

Colossians 4:3-18

Open Doors and Faithful Friends

Good morning, Church. It is wonderful to be here with you all.

Today, we will finish Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Please open up your Bibles to Colossians Chapter 4, we will be in verses 3-18.

The message is titled "Open Doors and Faithful Friends."

When I was a boy, I was fascinated with space. I had taken a field trip to Edwards Air Force Base in 4th Grade, and NASA became my world.

I had posters of the planets all over my wall and dreamed of going to the moon as an astronaut one day.

I would read about the moon landings, and although I was not around, names like Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin were known to me.

Of course, those were the faces of the 1969 Apollo Moon Landing, and they were the first men on the moon.

I was reading this week about it all, and what is really fascinating about it, and what most people do not realize, is that over 400,000 people worked behind the scenes to make that moment possible.

20,000 different companies all over the country came together.

Engineers, mathematicians, technicians, radio operators, seamstresses who carefully stitched the space suits, and countless others.¹

And when Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface, he may have been alone physically, but in reality, an army of people stood behind him.

Every calculation, every nut and bolt, every communication signal mattered.

¹ <https://apollo11space.com/the-workforce-behind-apollo-exploring-the-400000-people-who-made-the-moon-landing-possible/>

Without them, the mission could never have happened.

Now, when we come to the closing verses of Colossians, it almost reads like a list of names we might be tempted to skip over.

But what we are actually seeing here is Paul's own mission control room.

He mentions very important people.

These were the people behind the mission of the Gospel.

Paul may have written the letter, but the Gospel advanced because an entire Church prayed, served, delivered messages, encouraged other Churches, and opened doors for the Word.

The Gospel Work has never been a solo effort.

So this morning, Paul will show us three important things about ministry: Open Doors, Wise Words, and Faithful Workers.

Let's pray, and we will get into the Word.

I think it is important we remember where we left off last week...

A very important verse, one that grabbed me so much, I got a little long-winded on it...

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

Remember, we learned the necessity of persistent prayer and how the attitude we take in our prayer life will bring about a marked change in our hearts.

Prayer changes things... it changes us...

We must be willing to continue in prayer... not hoping God will change... because God will not be moved... He already knows what He wants to do for us...

Really, it is we who need to adjust to His will, and this happens through our earnest and continued prayer time...

When we adjust, we can then pray expectantly, knowing that God will bless us with the answer to our prayer.

We talked last week about praying through those times when we don't even know how to pray...

In those times, we can rest in the reality that the Spirit of God is interceding on our behalf...

Remember too, Paul encouraged vigilant prayer, praying with an awakened spirit, alert, ready for action...

We say "Amen" with a tool in our hand, ready to get busy with what God has before us.

We were also reminded to be thankful in our prayer... this is so important... to have a heart of Gratitude...

And when our perception of our God is in alignment with truth, and we see Him as the Word of God clearly shows Him to be, a loving God, merciful, slow to anger, patient, wanting to show compassion...

We know Him as a God who desires to meet with us in prayer, a God who is for us... when we know Him in Truth... we cannot help but be thankful... and to have a heart of gratitude...

This is how a person finds contentment in life... I wonder if you are content? At peace? If not, start coming to God with a heart of Gratitude, and do it often... it will change your outlook on life...

So, with this understanding of our prayer life and this need to continue in vigilant, thankful prayer, we can now begin our text this morning.

Look at verses 3 and 4 with me in Colossians Chapter 4...

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

Now that Paul has the reader's heart meditating on their prayer life... He humbly suggests that they pray for Paul and his team.

We see here that Paul believed in the power of prayer and didn't want his ministry to function without it.

He is now asking that, through prayer, they partner with him to be an effective man in the ministry.

Paul understood that it was through prayer that the power of God would be unleashed upon those hearing the message he was faithfully preaching.

This is an important point... as move forward in ministry... we should look to the example outlined in Scripture.

Whether God has called you to preach to a large crowd, or He is asking you to tell someone your testimony at work during your lunch.

We need to pray that God's power comes upon us.

Every morning before I drop my kids off at school, I pray that they have His power, be a witness, be a light, and do what is right... that in the right moment they will choose right...

It is a little frustrating when the principal calls me, and one of them is sitting in their office...

But I still pray because we all need the power only God can give us...

My son Freedom is ten, and I remember being ten, and he got in trouble the other day for back-talking, and disrespecting his mom... and he said: "Dad, I have a voice telling me not to do it, but a louder voice that tells me to do it, and I am following the louder voice."

