

“Final Words of a Friend”

Col 4:2-18

Scripture Ref: Mark 13:33; Luke 11:1-2; 2 Tim 4:10; Eph 4:11-13; Acts 20:27

1. **As Paul closes out his letter (and we close out our study!), Paul now turns to a final exhortation for the church, and some guidance on interacting with those outside the church.**

I Prayer

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ

2. **THE most important thing you can do for your church and ministry!**
 - a. **Certainly there is work involved in ministry (Paul “labored” for the gospel) – but without prayer, we are laboring under our own strength!**
 - b. **Working under your own strength is a recipe for burnout!**

Four Points on Prayer...

#1: Being faithful in prayer

3. **“Continue earnestly”**. Even though Paul was an Apostle, he was not hesitant to ask for prayer support
 - a. **Because He realized that the power of prayer is the key to the success of our work here.**

One day Charles Spurgeon was giving a tour , and he invited his guest to the “real powerhouse” of the ministry. He then took the guest to a room below the sanctuary, and noted that “every Sunday, hundreds of his people would pray during the service” No wonder his ministry was successful!

- b. **Why do we not pray more? Sometimes it is just laziness, plain and simple.**
 - i. **“God’s got it” we think, and go on our way.**
 - ii. **God does have it, but you see – God opens the door, gives the opportunity – WE go in and do the ministry!**

#2 Being watchful in prayer

4. **“being vigilant”**. Jesus said several times...

Mark 13:33 *Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

- a. Is our prayer “just going through the motions”, or are we alert, watching for what God might do
- b. Or - for what might distract us? Satan does not want you praying, and he will throw whatever he can to get you to blow it off!

#3 Being thankful in prayer

5. **“with thanksgiving”** If all we do is ask, then our prayers become selfish, my own little “spiritual wish list”
 - a. Remember Jesus model prayer – “Our Father, Hallowed be Thy Name”

Luke 11:1-2 Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

During a solar eclipse in the Middle Ages, the people awoke to find no sun... They wept and moaned because they thought something terrible had happened, and that the sun had gone forever. When it ended, they celebrated and thanked God for the sun.

- i. Sometimes we can become complacent about our life, and the blessing of the sun each day, the rain, the food on our table.
- ii. ...even living at the beach!

#4 Being purposeful in prayer

6. “that God would open to us a door”:
 - a. Prayer that is general may be fine – “Lord, bless the church” we might pray so we can get on with our day.
 - i. but in a sense there is a laziness that can creep in -
 - b. Specific and purposeful prayer takes TIME, takes FOCUS, and it takes sensitivity to what God is doing and how He is leading us.
 - i. Sometimes we have to wait upon the Lord for Him to speak to our hearts, and bring things to our remembrance.
 - ii. We wait a minute or two – and that’s all we give God!
 - c. Purposeful Prayer is prayer that is aligned with God’s will!
 - i. Prayer is not getting God to do what I want, but seeking what God’s will is, and then asking for it to be done!

Luke 11:2 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

7. What was the purpose of God opening the door??

II Preaching

that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

- 8. Paul's request was not that they pray for him to be released, or treated well in prison...**
- a. But for God to open a door for the preaching of the gospel!**
 - b. You see Paul understood that there is a greater purpose in this life than our own comfort and happiness**
 - c. He saw that there was a whole world that did not know Jesus, and Paul was willing to commit ever ounce of energy, every breath of his life, to telling them!**
- 9. Even though he was in chains for preaching – he wanted his life to be a LIGHT (make it manifest) – to shine brightly amongst others wherever he was**
- a. As was his reasonable service – as is ours when we really come to terms with WHO God is and WHAT He has done for us, and WHAT He has in store for our future!**
- 10. Ever meet someone who has just found the “perfect business opportunity?”**
- a. “Ground floor opportunity – get in now!” They are excited, they tell everyone they know.**
 - b. And they tell you “you have to work hard now, and later the money will just roll in!”**
 - c. Folks, we have the best residual income plan in the history of mankind...It's called “The Kingdom of God”**
 - i. You enter into a personal relationship with the Living God,**
 - ii. His power to get you through this life**
 - iii. You store up treasures that will be waiting for you in heaven – where they will never get old or lost**
 - iv. And Jesus promises syou will “reign and rule” with Him in Gods Kingdom”**
 - d. You enter a business, you life may change here on earth**
 - i. You become a Christian and your life changes – here and in eternity!!**
- 11. That's why Paul told us next...**

