



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 19



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

PARTICIPATION IN PRAYER

“ 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” ^{KJV} (Col 4:2-4)

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of God is one of participation. This is not a Kingdom in which personalities are inactive or uninvolved. In former times, when Israel was separated unto God, He emphasized His **intention** was for them to become involved with Him. This involvement included obedience to the voice of the Lord, and the keeping of His covenant. As it is written, “*Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex 19:5-6).

If Israel chose to ignore this

involvement with the Living God, He was quite clear concerning the results that would follow. “*But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set My face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times*

more for your sins” (Lev 26:14-18).

The Lord has never intended or condoned a people He has saved failing to be involved with Him. If men choose to believe it is God’s manner to maintain an association with those who ignore Him, they are simply wrong. There is not a syllable in the entirety of Scripture that suggests such an absurdity. Furthermore, the history of His dealings with people unquestionably confirms such a thing will not take place. If people concoct theologies that leave men imagining they can remain in the favor of God without **participating** in will and purpose, they have only moved men closer to damnation. Those who promote such teachings and conclusions are false prophets in every sense of the word!

OUTLINE

- ▶ CONTINUE IN PRAYER (4:2a)
- ▶ WATCH WITH THANKSGIVING (4:2b)
- ▶ WITHAL PRAYING FOR US (3:1a)
- ▶ A DOOR OF UTTERANCE (3:1b)
- ▶ SPEAK THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST (3:3c)
- ▶ MAKING THE MYSTERY MANIFEST (3:4a)
- ▶ AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK (3:4b)

Ponder the various statements of this book from the standpoint of participating with God – **becoming personally involved with Him in His great salvation.**

- ✚ Faith in the Lord Jesus and love toward all the saints (1:4).
- ✚ The word of the truth of the Gospel bearing fruit in the people (1:4-6).
- ✚ Their love in the Spirit (1:8).
- ✚ A prayer that the saints would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (1:9).
- ✚ Walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (1:10a).
- ✚ Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (1:10b).
- ✚ Giving thanks unto the Father who has qualified us for the inheritance (1:12).
- ✚ Translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son (1:13).
- ✚ A presentation to the Lord unblameable and unproveable in His sight IF we continue in the faith, grounded and settled (1:22-23).
- ✚ Not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel (1:23b).
- ✚ Christ in you is the hope of glory (1:27).
- ✚ Hearts being comforted, being knit

together in love (2:2a).

- ✚ Experiencing the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ (2:2b).
- ✚ An orderly life, and steadfastness of our faith (2:5).
- ✚ Walking in Christ, being rooted and grounded, established in the faith, and abounding with thanksgiving (2:7).
- ✚ Not allowing any man to beguile us of our reward (2:18).
- ✚ The body of Christ having nourishment ministered to it, being knit together, and increasing with the increase of God (2:19).
- ✚ Seeking the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God (3:1).
- ✚ Setting our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth (3:2).
- ✚ Mortifying our members that are upon the earth (3:5).
- ✚ Putting off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of our mouths (3:8).
- ✚ Putting off the old man, and putting on the new man (3:9-10).
- ✚ Putting on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering (3:12).
- ✚ Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another (3:13).
- ✚ Putting on charity, which is the bond

of perfectness (3:14).

- ✚ Letting the peace of God rule in our hearts (3:15).
- ✚ Letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (3:16a).
- ✚ Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (3:16b).
- ✚ Doing whatever we do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (3:17).

NONE ARE AUTOMATIC

None of these things are automatic. **None of them occur without thoughtful involvement on the part of the saved.** All of them require faith. All of them require love. All of them require hope. All of them require grace. None of them can be accomplished in the energy of the flesh, or by the natural man. None of them can be done by someone who is not in Christ Jesus. None of them are done for us by God without our participation. None of them are conferred upon us by some unique spiritual experience.

You might as well envision Israel coming out of Egypt by being miraculously delivered while they slept, as to imagine the twenty-nine things to which I have referred could be accomplished without personal involvement with God.

One of the serious deficiencies of the nominal church is that it has not instilled in its people a zeal for the things of God. Rather than the Lord becoming the heart and soul of life, He is generally viewed as an adjunct to life – a sort of accessory that is used in times of trouble or crisis. But this is a wholly distorted view, and has no association with God or

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His salvation. **If people are not working with God, it because they have withdrawn from Him**, for there is no inactive position in His kingdom.

THE KINGDOM SPELLED OUT

The Spirit reminds us that we have received a kingdom that is immovable: *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Heb 12:28). Notice that this reception is associated with serving God acceptably – **involvement with Him**.

The Kingdom we have received is

the Firstborn.

- ✦ God the Judge of all.
- ✦ The spirits of just men made perfect.
- ✦ Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.
- ✦ The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

None of those are museum pieces, or mere lifeless relics. All are noted for what they are presently doing. There are benefits associated with them all, and none of those benefits can

- ✦ A popular counseling program.
- ✦ A growing sports program.
- ✦ A large Christian school.
- ✦ A fully credentialed church staff.
- ✦ An effective ministry for senior citizens.
- ✦ A community exercise program.
- ✦ The distribution of food and clothing to the poor of the community.

None of these things are wrong of themselves. In fact, there is much that commends them all. However, none of them, of themselves, demand the Lord, His Spirit, a love for the truth, or an absolutely holy and submitted life. They can all be rendered acceptably to the professed “church” without the possession of faith and love.

This is by no means intended to be a condemnation of such things. However, it is to say that they are not to become the most prominent thing, or become the basis for supposed Divine approval. **The emphasis of the church must not be shifted from what God is doing to what men are doing.** The only way to avoid this type of change is to be *“laborers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9). That type of activity can only be done by those who live by faith (Rom 1:17), and walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25). There must also be fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor 1:9), and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).

CALLING US HIGHER

Now the Spirit will call us higher than our domestic responsibilities. **What we are here summoned to do demands that no carnal distractions be found in our lives.** If we are deficient as wives, husbands, fathers, children, servants, and masters, that deficiency will impact upon what we are now called to do. If we have not participated with God in our lower responsibilities, how will we be able to enter into more central matters – matters for which we have been called.

The activity to which we are now subjected touches directly upon God’s

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spelled in verses twenty-two through twenty-four. There, we are provided a view of some of the details of the Kingdom into which we have been translated. Observe how none of them are inactive or disassociated from the Lord.

“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24). This is the kingdom we are said to have *“received.”* Note that every one of the things mentioned is associated with life and activity.

- ✦ The city of the Living God.
- ✦ The heavenly Jerusalem.
- ✦ An innumerable company of angels.
- ✦ The general assembly and church of

be realized independently of involvement or participation.

All of this may appear to be a literary bypath, or a sort of hobbyhorse to be ridden now and then. However, the religious climate of America demands that men be brought to consider these things. We are being faced with church activities that are never mentioned in Scripture. Yet, they are areas with which certain religious distinctions are being associated. **What kind of response would be elicited from the Apostle Paul, who wrote this Epistle, if men gave him a report of the following congregational achievements.**

- ✦ A flourishing praise and worship service.
- ✦ An effective praise and worship leader.
- ✦ A dynamic youth program.
- ✦ A burgeoning junior church service.
- ✦ Outstanding Christmas and Easter programs.

“eternal purpose.” Our calling was not in order to be wives, husbands, fathers, children, servants, or masters. We have a responsibility to conduct ourselves to the glory of God in those relationships, but they are not the “vocation wherewith ye

are called” (Eph 4:1). **Rather, they are areas in which we prove ourselves worthy of handling matters that bear directly upon eternity.**

Fundamentally, Jesus has washed

us from our sins in order that we might be “kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6). Now the Spirit will deal with one of the functions of king-priests. This is word for every member of the body of Christ, without regard to age or gender.

CONTINUE IN PRAYER

“4:2a *Continue in prayer . . .*”

I do not believe the Spirit changes the subject in this passage. Rather, I see the previous admonitions (3:1-4:1) as a **preparation for this call into holy involvement.** The ultimate aim of the Spirit is not to produce ideal families, or the most comely association between masters and slaves. However noble those circumstances may be, they are subordinate to a higher work.

