



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Three Closing Admonitions (Colossians 4:2-6)

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Paul Meinsen / (573) 418-2077 / www.capitolcom.org / paul.meinsen@capitolcom.org

This Week's Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, May 10 at 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, May 10 at 8:30 PM in Room #225**
(Sen. Bob Dixon's office)

While we will not be able to finish the fourth chapter of Colossians this session, we will be able to get in a very important discussion as the Apostle wraps up his letter. The last verses in the letter are various greetings to and thanksgivings for a number of Christian brothers and sisters that worked and assisted the Apostle Paul. Even though he writes this epistle from a prison in Rome, he still has many who are working with him and many others who are in constant prayer for him.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of Paul's concluding remarks include many thanksgivings, greetings and acknowledgements of those who have been serving with the Apostle. While some of the names have been lost in the history of mankind, this section should serve as a stark reminder that service in the Kingdom is not a "one-man show." Even the respected Apostle had those who were "fellow workers for the Kingdom of God" (4:11) and these were highly appreciated.

Before listing these final words of greetings and thanks, Paul gave a few more exhortations to the church in Colossae.

Colossians 4:2-6 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; ³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. ⁵Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

After his discussion on the new lifestyle and the effects of the "new" in a believer's life, Paul gave three general reminders to the followers of Jesus.

WATCH YOUR PRAYERS (4:2)

The first of these general reminders concerns the prayer life of the believer. In this passage, Paul gave three commands about one's prayers. The first is the command to devote oneself to a life of prayer. The verb translated "devote" carries the idea of being persistent and diligently holding on and not letting go. In other letters, Paul stated it in different ways. He said to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), "to pray at all times" (Ephesians 6:18) and to "be devoted to prayer" (Romans 12:12).

In prayer, a child of God is able to confess sin, lift up praise, give thanks and offer up requests for themselves and on behalf of others. Prayer is to come from a pure heart (Psalm 66:18) and be consistent with the will of God (Ephesians 6:18).

Now, Paul's command is not teaching to be verbally praying at all times--this is literally impossible. But rather, "it refers to a God consciousness that relates every experience in life to Him."¹ It does include earnest and persistent verbal prayers; but a believer should also live in a constant recognition of the hand of God in all things throughout his or her life.

Prayer is the lifeline of the believer, even though it is one of the hardest things in which to hold and to be consistent. Prayer shows his or her dependence on God for all things. It humbles us to remember and recognize that there is One who is above us. And this One above us desires His people to converse with Him in prayer and to seek Him for those things which are needed in their lives.

Let us (yes, I use the first person plural--for this discipline is quite difficult for me) pay heed to Paul's command and be devoted people of prayer.

The second command concerning prayer is the admonition to always be thankful. Paul commanded to "keep alert...with an attitude of thanksgiving" (4:2). The believer should always be awake to the things around him or her in which to thank God. His blessings are everywhere; even in the times of trial, pain and deep sorrow. If one is alert, one can see the things which God is doing in his or her life.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #225

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Three Closing Admonitions (Colossians 4:2-6)

Gratitude seems to be quite important in this letter of Paul for this is his fifth reference to it (1:12; 2:6; 3:15, 17). And a consideration of his personal circumstance makes this even more emphatic; Paul wrote this letter while incarcerated in Rome, awaiting his trial before Caesar. He mentioned his fellow prisoner, Aristarchus (4:10) and even asked the church to remember his imprisonment (4:18). If the Apostle Paul can find thanksgiving for people he has never met while sitting in the jailhouse, the people of God can also find gratitude in their lives no matter the circumstance.

The third command concerning prayer is Paul's request that the church would remember them as they proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In light of the important necessity to live a lifestyle of prayer, the prayer for the gospel to go forth is quite vital. There is no higher request of God to ask boldly ask Him to draw one unto Himself for their salvation.

Three requests appear concerning the proclamation of the gospel. The first is that God will open doors. The request is appropriate for it is God who opens doors and provides the opportunities. When Paul and Barnabas gave the report on their missionary journey to the church in Jerusalem, "they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27b).

ONE'S SPEECH SHOULD BE FILLED WITH WISDOM,
DELIVERANCE, TRUTH AND GENTLENESS. AND "SPEECH
WITH GRACE" ALSO KNOWS WHEN TO STAY QUIET.

