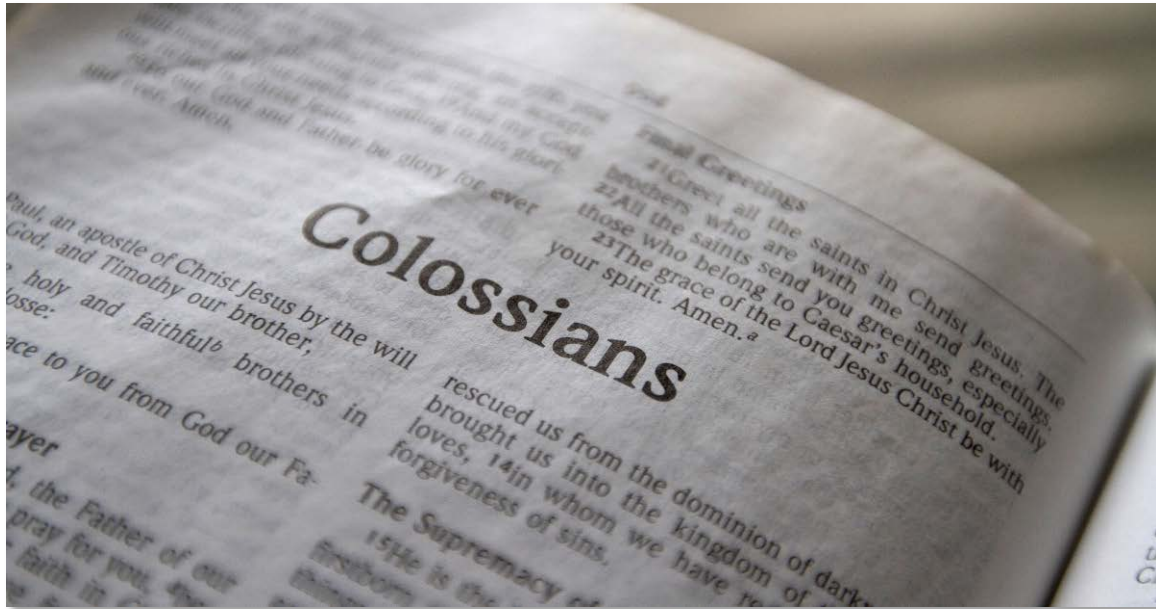


THE WORK OF LOVE

COLOSSIANS 4



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Work of Love: Colossians 4
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Colossians 4: Introduction

Paul's letter to the Colossians ends with greetings, exhortations, and a glimpse into the apostle Paul's disciple-making ministry.

Paul emphasizes the need for a consistent walk with the Lord so that his readers might press on in becoming complete in Jesus. He ends by urging them to remember him in prayer.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
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1 Continue

Opening Prayer: Psalm 25.4, 5

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Sing Psalm 25.4, 5

(Festal Song: *Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Read Colossians 4.1-3

Preparation

1. How should we pray?
2. What “ought” Paul – and we – to speak and make manifest?

Meditation

Paul is never very far away from the “under the heavens” (cf. Ecclesiastes) theme that marks all his writing. He is constantly aware that we have a Master in heaven Who knits us together in love, and Who calls us to bring our praise, thanks, and supplications to Him in prayer.

Here are important instructions concerning the work of prayer. First, we must *continue* in it. Prayer should be the air we breathe, the praise and supplications we exhale all day long (1 Thess. 5.17; Lk. 18.1).

Second, we should pray *earnestly*. That Greek word indicates intense effort, struggling through difficulty, devoting oneself, and persisting. Prayer is hard work, as the ancients knew: *orare est laborare* – to pray is to work.

Third, we must *be vigilant* in prayer, always ready to enter prayer for every situation, person, or need we encounter throughout the day.

Fourth, our prayers should always include thanksgiving (cf. 1 Thess. 5.18; Phil. 4.6, 7). Giving thanks keeps us focused on God and makes our prayers an offering appropriate to Him Who does all things well and works all things together for our good.