If spiritual life was merely a matter of proper earthly associations, it would not justify the staggering investment that has been made in our salvation. The prodigious ministry of the Prophets and John the Baptist in preparation for this salvation can hardly be vindicated by perfecting associations that are **not** common to all who receive that salvation. Too, **I do not believe a case be built for the life, death, resurrection, exaltation, enthronement, and intercession of Jesus, solely for the purpose of achieving optimum temporal relationships.** Who is willing to affirm that godly families and comely relationships between servants and masters required that Jesus be made sin (2 Cor 5:21), and cursed by God (Gal 3:13), for us? And if this is not the case, such associations cannot be the ultimate aim of God’s great salvation.

While no person of sound mind is willing to brush aside temporal interconnections as inconsequential, they are to be seen a means to an end, and not the end itself. That is, when we have fulfilled the will of the Lord in those relationships, our work is not done, but is only begun. **By being faithful to God in these earthly matters, we become qualified to handle things more**

directly related with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If the latter stewardship is not taken seriously, there is no virtue in supposed achievements in the earthly matters.

FOR THE LORD

Wives are admonished to fulfill their role “as it is fit in the Lord,” and as the “church is subject to Christ.” Husbands are to love their wives as “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” Children are to obey their parents “for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” Fathers are not to provoke their children, but “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Servants are to be obedient to their masters “with singleness” of “heart, as unto Christ.” Masters are to give what is “just and equal” to their servants, knowing they also “have a Master in

In order to set the stage for the words that follow, consider who it is that is speaking. This is THE “Apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13), charged with taking the Gospel the Gentile world with a mind to provoking the Jews to emulation (Rom 11:13-14).

The commission he was given is staggering to ponder. It is this: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18). It involves individuals doing the following.

- ✚ Seeing what the Lord has done, being enlightened concerning His salvation.
- ✚ Being turned from the power of

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heaven.”

In all of these relationships, a keen sense of personal responsibility to the Lord is to be maintained. The seasoning of eternal purpose is to be sprinkled on the whole of life. This not only sanctifies life in this world, it readies us for participation in eternal matters.

SETTING THE STAGE

enslaving darkness.

- ✚ Being translated into the Kingdom of God’s Son.
- ✚ Embracing, and profiting from, the very power of God.
- ✚ Receiving the forgiveness of sins.
- ✚ Receiving an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith.

A ministry of this magnitude cannot be accomplished independently of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul was not a loaner – isolated from the rest of Christ’s body, and operating on his own. He will now call upon the people he has just admonished to join him in the labors to which he has been appointed. He will call upon them to lift up his hands, as Aaron and Hur lifted the hands of Moses (Ex 17:10-13). **He sensed that the success of his commission depended, in part, upon the involvement of the saints.** That involvement, however, must not be sullied with defiled hands.

CONTINUE – THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

“Continue . . .” Other versions read, “*continue earnestly*,”^{NKJV} “*continue steadfastly*,”^{RSV} “*devote yourselves*,”^{NASB/NIV} “*give yourselves to*,”^{BBE} and “*persevere*.”^{DARBY}

The word “*continue*” comes from

and giving ourselves to the matter.

“Continuing” is the manner of the Kingdom. This is what characterizes all legitimate activity for Jesus.

- ✦ Continue in **the grace of God** (Acts 13:43).
- ✦ Continue in **the faith** (Acts 14:22).
- ✦ Continuing in **God’s goodness** (Rom 11:22).
- ✦ Continuing in **the faith grounded and settled** (Col 1:23).
- ✦ Continuing in **the things we have learned** (2 Tim 3:14).
- ✦ Letting **brother love** continue (Heb 13:1).
- ✦ Continuing in **the Son and in the**

I want to reaffirm that continuing is the manner of the Kingdom. Even though earnest and consistent disciples are exceedingly rare in our part of the world, there is no other legitimate disciple. Jesus said, “*And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:27). That is not something that can be done sporadically or seasonally.

The landscape of Christianity is strewn with the wreckage of works that were never completed, noble ambitions that failed of fulfillment, and efforts launched in the name of Christ that eventually fizzled out. Legion is the name of preachers who have quit preaching, teachers who have quit teaching, and church members who have ceased to be productive. **Dropouts are altogether too common in the professed church, and that condition is at sharp variance with the very nature of spiritual life.** Our God is noted for finishing His work (Rom 9:28). The Lord Jesus is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2). The epitaph of a faithful kingdom laborer is, “*I have finished my course*” (2 Tim 4:7).

Continuance has to do with finishing. It involves dependability and faithfulness. It is altogether uncomely for anyone to begin in Christ but not finish. Whatever excuse may be offered for failing to continue will be thrown down to the ground in the day of judgment. Not continuing is equivalent to being unfaithful, and God has spoken clearly about that condition and the determined outcome of it.

IN PRAYER

“*. . . in prayer . . .*” To “*continue in prayer*” is to remain steadfast and earnest in this aspect of spiritual life. After all, prayer is a vital part of “*the whole armor of God*.” As it is written, “*Put on the whole armor of God . . . Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (Eph 6:11-18). “*Praying always*” is the same as continuing in prayer. It is being dependable in this facet of newness of life.

Notice, the particular focus of prayer is “*all saints*” – something that

Continuance requires commitment, being earnest, and being diligent. It is being persistent even though obstacles are thrown in our path. Effort is characterized by intensity, faithfulness, and giving ourselves to the matter.

a word that means “to be earnest towards, to persevere, be constantly diligent, to attend assiduously to, to adhere closely.”^{THAYER} “Persist at, stay by, to be loyal to, attach oneself to, associate closely with, stand ready, occupy oneself diligently with, pay persistent attention to, cling to, spend much time in.”^{FRIBERG} “To continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty.”^{LOUW-NIDA} “To persist obstinately in, to adhere firmly, be faithful.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Continuing is not a mere habit. It is not done perfunctorily, without heart and with purpose. It is not a repetitious exercise that can be done casually, without trust, or without purpose. **Continuance requires commitment, being earnest, and being diligent.** It is being persistent even though obstacles are thrown in our path. Effort is characterized by intensity, faithfulness,

Father (1 John 2:24).

- ✦ Continuing in **the perfect law of liberty** (James 1:25).
- ✦ Continually offering **the sacrifice of praise** (Heb 13:15).
- ✦ Patient continuance in **well doing** (Rom 2:7).

Continuance is the opposite of falling away (Heb 6:6), drawing back (Heb 10:38-39), and coming short of the promise (Heb 4:1). It contrasts with believing for a while (Luke 8:13), becoming lukewarm (Rev 3:16), and failing to go on to perfection (Heb 6:1). **Continuance cannot take place when life is not lived as unto the Lord, with zeal and consistency.**

Paul will now address. **The work of the Lord relies upon the prayers of the saints.** While it is true that there are leaders in the body of Christ, the work itself is put into motion through the prayers of the saints. Paul knows this, and therefore urged the saints to join in this good work.

When John was given the magnificent revelation on the Isle of Patmos, he was confronted with the book of Divinely determined destiny – a book that could only be opened and expounded by the Lamb of God (Rev 5:1-7). When the Lamb of God “took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne,” one of the very first things that

was mentioned was the prayers of the saints. “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, **which are the prayers of saints**” (Rev 5:8).

Later in the Revelation the prayers of the saints are again associated with the fulfillment of Divine purpose. “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came **with the prayers**

of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (Rev 8:3-4).

The truth of the matter is that God has brought the saints into intimate involvement with His will. He has chosen to incorporate them into His purpose, allowing them to put their hands on the plow of Divine intent. **It is this arrangement that necessitates the saints continuing in prayer.** The Lord has so arranged things that prayer is integral to the fulfillment of His will.

That is the way He has designed things, and that is the way in which He works. Knowing this, Paul summons the saints into that holy involvement.

WATCH WITH THANKSGIVING

“4:2b . . . and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

There is a certain attitude that accompanies valid prayer. Like all other activities in the Kingdom, prayer cannot be accomplished perfunctorily, or by rote. For example, Jesus said that prayer must be attended by “believing” (Matt 21:22). Paul reminded us that steadfastness, or being “instant,” is also required (Rom 12:12). Now he admonishes the saints concerning another frame of mind that is to be built-into our prayers.

