**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 30**

**Colossians 4:2-6**

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 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. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What does being devoted to prayer mean? Am I doing this? What more can I do?
2. What does it mean to be watchful and thankful in my prayers? Am I doing this? What more can I do?
3. Do I pray for leaders? Do I pray for open doors for God’s message?
4. What does it mean to make the most of every opportunity? Am I doing this?
5. What does it mean to have conversations “full of grace” and “seasoned with salt”? Am I doing this?

***Insight:***

*Devoted.* Paul instructed them to *devoted* to prayer. The Greek word translated as devoted means “be consistent in” or persevere in.” Other versions translate it as “continue steadfastly.” One would think that because we are staying at home, we should have more time to pray. Even if we are still working from home, we have gained extra time because we don’t have to spend time preparing to go to work and traveling to work. Also, the threat of sickness and of hunger because of loss of income should motivatedus to pray more. But have we become more devoted to prayer? Are we more devoted now than before the pandemic? Are we devoted to prayer or distracted from prayer? When you are devoted to something you invest your time, energy, resources and skills in it. Difficulty, inconvenience or discomfort does not prevent you when you are devoted. When you are devoted you will not allow distractions to stand in your way. Is this our attitude toward prayer? Being devoted to prayer is extremely important because it reflects our devotion to God. We cannot say we are devoted to God if we are not devoted to prayer. Prayer must be a constant resource and not just an emergency recourse.

*Watchful and Thankful.* While watchfulness and thankfulness should characterize our daily lives, the context of the verse seem to refer to having these characterize our prayers. We need to be watchful in our prayers. This means we should stay awake and alert. We cannot afford to have sleepy prayers. We should choose the best time of day for our prayers. We should design our schedules so that our “prime time” can be used for prayer. If we pray in the mornings, we should curb non-essential activities at night so we can wake up fresh in order to pray. We should be thankful in our prayers. Let us use our prayers as opportunities to remember what God has blessed us with and thank him for each one.

Paul asked them to pray for him. Do we pray for our leaders? Do we ask them what we can pray for them? Do we ask our members to pray for us? We should have a constant exchange of prayer requests. How can we love one another if we are not praying for each other? Paul asked for open doors and clarity in his preaching. Similarly, we should pray for opportunities to reach out to people and an effective way to preach the gospel while we are staying in our homes. It is amazing how family members have been reached and how new methods have been employed to preach the gospel despite the situation we are in. Let’s continue to pray for more open doors and effective preaching.

Paul advised them to be wise in how they act towards outsiders. One way is by making the most out of every opportunity. The Greek word translated as “making the most” means “to redeem” or “to buy.” So, it’s like we are paying for the time we spend or we buy it back. In other words, we should be exchanging the time we use up for something of value. Imagine if every hour of your life is equivalent to P100. So, you lose P100 with each hour you are alive. Knowing this, how would you spend every hour of your life? Would you waste it? Now imagine if every hour of your life is worth P1000. How would you spend every hour of your life? But the truth is, every minute of our lives is priceless. Once we use it up, it is gone. This is why we need to make the most out of every second we have.

Another way we are to be wise is how we talk. Our conversations should always be full of grace and seasoned with salt. To be gracious is to treat people better than what they deserve. To give them grace is give them what they need. The content of what we say should build people up and not tear them down. If our conversations are like meals then what we serve should be nutritious and not junk food. On the other hand, salt as a seasoning makes food taste better. Thus, our manner of speaking must be appealing. A meal no matter how nutritious may not be eaten if it tastes bland. Therefore, we should not only say the right things, we should also say them in the right way. This is particularly true for preachers or disciples who study the Bible with people. What we talk about must have substance and we should say it in such a way that it would make it easier for people to understand. This means we need to adapt our message in accordance with the needs of the people we are speaking to. In other words, we should be loving in the way we speak.

During the lockdown, let us be devoted to prayer, make the most of every opportunity and speak the truth in love.