

Colossians 4:2-4
Godward Evangelism part One

Introduction:

1) Prayer in general is indispensable—4:2

- a) What are we to do? ² **Devote yourselves** [pres. act. impv. προσκαρτερέω] *to prayer* [προσευχή], (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4)
 - i) Despite any difficulty, we must make this a priority. It is a demonstration of our loyalty to God.
 - ii) The point, then, is not that believers should pray with intensity when they pray but that they should pray habitually and with perseverance. (Douglas Moo)
- b) How are we to pray?
 - i) With mental and spiritual alertness: *being watchful* [pres. act. ptc. γρηγορέω] *in it*
 - (1) Alert to the spiritual dangers and temptations.
 - (2) Alert to what God is already doing in our sphere of influence.
 - (3) Alert to the any-moment return of Christ.
 - ii) With gratitude: *with thanksgiving* [εὐχαριστία];
 - (1) For past demonstrations of His grace and mercy.
- c) This should challenge us regarding prayer. (MBC)
 - i) Sometimes we become careless and complacent.
 - ii) Sometimes we become sluggish.
 - iii) Sometimes we become ungrateful.

2) Prayer regarding evangelism is indispensable—4:3-4

- a) **Intercession explained:** ³ *praying* [pres. mid. ptc. προσεύχομαι] *at the same time for* [περί] *us as well*,
 - i) Intercession is prayer on behalf of other people. We could call this the partnership of prayer.
 - ii) The “us” is Paul and his ministry team (including Timothy [1:1] and Epaphras [4:12-13]).
- b) **For opportunity:** *that* [ἵνα] *God will open up* [aor. act. subj. ἀνοίγω] *to us a door for the word*,
 - i) Referred to elsewhere in Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9 and 2 Cor. 2:12.
 - ii) *so that we may speak* [aor. act. infin. λαλέω] *the mystery of Christ*,
 - (1) Referring to God’s plan of redemption and transformation for the Gentiles.

- (2) Douglas Moo reminds us: It is the word that must be given entrance because it is the word that has the power to transform human beings.
- iii) *for which I have also been (and remain) bound (imprisoned)* [pf. pass. ind. δέω],
- (1) Warren Wiersbe clarifies for us: It is more important to Paul to be a faithful minister than a free man.
- c) **For clarity:** ⁴ *that [ἵνα] I may make it manifest* [aor. act. subj. φανερόω]
- i) *Necessity: in the way I ought* [pres. act. ind. δεῖ] *to speak* [aor. act. infin. λαλέω].
- (1) We need clarity in our speech because of the value of the message.
- ii) Even an experienced teacher of God's Word knows he fails in this area regularly.

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) It is God who has given us the Gospel. It is God who enabled us to believe the Gospel. It is God who gives us the desire to share the Gospel. It is God who prepares the way for the Gospel. It is God who provides opportunities to share the Gospel. It is God who opens the hearts of listeners.
- b) If Paul needed people to pray for him and his preaching, don't you think your pastor does also? Thank you for praying for me.

Colossians 4:5-6
Godward Evangelism Part Two

Introduction: We ought to not only pray evangelistically (4:2-4), but we must also live evangelistically (4:5-6).

1) Live skillfully—4:5

- a) Engage in personal relationship: ⁵ **Walk** [pres. act. impv. περιπατέω] ...
 - i) While resisting the wrong kind of outside influence, the Colossian Christians nevertheless need to stay engaged with their fellow citizens and seek to win them to Christ. (Douglas Moo)
- b) How?
 - i) Live **skillfully**: *in* [ἐν] *wisdom*
 - Lit. “*in wisdom* (emphatic) *walk toward those outside*”
 - (1) Douglas Moo reminds us: “Wisdom,” of course, is a very broad concept, occupying in biblical thought a crucial intermediate stage between thought and action. ... Wisdom will enable us to determine just how, in given situations, our new way of thinking, our new set of biblical values, should be put into effect.
 - ii) Live **evangelistically**: *toward* [πρός] *outsiders*,
 - (1) We must live skillfully toward those outside the close-knit Christian community.
 - iii) Live **resourcefully**: *redeeming* [pres. mid. ptc. ἐξαγοράζω] *the time* [καιρός].
 - (1) Making the most of the opportunities God gives you. (cf. Eph. 5:15-16)
 - (2) As Murray Harris states: In the open market where the commodity of καιρός is on sale, Christians are to make a “timely” purchase for themselves. In other words, they are to seize eagerly and use wisely every opportunity afforded them by time to promote the kingdom of God (cf. 4:11).