WATCHING – ANOTHER KINGDOM MANNER

“ . . . and watch . . . ” Other versions read, “be vigilant,”^{NKJV} “keeping alert,”^{NASB} “being watchful,”^{NIV} “stay awake,”^{NJB} and “with an alert mind.”^{NLT}

The word “watch” means “to be have been aroused from sleep, to be awake .. Give strict attention to, be cautious, active – employ the most punctilious care in a thing.”^{THAYER} “To watch, be or keep awake, be watchful, vigilant, alert.”^{FRIBERG} “he would surely see what was happening.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Being watchful postulates the possible presence of danger, or the imminence of great blessing. In both cases, there is a need to be alert. Once again, it is clear that a religion of habit or routine has no place in Christ Jesus. IN

our prayers we are to be alert – alert for direction and alert for an answer.

It is **while Jesus was praying** that He was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared, speaking with Him about the death He was to accomplish (Luke

instances required a watchful spirit.

An Example of NOT Being Watchful

We do have a Scriptural example of some who were NOT watchful in prayer. It was one of the most critical

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9:29-31). When Peter was on the housetop of Simon the tanner, **praying**, the Lord directed him concerning delivering the Gospel to Cornelius (Acts 10:9-17). You may also remember that it was while the early church was ministering to the Lord and fasting that the Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). Again, while Paul was “praying in the Temple,” the Lord directed Him: “Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me” (Acts 22:18).

The consolation and direction that was received in each of these

times in the history of the world – if not the **most** critical time. Jesus is praying with “strong crying and tears” to Him who was able to Him who was “able to save Him from death” (Heb 5:7). His prayers were so fervent and taxing to his physical constitution (Lk 22:44), that “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43).

Rising from his intense prayer, He returned to His disciples (Peter, James, and John), only to find them asleep. In plaintive tones He asked them, “What, could ye not **WATCH** with Me one hour?” (Matt 26:40). At that hour, when He was struggling with the forces of darkness and

of nature, the weary disciples were not watchful. He then told them, **“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Matt 26:41). **Unbeknown to them, they were in the midst of a great spiritual battlefield into which the hosts of heaven and hell had converged. But they knew it not.**

IN THE SAME

“ . . . in the same . . . ” Other versions read, *“in it,”* and *“therein.”*^{ASV} ^{NKJV/NASB}

The *“same”* refers to prayer. It is IN the praying itself that the saint is to remain watchful, alert, earnest, and aware in both mind and spirit.

Many a poor soul has developed

in order. Over the years, I have confronted people who prayed with their eyes open, sometimes gazing around the group. I remember seeing this as a young boy without understanding, and wondering at this strange phenomenon. Mind you, it is not that such a practice is necessarily a sin. It does, however, contradict the admonition to be *“watchful”* in prayer. **There is a sense in which the sights of this world are distracting to the heart, introducing competitive thoughts, and separating one from the spirit of prayer.**

Each believer must determine to culture the practice of being *“watchful”* IN prayer. An alertness is required that enables the individual to be directed from heaven, and to pray *“with the spirit and with the understanding”* (1 Cor 14:15).

“thanksgiving,”^{NASB} *“keeping watch with praise,”*^{BBE} and *“a thankful heart.”*^{NLT}

In this case, *“thankfulness”* is the environment in which prayers are offered. This is when there is, IN prayer, a prevailing sense of the goodness of God, and of the abundance of His grace. At once there is a consciousness of the past and the present, in which the Lord has been active. This is when the follower of Jesus can say with Solomon, *“Blessed be the LORD . . . there hath not failed one word of all His good promise”* (1 Kgs 8:56). Surveying the landscape of life, the believer can say with Joshua, *“that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning”* (Josh23:14). He can confess with Zacharias, *“He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy”* (Luke 1:54).

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The well of thanksgiving is opened by such truthful recollections. Thankfulness also has a way of clearing our vision, so that we are better able to see past blessings, as well as coming benefits. This vision is essential to effective prayer.

Prayers that are driven by such a spirit are more effective. Thus Peter admonished, *“Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray”*^{NIV} (1 Pet 4:7). Effective prayer requires these qualities.

the dreadful habit of being unalert in periods of prayer. Although prayer is not to be approached from Mount Sinai, there are some practical observations that are

WITH THANKSGIVING

“ . . . with thanksgiving.” Other versions read, *“with an attitude of*

WITHAL PRAYING FOR US

“^{3a} *Withal praying also for us.*”

Now the Spirit will show us why cultured spirits are essential. The necessity of being watchful and thankful in our prayers will be made more clear. This is one of the reasons for admonishing wives, husbands, fathers, children, servants, and masters. Fulfilling their responsibilities is not an end of itself, but better prepares them to enter into the work of the Kingdom, being *“laborers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9). It should not surprise us that *“joint heirs”* with Christ are also *“laborers together”* with

Him.
While we are to *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (Phil 4:6), this is by no means a total view of prayer. **At some point, our prayers must include interests that are higher than our own, and pursue larger matters than those that impact directly upon us.** We must venture beyond the circumference of our own lives. This will become evident as we delve into this text – a request that we pray for someone other than ourselves.

WITHAL PRAYING ALSO

“Withal praying also . . . ” Other versions read, *“meanwhile,”*^{NKJV} *“at the same time,”*^{NASB} *“too,”*^{NIV} *“also,”*^{RSV} and *“especially.”*^{NJB}

The word translated *“withal”* means *“at once, at the same time, at the same time with, together with.”*^{THAYER} *“In association with,”*^{FRIBERG} *“A point of time which is emphatically simultaneous with another point in time.”*^{LOUW-NIDA} Here, then, is something that is to be done WHILE we are continuing in prayer – whether personal or collective.

There is a certain harmony in the

Kingdom of God and of Christ – a harmony that allows for great versatility without the compromise of godly focus. In the world, and especially within the false church, “*Babylon the Great*” (Rev 17:5), this kind of diversity is not seen. Within the very social fabric of organized religion there is a sort of ungodly competition. This trait is often what drives, what is called, “specialized ministries.” This, however, is not the manner of the Kingdom.

While it is quite common to find this, no valid work for Christ should have to operate without the confines of local congregations. Notwithstanding, many good men and women have found it impossible to fulfill their calling within the organizational structure of the professed church. **Contrary to this circumstance, we will find Paul fulfilling his ministry as a member of the body of Christ, calling upon congregations to lend their influence to his calling.**

Valid personal concerns do not conflict with larger Kingdom matters. Men and women of faith can throw themselves into fervent prayer for matters that do not directly impact upon their personal calling or ministry, and do so without any interruption of their work. Congregations can do the same.

FOR US

“... for us ...”

The prayer is for Paul and those who traveled with him – “us.” We read of “*Paul and his company*” (Acts 13:13), “*Paul and Barnabas*” (Acts 13:43), “*Paul and Silas*” (Acts 16:19), “*Paul and Timotheus*” (Phil 1:1), and “*Paul and Sylvanus, and Timotheus*” (1 Thess 1:1). Although he was the one commissioned to be “*the Apostle to the Gentiles*,” he gathered around him faithful souls to co-labor with himself. That also is the

Yet, with all of the revelation that had been given to Paul, and with the absolute uniqueness of his ministry, he relied upon the prayers of the saints.

manner of the kingdom.

It is apparent that there is no conflict between the objectives of Paul and that of the saints in Colossae. While continuing in prayer, they can take up matters pertaining to Paul’s Apostleship.

Probably, with the only exception of Christ Jesus, Paul is the leading man of all time. He “*labored more abundantly*” than the other Apostles (1 Cor 15:10). Three years after he had been personally tutored by Jesus, he “*went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days*” (Gal 1:18). **Even though Peter and the other Apostles had been in Christ much longer than Paul, they were not ahead of him in their understanding.** Paul says of the most noble of them, “*they who seemed to have been somewhat in conference added nothing to me*” (Gal 2:6). This was in no way intended to be derogatory, but did accent the remarkable abundance that had been revealed to Paul. James, Peter, and John “*perceived the grace*” that had been given to Paul, extended the right hand of fellowship to him, and knew that he “*should go unto the heathen, and they to the circumcision*” (Gal 2:9). They saw the extent of his understanding.

