

Reflections on the message by Glen Rickard, 14th March 2010

“Continuing in Prayer” Colossians 4:2-3

Colossians 4:2-3 (NKJV). *Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.*

There are many references to prayer in the New Testament. It is clear that God wants us to pray. Paul speaks about being earnest and vigilant in prayer. There is a seriousness about prayer.

Prayers are little like e-mail. Glen and Colin go to Ukraine and arrange it by e-mail. Ukrainians reply with very little information to confirm these arrangements. Sometimes the reply comes back in Russian. Is this like your experience of prayer?

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that of all activities none cause so much perplexity as the activity of prayer. And yet we are commanded to pray continuously. We all struggle with it.

Why pray? Atheists pray. Every faith has some kind of prayer. They all want to attract the attention of the being outside of themselves. In the 1950s there was a Communist document that said that in all kinds of adverse circumstances you should “think of him”, that is Stalin. And thinking of Stalin would help you in these circumstances. The human heart can't suppress this desire to express itself to a being outside of itself. Everyone has his urge. Even those who disagree with prayer look at horoscopes and don't think it odd.

There are two reasons for prayer. Perspective and partnership.

1. First of all, partnership. God loves your company. We sing, "I am a friend of God" (James 2:23). What God wants most from you is a relationship. God knows you better than you know yourself, but God still wants your company. God is thrilled with your company. How many people in the world are thrilled with your company all the time? Who wants your company and will not get bored with you? God calls you into partnership with Him through prayer.

With prayer you build friendship and relationship with God. In realising you are accepted by God, build a relationship up with Him. Prayer and reading the Bible are the primary ways you get to know God.

Jesus Christ needs hands and feet and a voice. He needs bodies here on Earth. He uses people, and you are the people. John Wesley said that God does nothing but in answer to prayer.

Matthew 9:38 (NKJV).

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest

The disciples were commanded to pray that the Lord would send workers into the harvest. Jesus could have prayed himself but He instead He told the disciples to pray. He chose people to do His work for Him. He recruited disciples and then He left them! It is the way God works. He has called you into partnership with Him and it works through prayer. C. S. Lewis said that God seems do nothing that He can delegate to His people.

What is He calling you into partnership to do? One thing is to pray and build a relationship with God. He copes with our mistakes and backslidings.

There was a man who built stone steps in his garden from very heavy stones that could be moved only with difficulty using levers. Nevertheless the man's five-year-old daughter wanted to help him. When it was safe for her to do so, he let her push on the stones while he moved them with the levers. He admitted later on that her help had slowed the work down rather that speeded it up. But at tea-time the little girl was full of pride as she announced that she and her daddy had built the stone steps. It is like that when we are helping to build God's kingdom.

God builds the church and we get in the way, but He won't do it without us. You are a co-worker with God. Did you ever want to be a partner in big firm? As a Christian, you are. It just needs faith. You are a junior partner, but God makes you feel big, not small.

2. Changing our perspectives.

Psalms 46:10 (NKJV).

*Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!*

The word *still* comes from the word *vacate* from which we get the word *vacation*. Take some time to consider the Lord. Allow Him to bring you up alongside to give you His perspective in your situation.

Luke 22: 39-45 (NKJV)

³⁹ *Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.* ⁴⁰ *When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."* ⁴¹ *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed,* ⁴² *saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."* ⁴³ *Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.* ⁴⁴ *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* ⁴⁵ *When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.* ⁴⁶ *Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."*

Before the cross, Jesus begins to see a different perspective. He sees what He had and what He will have in glory. In bad times we need an eternal perspective through prayer, His perspective. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus looked a wreck and the disciples, asleep, look okay. But Jesus got a heavenly perspective and walked uprightly to the cross, while His disciples 'fell apart' and fled. God wants to make us to see things from his perspective through prayer. We learn that God listens, grants and withholds.

How is the Lord speaking to you in these things? Continue in prayer! It is easy to slip out of the habit of prayer. And it is a habit. Take half an hour to pray and read the Bible every day.

What is God calling you to do in partnership in his church.? Jesus gives us the responsibility to build his kingdom. How do we find out what we should do? Continue earnestly in prayer! God will prompt you in different ways. How will this word change you? How will it affect your prayer lives?

Next time: how to pray and overcoming difficulty in prayer.