When he said that, I remembered being a boy and having that same reality, and I said, "Son, the only way for the good voice to win, which is God's voice in your life, you have to pray and ask Him to help, or that loud voice will wreck your life!"

It did mine, until I surrendered to God's voice... and I just pleaded with him to do better than I did...

But we all deal with these things... we all need God's power and strength... and maybe we've lost the clarity a ten-year-old has about the battle between the voices...

But it is happening...

I pray for Free to get it. I wonder if he hears my voice. He is teetering between boy and man at 10, and I am trying to teach him to find that man, to hear the right voice as a man...

We went out with Pastor Josh on Friday night in our trucks out in the desert, and our kids climbed the rocks. In the excitement, they got way ahead of us. Josh had a 40lb weight on his shoulders named Asher, and I have my bum knee...

So, we made it to the top, but the group of five kids was over the top and down a ravine, working on another set of rocks, so we plopped down and enjoyed the view.

We didn't have anything to prove...

But all of a sudden we hear death screams... And we were pretty far back there... and I am thinking one of the kids fell down the side and is all bashed up...

But right before we left, Jess said, “Be careful out there, it might just be warm enough for snakes.”

Sure enough, it was a rattler, and they were so far ahead, I couldn’t get to them... but I have taught my son Freedom what to do in such encounters, since he was little...

Lola was up on a rock screaming, “Dad, the tail is shaking back and forth.”

I looked at Free in the eye, and I yelled, “You know what to do!”

He looked at me and nodded, and then I yelled at all the kids, “Listen to Freedom, he will get you out of there.”

He puts his hands up, and I hear him say the exact things I taught him, “It is only afraid of us, we just have to go the other way, everyone stop yelling.”

I noticed he kept looking back at the thing, but he kept himself between the snake and the kids and calmly took them down the hill on another trail.

I got to him on the way down, and he told me he was shaking and scared...

So I talked to him about that yesterday in the morning, and told him, "That good voice I have been telling you about that we need to listen to, well, sometimes He asks us to do hard things, but they are right, and we have to obey it even though we are scared, I am proud of you son, that is a good leader."

I told him I shake when I have to do things for Jesus too... even get up in front of people, and talk is hard for me...

But this is why we pray for the power of God every day, so that when the moments come, we can do the right thing and obey the right voice...

Now, if we can get him to stay out of the principal's office...

So, I like it here too, that Paul does not see himself above needing prayer...

Listen, please... Your Church here, the leadership could use your prayers.

If you don't mind, add the pastors and elders to your prayer list, and our wives and kids...

The early church prayed through every situation. As you go through the Book of Acts, the church was relentless in storming the gates of hell.

Pray for us, that we can be focused on what Jesus wants us to be focused on, winning souls for His Kingdom.

I believe, too, it is important to pray that we stay Biblically grounded and focused.

The temptation is to allow the culture to take the lead in what we are doing here... We always need to allow the Bible to speak loudest over things.

Through prayer and self-denial.

Pray that we wouldn't miss the great needs of those around us by being focused on catering to the demands of a relentless Consumer Church Culture.

And pray for our Church missionaries, they are on the front lines, in constant spiritual battle.

You can look at the map on the way out, take a flyer with a list of the missionaries we support, or go to our website to see them all, and pray for them by name.

We have a team getting ready to head to Ukraine in July, be praying ahead for them, preparing the work...

It is definitely an interesting time to be going...

Paul wanted them to pray here for an open door, to share the message that had him in chains...

Even though Paul was locked up in prison at the time, he was not discouraged one bit; he was looking ahead, beyond his present circumstances.

Pray that ministry would continue, that doors would open...

Maybe he was looking at the guard outside his door as he wrote this...

What an example, to maintain the mind of Christ, even under pressure...

To stay focused on Jesus and the ministry at hand, no matter what trials fall upon us.

To do this, we need prayer, continual prayer...

Church, pray for me, as I pray for you.

That doors of opportunity continue to open for us to share the good news, the love of God, the forgiveness of sin....

No matter what we face in this life, the tests we endure through, the pressures we are under, that we will press on.

Our collective prayer should be that God is glorified through us in the eyes of those He desires us to reach.

At the end of the message, I will talk about some things we have specifically for you to join us in praying about.

Understand, I am, and the leadership, we are praying this type of prayer that Paul is requesting from the Colossians often...

“That God would open to us a door for the word to speak the mystery of Christ.”

I believe He is opening certain doors, and now He is inviting us to go through them...

So, let's continue now, in verses 5-6...

