

PRAYER, EXPECTANCY, THANKSGIVING, & WITNESS

I. Colossians 4:2-6

A. In today's text we have Paul writing from prison in Rome. Nothing ever kept Paul from carrying out the Great Commission. Declaring the Gospel was his mission. If he was sharing the Gospel with Jews, he was on mission. If he was sharing the Gospel with Gentiles, he was on mission. If he was preaching in a synagogue, or by a riverbank, or in a home, he was on mission. If he was preaching from a jail cell, marooned on an island, before barbarians or kings, he was always on mission. When God sat him down, the letters would fire up. No matter what, Paul was always on mission.

B. In our present day culture, and sadly within the church, there's a malaise, a complacency when it comes to the sharing the Gospel. When your gospel is such that you believe everyone ultimately goes to heaven irregardless of what they believe and do, then there's little need for urgency. Who needs good news when there's no bad news?) For many Christians, the myth of the American Dream has usurped the Great Commission. But God has planted us into various stations and spheres of life, not merely for our sake, but for His sake and for the sake of others. His mission trumps all other goals and aspirations. (Ref. John 4:34)

C. 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV) has long been a key Scripture for us here: *15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (Early Christians were accused of being atheists, cannibals, and anti-government radicals. Yet they lovingly stayed on mission. Charles Spurgeon said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor." Let none of us be impostors and let us therefore always be ready to share Christ.)*

D. Our text is only five verses long. But in these few verses Paul seems to lay out a progression when it comes to being witnesses. I don't believe anyone, or any church, that puts these verses into practice will lack opportunities to share Christ. But if complacency settles in and keeps us from reaching out, that "*I-don't-care*" attitude will also seep into many other areas of our hearts and lives.

E. Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV) is our main text. Let's glean from it all we can...

1) **V2: 2** *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* (Prayer is essential. Outreach begins with up-reach. Praying watchfully means praying expectantly. Add to that thanksgiving. Praying with an attitude of thankfulness means you know *WHO* is ultimately in control, at work, and drawing people to Himself. Paul's merely preaching what he's practicing in prison. He's no doubt already prayed and shared Christ with his guards.)

2) **V3-4: 3** *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-- 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (If Paul is asking for prayer because he's eager*

for additional open doors to share the Gospel, both inside and outside the prison walls, does it not make sense for us to pray in like manner for ourselves?)

3) **V5-6: 5** Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, (**unbelievers**) making the best use of the time. **6** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Peter echoed similarly in our lead-in verse.)

F. Let's repeat the progression: Pray. Pray steadfastly. Pray expectantly. Pray with thanksgiving. Pray specifically for opportunities. Then speak! Speak graciously. Speak the truth with sensitivity and love. Trust God to give you the right words. Let God be God. i.e. Let the Holy Spirit take it from there. Meanwhile, keep praying and stay available.

G. Might there be barriers? Could there be obstacles? Hurdles? Yes and yes some more! Here's a few challenges you might face both from within and from without...

1) **Lack of courage**: Therefore, pray for courage. A thousand people have said, "*Courage is not the lack of fear, it's acting in spite of fear.*" Fear makes courage a virtue. You actually can't have courage without fear! Trust God to give you courage. Be bold & courageous! "*The righteous are as bold as a lion!*" (see Proverbs 28:1b)

2) **Facing shame, ridicule & rejection**: You might have to face angry or argumentative people. You could be ridiculed or made fun of on social media. And this might be in your own family! But don't be ashamed of your Rescuer! Don't let the cock crow for you! Paul, whose body was tattooed with scars, wrote in **Romans 1:16** (NLT): *16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes--the Jew first and also the Gentile.* (Remember Jesus endured the cross and scorned its shame and that for you! Check out Hebrews 12:2...)

3) **Your reputation could be ruined**: You're a pillar in the community. You're a rising star in your company. You're building a wonderful legacy for yourself & family. This Jesus stuff could taint your notoriety, smear your good name, lessen your popularity, negatively impact your business, thwart your plans for success. During a renovation project on the Washington Monument back in the 90s, workers uncovered some century old graffiti. One of the original monument workers scribbled: "*Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring than this.*" -BFB (Here's to erecting the more lofty monuments that honor Jesus Christ!)

