

This is our final look at the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Colossae.

Please have your Bibles opened to Colossians chapter 4, verses 2 to 18

There's the usual sermon outline, in your bulletin, if you'd like to jot down notes.

Let me pray for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

## INTRO

Over the past 7 weeks or so

The Apostle Paul has taught us:

### [PowerPoint 1-Summary]

That - Jesus is God - Jesus is Creator - and Jesus is our Saviour

That - Jesus gives us a new life if we believe in His death and resurrection

That - Jesus gives us freedom to love - and changes our have-to's into want to's

That - Jesus is all of life - not just an hour on Sunday

That - our relationships with one another are meant to be different because of this new life in Jesus

That - in our relationships with one another - we need to have the same mindset as Jesus - sacrificial - "agape" love

So given ALL of that....

Paul then finishes his letter in today's reading - with 2 responses for the Colossians (and for us)

### [PowerPoint 2-2 Responses]

2 Responses:

PRAYER and WITNESS [2 of the spokes on the wheel]

## PRAYER (vv2-4, 12, and 17-18)

The Apostle Paul offers a fistful of advice on prayer

[PowerPoint 3a-Devoted]

### 1. First - Be devoted to prayer

See V2 - **Devote** yourselves to prayer being **watchful** and **thankful**.

**Devote** here means - persevere in prayer - continually praying - not giving up praying

*When Hudson Taylor (who later in life became a missionary to China (1832-1905)) when he was eighteen years old he wandered into his father's library and read a gospel tract. He couldn't shake off its message. He eventually fell to his knees, and accepted Jesus as his Saviour.*

*10 days later, his mother, who had been away, returned home. When Hudson told her the good news that he had come to believe in Jesus,*

*She said, "I already know, son. Ten days ago, the very day on which you tell me you read that tract, I spent the entire afternoon in prayer for you until the Lord assured me that my wayward son had been brought into the fold."*

That's the sort of devotion to pray that Paul is talking about here

Prayer is so important

*It might have been an angel that released the Apostle Peter from prison (in Acts 12), but it was prayer that brought the angel to release him (acts 12:5). [Thomas Watson]*

I wonder how diligent we are in our prayer life.

*Jesus went more freely to His death on the cross, than we go to God's throne of grace in prayer!* [Thomas Watson - puritan preacher]

In v2 - when it says being **watchful** - it literally means **being awake** - Not like the disciples at the transfiguration (Luke 9:32) when they were sleepy and not fully awake - and not like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane when they all fell asleep and left Jesus praying alone (Matthew 26:40)

Our prayers should not be infrequent - nor tired prayers - but continual and awake/alert prayers

Yes there will be times - when after a hard day - we are too tired to pray much - so our prayers need to be planned at more alert times

And we shouldn't forget to be **thankful** - it's easy to go straight for the shopping list or immediate help prayer - and forget to be **thankful** for what God has done and continues to do in our lives

**Challenge for us** - are our prayers **continual** - **alert/awake** prayers? Are they **thankful** prayers?

[PowerPoint 3b-open doors]

2. **Second** - Pray for **doors to be opened** to proclaim the message of Jesus

V3 says - And pray for us, too, that **God may open a door for our message**, so that we may **proclaim the mystery of Christ**, for which I am in chains.

And look at what Paul asks prayer for

Yes it's prayer for himself - but not asking for release from prison, or for a successful outcome for his pending trial, or for rest or for peace. No he asks for prayer that there might be opportunities - even in his present circumstances - to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus - specifically this mystery of Christ that was revealed to Paul

This mystery of Christ that Paul refers to - is that the salvation accomplished by Jesus through His death and resurrection - is available to Jews and Gentiles - which is why Paul is in jail in Gentile territory as he writes his letter

**Challenge for us** - are we praying for doors to be opened - so that people can hear the message of Jesus? Are we praying that we recognize the opportunities that come our way?

[PowerPoint 3c-Pray for the words to say]

### 3. Third - Pray for the words to say

See V4 - Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Paul also asked for prayer to proclaim this message of Jesus clearly

Our OT passage picks up on that from Psalm 25:

V4 Show me your ways, LORD,  
teach me your paths.