Finally, pray for those entrusted with the ministry of the Word. And that means all of us who have been called as witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1.8). No matter the difficulties, obstacles, hindrances, or other complications that litter our Personal Mission Field, we should pray for open doors to talk about Jesus and be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3.15).

If we continue in prayer, looking always to our Master and King (3.1-3), we will continue in faithfulness as saints of the Lord.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Some of us oversee, or are responsible for, other people. We might be parents, or spouses, or employers. The first mandate we receive is: Give! “Give what is just and fair” (4.1). Keeping foremost in our minds that God is The Boss of us, and we answer to Him for everything we do, think, and are.

Reminds me of a time many years ago when our dear granddaughter (she now has two children of her own) was staying with us. I encouraged her to finish her lunch at which time she said, “You’re not the boss of me!” So cute. But not accurate. I was the boss at that moment because her mother had made me the boss.

I fear we sometimes have that same attitude toward God. You’re not the boss of me we think. I can do whatever I please! Not so cute, and definitely not accurate.

Paul reminds us here to be just and fair to others because indeed we do “have a Master in heaven” who observes everything that we do (4.1).

“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov.15.3).

“I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways *are* before You” (Ps.119.168).

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must* give account” (Heb.4.13).

Being just and fair to others, “giving up threatening” (Eph. 6.9), is how our Boss wants us to treat those over whom we have authority. Is it the right thing to do, and God sees us do it.

Or not.

Reflection

1. How do justice and fairness demonstrate the love of Jesus which binds us together?
2. How do your prayers match up to the way Paul instructs us to pray in these verses?
3. How can such prayer make us more ready and willing to submit to God as our Boss?

[Y]ou, too, if you want to be victorious, listen to the apostle say, “Be assiduous in prayer, being wakeful.” This is the most glorious fight of the Christian, not to presume upon his own strength but always to implore the assistance of God. Caesarius of Arles (470-543), Sermons 103.5

Keep me in prayer today, O Lord, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 25.1-3, 8-10

Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord for this day (Rom. 12.1, 2). Ask Him to direct all your paths in mercy and truth, and that you may have strength to keep His covenant and all His Word.

Psalm 25.1-3, 8-10

(Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord)

I lift my soul to You; O Lord, in You I trust.

Let me not come to shame, nor let my foes o’er me exult.

All they who wait on You shall never come to shame.

Yet they to shame shall come who stand against Your holy Name.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way.
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness.
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

2 Deeds and Words

Opening Prayer: Psalm 1.1, 2

Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

Sing Psalm 1.1, 2

(St. Thomas: [*I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*](#))

How blessed are they that shun sin's vain and wicked ways.
For them has Christ salvation won; He loves them all their days.

God's Word is their delight; they prosper in its truth.
In it they dwell both day and night to flourish and bear fruit.

Read Colossians 4.5, 6

Preparation

1. How should the Christian "walk"?
2. What kind of speech should we strive always to have?

Meditation

Paul offers advice for how believers should conduct themselves "toward those *who are* outside" – that is, outside the faith of Jesus (v. 5). Your Personal Mission Field will include believers and unbelievers. We are to be clothed with Jesus so that He can knit us together in love with our fellow believers. Relating to unbelievers requires no less love, merely different expressions of it, especially wisdom and grace.

We are walking in wisdom as we walk in Jesus and His Spirit (cf. Col. 2.2, 3; Gal. 2.16-23). Put on Jesus to go out among the unbelievers of your world. Make the most of all your time; and when your time brings you in contact with unbelievers, they will be more likely to see Jesus in you.

And if you have an opportunity to talk with unbelievers, let your speech be gracious and seasoned with salt – edifying (Eph. 4.29) and plain, to make them thirsty for more of the Good News of Jesus (v. 6). If we concentrate on love and speech that edifies, we will always have something worthwhile to offer the unbelievers in our lives. We don't have to answer all their objections, clear up all their confusion, or make the Bible make sense to them. We must love them and speak the grace of Jesus. He'll take it from there (Acts 17.32-34).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Pirates and parrots come to mind when we think of salty speech.

But Paul uses the term in a different way: Our speech should be so salty that it makes people thirsty for the Jesus that lives in us. And this will be so because it is the seasoning of grace.