2) Speak pleasantly—4:6

- a) Speak **attractively**: ⁶ *Let your words always be with* [ἐν] *grace*,
 - i) This demands constant vigilance (“always”).
- b) Speak **tastefully**: *seasoned with salt*,
 - i) Not too much, not too little.
 - ii) It is not the pleasure of the unbelieving which is in view, but their profit spiritually. (John Kitchen)

- c) Speak **appropriately** to the curious: *so that you will know* [pf. act. infin. οἶδα] *how you should answer* (respond to) [pres. dep. infin. ἀποκρίνομαι] *each person*.
 - i) Paul assumes that unbelievers will be raising questions about the faith of the Colossian Christians, questions that may be neutral or even, perhaps, hostile. (Douglas Moo)
 - ii) This is paralleled in Peter's first letter. (1 Pet. 3:15)

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) It remains true that the reputation of the gospel is bound up with the behavior of those who claim to have experienced its saving power. (F. F. Bruce)
- b) To hold a balance between maintaining distinctive commitment and promoting genuine communication with others is never easy. ... Here, evidently, was a church not on the defensive against powerful forces organized against it, but expected to hold its own in the social setting of marketplace, baths, and meal table and to win attention by the attractiveness of its life and speech. (James Dunn)
- c) Paul is not calling for a cookie-cutter approach to evangelism. He is calling for a real-time, Spirit-born wisdom and grace to be applied in the specifics of each encounter with each person. The emphasis here is not on learning a method of gospel presentation, but upon personal dependence upon the Holy Spirit to produce in one's heart and mind the wisdom and grace essential to making the most effective use of each and every encounter with an unbeliever. ... It recognizes that we must listen carefully to each person God sovereignly puts before us. It also reminds us that each encounter demands fresh grace coming down from God, flowing through us and on to the person. (John Kitchen)

Colossians 4:7-9
Godward Co-Workers of Paul

Introduction: The focus of Paul's letter is complete. From here to the end, he will wrap things up with some personal matters.

Paul has two representatives that he sends to deliver this letter. Listen carefully to how these two men are similar and how they are different.

1) Tychicus—4:7-8

- a) Elsewhere in the NT we learn, he was a native of the province of Asia and was earlier selected to be one of the two delegates of the churches who were to accompany Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem, probably as custodians of the offering that was given by the churches for the needy in Jerusalem. (Curtis Vaughan)
- b) What are his credentials? (similar to Epaphras in 1:7)
 - i) Loved: *our beloved* [ἀγαπητός] *brother* [ἀδελφός]
 - ii) Trustworthy: *and faithful* [πιστός] *servant* [διάκονος]
 - iii) Associate: *and fellow slave* [σύνδουλος] *in the Lord*,
- c) What is he to do?
 - i) Inform: *will make known* [γνωρίζω] *to you all my affairs*,
- d) Why was he sent? ⁸ *whom I have sent* [πέμπω] *to you for this very purpose*,
 - i) Present the facts: *that you may know* [aor. act. subj. γινώσκω] *about our circumstances*
 - ii) Say what needs to be said: *and that he may encourage* [aor. act. subj. παρακαλέω] *your hearts*;
 - iii) Sometimes information and encouragement walk together, but sometimes they do not. Instead, sometimes information and discouragement walk together. (paraphrase John Kitchen)
- e) Tychicus also carried the letter to the congregations in Ephesus (cf. Eph. 6:21-22), Laodicea (cf. Col. 4:16), and probably the personal letter to Philemon.

2) ⁹ and with him Onesimus—4:9a (cf. the book of Philemon)

- This is a wonderful example of 3:11 in real life.
- a) What are his credentials?
 - i) Trustworthy: *our faithful* [πιστός] (brother)
 - (1) To be entrusted with delivering the Word of God to a congregation.
 - ii) Loved: *and beloved* [ἀγαπητός] *brother*,
 - (1) Not referred to as a servant or fellow slave in the Lord.
 - iii) Familiar: *who is one of you*.

- (1) Graciously, no mention is made of his past.
- b) Murray Harris captures the thought: Onesimus, known to them as a dishonest, runaway slave, had become a reliable and dearly loved Christian brother.