Paul saw more than others saw, being given the understanding required to open men’s eyes and turn them from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). As it is written, “*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when*

ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph 3:3-5).

Yet, with all of the revelation that had been given to Paul, and with the absolute uniqueness of his ministry, he relied upon the prayers of the saints. When addressing the Ephesians concerning “*the whole armor of God*,” Paul declared prayer was integral to that armor. He focused upon being watchful “*with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me*” (Eph 6:19-20a). How is it that he spoke in this way? It was because he knew the nature of the Kingdom into which we have been transferred. There is an interdependence in that Kingdom that is by Divine design.

Just as surely as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses in a strategic battle (Ex 17:10-13), so Paul calls upon the saints in Colossae to hold him up. Aaron and Hur were not equals with Moses, for he had no equals. God did not speak to anyone else like He spoke to Moses. God said of him, “*With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*” (Num 12:8). Yet, Moses, in order to fulfill his work, was dependent upon those who had less distinction than himself.

That is still the manner of the Kingdom. Labor to see it with understanding, and to enter into the labors of others as best you can. Run from self-centeredness. It is not of God.

A DOOR OF UTTERANCE

“^{3b} ... that God would open unto us a door of utterance ...”

Paul is not vague about how the saints are to pray for him. He not only has a grasp of what he has been called to do,

but he is also perceptive of **how** that calling will be fulfilled. He comprehends the manner in which Jesus works.

GOD OPENS

“ . . . that God would open unto us . . . ” Other versions read, “that God may give us an open door,”^{BBE} “asking God to throw open a door,”^{NJB} and “that God will give us many opportunities.”^{NLT}

Because “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1), **He can create opportunities.** Those in whom faith is working know this

would be able to bring glory to God. Although they were spiritually fatigued, no man would be able to take this opportunity from them, or inhibit them from taking advantage it.

Evidence at Colossae

This is the way in which Jesus worked, and Paul knew it. With a message burning in his heart, he sought for an opportunity to declare it. This involved more than simply speaking the message.

Head of the body is enthroned. The finely tuned organizations of men cannot bring glory to God, for they are operating in the flesh. The church, with all of its members, is “the body of Christ,” who is its solitary Head. **It is a sin of the greatest magnitude for men to attempt to marshal the saints to implement programs spawned in their own minds.** Although this practice is quite common, it is impotent to yield anything but external and temporal results.

When Jesus charged His disciples with preaching the Gospel, He commissioned them to begin where most of the preparative work had already been done. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Earlier He said that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name **beginning at Jerusalem**” (Luke 24:47). That is where the door was opened, as the results confirmed.

A DOOR OF UTTERANCE

“ . . . a door of utterance . . . ” Other versions read, “a door for the word,”^{NKJV} “for our message,”^{NIV} “a door for the preaching of the word,”^{BBE} “a door of speech,”^{DOUAY} “a door for us to announce the message,”^{NJB} “to preach,”^{NLT} and “to speak.”^{YLT}

The word “utterance” means “of speech, a word uttered by a living voice.”^{STRONG’S} It refers to an opportunity to speak – to express the message of the Gospel in words. **Those who say the best sermon is one that is seen are only expressing their own ignorance.** Faith does not come by seeing, but by hearing. The Gospel cannot be comprehended by seeing, it must be heard in words, else it will forever remain a mystery.

A “door of utterance” is an opportunity to preach the Gospel to those who want to hear it. It is a Divinely orchestrated circumstance that brings the Gospel to a people who are ready to receive it – like Philip being sent to a Ethiopian official who had a desire to understand the Word of God (Acts 8:26).

Kingdom activities are directed from heaven, where the Head of the body is enthroned. The finely tuned organizations of men cannot bring glory to God, for they are operating in the flesh. The church, with all of its members, is “the body of Christ,” who is its solitary Head.

is the case. They know that, in Christ, the “opening of the prison to them that are bound” is boldly announced (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:18). He “opened” Leah’s barren womb (Gen 29:31), and Rachel’s as well (Gen 30:22). He “opened the eyes of Balaam” (Num 22:31), and the eyes of Elisha’s trembling servant (2 Kgs 6:17). He “opened” Lydia’s heart so she could respond to the things spoken to her by Paul (Acts 16:14). Even in Job’s day, men knew the Lord “openeth the ears of men” (Job 33;16). Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev 3:7).

A Door Opened to Philadelphia

In a special message sent to the church in Philadelphia, Jesus spoke of creating an opportunity. This is one church against which Jesus had nothing. Because of the fierce warfare in which it was engaged, this church is described as having “a little strength.” Notwithstanding “the King of glory” declares He is going to “set before” them an “open door, and no man can shut it” (Rev 3:8). **This was an opportunity in which this faithful body of believers**

He was keenly aware that the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), and he desired an opportunity to declare it **where it would bring forth fruit.** It was no consolation to Paul simply to preach the message. His desire was for fruit like that which had been reaped in Colossae: “. . . the word of the truth of the Gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and **bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth**” (Col 1:6).

A Sense of Stewardship

Paul had a keen sense of the requirement for stewards. As it is written, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:2). **This involves more than simply speaking the Gospel. It also includes declaring it at the right time and in the right place.** This is why, at one time, the Spirit forbade Paul and company to go into Asia, and did not allow them to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). It was not the right time or place.

Being a faithful steward involves being sensitive to the Lord and following His direction. **Kingdom activities are directed from heaven, where the**

There are several things that characterize a faithful steward of God.

- ✚ He has received something from God that is to be declared.
- ✚ He has perceived the sense of the message received, having an understanding of it.
- ✚ The message is burning in his heart like a fire, and he is compelled to speak it out.
- ✚ He has a desire for the message to be comprehended and received by others.

Where these characteristics do not exist, a real preacher is not present. Anyone else who presumes to preach in the name of the Lord is actually an imposter. Those who preach without being “sent” have done nothing more than attempt to impose their will in an arena in which they are not licensed to operate.

A “door of utterance” assumes the conditions that I have just mentioned. It assumes there is a message to be declared. It takes for granted the person who will speak has an understanding of that message. It accepts that there is a driving compulsion to speak the message. It assumes there is a fervent desire for that message to be understood. To give an opportunity to speak to anyone **else would contradict the very character of Christ and the nature of His salvation.**

It is not enough to have a message – a valid and powerful message from heaven! There must be an opportunity to declare it – and that is something men cannot create. **When preaching the Gospel, men are not to stab in the dark, making vain attempts here and there to declare the good news – trying, as it were, to get the message out.** They are not to study the layout of the world to see where they conceive the Gospel to be needed most. However noble this may appear, it is not the strategy that has been employed by heaven. I suppose a case could have been built for the priority of preaching the Gospel to Asia – but there was a time when the Holy Spirit would not allow it. Perhaps a convincing

case could have been presented for going into Bithynia, but there was a time when the Spirit would not allow that either. At that time, the door of utterance was opened in Macedonia, where a group of women were gathered by a river to pray (Acts 16:9-14).

Thus Paul calls the saints into holy involvement with his own Apostleship. He exhorts them to pray that the Lord will open opportunities for him

Thus Paul calls the saints into holy involvement with his own Apostleship. He exhorts them to pray that the Lord will open opportunities for him to declare the Gospel to those who will receive it. He knew Jesus could do this.

to declare the Gospel to those who will receive it. He knew Jesus could do this. He also knew the manner of Christ’s working – that He works through His church, “*which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Eph 1:23).

My own testimony

I cannot help but testify of the blessing of the Lord that I myself have received in this area. Over a period of more than five decades, I have prayed in the words of David, “*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law*” (Psa 119:18). In great mercy, He continues to answer that prayer. I have found that when truth is discerned it is like “*a burning fire shut up in my bones*” that could not be contained (Jer 20:9).

The complicating factor was that I was associated with a people who, for the most part, had little or no appetite for these “*wondrous things*.” Here and there among them, by the grace of God, the remnant of those who have received the love of the truth were found, but they were precious few and far between.

The Lord opened a door of utterance to me in writing – a vehicle through which I could express the things I was given to see. Several thousand

readers in America, Korea, and India were opened up to me – a fellowship in which I found great joy and strength.