And we understand grace to be the undeserved love that God shows to us, that we in turn, show to others.

Who wouldn't want to participate in this flavoring of life?

This grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1.17).

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12.28).

"...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3.18).

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you as you walk in wisdom toward those who are outside the faith (I Thess. 5.28; Col. 4.5).

Reflection

1. What can you do to make your speech more consistently "salty"?
2. What kind of speech edifies you? Encourages you?
3. Why do we need both deeds and words in our witness for Christ?

Redeeming the time . . . is nothing else than making the seasons that are the most difficult, inconvenient and adverse to our salvation advantageous and opportune. Such were the times when Christians lived in the midst of the cruelties of idolaters; such also are now, when we live in the midst of the seductions of heretics and profane scoffers of God and religion. John Davenant (1576-1641), Notes on Paul's Letter to the Colossians 4:5

Make me gracious in deeds and words today, O Lord, as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 1.3-6

Pray for opportunities to share the grace of Jesus with specific people today.

Sing Psalm 1.3-6

(St. Thomas: [*I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*](#))

Firm planted on the banks of God's great stream of grace,
they raise unending praise and thanks to His great glorious face.

The wicked are not so, but, driven by the winds,
they fall and perish, weighed with woe, when once God's wrath begins.

In Jesus' righteousness, though sinners fail and fall,
His flock He will preserve and bless, who on His favor call.

3 Encourager

Opening Prayer: Psalm 5.7, 8

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;
In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.
Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.

Sing Psalm 5.7, 8

(Angel's Story: [*O Jesus, I Have Promised*](#))

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

Read Colossians 4.7-9

Preparation

1. How did Paul describe Tychicus?
2. What was he sending Tychicus to do?

Meditation

Tychicus was a Greek from Asia Minor who joined Paul's team at some point during his ministry in Greece (Acts 20.4). Paul worked with him as he did Timothy to prepare him for the ministry of the Word to the churches in Asia Minor, including the Ephesians and the Colossians (cf. Eph. 6.21).

Paul described him as "a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord" (v. 7). Paul sent him from Rome to the Colossians, probably bearing this epistle, both to apprise them of his situation and to encourage their hearts to continue faithful in the Lord (v. 8). He also served as the traveling companion of Onesimus, whom Paul sent back to Philemon in Colossae, to restore him to his former master as a brother in Christ (v. 9, cf. Philemon).

Consider the commitment of Tychicus. He learned from Paul, embraced his vision and ministry, and performed faithfully whatever Paul assigned. It would have taken courage and perseverance to travel from Rome to Asia Minor. Upon reaching his destinations (Colossae and Ephesus), he would have cheered the churches with the news of Paul's faith and further encouraged them by appropriate teaching from the Word of God. Tychicus had learned from the best, who also calls us to imitate him, like Tychicus, so that we might fulfill our own calling from the Lord (1 Cor. 11.1).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

"...that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts" (Col. 4.8). God has given us the special task of trying to know and understand another person's trouble, sorrow, sadness, or grief; and then to offer comfort to their hearts through wisdom supplied by the Holy Spirit.

The dictionary defines comfort as to give strength and hope to; to ease the grief or trouble of; to give strengthening aid and consolation in time of trouble or worry.

Often the comfort we offer has come by being comforted ourselves: "Blessed *be* the God and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1.3,4).

Paul was comforted by friends who met some of his physical needs. He tells us, “...for they refreshed my spirit” (1 Cor. 16.18).

We can offer comfort to others by being constant in our faith and hope and trust in the Lord. “But you, brethren, are not in darkness...you are sons of the light...let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us...Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5.4-11).

God commands us to “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” (Is. 40.1)

Being attentive, showing concern, giving love: these are the ways to comfort others as God comforts us: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Ps. 23.4).

We are called to take up the job, where Tychicus left off, to be a beloved brother, faithful minister, fellow servant and encourager of hearts that need to be comforted.

Reflection

1. When has someone comforted or encouraged you in the Lord?
2. Why is it so important that we do this for one another?
3. Whom can you comfort or encourage in the Lord today?