3) Together—4:9b

- a) William MacDonald paints a wonderful image for us: Picture the excitement among the believers in Colosse when these two brethren arrived with the Letters from Paul! Doubtless they sat up late in the evening, asking questions about conditions in Rome and hearing of Paul's courage in the service of his Savior.
- b) James Dunn writes: After all, when the scope of his missionary work is considered, the number of churches and the amount of travel involved, it would have been impossible for him to maintain anything but the most irregular contact otherwise.
- c) *They will inform [γνωρίζω] you about the whole situation here.*
- i) Tychicus and Onesimus probably not only delivered the letter but also read it and perhaps interpreted the letter if there were any questions.
- ii) Note the three ways he describes the information these men will deliver.
- (1) *all my affairs* [ὁ κατά ἐγὼ πᾶς]—4:7
- (2) *about our circumstances* [ὁ περί ἐγὼ]—4:8
- (3) *about the whole situation here* [ὁ πᾶς ὅδε]—4:9
- iii) Paul intends to keep nothing hidden about his circumstances.
- d) Even when imprisoned (v. 10), Paul preferred not to write in a letter the details of his circumstances. (Gerald Peterman)

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) Paul is not using flattery to accomplish a hidden purpose. He is, however, seeking to acknowledge faithfulness and give honor to whom honor is due. (summary of Jay Adams)
- b) People are not necessarily who they once were and must not be related to for what they once did. (John Kitchen)

Colossians 4:10-18
Godward Greetings and Instructions

Introduction:

1) Greetings from Paul's three Jewish co-workers—4:10-11

- a) Who are these three men?
 - i) ¹⁰ **Aristarchus**,
 - (1) Imprisoned with Paul: *my fellow prisoner* [συναιχμάλωτος],
 - (2) *sends you his greetings*;
 - (3) Originally from Thessalonica (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2)
 - ii) *and also Mark, the cousin of Barnabas*
 - (1) *(about whom you received instructions; if (3rd class, probable) he comes to you, welcome him)*;
 - (2) Mark's failure 12-14 years earlier in Acts 15 was not final.
 - iii) ¹¹ *and also Jesus who is called Justus.*
 - (1) Nothing else is known about him.
- b) Description of these three men.
 - i) Jewish believers: *These are the only fellow workers* [συνεργός] *for* [εἰς] *the kingdom of God who are from* [ἐκ] *the circumcision,*
 - (1)
 - ii) Soothing believers: *and they have proved to be a comfort* [παρηγορία] *to me.*
 - (1) A consolation in times of disappointment, a relief from pain.

2) Greetings from Paul's three Gentile co-workers—4:12-14

- a) ¹² **Epaphras**, (the founder of the Colossian congregation, 1:7)
 - i) A Colossian: *who is one of your number,*
 - ii) *a slave* [δοῦλος] *of Christ Jesus,*
 - iii) *sends you his greetings,*
 - (1) Intense effort: *always striving* [pres. dep. ptc. ἀγωνίζομαι] *for you in his prayers,*
 - (a) *that you may stand ... in all the will* [θέλημα] *of God.*
 - (i) Mature: *complete* [τέλειος]
 - (ii) Assurance: *and fully assured* [πληροφορέω]
 - (2) Difficult work: ¹³ *For I testify* [μαρτυρέω] *for him that he has a deep concern* [πόνος] *for you and for those who are in Laodicea* (10 miles away) *and Hierapolis* (6 miles past Laodicea).
 - (a) Hierapolis was a commercial, military, and religious center.

iv) Someone has said: true ministry equals pain: other-oriented, God-exalting, soul-sapping pain.

b) ¹⁴ **Luke**,

i) *the beloved physician,*

ii) *sends you his greetings,*

c) *and also Demas.*

i) Who later abandons Paul (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10)

3) Final instructions—4:15-17

a) Instructions about greetings—4:15 ¹⁵ **Greet** ...

i) Corporately: *the brothers who are in Laodicea*

(1) Ten miles west of Colosse

ii) Individually and corporately: *and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.*

(1) Probably a woman (the difference between masculine and feminine is on what syllable the accent is placed).

(2) Perhaps the congregation in Laodicea?

(3) Judging by archaeological evidence from cities like Ostia and Pompeii in Italy, a typical well-to-do house could host only about thirty to fifty people (depending on the size of the house) for a meeting held in any comfort, though large villas of the wealthy elite could certainly hold more. (James Dunn)

b) Reading instructions—4:16

i) ¹⁶ *And when this letter is read among you, **have it also read** in the church of the Laodiceans;*

ii) *and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*

iii) How well did they listen? Cf. Rev. 3:

c) Personal instructions—4:17

i) ¹⁷ *And **say** to Archippus, "**Take heed** to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."*

ii) Perhaps he is filling in as the interim pastor while Epaphras is with Paul in Rome?

4) Paul's signature—4:18

a) ¹⁸ *The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.*

b) **Remember** my chains.

c) *Grace be with you.*

5) Things we need to remember:

a) Not everyone who seems to start well ends well. Not everyone who seems to start poorly ends poorly. Time will tell.

- b) Team ministry was normal for Paul.
- c) When all is said and done, grace is what we need.