

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
 - 1. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - 2. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15-29)
 - 3. Warnings against false teaching (2:1-23)
 - 4. Instructions on living the Christian life (3:1-4:6)
 - a. Live what you believe (3:1-17)
 - b. Concerning relationships (3:18-4:1)
 - c. Concluding instructions (4:2-6)
 - 5. Final greetings (4:7-18)
- B. Review from last week
 - 1. All interpersonal relationships need a divine perspective.
 - 2. Everyone is equal in the Lord but there are levels of subordination in the world.
 - 3. Regardless of who you are or what you do, if you are a Christian, serve the Lord Christ.
- C. Preview of Colossians 4:2-6
 - 1. Paul concludes the section with two commands.
 - 2. In verses 2-4, he commanded the Colossians to maintain strong prayer lives, maintaining communion with God.
 - 3. In verses 5-6, he commanded them to live what they believe so they could develop opportunities to share the Gospel with unbelievers.

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6, CONCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Concerning Prayer (2-4)
 - 1. Be devoted to prayer and thanksgiving (2), ***Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.***
 - a. A Christian is to be diligent in prayer.
 - 1) To be *steadfast* is to *be devoted to, to keep on, to persist in, to be diligent.*
 - 2) Paul could not exaggerate the importance of prayer plays in maturing a believer.
 - 3) T. Constable, *The most important practice to perpetuate in relation to God is prayer. That is so because in prayer we call on God to work, and we express our faith in Him.*
 - 4) N. Geisler, *Prayer is not a spiritual luxury; it is essential for growth. Prayer, as vital to one's spiritual health as breathing is to one's physical health, should be continual, not casual.*
 - b. A Christian is to keep watchful in prayer.
 - 1) *Watchful* means to be *alert, vigilant, meticulous care.*
 - a) 1 Peter 5:8, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
 - b) It is a caution against spiritual drowsiness caused by too much attention to the world, false teachers or the tricks of the devil
 - 2) G. Osborne, *The primary thrust here is...watchfulness in prayer for God's work and for his people.*
 - 3) C. S. Lewis, *No one in his senses, if he has any power of ordering his own day, would reserve his chief prayers for bedtime—obviously the worst possible hour for any action which needs concentration.*
 - c. A Christian is to be grateful in prayer.
 - 1) Philippians 4:6, *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
 - 2) Thanksgiving in prayer is a matter of trust, that God hears and that He promises to do what's best for His children.
 - 3) J. McGee, *This is like breathing: inhale by prayer, and exhale by thanksgiving.*

2. Pray especially for Paul and others who are proclaiming the Gospel (3-4), ***At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison-that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.***

a. *At the same time*

- 1) The focus of Paul's instruction had been on the Colossians, their personal growth and their local assembly.
- 2) Here, Paul exhorts them to pray for him, his ministry, and that of others around the world.
 - a) Often, Paul made such a request which revealed his dependence on prayer.
 - b) Romans 15:30, *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,*
 - c) 1 Thessalonians 5:25, *Brothers, pray for us.*
 - d) 2 Thessalonians 3:1, *Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you,*
- 3) The ministry of the Gospel is bigger than any one individual or church.

b. Paul asked that they pray specifically for two requests on his behalf.

- 1) For an open door for the Gospel.
 - a) He called it the *mystery of Christ*.
 - 1] The mystery revealed is that Jews and Gentiles have equal opportunity for salvation.
 - 2] Colossians 1:26-27, *the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*
 - 3] Ephesians 6:18-19, *...making supplication for all the saints and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,*
 - b) He declared that he was in prison because of his proclamation of the Gospel, Philippians 1:13-14, *so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*
 - c) He trusted God who answers prayers for open doors for the Gospel.
 - 1] M. Anders, *Paul knew God can open doors of opportunity even for those behind prison doors.*
 - 2] Revelation 3:8, *I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*
- 2) For clarity and precision in proclaiming the Gospel.
 - a) Paul's obligation as an apostle and believer in the Gospel was to clearly proclaim the message, Romans 1:14-15, *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.*
 - b) G. Osborne, *...that his preaching would be highly effective in making the gospel known and appealing to the pagan populace.*
 - c) T. Constable, *Paul had greater concern about getting the gospel out than he had with getting out of prison himself.*
- 3) Note Paul's similar request in Ephesians 6:18-20, *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

B. Concerning Outreach (5-6)

1. Be wise in living your faith among unbelievers (5), ***Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.***
 - a. The message of the Gospel is too important to waste opportunities because of frivolous living,
 - 1) Ephesians 5:15-17, *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*
 - 2) *Wisdom is necessary for spiritual success, M. Anders, Wisdom enables us to combine boldness with tact. Wisdom enables us to employ the proper approach in specific situations and with particular individuals.*

- 3) *outsiders* are those who are not believers.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 5:12, *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?*
 - b) 1 Timothy 3:7, *Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*
 - b. There is no inappropriate time to live and share faith in Christ.
 - 1) *making the best use of the time*
 - a) A literal translation *buy back the time*.
 - b) It means to *snap up every opportunity*.
 - c) Ephesians 5:16, *making the best use of the time, because the days are evil*.
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:2, *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*.
 - 3) J. McGee, *When you see an opportunity, pray that the Lord will lead you. Don't force yourself on people. Just pray and ask the Lord to open the door,, and He will open it*.
 - 4) G. Osborne, *Paul urges believers to use their time redemptively—to take advantage of every opportunity to magnify Christ and bring glory to his name. In a world already full of evil, our task is to fill it with good*.
2. Be gracious with the truth in speaking to unbelievers (6), ***Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.***
- a. Paul stated that a Christian's speech should always reflect the nature of God.
 - 1) It should be *gracious*.
 - a) It comes from the word meaning *unmerited favor*.
 - 1] T. Constable, *Speech most effectively expresses what is inside the believer. The Christian's speech should mirror the gracious character and conduct of his or her God by demonstrating love, patience, sacrifice, undeserved favor, etc.*
 - 2] M. Anders, *The believer's talk is to be gracious, rather than gruff, and charming, rather than coarse*.
 - 3] A Christian should always base his speech on Whose he is not how someone else is speaking to him.
 - b) G. Osborne, *...the phrase "always full of grace" could point specifically to the grace of God seen in gospel witness or more generally to gracious or winsome speech in general. Most likely this context calls for a combination of the two, seeking the establishment of positive, friendly relations with pagan neighbors that can become a vehicle for the spread of the gospel*.
 - 2) It should be *seasoned with salt*.
 - a) Salt is attractive because it makes food appealing. A Christian has the most important story to tell, so we should not make it boring.
 - b) It is a preservative that keeps the food from spoiling.
 - 1] Ephesians 4:29, *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear*.
 - 2] A Christian needs to be careful not to talk about things that dishonor the Lord.
 - 3] J. McGee, *A child of God should have a conversation that deters evil. It should withhold evil rather than promote it*.
 - c) A Christian should always have pleasant and wholesome speech which reflects well on our Savior.
 - b. Such speech promotes opportunities for Gospel witness.
 - 1) 1 Peter 3:15, *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:25, *correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,*
 - 3) Romans 12:20, *To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."*

CONCLUSION

- A. Prayer for Christians is not optional but essential.
- B. Christians need to have a view of prayer that is greater than themselves.
- C. A person's speech speaks volumes to who they truly are.