Now what Paul wishes to say is that there is no benefit in those things, for all those things fall apart, unless they are done with love. This is the love that binds them all together. Whatever good thing it is that you mention, if love be absent, it is nothing, it melts away. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on Colossians 8

Let Your love abound in me today, O Lord, as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 5.1-6, 11, 12

To whom is God sending you today? Prepare to be an encourager to them that they may rejoice in the Lord because of you.

Sing Psalm 5.1-6, 11, 12

(Angel’s Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

O Lord, attend and hear me, consider how I groan.
Receive my cries and near be, and love me as Your own.
By morning, Lord I seek You, for You will hear my voice;
My every need You speak to, and make my soul rejoice!

In sin You take no pleasure; no evil dwells with You.
Vain boasts You will not treasure, nor those who boasting do.
Sin kindles Your hot anger, You crush all those who lie;

the violent live in danger of Your all-searching eye.

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter 'neath Your wing.
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;
preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

4 Fellow Workers

Opening Prayer: Psalm 31.23, 24

Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!
For the LORD preserves the faithful,
And fully repays the proud person.
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.

Sing Psalm 31.23, 24

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))
O love the Lord, all you, His saints! He keeps us faithfully.
But all who act in sinful pride His wrath shall surely see.
Be strong and let your heart not fret; wait on Him constantly!

Read Colossians 4.10, 11

Preparation

1. What are the three men Paul mentions here?
2. To what would that lead in our lives?

Meditation

Paul mentions three additional “fellow workers for the Kingdom of God” (v. 11). This is the only mention of Jesus, called Justus. He may have come to Paul’s aid from among the believers in Rome, where Paul was when he wrote Colossians.

Aristarchus was a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 19.19) and a long-time companion of Paul. He accompanied him from Caesarea to Rome and continued his ministry with Paul there (cf. Acts 20.3; 27.2).

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, was also in Rome, and Paul regarded him as a fellow worker. This was not always the case. Mark had abandoned Paul and Barnabas on an earlier mission (Acts 13.13). When Barnabas wanted to take him on a second missionary journey, Paul refused, and the two parted company (Acts 15.36-40). Barnabas took Mark under his wing, as he had done with Paul. The result was Mark’s being reclaimed for the work of the ministry, and his joining Paul in Rome as a fellow worker.

As workers for the Kingdom of God, these men, like Paul, would have been keen to grow in the Lord and to take up the work of evangelizing, teaching, and making disciples wherever He took them. We are also called to be fellow workers with the Lord and His apostles, for the work of the Kingdom goes forward through folks like us.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We often think of Paul as strong in the Lord, perhaps even a little unemotional, maybe even steely. But here we see a touch of softness and emotion: “These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God...they have proved to be a comfort to me” (Col. 4.11). These men were his friends when he was in prison. This time. And they were a comfort to him. How grateful we are to Tychicus,

Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke and Demas who showed our beloved brother Paul, love.

We learn about friendship and love from Jesus, who said: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15.13-15).

These men loved Jesus and longed to serve Him with their lives. They also sacrificially loved Paul. Loving and caring for him in prison could have been dangerous work. Yet they did it. Gladly and fervently, they served Christ by loving and caring for Paul. And Paul loved and cared for them, teaching them to grow in their love and faith for the Lord. It was, as so many things are in the Christian’s walk, circuitous. Putting on love through teaching, service, comfort, and care just keeps going around. It is why all people are drawn to Christ and His Church. Or at least that’s the plan.

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (Jn. 12.32). “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13.34, 35).

These were all faithful, fellow workers for the Kingdom of God. Let’s join them and be a comfort and encouragement to our fellow workers today.

Reflection

1. What does it mean to be a “fellow worker for the Kingdom”? Would you describe yourself this way? Explain.
2. What fellow worker for the Kingdom will you comfort and encourage today?
3. Why do we need one another in our work of seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God?