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.

Paul now moves on to give some final godly advice on how Christians should treat others.

Walk in wisdom, in the way we conduct ourselves around those who are unbelievers.

It is so important that we understand this point: People are watching our lives... maybe you think that is just not fair... but this is the way it is...

Your life is an open book, and this is all of our reality if we are Christians.

People are desperately seeking answers for their lives... We make some pretty bold claims as Christians: that we have the Ultimate Truth, the Absolute Truth; that our Way is The Way, the Only Way...

Now, that can be seen as arrogance or pride, unless people see our lives and find something hopeful for themselves.

But if they are looking at your life, and you talk filthy like them, you get drunk with them, you sleep around like them, you numb yourself with dope like them, you are angry like them, gossiping, lying, cheating... then when you say, "I am a Christian, and my way is the way to heaven..."

They will think, “Your way is no different than my way.”

The world turns to relationships for a solution to loneliness, hoping each new lover will bring them peace... but they end up with more problems...

The world looks to material gain for security, hoping that the more they have in their accounts, the more satisfied they will be, but they remain empty.

The world will smoke a bowl of that, drink a refreshing one of those to take the edge off...

But, Church, we have the real peace, Jesus is our peace...

He is the answer people are searching for...

Ephesians 2:14 “He Himself is our peace.”

So as they watch our lives and how we remain at peace in tumultuous times, Jesus is glorified and lifted up in our witness.

Be wise in how you present yourselves to outsiders...

I believe, equally as important, that this is the other side of the issue: we have to be real... because it is easy to spot a fake or phony.

Listen, Christians, struggle, we feel pain, we make mistakes, we go through things... and when you act as though you don't, and that you are better than those in the world, it is on that extreme that you also lose your witness.

It is okay to let them know you struggle, that you are weak at times, but it is when we are weak that we experience His strength...

It is as Paul said, **2 Corinthians 12:10 "I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."**

It is there the power of Christ may rest upon us...

When we are walking in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time, we will do so humbly... we will have a proper estimation of ourselves.

Be wise, redeeming the time...

Understand, time is short... not just prophetically, yes, Jesus is coming soon... we need to be ready for that...

But as some of you are finding out, Life is too short... here...

People need to decide for Christ...

We get so caught up in the pursuit of the nothingness of this perishing world.

Life's issues derail us from what really matters... the souls of those around us that will be doomed for eternal separation from God if we do not pray up, and speak up...

Some of us are good at redeeming savings at the grocery store, we are good at buying up investments in this life, redeeming every deal and opportunity that comes our way in our business life... which is not bad... but it is more so needed in the spiritual...

Be alert... God is literally working all around you, at all times, inviting you into His Work... and if you are looking to redeem the time... when the invite comes, and the door opens, you will move...

You know, I cannot ever remember Jess and me saying, "We will pray about it." When a ministry opportunity opened up to us... We definitely prayed... but we always started moving in the direction until the door closed... if it remained open... we just kept moving...

People are hurting and desperate around us... and usually, when we are pausing and praying, we are really assessing whether it will be convenient for me...

Ministry will always be inconvenient... but as the doors of opportunity open... redeem the time... because it is going quickly and you will not be able to get it back...

Too many Christians pray about doing things their whole lives, but never step out and do anything... they get stuck in, "I'll pray about it."

Remember, pray with a tool in hand, so when the door opens, you are ready, and you go when the door opens... the door doesn't open... and you take it back to committee and pray again...

For the American Cultural Christian... Nothing ever gets done...

Redeem the time... it is easier to steer a moving ship than one anchored in the harbor... start moving, serving somewhere, and typically, God refines the movement and direction after the movement begins.

Lastly, about this conduct, notice Paul says here too, in verse 6... "Let your speech be seasoned with Grace."

In Ephesians 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Our words greatly impact the witness we present to others...

As we redeem the time, our lives and words must align with the Christian faith.

Now, as we finish this Chapter, the Apostle Paul will say goodbye to a few people and send greetings from others.

It is a tender section, showing the bond we have here in the Body of Christ...

Look, starting in verse 7...

Final Greetings

(cf. Eph. 6:21,22)

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,

Tychicus is a special brother... as Paul was there in his prison cell, this brother connected him with the other churches.

He brought a letter to Ephesus, then carried it to the Colossian Church.

He is mentioned a total of five times... and seems to have come into the picture at the end of Paul's ministry and life.

He was most likely a convert who came from Paul's long ministry in Ephesus.