V5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,

**Challenge for us** - when we pray for ourselves and for others - are we asking for God's strength to complete the tasks God has given us to share the Gospel and are we praying that God will give us the words to say?

[PowerPoint 3d-stand firm]

#### 4. Fourth - Pray for strength to stand up for Jesus with confidence

Notice also how Paul's colleague Epaphras prays.

See v12 - he's wrestling in prayer for the Colossians - why? That they stand firm in all the will of God - mature and fully assured?

We are living in a post-Christian era - Christianity is a minority in Australia.

And Christianity is constantly under attack and undermined - by our Politicians and by our community.

**Challenge:** Are we praying for our fellow Christians and our church - to stand firm in the face of these attacks?

Are we praying for spiritual discernment and maturity in the face of these attacks?

Are we praying that we are confident and assured of our place in eternity - are we praying that any doubts we have - might be removed?

[PowerPoint 3e-Perseverance]

5. **Fifth - Pray for perseverance** to complete our Gospel mission

Notice in v17 that Paul **passes a message** to Archippus. "that he **completes the ministry he has received in the Lord**"

**Challenge for us:** Are we praying for ourselves and others in our various ministries here at St. David's that we have the Lord's strength and guidance to complete the ministries the Lord has given us?

Are we praying that we complete the mission we have all been given - the mission of the Great Commission - to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and HS and to teach people to obey everything Jesus commanded?

Notice too in v18 – Paul asks for prayer to remember him in chains?

Are we remembering in prayer those who are persecuted or in prison or in danger or undergoing great sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel? Are we asking God to sustain these people - so they can persevere and complete their Gospel mission?

**WITNESS (vv5-6, 7-9, and 16)**

Next Paul turns his attention to the 2<sup>nd</sup> response to his letter - Witnessing

[PowerPoint 4a-heading]

Sometimes witnessing is not so much what we say - but how we act and behave  
A true story...

*Many years ago two men were panning for gold in Montana (USA), and one of them found an unusual stone. Breaking it open, he was excited to see that it contained gold. Working*

*eagerly, the two men soon discovered an abundance of gold. Happily, they began shouting with delight, "We've found it! We've found gold! We're rich!" They had to interrupt their celebrating, though, to go into a nearby town and stock up on supplies. Before they left camp, the two men agreed not to tell anyone about their find.*

*Much to their dismay, when they were about to return to their mining, hundreds of men started following them. When they asked the crowd "how they knew". They replied "You didn't have to tell us you found gold - your faces showed it!"* **Source unknown**

Our delight in Christ should be written all over our faces

Paul offers a fistful of advice on witnessing

[PowerPoint 4b-behaviour]

1. **First - A Christian must be wise in their behaviour** towards non-Christians (see v5). Non-Christians funnily enough - know exactly how Christians should act? So our behaviour must be such that it is attractive and different. Few people have ever been argued into Christianity - a Christian must remember it's not just their words about Jesus that attract people to Jesus but their life (remember - Jesus all about life) - our lives will either attract people to Jesus or repel them from Jesus. We have a huge responsibility.

**Challenge for us:** is our behaviour - our life - fitting behaviour for a Christian - remember the new clothes we need to put on from Colossians 3:12-14 (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiving and love). Is there something we need to change in our behaviour?

[PowerPoint 4c-opportunity]

2. **Second - A Christian must be on the look-out for opportunity** to share the Gospel (see v5). Our daily life and work are continually presenting us with opportunities to witness our faith in Jesus - not just in words but in actions. Our church constantly offers opportunities to teach, serve, visit, sing and work for the good of our church family - and yet it's easy to deliberately refuse or avoid accepting these opportunities

**Challenge** - are we on the look-out for these opportunities to serve Jesus and serve others (remember our serving of others, is actually serving Jesus - Matthew 25:40) - or are we ignoring these opportunities? Is God speaking to us - and we're ignoring His calling and prompting? Pray about it? [\[To help discern this - I have some spiritual gifts surveys\]](#)