*Paul had differed with Barnabas, on the account of this Mark, yet he is not only reconciled, but recommends him to the churches; an example of a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not always be remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. The apostle had comfort in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, working out their own salvation, and endeavoring to promote the salvation of others. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Colossians 4.10-18**

Use me today, O Lord, to do Your work and encourage Your workers as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 31.14-22

Give thanks for your great salvation. Call on the Lord to help you increase in it. Pray for your co-workers in the Kingdom, that they may rejoice in the Lord’s grace and strength this day.

Psalm 31.14-22

(Brother James’ Air: [*The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll not Want*](#))

But I will trust in You, O Lord; You are my God and King!
My times are in Your hand; from those who hate me rescue me!
Shine down Your face on me with grace; let Your love on me be!

Let me not come to shame, O Lord, for on Your Name I call.
Let wicked men to hell be cast, let shame upon them fall.
Their lies and plots shall come to naught; to silence send them all!

How great the goodness You reserve for those who fear You, Lord,
who rest in You and boldly stand before men in Your Word.
You cover them from plots of men; You shelter them, O Lord!

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me!
In my alarm I cried to Him; He heard my fervent plea!
In fear and dread with You I pled; You heard and rescued me!

5 Greetings All Around

Opening Prayer: Psalm 71.14-16

But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Sing Psalm 71.14-16, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read Colossians 4.12-14

Preparation

1. What did Epaphras desire for the Colossians?
2. Whom did Paul say to greet?

Meditation

Moe greetings to the Colossians from those serving with Paul. Here he mentions Epaphras, who was from Colossae, and may have been the source of Paul's information about the church there; Luke, Paul's traveling companion since Macedonia; and Demas, who would shortly quit the field, being too much in love with the world (2 Tim. 4.1).

All these men were important to Paul and his work, and they wanted to be remembered to the church in Colossae. Epaphras especially was burdened for his fellow believers there, praying for them earnestly that they might be made complete in Christ (v. 12). Paul testified to his zeal for the Colossians and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Epaphras must have had some familiarity with, and perhaps some ministry to, the believers in those cities as well.

Paul also wanted to be remembered to the believers in Laodicea. He had apparently written a letter to them (now lost), which he urged the Colossians to read (v. 16). He also singled out Nymphas (Greek: Nympha) for a special greeting. The Greek makes it clear that she was a woman, since she hosted a church in her (not "his" as in NKJV) house. Early Christian churches were house churches. But they were true churches, not just Bible study groups. Paul held in high regard those who opened their homes for the churches to meet, worship, and study together, like Nympha in Colossae, Chloe in Corinth (1 Cor. 1.11), and Priscilla and Aquila, her husband, in Rome (Rom. 16.3-5).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Being a person of prayer is a noble and righteous calling. Epaphras, the bond servant of Christ, always labored fervently for others in prayer, that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will

of God.

Somehow, these days, this amazing gift seems to have fallen into disfavor with the go-getters of churchdom. How many times have you heard someone say, or have said yourself, “Well, I guess I can just pray”? Or perhaps a person is shut-in and can’t get out to “do” mighty works of ministry, but oh well, “Shucks, I can pray”. Prayer is the mightiest work of all! And we can all do it; and in fact, are all called to do it. Some people though seem to have a real gift for it. Like Epaphras.

Jesus spent much time in prayer: “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Lk. 6.12). And then we have the loving discourse between Jesus and God recorded for us in John 17 where He is praying specifically for us. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me...” Amazing. There Jesus prayed for us!

Peter said, “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6.4).

Paul encouraged us to “continue steadfastly in prayer...” (Rom. 12.12), “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. 6.18), being anxious for nothing, “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving” letting our requests be made known to God (Phil. 4.6); and to do this “without ceasing” (I Thess. 5.17).

We all love to hear that someone is praying for us. Let us also take up this noble calling, and be like Paul’s friend Epaphras, and labor fervently for others in prayer.

Reflection

1. What can you do to be more consistent in your prayer life? Why should you do this?
2. Do you have fellow workers in the Kingdom to encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord? Whom do you regularly encourage?
3. The first Christians met in homes and turned their world upside-down for Jesus. Why do we feel like we can’t be a church without buildings, programs, staff, and so forth?