He would have witnessed the riot against Paul in his home city, which led Paul to head for Macedonia.

This man joined Paul in dangers and in his courageous advances.

Tychicus would be one of the seven who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem, where Paul would be arrested.

He stayed, along with Luke, by Paul's side when others were long gone.

He was a faithful friend in the ministry, and those are hard to find.

Look at another that is mentioned here in verse 9...

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.

This name you might remember from Paul's letter to Philemon, which we will study here, after we finish the Gospel of Mark, which is next up for us...

Philemon was probably carried by Tychicus as well... it would be a personal letter to one of the members of the Colossian Church, Philemon.

It will have to do with Onesimus's conversion, being an escaped slave.

Understand, in those days, the penalty for a slave who had escaped and been caught was death.

When Onesimus escaped from Colosse, he made it to Rome, where he met the Apostle Paul and was converted to Christ.

Paul would send a letter back to Philemon, letting him know that Onesimus was now a brother in Christ, and he would plead with him to free him, as Onesimus had been a huge help to Paul's ministry.

We see Paul calls him a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you...

That would be a statement of equality and a testament to how a life can be radically changed in Christ.

This once rebellious and angry slave was no longer that, but now a changed man in Jesus...

Just as the cross of Jesus has impacted our rebellious lives, so too was Onesimus changed...

And what gratitude comes to a person who is freed and lifted by Jesus.

So Paul goes on now, starting in verse 15...

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.

We see the writer of the next book we will study, John Mark, a key character in the book of Acts, mentioned here, as Paul and Barnabas were divided over this man.

It is wonderful here, to see the movements of Grace in the Body of Christ, that over time, wounds heal, relationships are restored...

Here, Paul, who once could not trust John Mark in the ministry, is now giving his stamp of approval to his ministry.

Also mentioned is Jesus, called Justice, a common name at that time.

Epaphras, who remember, seems to have been the pastor in this region who took on the burden of traveling 1300 miles to Rome to meet with Paul and consult on the issues he was facing in the ministry.

He loved the Body he served so much that he sought the wisdom of the elders to lead them and to battle the Heresy that threatened to rob the church of the fullness of Christ.

Paul presents him there in verse 12 as a brother who is always laboring fervently in prayer for the Church, that they would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Paul had seen him labor, or wrestle in prayer over them...

A great example of leadership.

Next, we see Luke, Paul's seemingly most loyal companion, the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles...

Who, at the end of Paul's life, when he is about to die, records...

2 Tim 4:11 Only Luke is with me.

Think of all Paul did for the Kingdom of God, all the lives touched by this man, and at the end of it all, one friend stood with him.

You must understand, when you serve Christ, you serve Christ... if you are doing it to be recognized, rewarded, raised up, you will be let down.

Serve Christ, to serve Christ... for His eyes... for His Glory... for heaven's sake... it may get lonely... You might not get the attention from men and women you crave... but God certainly notices... do it for Him...

Paul, at the end of his prestigious ministry... stood with Luke alone...

What a good friend Luke was...

Paul also gave this greeting to the surrounding churches, in Laodicea and the church that meets in Nympha's home...

Then in verse 16..

Closing Exhortations and Blessing

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.

The other letter was lost, unfortunately, but we see that these letters were passed around and used as doctrine and scripture even in the early church.

They were mutually beneficial then, and they are especially beneficial today.

The principles are transferable to every person and every culture.

We are told in **2 Tim. 3:16-17** All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that a man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

I want to encourage you to fall in love with God's Word, all of it... allow it to lead your life, speak to it, and have authority over it.

So, Paul has this encouragement now, verse 17...

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.

To this Archippus, Paul speaks to him, as he did Timothy...

1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

What a powerful way to end such a potent letter... that we see Paul signed here with his own hand, from chains...

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, Church... each of you has been entrusted with gifts, and you are all here in this Body for a reason.

God has a specific mission for us to fulfill, for us to have an impact in our community and beyond.

If we are instructed not to neglect our calling, this means we have a choice in it... We can tell God “no” and refuse to engage in what He puts before us.

We are His hands and feet here on earth...

Paul showed us three important things today: Open Doors, Wise Words, and Faithful Workers.

And Church, we have been praying for God to open doors of opportunity for us... and He has, big time... and the doors keep opening...

Church, you are doing Church, I want to encourage you in this...

We keep getting approached by outside ministries, and we hear a common theme about all of you.

“We know that you will do it.”

The last Embrace Grace group met. This is our ministry for single mothers, and we had two mothers who got shoulder-to-shoulder with... this is a discipleship ministry, doing life with these young ladies...

