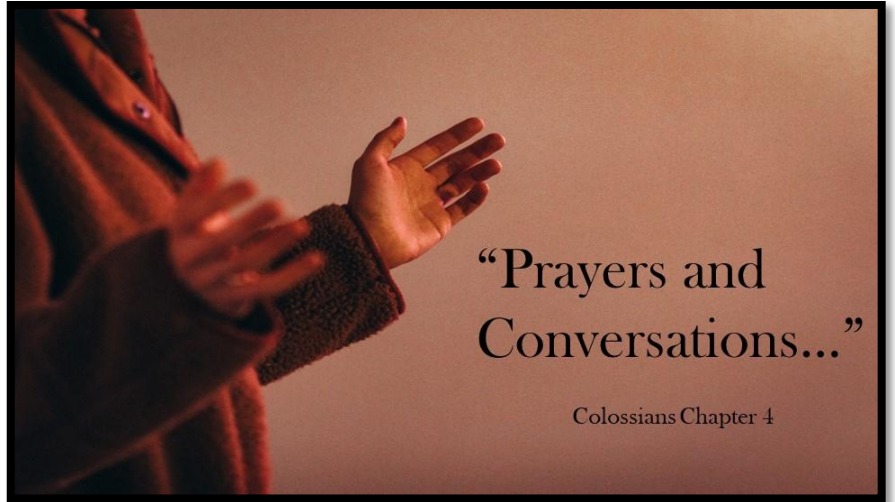


# “Prayers and Conversations...”

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at JF Believers Church  
in Menomonie, Wis  
on Sept 10, 2023  
- Colossians 4



*1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. 2 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, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. 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. 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 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. 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." 18 This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace [be] with you. Amen.*

## Chapter 4

### 4:2

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter to the church in Colossi. They had him in chains and yet he was still unwilling to relinquish the fight. It seemed that nothing was going to stop him from bearing witness for Christ. In his parting shot to these believers he tells them how to be effective witnesses for Christ.

He begins by reminding these believers to “continue in” (gr) prayer. The language originally meant to “be busily engaged in” or “give constant attention to.” Our usual use of the weapon of prayer is very different than this...we generally just pull it out when in a crisis. You know...we are in a bad situation so we “had better pray!” Sadly, our prayer live’s have drifted far from their original intention. It’s more of a fast-food drive in now where we speak briefly into the microphone in the box and tell Him what we want. But that was not, and yes, *is not*, the purpose of prayer. Maybe we have done it to ourselves by using a different word that what its basic makeup contains. We should have just stuck with what it essentially is: “talking to God.” Indeed our relationship...*and let us not let go of that crucial word...*is very different than it was then. We are given a glimpse into how things were “in the beginning”: back in Genesis 8...*“they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where [are] you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’”* Clearly Adam had a relationship with His God and Creator that included walking and talking in the gardens of Eden with Him. Now *that’s* prayer!

“Prayer” back in the onset of our being was walking and talking with God. It involved a rapport...an association between the Creator and the created. Moses seemed to understand...in Ex 33:11 we read *“the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.”* Now we generally approach God with an agenda when there was a time that such “agenda” was just to spend some time hanging out with Dad. Prayer now is all about us and used in attempt to garner some item or desire, when it used to be about a conversation and a friendship...between the Father and us, and even the friendship between ourselves and our brothers and sisters.

After all, such prayer practice should illicit unity in a group of believers. Its hard to pray *with* each other and *for* each other and harbor bitterness and resentment at the same time!

Acts 1:14 speaks of such saying “*They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. During this time, ...about 120 believers were together in one place...*”

The Old King James version includes the words “and watch” which speaks of giving “strict attention to,” of “being alert and attentive.” That idea first found its place back when Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the enemies of God were doing everything they could do hinder the process. They “*conspired all of them together to come [and] to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.*” But Nehemiah 4 verse 9 records “*Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them....*” What are you watching today? What has your attention? The temporal things of this world which serve as idols? Or is our attention upon the relationship of love we have with our Creator and Savior?