In 1958, the Lord opened a door of utterance to me in Gary, Indiana. There a band of disciples gathered together with a fervent desire for the truth. They came from all kinds of backgrounds, and with a single purpose. Through them my writing ministry expanded, and a national radio ministry was opened. In 1980, a door was

opened in India. In 1988 a door was opened for the publication the book “The Kingdom of God.” In 1989, another door was opened for the preparation and dissemination of sixty-five 30-minute videos on pertinent themes related to stabilizing the saints.

In 1992 another door of utterance was opened within a group of churches, permitting me to speak the things God has given me to see. In 1993, another door of utterance was opened in my own home, where saints gathered together for the solitary purpose of feasting on the riches of God’s Word.

In 1997 the Lord opened a door through the Internet, allowing access to thousands of hungry souls throughout the world. This has developed into a significant ministry, and has been used by the Lord to open other doors of unparalleled opportunity.

In 2002 and 2003 the Lord opened doors in West Africa, Pakistan, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, and the Philippines.

In every single one of these opportunities, there was glorious receptivity to the message of the Gospel. The recipients did not resist us, but

received the Word with all gladness and readiness of mind. Also, in all of them a static approach to preaching and teaching was strictly forbidden. All of them required ongoing growth and insight on my own part, therefore providing for constant freshness and joy. These experiences continue to this very day (April, 2004).

Great and Effectual

These experiences can best be described the words of Paul, who enjoyed such blessings on a vastly larger scale: *“For a great door and effectual is*

opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9). Another version reads, *“a wide door for effective work has opened to me.”*^{NRSV}

It was the Lord who opened that large and efficacious opportunity. However, he did so through the prayers of those who had been *“called into the fellowship”* of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor 1:9) – souls who were intimately involved with the Son of God.

Perhaps one reason for the seeming lack of *“effectual”* doors is

the lack of involvement with the Living God on the part of professed believers. This is another result of an approach to religion that makes the people primarily spectators. It is the consequence of lifeless organizationalism, where the people are not called to consistently participate in eternal purpose of God. Satan has become a more hindering force because of the general deadness of the church. Thus the Spirit calls the lethargic to *“awake out of sleep, for not is our salvation nearer than when we first believed”* (Rom 13:11). The need of the hour is alertness!

SPEAK THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

“^{3c} . . . to speak the mystery of Christ . . .”

There is no question in Paul’s mind what he will do with an open door. He knows why the Lord has called him. **He emphatically stated elsewhere that he was not fulfilling the agenda of men.** *“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to*

Apostleship was placed upon him. He was not a Christian of Christians but *“an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God”* (1 Cor 1:1). He no longer sought profit *“in the Jews’ religion,”* but was *“separated unto the Gospel of God”* (Rom 1:1). Now he was not living as a Pharisee *“of the most straitest sect of our religion,”* but was the *“Apostle of the Gentiles,”* in order to provoke some of the Jews *“to*

proclaim, preach, or declare. That is what the opportunity was for. The open door was not for the purposes of making acquaintances, forging a religious career, or even establishing a church. **It was a Divinely orchestrated occasion when the appointed message could be spoken.**

In a day when religious institutionalism has upstaged the revealed purpose of God, preachers are rarely noted for preaching. In fact, that is generally acknowledged to be the least of all their duties. It is not unusual for a prestigious preacher to actually speak only a few minutes a week, yet be known as a “preacher.” Preachers are often known for their administrative abilities, waiting on tables, developing various church procedures, etc. Paul, however, was noted for what he SAID. That means when God opened the door of utterance, he took advantage of it and spoke the Word of God.

Paul was noted for what He SAID – what he spoke, or declared. That is where his focus was placed – declaring. **If you take away what Paul said, whether in person or in writing, he would soon have been forgotten.** It is his message that has given him kingdom distinction.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

“. . . the mystery of Christ . . .” Other versions read, *“the secret of*

The open door was not for the purposes of making acquaintances, forging a religious career, or even establishing a church. It was a Divinely orchestrated occasion when the appointed message could be spoken.

please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ”^{NASB} (Gal 1:10). Prior to being called by Christ, Paul excelled in the religion of the Jews. **“And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”** (Gal 1:14). He was a *“Hebrew of the Hebrews”* (), and *“lived a Pharisee”* after *“the most straitest sect,”* he said, *“of our religion”* (Acts 26:5).

All of that changed when he came into Christ and the mantle of

emulation, and might save some of them” (Rom 11:13-14). Now Paul spells out more specifically what he will do when the Lord opens the door of opportunity for him.

SPEAKING

“. . . to speak . . .” Other versions read, *“so that we may speak forth,”*^{NASB} *“so that we may proclaim,”*^{NIV} *“that we may declare,”*^{NRSV} *“for the preaching of the Word,”*^{BBE} and *“to announce the message and proclaim.”*^{NLT}

The *“door or utterance”* was opened in order that they might speak,

Christ,"^{BBE} and "to preach about His secret plan – that Christ is also for you Gentiles."^{NLT}

In Scripture, a "mystery" is not something that remains unknown or hidden. **Rather, it is something that is hidden by nature, but has been revealed by God.** A Scriptural "mystery" is something that cannot be deciphered by the wisdom of men. Apart from Divine intervention, it is something that cannot possibly be known.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul asked that they pray he would open up his mouth and "make known the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph 6:19). This is the same "mystery" mentioned our text. "Christ" is the substance of the Gospel, and "the Gospel" is the good news about Christ. **That is, Christ is the total answer to the human dilemma caused by the entrance of sin and death.** And let it be clear, the problem that plagues humanity is sin! All of the deficiencies, inadequacies, and challenges within humanity are only sub-points of sin – and sin is the matter Christ came to address.

Earlier in this Epistle, Paul referred to the "mystery of Christ," affirming he had received it to make it known, among others, to the Colossian brethren. "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even **the mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col 1:25-27).

The mystery to be proclaimed was not God's plan for the family. It was not an evangelistic strategy. It was not a way to impact the governments of the world. It was not the secret to mental health and personal achievement. The "mystery" that Paul proclaimed was not the manner in which the local congregation is to be organized, nor was it the official roles of its various members. Compressed into a single word, the "mystery" was "Christ" – "the mystery of Christ."

The power of that message was realized when it became personalized – "Christ IN you." Until that happened, Christ remains a "mystery," inaccessible to the human intellect. **Until Christ is within, men only philosophize about Jesus, and in very small measures at that.**

The effectiveness of Christ is experienced when we are dominated by hope – "Christ in you the HOPE of glory." Let it be clear, **Christ is relevant to people only to the extent that they dominated by the anticipation of being glorified.** Wherever people are not purifying themselves because of that hope (1 John 3:2-3), they easily adopt an

1:23). That was the thrust of his message.

All of Paul's teaching and preaching found its center in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him, none of his teaching made any sense, or had any relevance. To be sure, what he taught brought a greater understanding of the people themselves. But that is only because he has provided an understanding of "the Lord's Christ."

Within the Christian community there is a remarkable diversity of messages. Some preach the church. Others preach the Holy Spirit. There is preaching about health and prosperity in all of its varied forms. There are messages that are tailored for the young, the old,

Christ's Person and accomplishments were what Paul expounded. The function of Christ in the Divine economy was what he expatiated, not the role of the Christian, the church, or the family.

emphasis other than Christ.

Christ's Person and accomplishments were what Paul expounded. The function of Christ in the Divine economy was what he expatiated, not the role of the Christian, the church, or the family. While he did teach on those matters, that teaching was not his message. Rather, he dealt with such things because they could prove to be obstacles in grasping the real message.

As soon as Paul was converted, he spent several "days with the disciples which were at Damascus, and straightway **preached Christ**" (Acts 9:19-20). During a period of "two whole years" in his own hired house he continued "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern **the Lord Jesus Christ**" (Acts 28:30-31). To the Corinthians, accustomed to all manner of Grecian wisdom, Paul said, "we preach **Christ crucified**" (1 Cor

the singles, and the married. There are those who major on some historical movement, together with its slogans and positions. Others focus on the future, emphasizing what they call "prophecy." There are even some who emphasize praise, music, and worship, doing so with somber tones and disfigured faces.