The apostle had comfort in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, working out their own salvation, and endeavoring to promote the salvation of others. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Colossians 4.10-18

Lord, lead me to come alongside a fellow believer today, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 71.17-24

Whom will you greet in the Name of the Lord today? Whom will you serve with the love of Jesus?

Sing Psalm 71.17-24, 3

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O Lord, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.
Forsake me not when I am old, ‘til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain, v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Your righteous deeds are great and true. O God, there is no one like You!
Though many troubles I have seen, You will revive my soul again!
Refrain

Increase my greatness, comfort me, and unto You shall praises be.
Your truth I will exalt full well, O Holy One of Israel!
Refrain

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; Lord, humble all who do me wrong.
Refrain

6 Read Around

Opening Prayer: Psalm 33.1-5

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work is done in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Sing Psalm 33.1-5

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.
His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

Read Colossians 4.16-18

Preparation

1. What were Paul's instructions concerning his letters to the Colossians and the Laodiceans?
2. What did Paul desire for the Colossians at the end of his epistle?

Meditation

The first Christians did not have Bibles. If a synagogue of Jews or a Jewish rabbi converted to the faith, they would have had *some* Old Testament scrolls. But the New Testament was a work in progress in Paul's day. He understood that his letters were important in helping to bring the Old faith into the New era of the last days. This is why he wrote so many letters which make so many references to the Old Testament.

The letter to the Colossians would have been read in the congregation. The leader – probably Archippus (v. 17) – would have offered some comments following the reading. This would have been repeated many times. Then the letter would have been copied and sent around to other cities.

The same thing was happening in Laodicea. We don't know why that letter hasn't survived. But we see from these few verses how important the apostles considered their written works. They all had a sense that the Lord was giving them a new and timely and eternal Word for His people. The first Christians cherished these letters. They made thousands and thousands of copies of them and sent them to believers all around the Roman world and beyond.

Their zeal for the Word and faithfulness in hearing it shows us how we should cherish and feed on the Word in our day. Paul ends his letter where he began it, seeking the grace of the Lord for the believers in Colossae (v. 18; cf. 1.2). Reading and hearing the Word of God is integral to that.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Now when this epistle is **read**...” (4.16)

“...see that it is **read** also...” (4.16)

“...and that you likewise **read**...” (4.16)

Hmm. Something seems to stand out in this verse: **read!**

If you are reading this, then you can read. And the most important thing you can or will ever read is the word of God. Because in this word you can “Take heed” (4.17) to all the things that God wants you to know.

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15.16).

“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary *food*” (Job 23.12).

“The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Ps. 119.130).

“But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not” (Jer. 20.9).

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119.105).

“Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him” (Prov.30.5).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1.1,14).

We have been given the dual gifts of the written word and the living Word of God. Both come from the hand of God.

The living Word gives us life and the written word is our guide to life. Both are essential for fulfilling our individual ministries in life (Col. 4.17). “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4.12).

The Word is our joy; and required reading!

Reflection

1. Do you find your reading of Scripture as satisfying, fulfilling, and edifying as it should be? What can you do to improve your reading.
2. Which fellow workers for the Kingdom encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord? Have you thanked them?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to get started in regular reading and meditation in God’s Word?

Hence, though it was addressed to the Colossians, it was, nevertheless, necessary that it should be profitable to others. The same view must also be taken of all the Epistles. They were indeed, in the first instance, addressed to particular Churches, but, as they contain doctrine that is always in force, and is common to all ages, it is of no importance what title they bear, for the subject matter belongs to us. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Colossians 4.16*

Lord, let my faith be only in Jesus, and only according to Your Word, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 33.8-12, 20-22

Pray for a worldwide revival of God's people and a great awakening of the lost world to the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom. Seek His counsel concerning how you may contribute to that great revival today.

Sing Psalm 33.8-12, 20-22

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!
The worlds exist by Jesus' Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations' plans; forever stands His sov'reign Word.
All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

7 Chains of Love

Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.1-6

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.
The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.

Sing Psalm 116.1-6

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise To God Who Reigns Above*](#))

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.
The snares of death encompassed me; hell’s grip could not unloosened be;
distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Read Colossians 4; meditate on verse 18.

