplishing in his world.

Fellowship Starters:

1. What is your experience in prayer? What hindrances and obstacles do you experience when you try to pray?
2. Josh shared that being watchful in prayer meant being spiritually alert to what God is doing in the world. What do you usually pray about? How can you better align yourself with God's priorities in your prayers?
3. Josh shared that thanksgiving in prayer is seeing God's gracious activity your life. What is God doing in your life for which you can give thanks? How has God used even your trials and sufferings to produce spiritual good in your life?
4. What can you do to cultivate a heart that is desperate for prayer? How would you like to grow in both private and corporate prayer?
5. Take time as a care group to pray. Start off with remembering God's character. Take time to give thanks. Take time to pray for revival, for the lost, for the gospel to go forth and for specific needs in your group.