However, none of these things can appropriately be termed a "mystery." Nor, indeed, are they suitable subjects for doctrinal emphasis. God has nowhere committed himself to open a door of utterance for the proclamation of such things – nowhere! When John spoke of the real message – the one associated with "eternal life" – he referred to it as "the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5:10-11). That, and that alone, is the message for which God provides a "door of utterance" – a "great and effectual door." Opportunities to speak other messages, "another Jesus," and "another Gospel," do not come from Him.

FOR WHICH I AM IN BONDS

“^{3d} . . . for which I am also in bonds.”

Paul now confirms his total commitment to the message – “*the mystery of Christ.*” He has not only been appointed, called, and commissioned to preach this message, that is precisely what he has been doing. His testimony will confirm that his heart is in his work. He can be trusted, therefore, to take

unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:16).

What Paul now relates was the result of his preaching. **The irony of the situation is that it was not the heathen that instigated most of his suffering, but his own countrymen.** He delivered a message that those devoted to justification by law could not receive. He was so dogmatic and unrelenting in

honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50).

✚ In Iconium, “**the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren**” (Acts 14:2).

✚ In Lystra, “**there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead**” (Acts 14:19).

✚ In Thessalonica, “**the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people**” (Acts 17:13).

✚ In Corinth the opposition began to pick up. “**And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat**” (Acts 18:12).

✚ When Paul gave his defense before a tribunal, speaking to his brethren, “**they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air**” (Acts 22:23). Eventually this opposition led to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome.

✚ Before he was transported to Rome, forty Jews “**banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul**” (Acts 23:12).

And what was the cause of all of this opposition? **It is what Paul preached.** He preached Christ with such strength and commitment that it exposed the hearts of those who were set against the Son of God. That is why he suffered – it was because of what he preached!

I AM ALSO IN BONDS

No other person can be trusted with an opened “door of utterance.” Unfaithful people are wasting their time in praying for opportunities. Such graces are reserved for the faithful, and for the faithful alone.

advantage of a “*door of utterance.*” One of the reasons Jesus “*enabled*” Paul, “*putting him into the ministry,*” was that He “*considered*” Paul to be “*faithful*” (1 Tim 1:12). No other person can be trusted with an opened “*door of utterance.*” **Unfaithful people are wasting their time in praying for opportunities.** Such graces are reserved for the faithful, and for the faithful alone.

FOR WHICH

“ . . . for which . . . ” Other versions read, “*on account of which,*”^{RSV} “*wherefore,*”^{GENEVA} “*for the sake of which,*”^{NJB} and “*That is why.*”^{NLT}

Even though the message Paul consistently delivered was “*good,*” declaring the “*way of salvation,*” and opening the marvelous accomplishments and ministry of the Lord Jesus, it was not so received by many. The very message that brought joy to some, produced anger in others. As it is written, “*For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life*

his proclamation of “*the mystery of Christ*” that the “*enemies of the cross*” lashed out against him. Of these opponents, who were Jews, Paul said, “*who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*” (1 Thess 2:16).

This opposition from the Jews began early in Paul’s ministry.

✚ Soon after his conversion we read, “**But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him**” (Acts 9:24).

✚ In Antioch of Pisidia, “**the Jews stirred up the devout and**

“... I am also in bonds.” Other versions read, “I am also in chains,”^{NKJV} “I have also been imprisoned,”^{NASB} “for which I am in prison,”^{NRSV} and “That is why I am here in chains.”^{NLT}

Here is a faithful man, imprisoned because of his preaching. Elsewhere he associated his imprisonment with his labors for Christ. He called himself “the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:1; Phil 1:1; Phile 1:9), “the prisoner of the Lord” (Eph 4:1), and “His prisoner” (2 Tim 1:8). He referred to his bonds as “the bonds of the Gospel” (Phil 1:13). He asked the Lord to give mercy to the household of Onesiphorous, “for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim 1:16).

Because the preaching of the cross is “foolishness” to those who are perishing (1 Cor 1:18), there was great opposition against Paul. Thus he was placed in restraints – “bonds.” Standing in defense of his faith, he referred to his condition in these words: “I am bound with this chain.”

How does a man like that want people to pray for him? Here he asks the saints to pray that a “door of utterance” will be opened to him – an opportunity to preach the message for which he was

Angels are occupied with the will of God (Psa 104:4). The Lord Jesus Himself is occupied with the will of God (John 4:34). The Holy Spirit is occupied with the will of God (Rom 8:27). Paul’s calling has brought him into that will also. What about you?

currently “in bonds.” This is in perfect accord with several other requests he made for prayer.

✚ “Finally, brethren, **pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you, And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.**” (2 Thess 3:1-2).

✚ “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; **and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I**

ought to speak” (Eph 6:20).

✚ “Ye also helping together by **prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf**” (2 Cor 1:11).

When Paul said “pray for us” (1 Thess 5:25; Heb 13:18), he was not taken up with personal concerns. Rather, his thoughts centered in the work of the Lord, and the Divine appointment that had brought him into involvement with that purpose.

Angels are occupied with the will of God (Psa 104:4). **The Lord Jesus** Himself is occupied with the will of God (John 4:34). **The Holy Spirit** is occupied with the will of God (Rom 8:27). Paul’s calling has brought him into that will also. What about you?

MAKING THE MYSTERY MANIFEST

“^{4a} **That I may make it manifest . . .**”

What is it that needs to be clarified, or made plain? Is it the church? The family? The role of government? The way the church is to be organized? Who has the authority in the church? What is it that God commissions people to manifest, declare, or make known? If one put his ear to the religious landscape, there might be considerable confusion on the matter. However, there is no discombobulation on this subject in Scripture. **We have been drawn to “the mystery of Christ” – the hidden things pertaining to the One God has anointed to destroy the devil his works, and deliver those who were all their lifetime subject to the fear**

of death.

THAT I

“That I . . .” Other versions read, “in order that I,”^{NASB} and “so that I may,”^{NRSV} and “to the end that I may.”^{DARBY}

This is the purpose for which Paul asks for prayer. **He is seeking Divine enablement.** Note, he does not ask for saints to pray that somehow someone would be found to do the work of the Lord. **Rather, he is seeking capability for his personal involvement in the purpose of God.** After all, “the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron 16:9). Such a person was found in the Apostle Paul. He

knew it, and asked for prayer that he might be equal to the challenge the Lord placed before him.

MAKE IT MANIFEST

“... may make it manifest . . .” Other versions read, “make it clear,”^{NASB} “proclaim it clearly,”^{NIV} “reveal it clearly.”^{NRSV}

The heart of the Apostle knows that if men are to gain an advantage from the Gospel, it must, to some degree, be understood. **A Gospel that remains a mystery will not bring faith** – for faith comes by hearing this Gospel (Rom 10:17).

This understanding requires Divine involvement. Only the Lord can

open the heart, so that men can respond appropriately to that Gospel (Acts 16:14). However, that by no means excludes the need for a messenger – one who is “sent” by God to deliver the appointed message (Rom 10:14-15).

Focused Calling

It is the responsibility of every preacher to make “the mystery of Christ” clear. That is to be the compelling objective and the effective

dabbling in too many things. The church is primarily “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), and it is to be occupied with the business of clarifying what is “hidden in Christ.” It has not been called to serve the community, but to serve the Lord.

Right Words

In manifesting “the mystery of Christ,” it is imperative that right words be employed. Paul was keenly aware of

“words” (1 Cor 2:13). That is the kind of preaching that makes manifest “the mystery of Christ.”

The Nature of Things Manifested

Throughout Scripture, things that are “manifested” are consistently associated with the Person and purpose of God. These are the things that God reveals or makes known. A brief perusal of the things said to be “manifest” will serve to confirm this.

The more of man that is in preaching, the more impotent it becomes. Novel preaching is powerless preaching. When men fill up their messages with earthly illustrations, humorous anecdotes, and the likes, their messages become feeble and ineffectual. It is quite possible for homiletical rules to do nothing more than neutralize the truth.

result of preaching. If that does not happen, the preaching worthless. God does not call men to clarify earthly responsibilities and temporal relationships. That is, that is not thrust of the work into which He calls His laborers. He raises up laborers for “HIS harvest,” not the ambitions and projects of men. **Like it or not, the Lord does not call people to solve the problems of their peers.** They may give wise counsel, assist in bearing burdens, and clarify what God has said concerning temporal relationships. But that is not to be their focus, nor is it to be the thing for which they are known.