### **[PowerPoint 4d-Conversations]**

3. Third - **our conversations** need to be Christian - in v6 our conversations must be **full of grace**. The word 'grace' has, in Greek as in English, the double meaning of God's grace [God's undeserved favour] and the meaning of human graciousness. Showing grace to someone - will mean being merciful, compassionate, forgiving, kind, gentle, lenient and so on. And our conversations should be **seasoned with salt** Paul says. Salt adds flavor, purifies and preserves - so our conversations need to be flavoursome (words that encourage and inspire people), our words need to be pure words [Godly, loving words] and our words need to preserve relationships - not destroy relationships. All this Paul says amounts to knowing how to give a wise and Godly answer to people we come across

**Challenge for us:** If we examine our conversations with others - are our words gracious? Are we adding flavor to people's lives? Are our words pure and loving? Are we building lasting relationships? Is there something we need to repent of and correct?

A good witness isn't like a salesman - our emphasis must be on people rather than a product. A good witness is like a signpost. It doesn't matter whether it is old, young, pretty, ugly; it has to point the right direction and be able to be understood. We are witnesses to Christ, we point to Him.

**Challenge:** Are we pointing people towards Jesus with our behaviour and our words?

[PowerPoint 4e-Report back]

4. **Fourth** - In v7-9 - we see another form of witnessing - one of Paul's colleagues - Tychius will **report back** to the Colossians how Paul's ministry is going. It is vital that we know how ministries in our church family are going and how our mission partners are going? Because as it says in v8 - it **encourages** our hearts.

That's why it's important to hear how our mission partners are going, how our children's ministries are going? How our communication corner ministries are going? How our friendship group is going? How our vision is going? These reports encourage us and spur us on to keep serving!

**Challenge:** are we reporting back the progress of the ministries we are involved in - not to big note ourselves - but to encourage our church family and spur one another on?

[PowerPoint 4f-Pass it on]

5. **Fifth** - Notice in v16 - that witness involves **passing on what we've heard**.

Paul asks the Colossians to pass on His letter to the Laodiceans.

**Challenge for us** - are we passing on what we have learnt from the book of Colossians - that Jesus is supreme - that Jesus is God, Creator and our Saviour, that Jesus is all about life - that we have a new life in Jesus - and that our relationships must have the same mindset as Jesus

It would be easy for us - to say to ourselves - I believe in Jesus - I'm forgiven - I'm safe - I'm going to Heaven - and keep all that to ourselves! But we have the greatest news of all time - Jesus is all we need - and He gives us the certain hope of Heaven - why would we not want to pass that on to everyone?

Remember the alternative to Heaven - is Hell.

Our silence - may mean people ending up in Hell - is that really what God wants - is that really what we want?

(pause)

**Conclusion**

So Paul has given us 2 responses to his letter to the Colossians

Prayer AND Witness

[PowerPoint 5a-heading - Conclusion]

As we think about how we should be as the body of Christ - His church

We have a perfect example of how a church should be - throughout the wonderful book of Acts - which describes the early Christian church

My final challenge for us - today - is to read the book of Acts through in our quiet times - and marvel at how God works in His church - and how the early church prays and witnesses.

Here's two examples to finish with

One about prayer and one what about witnessing

When the Apostle Peter was in jail:

Reading from Acts 12:4-5

[PowerPoint 5b-prayer]

<sup>4</sup> After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

The church earnestly prayed for Peter and an angel came and released Peter from prison.

Are we earnestly praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ?

The other example from Acts - is witnessing

In Acts 4 - the apostles, Peter and John - were hauled before the Jewish Council for teaching people about Jesus

Here's their witness

From Acts 4:18-20:

[PowerPoint 5c-Witness]

<sup>18</sup> Then they [The Jewish Council] called them [Peter and John] in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! <sup>20</sup> As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Can we join Peter and John in the early church and say "*we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard - about our Lord Jesus*"

Let's pray...