Paul was always praying and always watching. He believed in and trusted the wisdom and action of His Lord. He was therefore always watching for opportunities to serve and share for the advance of the kingdom, and he was also always watching for the enemy. Sadly, many, if not most of us, are oblivious to the spiritual as well as the actions of Satan around us. Yet the Christian walk is in reality a war. If we were in a physical war, we certainly would be alert to the enemy, to his movements as well as our own; things like where we step, land-mines, what we say, and where we go. The spiritual war we are in offers the same dangers and attacks. But the truth is, so many of us are just dreaming...

#### 4:3

Paul was seeking boldness and opportunity to further the kingdom of God. For these things he gave up his very freedom, and ultimately his life. Imprisonment was a way of life for this evangelist. He counted no cost too high. Again, this model is very different than our accepted standard today. We generally avoid any mere inconvenience let alone any real sacrifice. We give Jesus *some* of our lives but seldom *all* of our lives and yet we still believe this negotiated contract will lead to everlasting life and the blessings of family until that day! Yet the truth is, if He is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all...

Paul understood that unless the Spirit moves before us, we will fail in spreading the gospel. So he reached for the most crucial elements in this battle. He sought God to intervene with open doors and the daring ability to speak the gospel when those doors were opened. He knew that he had to have supernatural intervention if he was going to see the gospel advanced.

#### 4:4-5

Paul was desiring to manifest or to *live out* the cross of Christ. He wanted to *live out* the Word bodily, not just preach it. He wanted to “walk the walk, not just talk the talk.” His desire was to make the gospel real and tangible before a culture that just didn’t see it. To make it plain in a world that was lost in confusion. This desire was what kept him “on point”...focused upon the objective. Kept him walking not in any number of flowery adjectives of our current age, but to walk rather in simple “wisdom.”

How “wise” are we as Christians today concerning the world and what is really going on out there? Do we understand the stakes and the “lateness of the hour?” Are we savvy as to the methods of Satan and why he attacks... how and where that he does? Do we understand that God is willing to give us a supernatural wisdom to make us supernatural warriors for the battle? The dirty laundry of the modern church is that most believers are just skipping lightly down the yellow brick road while our culture is putrefying and untold thousands are passing into eternity’s hell every day! We live in the age of video games, dining out, and the American family, and we ignore the reality that Paul not only never knew those things nor did he pursue anything of the sort. We are too consumed by our feelings and emotions...we feel a little down today ...we feel a little sad, so I need to focus on my personal mental health now ...no time to share Jesus and definitely not get ridiculed for my faith by those outside!

The phrase “them that are without” or “those on the outside” refers to the unbelievers of the world, those who are walking through life without Christ and God. Think what this means: they are walking...

- without hope beyond this life.
- without assurance of life hereafter with God.
- without help in facing the trials and traumas of this life.
- without peace.
- without security.
- without God’s care and deliverance.
- without fellowship with God and His family of believers.
- without freedom from guilt—no assurance of forgiveness of sins.
- without light—no freedom from the darkness of death and the grave.

The Christian is called to “redeem the time.” Meaning we seek to grasp every moment to live for Christ before the lost of the world. We always look for opportunities to serve and to bless and to let our light shine before men. We try to figure out how to make opportunity to bear witness by the way we live.

#### 4:6

Paul wanted prayer conversation with his Creator...and righteous conversations with those who did not know Jesus...and eventually in this chapter, godly and relational conversations with his brethren. Paul wanted to “speak well” to those around him in word and living. He wanted to speak up and be brave and be bold in his witness.

Paul wanted his language to be “seasoned with salt.” Salt has a few different attributes...all of which play into his analogy. Salt makes things more flavorful, more edible! If we want our words, HIS Words to be received by those with whom we share, don’t forget the salt! We will not get very far if we present the gospel in clinical apologetic terms or with hell fire and brimstone condemnation. Often we end up debating and arguing instead of loving and directing. We will argue about the minors while losing the majors...King James only theology, Calvinism, denominational superiority, eternal security, church politics and social debates, etc etc. The unredeemed out there don’t want to get that stuff shoved down their throats. Salt has flavor. Use it.

Salt is a preservative. The Spirit-filled believer “keeps” the world from rotting away if we are willing to be so used!