Throughout the centuries, God has called men into His own work. Such notables as Moses, David, the Prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and others like James, Jude, Luke, Timothy, Titus were included. **Not a single one of them were called to resolve a social issue.** Many of them delivered a word concerning such things, but that was never their focus.

Today, the professed church has become too diverse in its work. It has lost its focal point, and is

this. That is why he said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: **not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect**” (1 Cor 1:17). Note, the employment of “cleverness of speech,” ^{NASB} or “words of human wisdom,” ^{NIV} actually negate “the cross of Christ,” making it ineffective. **The more of man that is in preaching, the more impotent it becomes.** Novel preaching is powerless preaching. When men fill up their messages with earthly illustrations, humorous anecdotes, and the likes, their messages become feeble and ineffectual. It is quite possible for homiletical rules to do nothing more than neutralize the truth.

Powerful preaching is “a message of wisdom among the mature” (1 Cor 2:5). That is why Paul said, “And my speech and my preaching was **not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God**” (1 Cor 2:4-5). With holy deliberation he spoke “not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, **combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual**

- ✚ What may be known of God is “manifest” (Rom 1:19).
- ✚ The righteousness of God without the Law is “manifested” (Rom 3:21).
- ✚ The whole creation is waiting expectantly for the “manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19).
- ✚ God Himself was “made manifest unto them” that asked not for Him (Rom 10:20).
- ✚ The message of the Gospel, kept secret since “the world began,” is now made “manifest” for “the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26).
- ✚ God makes “manifest” the savor of His knowledge (2 Cor 2:14).
- ✚ The truth is made “manifest” in the preaching of the Gospel (2 Cor 4:2-3).
- ✚ The “life of Jesus” is “made manifest” in the bodies of the saints (2 Cor 4:10).
- ✚ The “mystery” of salvation, that has been “hid from ages and generations,” is now “made manifest to His saints” (Col 1:26).
- ✚ In Christ, God Himself “was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16).
- ✚ The “purpose and grace” of God are “made manifest by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 1:10).
- ✚ God’s word is “manifest . . . through preaching” (Tit 1:3).
- ✚ The Lamb of God, “foreordained before the foundation of the world,”

is “manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20).

- ✦ The **life of God** has been “manifested” in Christ Jesus (1 John 1:2).
- ✦ **Jesus** was “manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5).
- ✦ **The Son of God** was “manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

These texts speak for themselves, making quite clear where the emphasis is to be placed.

“MANIFEST” AND “MYSTERY”

The word “manifest” appropriately has to do with a “mystery” – something that is presently hidden, yet is intended by God to be known. **Things that are “manifested” are things that already exist, but are, by nature, hidden from the natural understanding.**

God, Christ, the righteousness of God, the purpose of God – these are all existent in their fulness. None of them are in a state of development. All of them are made accessible to men through Christ Jesus and by faith. **These are the substance of preaching – the core of what is being made known.**

Summarized in a single statement, the hidden thing that is being made known is “the mystery of Christ.” This is not a message about Jesus that is derived from uninspired accounts. It is not a word that is developed through etymological research, archeological findings, or extra-biblical writings. Those are not things that are hidden to men, or require prayers, such as the one that is now set before us. “The mystery of Christ” has to do with Divine determinations and objectives that can only be known by revelation. It deals with the accomplishments of Christ that cannot be seen with the eye, or grasped with the natural understanding. These are the things that are to be made known, or “manifested.”

Some Examples

A brief review of things relating to Christ that are hidden to nature will

suffice to confirm this point. If we had all of the historical facts before us concerning the birth, life, and death of Christ, there are several things that could not possibly be derived independently of revelation. These all pertain to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ✦ He was sent from heaven (John 6:38).
- ✦ He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
- ✦ He received a commission to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18).
- ✦ He only spoke what the Father told Him (John 12:49).
- ✦ He only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19).

His cross (Col 1:20).

- ✦ On the cross He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us (Col 2:14).
- ✦ He made a public show of inimical principalities and powers, triumphing over them in His cross (Col 2:15).
- ✦ He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).
- ✦ He bore our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24).
- ✦ God made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21).
- ✦ He was made a curse for us,

If we had all of the historical facts before us concerning the birth, life, and death of Christ, there are several things that could not possibly be derived independently of revelation. These all pertain to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ✦ He partook of flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death (Heb 2:14).
- ✦ He came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15).
- ✦ He came into the world to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).
- ✦ He was tempted in all points like as we are (Heb 4:15).
- ✦ No man took His life from Him (John 10:18).
- ✦ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor 5:19).
- ✦ In His death He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14).
- ✦ He made peace through the blood of

redeeming us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).

- ✦ He was obedient unto death (Phil 2:8).
- ✦ He was declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection (Rom 1:4).
- ✦ By one offering He perfected forever those who are sanctified (Heb 10:14).
- ✦ We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all (Heb 10:10).

There is not a single one of these things than can be derived by merely viewing the history of Christ’s birth, life, and death – not a single one. Given all of the external facts in the case, we could not have concluded one of these sentences, much less all of them. No amount of expertise in the

“original language” can produce the knowledge of these realities. If God did not raise up men to declare them – to make them “*manifest*” – they would have remained in obscurity.

This is a part of “*the mystery of Christ*” that is to be made clear to the people. **If this does not take place, nothing pertaining to godliness, or living acceptably, will make sense to us.** The persuasion of these things is the catalyst that enables us to walk by faith and live in the Spirit.

The modern church has not done well in clarifying these things – things gathered together in “*the mystery of Christ*.” You will find a staggering consistency in the ignorance that exists concerning them. These are the very things that are excluded from preaching, in favor of what is called relevant matters. **If a person cannot comprehend the things pertaining to Christ, such things as the resurrection of the dead and appearing before the judgment seat of Christ will be viewed as irrelevant.** However, when

faith takes hold of them, and they are made manifest to the heart and mind, **everything else makes sense.** Godliness is then seen as essential. Alertness and vigilance make perfect sense. Diligence and perseverance are then seen as indispensable.

It is no wonder that Paul asked for prayers that He would clarify “*the mystery of Christ*,” opening the riches of that mystery to the people. He knew that was the means through which faith is spawned.

AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK

“^{4b} . . . as I ought to speak.”

The heart that is “*established in grace*,” and not by empty religious routines (Heb 13:9), views the work of the Lord quite differently than those who are under the dominion of Law. Those who know that God has made them “*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Col 1:12) have a unique

is a need of, it behooves, it is right and proper.” THAYER
 “It is necessary, one must, one has to, it is necessary or binding, one ought, one has to, one must.” FRIEBERG
 “That which must necessarily take place.” LOUW-NIDA
 “It is binding on one to do a thing, one must, one ought.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

Even in English, the word means, “Used to indicate duty or correctness.” OXFORD

“**must** go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt 16:21). When speaking to them of certain signs of great trouble that was coming upon the earth, He said “*for all these things must come to pass*” (Matt 24:6). It is obvious from these texts that “*must*” is not one of several differing options.

If the quest of the believer is to “know Christ,” what may be known of Him must be manifested or clarified! Those who spend the burden of their time developing other subjects are recreant to their trust and useless to the church.

Elsewhere, where the word is translated “*ought*,” it is equally apparent that something **essential** is being addressed. “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). “*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak*” (Rom 15:1). “*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*” (Eph 5:28). “. . . ye **ought** to walk and to please God” (1 Thess 4:1). “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*” (Heb 2:1). “*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness*” (2 Pet 3:11).

perception of what they are supposed to do. In the verse before us, we find a sterling example of this.

AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK

“. . . as I ought to speak.” Other versions read, “*as I should*,” NIV “*as it is right for me to do*,” BBE “*as it becometh me to speak*,” GENEVA “*as I must speak*,” NAB and “*as it behoveth me to speak*.” YLT

The word “*ought*” comes from a Greek word that means, “it is necessary, there

Absolutely Essential
 Making “*manifest*” the “*mystery of Christ*,” clarifying it to the minds of the people, was not a mere noble objective. Paul is not requesting that he excel above his equals in the matter of preaching, by doing better than ordinary. **In this, he is asking for prayer to preach in the only acceptable way.**

In the Scriptures, this word is often translated “*must*.” In preparing to die, Jesus showed His disciples that He

As you can see, there is nothing about this word that suggests something that is optional. “**Ought**” speaks of something that is essential, imperative, and necessary. It is a requirement or requisite.

