

A Pastor's Request

August 21, 2016

Colossians 4:2-9

We are close to the end of Colossians. We've asked, "How do we live the New Life (Continued)?" The New Life continues, or it stops being new. The New Life continues with gratitude.

We thank God for our change of address! The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us. We take his Good News into a desperate and dying world.

We can do that work only with good roots. With those good roots we receive power from the Holy Spirit to live like Jesus lives. That's the key to human life that is full and flourishing.

How does that full and flourishing life work out in our behavior? We ask and answer a simple question. Will Jesus say "Amen" to my actions? We get better answers when we fill ourselves with Jesus' word and worship. Paul applies this standard to some specifics in the Colossian community—to masters, fathers, and husbands in particular.

This is what the New Life (Continued) looks like. The Apostle Paul was many things: theologian, writer, crusader, and general pain in the lower back. But most of all, he was a pastor. We come now to his words as a pastor to the Colossian congregations. Pastor Paul now makes a request.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation. That is my request as your pastor as well.
Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation

First, make prayer a priority. "*Devote yourselves to prayer,*" Paul urges, "*keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.*" As you pray, he says, pay the most attention to reasons for gratitude.

We humans have a negativity bias. We give more psychological weight to bad experiences than to good ones. Some researchers assert that negative emotions have an impact close to three times stronger than positive emotions. This bias protects us from danger. It also primes us for unhappiness. Most of us have many, many reasons to give thanks.

So when you pray, say three words of thanks for every word of request or complaint. Pay attention to the good stuff.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation.

Second, Paul asks, pray for my ministry. "*At the same time,*" he writes, "*pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ...*"

I have that same request. I need your prayers daily. We are at a turning point in the life of Emanuel Lutheran Church. We are discerning where to go and what to do. Many times doors seem to close to us here for a variety of reasons. But many, many ministry doors are opening. It takes wisdom and patience to step through.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation.

Third, Paul asks them to pray for his welfare. He reminds them that he is in prison for the sake of the Gospel. Maybe he is tempted to back off or soften his preaching and teaching. He needs strength to continue his faithful work.

I am not in prison for the Gospel. But I do experience struggles and discouragement. These are tools of the Enemy to derail the great things that can happen here. So I need your prayers for my spiritual strength and welfare.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation.

Fourth, Paul asks them to reach the world outside the church. “*Conduct yourselves wisely towards outsiders,*” Paul advises, “*making the most of the time.*” It’s not their job to create offense or to raise barriers to outsiders. Instead, he urges them to take advantage of every opportunity to share the Good News with those outside the Church.

There’s no room for judgment, intimidation, or rudeness. “*Let your speech always be gracious,*” he tells them, “*seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.*”

I have that same request for you. Most of my time is focused on the congregation and you as members. You spend far more time with non-churched people than I do. Evangelism is a ministry of each congregational member. If it is the ministry of the pastor only, the congregation will not flourish.

It’s not necessary to be pushy or irritating. Nor is it helpful to shy and retiring. Instead, think about how Jesus actually makes a difference in your daily life. Be alert for chances to share that story with kindness and patience. If you are ready to share, the Holy Spirit will create the opportunities for you.

You don’t need to have answers to all the questions. Just build a relationship. And introduce me to new people. We can take it together from there.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation.

Fifth, Paul sends reminders that his is praying for the Colossians. Those reminders come in person, through Tychicus and Onesimus. Please know that I pray for you often in your ministry as well.

Paul asks these new Christians to be his full partners in prayer and proclamation. I ask the same of you. There’s nothing more a pastor could want.

Please be my partners in prayer and proclamation. So, let’s pray for more praying...

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