

ROMANCING THE SAINTS AT COLOSSAE

Studies in the Book of Colossians

*“If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the ‘church of Christ,’
then Colossians must surely be labeled ‘the Christ of the church’”*
unknown

Text

Colossians 4:2-6

Topic

The apostle Paul encourages us to think like missionaries when we leave church and are among those who are outside of the church

Title

“Think Outside the Body”



Introduction

We’ve launched **IMPACT!** It’s a ministry born from our desire to see our everyday lives take on more of a missionary quality.

It’s not uncommon to see a sign as you are exiting a church that says, *You are now entering your mission field.* If you **were** going on a missions trip, you’d be soliciting daily prayer; providing your prayer-partners with an itinerary; and updating them on what God was doing.

Why not solicit prayer support for our everyday 'mission field' at home, at work, and at school?

We created a website where you can sign-up to participate - impact.calvaryhanford.com. Your participation can be two-fold:

1. You can sign-up on the **Front Line**. There you tell us about your mission field, the people, the situations, so we can put a team together to pray specifically for you.
2. You can sign-up on the **Supply Line**. There you will be assigned folks on the **Front Line** to pray for.

We started teasing for the ministry by asking, "Are you ready for **IMPACT?**" Introducing it we said, "Brace for **IMPACT.**" Now it's time to "Make an **IMPACT.**"

Making an impact on others for Jesus was something the apostle Paul both wanted to do and wanted others to do. In our text he provides some instruction on exactly how we should think and act if we want to make an impact.

- He first asked the believers at Colossae to pray that God would open doors of ministry for him and other missionary evangelists to effectively share the Gospel.
- Then he reminded them how to live in order to represent Jesus as they walked outside in the world among nonbelievers who were watching them.

Let's put ourselves into the text. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Should Look For Open Doors Before Going Outside, and #2 You Should Live Like An Open Book To Those Outside.

#1 You Should Look For Open Doors Before Going Outside (v2-4)

We just finished a section in Colossians that discussed the relationships that exist within the Christian home. Now it's time to leave your house and go outside. The thing you need most before you venture out is prayer.

Colossians 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

“Continue earnestly” means a couple of things:

- It means to devote specific blocks of time, attention, and energy to praying.
- It also means to be in prayer ‘continuously,’ which I take to mean that you are always aware of the presence of God and your dependance upon him.

Prayer is both an *activity* and an *attitude*. I should want to block out more time for the activity of praying **and** I should practice having an attitude of prayer all the time.

We might say that you are to be often on your knees and, no matter what posture your body is in at other times, your spirit is to constantly be kneeling.

Two things ought to characterize our continuous praying:

1. We are to be “vigilant.” It means *to be watchful, to remain alert*. Normally we think in terms of remaining awake. Here I think Paul had more in mind the idea that we devote attention and energy to prayer. It is a sensitivity to the fact that things surrounding us are essentially spiritual and should be approached with spiritual resources.
2. We are to continue in prayer “with thanksgiving.” When we are thankful it is an acknowledgement that we are submitted to God’s will for our lives. It communicates that we really do believe that all things work together for the good - whether those things are blessings or buffetings.

Colossians 4:3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

It's a good time to be reminded that Paul was "in chains," writing from prison. The thing that grabs you is that he doesn't ask them to pray that his prison 'door' would be left 'open' so he could escape; or even that God would 'open' his prison 'door' through regular legal channels so he might be released. No, Paul was only interested in God opening spiritual doors of ministry.

Paul called what he was requesting "a door for the word." God had already opened some doors for Paul:

- From his jail cell he wrote at least three letters to churches - Ephesians, Philipians, and Colossians.
- Prison guards assigned to Paul were getting saved and then going back to Caesar's household where many others were getting saved through their witness.
- The runaway slave, Onesimus, had gotten saved as a result of Paul and was being sent back to his master in Colossae, Philemon, with the letter bearing his name.

The Gospel was Paul's priority. Whether he was bound or free, abounding or abased, he had a focused mind. He always kept 'the main thing, the main thing.'

You might be in a place at home or at work or at school where you feel confined - almost as if it is a 'prison' to you. Well, first of all, *it isn't prison!* But even if it was, your priority ought to be that a "door" would "open for the **word**" rather than your prison door being opened.

If that should be your priority even if you were in prison, how much more out in the 'free' world where God has placed you?

Paul called his message "the mystery of Christ." He was revealing the previously concealed truth that the church on the earth was Jesus Christ's spiritual body and that it was entered by faith alone through grace alone

without any ethnic distinctions and without the necessity of first converting to Judaism.

Colossians 4:4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

What strikes me here is that Paul believed he needed prayer in order to be effective. Paul was a brilliant guy. He was a Jew with impeccable heritage but also enjoyed Roman citizenship. He was a Scripture scholar but also well-read in Greek wisdom and philosophy. He was called by Jesus personally to be an apostle. He performed miracles in the name of Jesus. He established churches. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote Scripture.