We are not just doing a baby shower, that is only part of it... There is more to it... much more...

It is not just a big "throw-a-party-and-we 're-done-with-you" kind of thing... it is a discipleship ministry...

It is a commitment on our part... we are for life... and when a young mother... in a tough place chooses life... we don't just want to stand back and applaud that decision...

No, we want to be there to help them now through that decision, hands-on...

What a strange thing to be campaigning life, and when the young single mom takes that fearful step, all alone, with no one by her side, and the Church stands back and says, “Well, good luck now.”

Well, you went shoulder-to-shoulder with two mothers and are still in that commitment with them... and you all came through... we made it through another discipleship class, baby shower... and we are still shoulder-to-shoulder with those moms.

We just started the next class on Friday... And we had six of nine mothers who signed up come, who chose life, committed to the discipleship classes with us... who will need the baby shower at the end.

With this comes special needs... some of these mothers are in very difficult situations, and they need rides to the Church on Fridays... so if you can step up and help, please call the office or see my wife Jessica or Pastor Jacob...

Church, the Lord tripled what you were able to do last time... and understand something, we are not a wealthy ministry... we are not one of the big ones...

Yet, big ministries are saying, "We don't have people with the heart for this type of thing; we know you do."

Isn't that something?

My wife was approached by another outside Christian ministry that is asking our church to support Foster Families here locally.

If we were willing to do support meetings again... and bless the families and the foster kids...

Again, we have a heart for this, but we don't necessarily have the resources to do so.

We already have commitments all over the world...

But here is the thing: the community here sees you all as a Church that steps up for the most vulnerable...

And I could go on... because I got another call last week... and more requests are made... Doors are constantly being opened.

This is not even considering what is happening in the Children's Ministry and the great needs we have right here in the neighborhood...

We have long dreamed of building a youth center, a building that connects the two buildings here, to minister to the kids right here in the neighborhood.

We are in a direct spiritual war every week.

I notice online, there is a lot of debate and argument about what the Church should and should not be doing...

Who we should be reaching, and who we should not be reaching...

We literally have an Islamic Center across the street, a Mosque 1 block up in an old Church, and a drug epidemic and gangs right out there that will happily take all those kids running around in our neighborhood.

They don't care about immigrant status, the color of the skin, the devil is not picky on the soul he steals, it is so stupid to me that pastors are saying who should be

here in our country or not, what we need to be doing with certain people or not, because Jesus said: “Go make disciples of the nations...”

They are right there... here in our neighborhood... and if we are willing to welcome them in or even get them or provide a place of ministry for them... Islam will be happy too, fentanyl will find them... and we will have another Zombie walking the street... because of what some pastor tweeted... putting some kind of prejudice in Christians hearts...

We are in a dogfight for the soul of this community... We are here to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death... to guide them in the way of peace... what an incredible privilege.

Two churches were dying out when I got here. The Muslims paid cash for one and turned it into a Mosque, and this one. God brought life back to this place for a reason.

The battle is spiritual for this neighborhood... and when you sign up to serve in ministry, you will experience warfare...

Satan will get you to want to quit... it will be hard... but what we are doing here is not cultural Christianity...

We are not coming to Church to feel something...

We come here to be a part of something bigger than ourselves...

You are part of something very important... we cannot lose ground here...

It was almost lost once... let's keep pushing the darkness back... and we will continue to be a lighthouse... a refuge of hope for those who desperately need it...

Continue to serve, continue to give... above all else... continue to pray!

As I was praying about these things... a little overwhelmed by them... the Lord reminded me of a passage in

Rev 3:8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Doors of opportunity are opening to us... to reach people, the most vulnerable, an open door to our little Church...

A prayer of mine is "Lord expand our reach, use this ministry for Your Glory."

And the doors are opening... and instead of questioning whether we are capable or able to fund these new opportunities...

Instead... we need to get tools in hand... trusting Him that provision will come... workers will link up, the fields are ready for harvest, surely the Lord of Harvest will raise more laborers...

This is His Work... and I am expecting Greater Things to come...

As we learned this morning, pray for God to use you and those around you to further His Kingdom.

Live a life as a witness for Him, using wisdom in all your actions and words.

Redeem the time, be ready at all times to walk through the doors open to you.

You are having an impact... Keep it up... momentum has only begun...

God is using you, Big, and is going to continue; doors are opening... Pray, and pray more until your hearts are aligned with His...

Let's pray...