4) **God saving people unlike you**: So what if God takes hold of people you don't like? Or people with abominations you deem worse than yours? '*Can't we just evangelize believers in other churches and try and get the likable ones to switch to our church?!*' '*Can't we just send the ones we don't like to some other church?!*' When Jesus commanded the disciples to love one another do you think that came easy? But when former enemies are saved, brought into fellowship, and grow to love one another, there's your bully pulpit! God still saves renegades & deplorables & infidels like we once were! The late Warren Wiersbe wrote about William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army: "One Sunday evening, William Booth was walking in London with his son, Bramwell, who was then 12 or 13 years old. The father surprised the son by taking him into a saloon! The place was crowded with men and women, many of them bearing on their faces the marks of vice and

crime; some were drunk. The fumes of alcohol and tobacco were poisonous. "Willie," Booth said to his son, "These are our people; these are the people I want you to live for and bring to Christ." Years later, Bramwell Booth wrote, "The impression never left me."

H. The same Warren Wiersbe said: "The Christian life is a pilgrimage from earth to heaven, and our task is to take as many as possible with us as we make this journey."

I. Therefore: Pray. Pray steadfastly. Pray expectantly. Pray with thanksgiving. Pray specifically for opportunities. Then speak! Speak graciously. Speak the truth with sensitivity and love. Trust God to give you the right words. Let God be God. Let the Holy Spirit take it from there. Meanwhile, keep praying and stay available.

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Colossians 4:2-6 (ESV)

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. **3** 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-- **4** that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. **5** Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. **6** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16** keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Romans 1:16 (NLT)

16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor."

Original Graffiti Uncovered At The Washington Monument

"Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring than this." - BFB

These Are Our People

One Sunday evening, William Booth was walking in London with his son, Bramwell, who was then 12 or 13 years old. The father surprised the son by taking him into a saloon! The place was crowded with men and women, many of them bearing on their faces the marks of vice and crime; some were drunk. The fumes of alcohol and tobacco were

poisonous. "Willie," Booth said to his son, "These are our people; these are the people I want you to live for and bring to Christ." Years later, Bramwell Booth wrote, "The impression never left me."

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers, p. 185.

Quote by Warren Wiersbe

"The Christian life is a pilgrimage from earth to heaven, and our task is to take as many as possible with us as we make this journey."

Video Clips & Important Articles

Phil Keaggy - Concert in Granville, Nov 8th, Spring Hills Baptist/Living Waters Benefit
<https://www.itickets.com/events/434404>

Whetstone Family Sings at Millersport UMC (Last Sunday: 10/6/19)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eJBj1B7JSg&feature=youtu.be>

When to Share the Gospel with Your Neighbor - John Piper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ohmqk7Ib0B0>

Finding People Interesting; Being Real; Caring Enough to Witness to People - John Piper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM57eM8tCWU>

Top 20 Quotes by Warren Wiersbe (1929 - 2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCOswiUYhEk>

11 Reasons You Need to Belong to A Church - Peter Adam - The Gospel Coalition
<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/11-reasons-need-belong-church/>

Do Old Testament Commands Apply Today? - Dr William Fullilove - Reformed Seminary
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LHXpeq9BWM>

Bonus Stuff

1 Peter 3:15-16 (AMP)

15 But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect. **16** And see to it that your conscience is entirely clear, so that every time you are slandered or falsely accused, those who attack or disparage your good behavior in Christ will be shamed [by their own words].

Ephesians 5:15-18 (AMP)

15 Therefore see that you walk carefully [living life with honor, purpose, and courage; shunning those who tolerate and enable evil], not as the unwise, but as wise [sensible, intelligent, discerning people], **16** making the very most of your time [on earth,

recognizing and taking advantage of each opportunity and using it with wisdom and diligence], because the days are [filled with] evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish and thoughtless, but understand and firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is. **18** Do not get drunk with wine, for that is wickedness (corruption, stupidity), but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit and constantly guided by Him.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NLT)

24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. **25** Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. **26** Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Proverbs 28:1 (NIV)

1 The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

Matthew 10:16-20 (NLT)

16 "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. **17** But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. **18** You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are My followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about Me. **19** When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. **20** For it is not you who will be speaking--it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Mark 13:9-13 (NLT)

9 "When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are My followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about Me. **10** For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. **11** But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit. **12** A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. **13** And everyone will hate you because you are My followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Luke 12:11-12 (NLT)

11 "And when you are brought to trial in the synagogues and before rulers and authorities, don't worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, **12** for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said."