Being an Example

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

12. Listen - People don't want to just hear about God from you – they want to SEE God working in your life
 - a. Nothing wrong with witnessing to strangers – many come to Christ in that way
 - b. But many of us have co-workers, neighbors, people our kids play ball with... that seem hard to reach. They don't seem interested
 - c. But you have a powerful tool at your disposal – YOUR LIFE
13. Some Christians hurt their ability to witness by not being good citizens
 - a. Not paying their bills – cheating – compromising – lying or stealing – having foul speech
 - b. Ever notice how hard it is to witness to someone after you have compromised with or in front of them?
 - c. Matter of fact, we won't even TRY – because we are afraid that they will think we are hypocrites. (they are correct!)
14. But on the other hand – if we live our lives above reproach, and whenever we DO fail (and we will!), we take responsibility and make things right...
 - a. People will see something - “that guy/gal is different”
 - b. You've heard “When EF Hutton speaks, people listen”.
 - c. Guess what – if you are not just talking the talk, but also walking the walk, when you speak – people will listen!
15. Lastly we come to Paul's mention of several people as he closes the letter
 - a. Worth noting become when it come to the ministry (which we are ALL in!), WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE!
 - b. If you look through Paul's letters, you will find 100 people that he mentions. People who were somehow connected with him
 - i. People who ministered to him
 - ii. ...who traveled with him
 - iii. ...who he sent on missions
 - iv. ...who carried his letters
 - v. ...who stayed back and ministered at the churches he planted

Fellow Workers

7 **Tychicus**, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, 9 with **Onesimus**, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.

10 **Aristarchus** my fellow prisoner greets you, with **Mark** the cousin of **Barnabas** (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and **Jesus** who is called **Justus**. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

12 **Epaphras**, who is one of you (*a Gentile*), a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

14 **Luke** the beloved physician and Demas greet you. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and **Nymphas** and the church that is in his house.

(SKIP)

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

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

Those Who Stayed...

16. Tychicus – one of the seven that accompanied Paul when he left Ephesus, we see him mentioned in Acts, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Tim, and Titus.

- a. **A faithful minister, fellow servant, and beloved brother who stuck with Paul through thick and thin.**
- b. **People will come and go in the church, it is a rare find when you find those who will faithfully stick with you through whatever comes.**

17. Onesimus – the runaway slave that Paul converted in prison (prison ministry!), and whom he sent back to his master Philemon with a letter.

- a. **He represents those who are saved from hard situations, and God uses them!**

18. Aristarchus- another faithful brother that stuck with Paul through thick and thin

- a. **... and he had the habit of being with Paul whenever there was trouble!**
- b. **He was in Ephesus when the riot broke out, and he almost lost his life!**

- c. He was with Paul on the voyage where they were shipwrecked on Malta, and now he is with Paul in prison.
 - d. One commentator suspects that Aristarchus made himself Paul's slave so that he could accompany Paul wherever the authorities sent him.
19. Mark – the one who abandoned Paul on his first missions trip, and the next time Paul would not let him go.
- a. But John Mark persisted, and proved himself to be useful, and Paul allowed him back in to the ministry.
 - b. Represents those that blow it – and don't give up – and are restored.
20. Barnabas – the encourager who assisted John Mark in restoration to ministry.
21. Jesus who is called Justus – we know nothing about Jesus Justus, he is one of the millions of faithful who man may not know, but God does!
22. Epaphras – Led to Christ by Paul in Ephesus, who returned to his home and perhaps started the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis.
- a. Known as a prayer warrior, "laboring fervently for you in prayers"
23. Luke – the Greek doctor. Interesting that even though Paul had the power to heal people, he traveled with a physician!
- a. No doubt Luke's personal presence and his professional skill were of great use and encouragement to Paul
 - b. We do well to remember that God uses anyone, even successful professionals!
24. Nymphas – we know little about this man, other than he hosted a church in his home.
- a. Represents those who perhaps open their home for ministry
25. Archippus – we get the impression from Paul's letter to Philemon that Archippus was Philemon's family – and possible the pastor of the church there in Colossae.
- a. Paul encourages him "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."
 - b. Perhaps he was discouraged, there are many things that come against the ministry
 - c. We would all do well to remember that our ministry – and we all have one (whether we are doing it or not!) – has been given to us by the Lord!

Fellow Workers – Those Who Strayed...

26. Demas is mentioned three times – first as a "fellow laborer", here just "Demas", and finally in 2 Tim Paul says

2 Tim 4:10 *for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica*

- a. **A sad ending for this one who started out so well... that is the thing that separates the faithful servants from those who are just going along for the ride**
- b. **When things are going great everyone wants to be a part of the ministry!**
- c. **But when the going gets tough – some will fall away**
- d. **I am reminded of the thousands that followed Jesus, only to turn away when He wasn't so popular anymore.**

27. Demas perhaps remembered life before he went into ministry...

- a. **Honestly – I think of it too. Sometimes when I go back to Cary, drive through the perfectly manicured streets and see the place I used to live...**
- b. **I think “why cant I just go back to the tech industry, make more money, live life, go to church if I feel like it, not have to do anything for anyone other than my family...**
- c. **But then I think of Paul's words to Archippus... "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."**

28. But it is not just me – God has not called each of you to go into the pastorate, but He has give each one of you a ministry:

Eph 4:11-13

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

- a. **Our job here at the church is not to “do ministry”, but to equip you all do “do ministry”**
- b. **Does not mean you work 24x7 and have no life**
- c. **Just means that each does his/her part – and we are all available for how God might use us.**

The Importance of the Word of God

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Acts 20:27 *For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

29. That is what we do here – we teach the bible –the entire bible – not just parts.

18 This salutation by my own hand -- Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

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