Secondly, Paul asks that they pray on his behalf that he may speak on the "mystery of Christ" (4:3) when those opportunities arise. This is not the giving of a mystery to be solved by the listeners. It is a "revelation"; a revealing of what has been kept hidden. Paul has already discussed this mystery revealed in Colossians 1:26-27. Its essence is that the Sovereign of the Universe became a man and through His life, death and resurrection, people can be made new in Him and that He now dwells in them. Paul asked prayers so that when the chances come, he will be faithful in revealing this mystery. It is ultimately why he is in prison (4:3b); some did not like his message and attempted to quiet him (Acts 21-28).

Paul's third request rightly follows the second. He asked that they pray that "I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:4). Paul's mandate and compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16) was to preach the gospel, revealing the mystery of Jesus Christ. Thus, he desired to proclaim the message in a clear manner; not confusing either in words or in style.

The gospel must be proclaimed, not just "lived out". While living out one's faith is important, the reason for faith must also be spoken. The gospel is to be proclaimed clearly and boldly (see Paul's prayer request to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 6:19), with wisdom (Proverbs 25:11) and with much grace (Ephesians 4:15).

Believers are called to be prepared to give an answer for the hope they have (1 Peter 3:15). Paul makes it clear in Romans that those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But, he asked, how can they call unless they believe? How can they believe unless they hear? How can they hear unless a preacher is sent? (Romans 10:13-15). This is not a specified, ordained person or office. It is for those who are sent to proclaim; and that covers all believers (Matthew 28:18-20).

The request for believers to pray for the clear gospel to be proclaimed is still very much valid for today. One should be in constant prayer that his or her pastor will preach clearly, that others in the body will be bold and clear as they declared God's amazing grace, and that they will also have open doors and will proclaim the clear message of the gospel.

WATCH YOUR CONDUCT (4:5)

The second general reminder Paul gave as he drew this letter to a close was for a believer to be on guard concerning his interactions with those who do not believe. He seems to have the "open doors" in mind here as he exhorted the believers that they should use all wisdom as they work, study, play and generally, live with unbelievers.

As noted above, the proclamation of the gospel is a necessity for unbelievers to believe. But for the proclamation to be believable, it must be seen lived out in the life of those who claim to believe the message.

For this, one needs wisdom. And this wisdom comes from a fear of the Lord (Proverbs 9:10), asking God for it (James 1:5), studying the Scriptures (Colossians 3:16) and by receiving godly instruction (Colossians 1:28).

This is an area where you, as a legislator, are in the spotlight--especially if you campaigned or are known as a Christian. People are looking at and observing you. Do you exhibit much patience with people? Are you voting according to your convictions? Do you lead a righteous life? Are you living with hope? Are you known for kindness, gentleness, humility, compassion and love? In essence, do people see a resemblance of Jesus when they see you? Or do your words not match your actions? Do you use the label when it benefits you? Do you live differently in Jeff City than you do back in the district?

MISSOURI

Three Closing Admonitions (Colossians 4:2-6)

You have a great opportunity, as a government leader, to make bring much glory to the Father or to bring a reproach upon His holy name in the eyes of others.

Paul commands to live a life of prayer and to conduct yourself wisely as you interact with unbelievers. His last command in this section is to watch your speech.

WATCH YOUR SPEECH (4:6)

The hardest element to tame in a believer's life is the tongue. James makes the incredible hyperbolic statement: "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well" (James 3:2b). James continued by remarking how powerfully destructive the tongue can be; in spite of its very small size.

James 3:3-8 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

Paul said that a follower's speech is to "always be with grace" (Colossians 4:6). It is not to be crooked nor devious (Proverbs 4:24; 6:12). It is not be filled with lies (Prov. 6:17), perversion (Prov. 8:13), violence (Prov. 12:6), nor belittling, exhibiting pride (Prov. 11:11-13).

One's speech should be filled with words that are good for edification of others (Ephesians 4:19). It is to be filled with wisdom (Proverbs 10:13), deliverance (Prov. 12:6), truth (Prov. 12:17) and gentleness (Prov. 15:1-2). And "speech with grace" also knows when to stay quiet (Prov. 17:27-28).

Believers need this compassion, gracious speech. They also need the wisdom to know how they should respond to each person; saying the right thing at the right time. Once again, wisdom is needed to know how to best talk with other people (see the above section for sources of wisdom).

Psalm 141:3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.

CONCLUSION

The essence of these three closing admonitions in Paul's letter is that in all areas the person who has been made new lives as a resemblance of Jesus Christ. Living constantly in prayer and guarding one's deeds and words show that something new has begun in a follower of Jesus. The old is now put off; the new is put on and it glorifies the One who makes all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds new.

Friend, God can forgive you of your sins and you can be made new--are you interested?

¹ John MacArthur, *Colossians & Philemon* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 179.