Luke 21:12-19 (NLT)

12 "But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are My followers. **13** But this will be your opportunity to tell them about Me. **14** So don't worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, **15** for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! **16** Even those closest to you--your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends--will betray you. They will even kill some of you. **17** And everyone will hate you because you are My followers. **18** But not a hair of your head will perish! **19** By standing firm, you will win your souls."

Quote by Martin Luther

"If he have faith, the believer cannot be restrained. He betrays himself. He breaks out. He confesses and teaches this gospel to the people at the risk of life itself."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

Quote by Charles Stanley

"God's plan for enlarging His kingdom is so simple – one person telling another about the Savior. Yet we're busy and full of excuses. Just remember, someone's eternal destiny is at stake. The joy you'll have when you meet that person in heaven will far exceed any discomfort you felt in sharing the gospel."

Quote by Elton Trueblood

"Evangelism is not a professional job for a few trained men, but is instead the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs to the company of Jesus."

Quote by G. Campbell Morgan

"To call a man evangelical who is not evangelistic is an utter contradiction."

Quote by John Piper

"Have you ever wondered what it feels like to have a love for the lost? This is a term we use as part of our Christian jargon. Many believers search their hearts in condemnation, looking for the arrival of some feeling of benevolence that will propel them into bold evangelism. It will never happen. It is impossible to love "the lost". You can't feel deeply for an abstraction or a concept. You would find it impossible to love deeply an unfamiliar individual portrayed in a photograph, let alone a nation or a race or something as vague as "all lost people". ...Don't wait for a feeling or love in order to share Christ with a

stranger. You already love your heavenly Father, and you know that this stranger is created by Him, but separated from Him, so take those first steps in evangelism because you love God. It is not primarily out of compassion for humanity that we share our faith or pray for the lost; it is first of all, love for God.”

Quote by David Platt

“We email, Facebook, tweet and text with people who are going to spend eternity in either heaven or hell. Our lives are too short to waste on mere temporal conversations when massive eternal realities hang in the balance. Just as you and I have no guarantee that we will live through the day, the people around us are not guaranteed tomorrow either. So let's be intentional about sewing the threads of the gospel into the fabric of our conversations every day, knowing that it will not always be easy, yet believing that eternity will always be worth it.”

Quote by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

“While the lecture itself was not bold, because my relationships were bold and intimate and risky, the lecture had impact. This experience taught me a powerful lesson about evangelism: the integrity of our relationships matters more than the boldness of our words.”

Prayer & Thanksgiving / ESV Study Bible

“Thanksgiving leavens prayer, so that it does not become merely a selfish pleading to have one’s desires fulfilled.”

- *ESV Study Bible*, footnote to Colossians 4:2, p.p. 2299.

Make A Stand

A Devotion by Greg Laurie - April 20, 2015

<https://harvest.org/resources/devotion/make-a-stand/>

“If you want to be My disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be My disciple.” - Luke 14:26

When I became a Christian, all of my friends were no longer my friends. They quickly turned on me, mocked me, and made a joke out of what I had just done.

Sometimes relationships hold people back from following Christ. They think, If I become a Christian, what will my boyfriend say? Or, What will my girlfriend say? If you have a boyfriend who would not want you to become a Christian, then you need a new boyfriend. And guys, the same is true of a girlfriend. If you have friends who would oppose your being a follower of Jesus Christ, then you need some new friends. You need to make a stand.

In Luke 9 we find the story of a man whom Jesus called to follow Him. But the man said to Jesus, *“Lord, let me first go and bury my father”* (verse 59).

Jesus responded by saying, "*Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God*" (verse 60). We may read that and think, Wow. Jesus was a little heartless, wasn't He? But the man was using an expression of the time that meant "wait until my father and mother die." It didn't mean that his father was dead. The man was effectively saying, "Give me a little time. Later, when my parents pass away, then I will follow You."

But Jesus was saying, "No, do it right now. I called you. If you want to do it, then do it. Or don't do it. It is your choice. But do it now."

The disciple must love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. Or to put it another way, your love for God should be so strong, so intense, that all other loves would be like hatred in comparison.

Keepers Of The Aquarium

The late Sam Shoemaker, an Episcopalian bishop, summed up the situation this way: "In the Great Commission the Lord has called us to be--like Peter--fishers of men. We've turned the commission around so that we have become merely keepers of the aquarium. Occasionally I take some fish out of your fishbowl and put them into mine, and you do the same with my bowl. But we're all tending the same fish."

- Em Griffin, The Mindchangers, Tyndale House, 1976, p. 151.