Salt is a *mild* seasoning...we aren’t talking about cayenne or chili pepper. Salt makes the conversation simply taste right. It “melts” an icy individual, and keeps the weeds from growing in our path.

How to “answer every man” is a combination of knowledge of the Word and the Spirit to deliver it as Jesus Himself did. With love, honesty, and of course salt, the grace that comes with everything that says “Jesus!”

#### 4:7-18

Most NT letters end with a series of greetings and references to co-workers and travel plans, but this part of Colossians is longer than normal. Perhaps it reflected a heart of a loving pastor that was separated from his brethren. It seemed like perhaps this separation was the worst suffering he endured while imprisoned.

Notice the names mentioned in this and the following verses. Will YOU be remembered as a “beloved brother”, “a faithful minister”, “a fellow servant”? Will you be remembered at all? I have seen a lot of folks flush everything they ever said and ever stood for, and are now forgotten from the pages of time. It has been said that **“We judge ourselves by our best intentions and most noble deeds but we will be judged by our last worst act.”**

I cannot help but believe that those mentioned here would be very surprised that they have been so immortalized. For I am sure they were simply disciples of our Lord; living Him, serving Him, sharing Him...in all they did. None of them were famous. None of them superstars. Not a mega-church in the bunch.

**Tychicus** (vv. 7-8) appears to have been with Paul for several years. He came with Paul from Ephesus in Acts 20:4, and labored in Asia with Paul for at least three years. Tychicus was apparently to be the one to carry the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22). He would have had a long and dangerous journey ahead of him. He couldn’t have known that these letters were destined for bigger things than to be just read at a church service in Colossi and Ephesus!

**Onesimus** (v. 9) was the runaway slave of Philemon, whom Paul had won to Christ. The apostle was now sending Onesimus back home to Colosse...back home to his master having previously run away. He and Tychicus traveled together, with Tychicus carrying this letter to the church in Colosse and Onesimus carrying that precious letter Paul had written to Onesimus’ master, Philemon.

**Aristarchus** (v. 10) must have been a rather tough dude, for he appears in some severe situations! We see him appear on the scene during the Ephesian riot (Acts 19:29), where he was snatched off the streets by the rioters and no doubt beaten. He was also backing Paul up during that terrible storm in route to Rome (Acts 20 & 27). He was no “fair weather friend.” Now some 2000 years later he is memorialized for being not only a faithful Christian, but a faithful friend, for he clearly stuck by Paul through thick and thin!

**Marcus** (v. 10) is John Mark, the cousin to Barnabas. Remember Mark had had a “fall out” with Paul years before (Acts 13:13 and 15:36-41). It is possible that the Colossians knew about Mark’s failure, but Paul wanted them to receive this young man and show him love. When he wrote his last letter, Paul admitted that Mark was “profitable” in the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). Paul understood the principles of grace, forgiveness, and the “second-chance.”

**Jesus-Justus** (v. 11) was a Jewish believer who worked with Paul and clearly had encouraged him, even while Paul was in prison!

**Epaphras** (vv. 12-13) was a Gentile and probably the founder-pastor of the church at Colosse. Paul's language paints him as a prayer warrior...not simply "saying prayers" but moreover "he labored [agonized] in prayer." It is the same word that is used for the struggles of athletes in contests.

**Luke** (v. 14) was the Gentile physician who joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10) and later wrote the books of Luke and Acts.

**Demas** is linked with Luke here ...this time in an apparent good light, but in 2 Tim. 4:10-11 we read, "Only Luke is with me... Demas has forsaken me" (nkjv). Despite what was once a righteous walk, in the end we are able to summarize the life of Demas in those 4 words: "Demas has forsaken me" (2 Tim. 4:10, nkjv). Demas' backsliding must have been rapid and complete.

Paul's letter ends with hellos and salutations to his friends...messages both corporate and personal. This was not a high browed professor with a doctorate at a sterile university somewhere. These were his friends. His family. His brethren. This book was not a legal edict of some kind, but rather a letter home. And these names? These are the friends he is no doubt hanging out with even now as we speak.