Paul wrote something similar in his Epistle to the Ephesians. “*For which*

I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph 6:20). On the one hand, he asks the Colossians to pray that he may speak with great clarity, making the mystery known. On the other hand, he asks the Ephesians to pray that he will make *"the mystery of the Gospel"* known boldly, or fearlessly – with frankness in utterance, and confidence in spirit.

When it comes to preaching, here are two things that must be done. They come under the heading of **"OUGHT."**

✦ **CLARIFY THE GOSPEL.** If hungry souls are left in a quandary about anything, it had better not be the Gospel of Christ! **If the quest of the believer is to "know Christ," what may be known of Him must be manifested or clarified!** Those who spend the burden of their time developing other subjects are recreant to their trust and useless to the church. If the Scriptures themselves primarily testify of Christ (John 5:39), what may be said of the professed preacher or teacher who does not do so? Paul describes such men in these arresting words: *"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things"* (Phil 3:19).

✦ **PREACH IT BOLDLY.** Many a would-be preacher has caved in to pressure to clarify other things – things that have little to do with the Person and accomplishments of Christ. **In the church culture in which we find ourselves, it will take "boldness" to clarify "the mystery of Christ" – but it must be done!** If men say to be silent, the message must be still be declared. If the religious group with which we are

identified does not allow for making *"the mystery of Christ"* plain, men must do it anyway. If elders or other leaders oppose this kind of message, it is still to be declared. If it conflicts with other interests, preach it! If it drives people away, declare it still!

It does not appear to me that these things are generally known within the professed church. **There are simply too many other messages being declared! Churches are putting up with deficient and flawed teaching and preaching.** This is nothing new. Paul dealt with this in the church at Corinth – a congregation that had a noble beginning and came *"behind in no gift"* (1

In the church culture in which we find ourselves, it will take "boldness" to clarify "the mystery of Christ" – but it must be done! If men say to be silent, the message must be still be declared.

Cor 1:7). Yet, they had become so novel in their approach to the things of God that Paul said this of them. *"For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough"*^{NIV} (2 Cor 11:4).

For that matter, Jesus Himself said the church at Thyatira tolerated a false prophetess among them, who was teaching His servants *"to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols"* (Rev 2:20). The church in Pergamum had those who held to the *"doctrine of Balaam,"* and others who had embraced *"the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,"* which thing Jesus hated (Rev 2:14-15).

The Galatians endured some teachers who troubled them and perverted the Gospel of Christ (Gal 1:7). They moved the Galatians to cease to obey the truth, persuading them of things that were not true (Gal 5:7-8).

The Colossians were being exposed to teachers who had a penchant for Law, and were encouraging the observance of days, new moons, and Sabbaths. They heard messages that promoted voluntary humility, the worshiping of angels, and the rudiments of this world (Col 2:16-20). They were also being exposed to lifeless religious routines by men who were not holding to the Head, Jesus Christ, and thus were not delivering His message (Col

2:19-20). Those conditions occasioned some of the words we are now reading.

All of these instances had something in common: **Jesus was not at the center of what was being taught! "The mystery of Christ" is not what was being "manifested."** The people were being diverted to spiritually profitless areas of thought. God provides for no other message!

Thus Paul asks the Colossians to pray that he would open up **the only message that saves and sanctifies,** doing so boldly and without fear. May the Lord grant that such a spirit will be found in abundance among those who profess to speak for God. Where the Gospel is not being clarified boldly, a person is found who is not speaking for God.

CONCLUSION

There are certain staple kingdom | activities that are common to all who are | in Christ Jesus. The text we have just

In Christ Jesus we are called into lives of participation – participation with God in the working of His own purpose – by Given O. Blakely

reviewed focuses upon prayer. **Prayer is an activity that is aided by the Holy Spirit.** As it is written, we are to build ourselves up by *“praying in the Holy Spirit”* (Jude 1:20). For some, this means praying in a language that is not understood by the one who is praying. However, that meaning has been superimposed upon the text. There is no clear statement in Scripture that affirms such a thing. Those who teach this are teaching a human conclusion. **Every other exhortation to prayer is one that requires an understanding and focus in the one doing the praying.** Too, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them to pray with words they understood, and for

understanding he had been given. **He did not resort to marketing techniques, advertising campaigns, or other systems reflecting the wisdom of men.** His approach would not be considered acceptable by any religious institution. However, it is, in my judgment, the **only** acceptable approach. Our Lord Jesus Himself told His disciples, *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest”* (Matt 9:38).

At this point there is something that we must see. **The kind of prayer our text admonishes can only be fulfilled in a spiritually mature people.** Those who live slovenly spiritual

The kind of prayer our text admonishes can only be fulfilled in a spiritually mature people. Those who live slovenly spiritual lives cannot fervently pray for the Lord to open doors of utterance. In fact, they do not even have minds that can embrace such a thought.

matters that could be intelligently articulated (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4). Our text also speaks of prayer that is intelligent and thought out by the one doing the praying.

Our text admonishes us to *“continue in prayer,”* being alert within prayer to give thanks. **Such a posture is inconceivable if the individual either does not know what he has prayed, or is not focused in that prayer.**

Prayer is one of the means through which the Lord manages His kingdom. Through His grace, He has called His saints into the activities of His kingdom. In our text, the Colossians were exhorted to come along side the Apostle in his prodigious ministry. Through their prayers, doors of utterance could be opened for Paul to disseminate the

lives cannot fervently pray for the Lord to open doors of utterance. In fact, they do not even have minds that can embrace such a thought. Partaking of the Divine nature, and being workers together with God requires an eye that is single, and a heart that is wholly devoted to the Lord. A person attempting to serve two masters cannot engage in such prayer. One who is not taking up his cross daily and following Jesus cannot be counted on to pray in this manner.

Here is where the previous exhortations in 3:1 through 4:1 are seen more clearly. Ponder them once again, and see if they do not make more sense.

- ✚ Seek the things which are above (3:1).
- ✚ Set your affection on things above (3:2).

- ✚ Mortify your members that are upon the earth (3:5).
- ✚ Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of your mouth (3:8).
- ✚ Lie not to one another (3:9).
- ✚ Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering (3:12).
- ✚ Forbear and forgive one another (3:13).
- ✚ Above all, put on charity (3:14).
- ✚ Let the peace of God rule your hearts (3:15a).
- ✚ Be thankful (3:15b).
- ✚ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (3:16a).
- ✚ Teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs (3:16b).
- ✚ Do everything in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to the Father through Him (3:17).
- ✚ Wives, submit to your own husbands (3:18).
- ✚ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them (3:19).
- ✚ Children, obey your parents (3:20).
- ✚ Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath (3:21).
- ✚ Servants, obey your masters (3:22).
- ✚ Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, not men (3:23).
- ✚ Masters, give to your servants what is just and equal (4:1).

Those who achieve growth in these areas will be able to pray effectively concerning the Lord opening doors of utterance to those who have an understanding of the Gospel – and doors will be opened to no one else! However, those who do not

grow in these areas will not be able to enter into such a work.

Who is able to adequately measure the effectiveness of a church that is spiritually alive and mature? Equally true, who is able to estimate the

hindrances and blockades that are thrown in the path of Kingdom progress by churches that are sloshing aimlessly through life, with no commitment to God, no fellowship with Christ, and no communion with the Holy Spirit? These circumstances represent a condition that

is serious beyond measure.

May you be challenged to so live that those in God's harvest fields can be helped along by your prayers. That is an indispensable ministry into which holy people can enter with joy and zeal. It is both satisfying and productive.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/16/2004. In this session, we will be covering verses 5-6 of the fourth chapter. The title of our lesson is, **"WALKING AND SPEAKING"** Our conduct toward those are "are without" focuses on how we live before those who are not joined to the Lord. The Spirit considers them to be "without" – outsiders. Now He will admonish us concerning our conduct toward them. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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