Yet here he was, soliciting prayer. Charles Spurgeon, called ‘the prince of preachers,’ was once asked the reason for the success of his ministry. Without hesitation he answered, “My people pray for me.”

Paul was a full-time missionary evangelist. We are not. But we can have the perspective that we can do the work of missionary evangelists. We can understand our homes and offices and classrooms to be mission fields and ourselves the missionaries assigned there. As we go about our regular work we are to be sensitive to God opening doors so that we can reveal the Gospel to those around us.

Perhaps what is missing in some of our lives is the two-fold approach of prayer on our part and prayer support from others.

Sign-up for **IMPACT**. It’s a tool to focus your attention on your mission and to solicit the kind of spiritual help you need to see doors opened by God.

#2 You Should Live Like An Open Book
To Those Outside
(v5-6)

Christians in the culture of the first century were greatly misunderstood and even maligned:

- By some nonbelievers they were considered atheists because they refused to worship all the Roman and Greek gods.
- By some they were considered unpatriotic because they refused to offer incense to Caesar.
- There were rumors that Christians participated in sexual orgies. After all, they called their weekly pot-luck on Sunday evenings the Love Feast!
- There were accusations that Christians practiced cannibalism. After all, didn't they talk about 'eating' the Lord's body and 'drinking' His blood at the communion table?

A Christian ought to be aware that his or her behavior outside in the world is being scrutinized. Even with prayer support you won't make the impact you want unless you attend to your witness to the watching world of nonbelievers.

Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

Let's first think about this phrase, "those who are outside." It was Paul's way of referring to nonbelievers. It was both a lament and a challenge:

- It was a lament because it communicated that nonbelievers were "outside" the church and, therefore, outside of salvation. If they continued in their sins without the forgiveness that Jesus provided on the Cross they would find themselves "outside" of Heaven and in Hell. Paul was suggesting a picture of someone who was still outside and in grave danger from the looming disaster. You know, like in all the disaster movies when someone waits too long to get into the shelter and it's too late for them and the zombies eat them.
- "Those who are outside" was also a challenge to see yourself as being in a position to perhaps affect a spiritual rescue.

Concerning "those who are outside" you are to "walk in wisdom." "Wisdom" is the practical application of the truth in God's Word, the Bible. I "walk in wisdom" when I apply Christian principles out in the 'real' world.

Walking in God's wisdom is what makes my life an open book for nonbelievers. The book it opens for them is the Bible! They 'see' what

the Bible teaches as I apply it to every situation and to every relationship. I become a living letter.

Concerning “those who are outside” I am to be “redeeming the time.” It’s from a word that means *to buy out*. Have you ever bought-out an item from a store? Bought every one they had? You do it when something is valuable to you and you just can’t pass it up.

That’s the idea - only Paul was applying it to opportunities to affect people’s lives for Jesus. We should see every opportunity, every open door, as something valuable that we just cannot pass up.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

The wording suggests that you will create a ‘taste’ in the lives of the nonbelievers you encounter. You will create a hunger and a thirst for God. You do it by serving-up “grace” “seasoned with salt.”

“Grace” is God’s undeserved and unmerited favor. It is the heart of God and thus the heart of the Gospel. It is captured perfectly in John 3:16.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

If you are not yet a believer, you have a problem. It’s probably not what you think it is - your spouse or your boss or your addiction. It’s sin. You are a sinner and need saving. Jesus came and took your place on the Cross to offer you the forgiveness of sin and a new spiritual life. Salvation is God’s free gift to those who will simply receive it.

You are to *always* present God as gracious in offering the free gift of salvation to believing sinners.

“Salt” both preserves food from corruption and makes it savory for consumption. It is the other side of the coin, so to speak. It is a reminder to let nothing corrupt come from out of my mouth but only that which is wholesome and spiritually savory.

You want to be the one who doesn't gossip, or backbite, or slander. You want to be the one who believes the best and who hears both sides of a matter before passing any judgment. You want to be the one who turns the conversation back to that which is important and eternal.

"That you may know how to answer each one." First of all this tells you that when you walk in wisdom people will be curious. They will eventually ask you questions.

Second of all notice that Paul didn't say "everyone" but "each one." It reminds us that the people we encounter are unique individuals for whom Jesus died.

Think of the Lord when He was on the earth. He healed and fed multitudes - so many, John says in his Gospel, that the world could not contain the books if they were all written down. But you remember the individuals more than the multitudes. The woman at the well; the centurion whose servant needed healing; the woman caught in the very act of adultery; the woman with the issue of blood; the demon possessed man at Gadera; the rich young ruler.

"Each one" whom the Father put before Him, Jesus bought-up the opportunity.

Let's help each other 'think outside the body.' Get involved in **IMPACT**. Tell us about your front lines. Be part of someone else's supply line.