Preparation

1. How many ways do you see believers’ love for one another at work in this chapter?
2. What uses of prayer does Paul mention in chapter 4?

Meditation

Paul begins Colossians 4 asking prayer for open doors “to speak the mystery of Christ” (v. 2). He closes the chapter by asking for prayer (“remember”) again, but this time for his “chains” (v. 18). These requests do not contradict one another – freedom to preach and house arrest in Rome (cf. Acts 28.16, 30, 31). Roman chains could not prevent the Gospel from reaching others with the welcome chains of God’s knitting and binding love (cf. Hos. 11.3, 4; Phil. 1.12-14).

Paul was knit in love to faithful colleagues (Col. 4.7-15), and through them, to the churches – like those in Colossae – which he served by his writing (v. 16). His great desire was that all believers would be more closely bonded to Christ and one another in the chains of His unfailing love (v. 13; cf. 1.28, 29).

All believers have a Master in heaven (v. 1) Whom we love, to Whom we pray (vv. 2, 3), and Who

calls us, in the chains of His saving and sanctifying love, to take the mystery of Christ to our world. He is supremely just and fair; therefore, we do not hesitate to put ourselves in the yoke with Him to do the work He has appointed for us (Matt. 11.28-30). Bondservants of Christ, yokefellows in the work of the Gospel, join us in the chains of God's love for mutual prayer, encouragement, and edification, that we might all walk in wisdom (v. 5) and show and tell the Gospel as we ought (v. 4). We should seek out such soul friends, that we might be knit together in the love of Jesus (3.14), that we might together glorify God in everything we do or say (3.17; 4.5, 6).

If we chain ourselves to this world, we'll never know the freedom to soar above temptation, trials, fears, and doubts that comes from being chained in the love of Jesus. Remember Paul's chains – our earthly trials and challenges, but the love of our heavenly Master – and take them upon yourself anew each day.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul filled his letter to the Colossians with Christ and His glory. He was eloquent and firm concerning the Christian's responsibility to put on love for God and neighbor.

Colossians offers abundant counsel in how to do this, and the encouragement of knowing that we have the mind of Christ to enable our success.

Then at the very end Paul signs his name and says, "Remember my chains" (Col. 4.18). For all his strength and brilliant teaching, he is, we find, human. What a comfort that is to our flagging spirits! Even Paul had to trust Christ at every moment to soldier on in this life. And didn't he do it well?

We can too, if we put on Christ every day and live from His mind; reading and studying and meditating upon His Word and being fervent in prayer--as this is the will of God for us.

Even in our humanity and chains, remembering Paul in his chains, we can say with him: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4.7,8).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?" "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8.35, 37-39).

Remember Paul's chains and humanity. But remember the power he knew to be able to say, despite the chains, "Remember that Jesus Christ...was raised from the dead...for which I suffer trouble...even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things..." (2 Tim. 2.8-10) and finally, "Grace be with you" (Col. 4.18). Remember.

Reflection

1. What are some worldly "chains" that can hinder our progress in the Gospel? How can we know when we have become trapped in these?
2. Paul did not allow Rome's chains to keep him from serving Christ. How was he able to do that?

3. How can believers encourage one another to press on in our calling, regardless of worldly obstacles or hindrances?

All who thus come will receive rest as Christ's gift, and obtain peace and comfort in their hearts. But in coming to him they must take his yoke, and submit to his authority. They must learn of him all things, as to their comfort and obedience. He accepts the willing servant, however imperfect the services. Here we may find rest for our souls, and here only. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Matthew 11.28-20*

Lord Jesus, I yield to You and take Your yoke and bands upon me today so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19

Rejoice to be God's prisoner in love. Devote this day and everything in it to Him. Put on Jesus and the bond of His love, and seek the grace and wisdom of the Lord for the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 116.7-19

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your Presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What can we learn about the work of prayer from Colossians 4?
2. Why do we need soul friends and fellow workers in the Lord's Kingdom?
3. What is the relationship between loving the Lord and redeeming our time?
4. Why is reading the Bible so important to our walk with and work for the Lord?
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from Colossians 4? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.