

Posted July 16, 2020

Read Colossians 4:2–18. I will print the Net–2 translation.

#### EXHORTATION TO PRAY FOR THE SUCCESS OF PAUL’S MISSION

2 Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may make it known as I should. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunities. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.

#### PERSONAL GREETINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS

7 Tychicus, a dear brother, faithful minister, and fellow slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are doing and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 I sent him with Onesimus, the faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him). 11 And Jesus who is called Justus also sends greetings. In terms of Jewish converts, these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a slave of Christ, greets you. He is always struggling in prayer on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I can testify that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Our dear friend Luke the physician and Demas greet you. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters who are in Laodicea and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house. 16 And after you have read this letter, have it read to the church of Laodicea. In turn, read the letter from Laodicea as well. 17 And tell Archippus, “See to it that you complete the ministry you received in the Lord.”

18 I, Paul, write this greeting by my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

#### COMMENTS:

Paul emphasized the importance of prayer. There are even some in the Lutheran family who believe Prayer is the 3rd Sacrament. It doesn’t meet the traditional definition for a sacrament because there is no visible element in prayer. Certainly the power of prayer makes it a wonderful gift from God to be highly prized. Don’t ever neglect to pray!

One way to keep your heart and mind concentrating when you pray is to keep looking for ways to be thankful for God’s presence, help, and gifts. Then in v. 3 he says, “Pray for our mission efforts to share Christ with others.” It is called a mystery because the children of Israel had failed to see how God wanted everyone one included, both Jew & Gentile.

It is also a mystery revealed because the religions then and now, believed you had to do something to get past the anger of God. The message that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19) was something new to them. Even today, even among some Christian churches, they still have trouble with Jesus call simply to receive, never to deserve.

He even suggests they pray that he will do the right thing. It doesn’t make any difference who the person is, even your pastor, that is always an appropriate prayer. Paul wants to speak the Word of God boldly and clearly. A noble aim for all of us serving God, whether in pulpit or pew.

This is especially true when we are dealing with those outside the faith. My grandmother’s advice is still true. God gave you two ears, but only one mouth. Try to listen twice as much as you talk. Find out what they believe FIRST. Then you can find the most gracious way (v. 6) to shape your words to their hearts.

Today we finish Colossians and tomorrow we will finish Philemon. I will be skipping Saturday. I have a Memorial Service Saturday, I preach at Woodlands on Sunday and then on Monday I have to tape Wednesday Worship for Woodlands. So forgive me for skipping a day. Pastor Josh is enjoying a well deserved vacation and the old war horse (me) is the only one in the barn.

I know you will not recognize many of the names you read in Paul's greeting, but try to see and remember the various connections. They are important to understanding the story. The first person mentioned is Tychicus, who delivered the Prison Epistles, and was Paul's messenger to bring reports to the churches on his welfare and his ministry.

We know little about him, but in Acts 20:4 we find one important fact. He and Trophimus are both Asians. The diversity of the family of God is clearly at work in the New Testament.

Then in v. 9 we are introduced a very important figure in the story of Philemon: Onesimus, the runaway slave. More on him tomorrow.

Aristarchus (v. 10) was a citizen of Thessalonica, apparently one of Paul's first converts in Europe after the Macedonian Vision got Paul into Europe. He was a traveler and worker with Paul in Ephesus and joined Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem and apparently stayed with him during his imprisonment because he also journeyed to Rome with Paul.

Barnabas had been a witness of Paul's faithful service to Christ and he recommended him to the Apostles. John Mark, had deserted Paul and Barnabas on one journey and so Paul didn't want to take him along on his next journey. Paul & Silas went one way and Barnabas and Mark another (cf. Acts 15:36-41). Here we learn a new detail: Mark is a cousin of Barnabas.

It seems as if Justus, also called Jesus, are one in the same (but not the Jesus born in Bethlehem). Then in v.11 Paul reveals he did not find many Jewish converts who had comforted and helped him even though he was a Jew of Jews being been a Pharisee and a student of Gamaliel, the best known Jewish teacher.

Epaphras was apparently a native of the Lycus River Valley in Asia Minor. He may have been Paul's personal representative to such cities as Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis in that area. His being named before Mark, Luke, and others (Philem. 23-24) may indicate the high esteem in which Paul held him.

He is apparently a good imitator of Paul in the practice of prayer. Luke and Demas also send greeting to the congregation at Colossae. Paul tells about the practice of the early churches sharing their apostolic letter with one another.

Paul's instruction for Archippus to complete the ministry he has received from the Lord is not explained. Obviously he is an important leader in the Colossian Church, perhaps even serving now as its pastor.

We know Paul often used a secretary or scribe to write his epistles, but here he makes a point of saying, these greeting are in my own handwriting. He closes with the reminder that he is in chains, imprisoned for preaching Christ Jesus as Lord. Then he closes with the blessing of grace, our undeserved favor from God.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:** Some withdraw from serving God because they get no recognition. Don't ever do that. Your service is always noticed by God and you know you have some wonderful blessings awaiting you in heaven. You are not serving to be seen by men. You are

serving God. He who sees you serving in secret will reward you. For some good words on God's secret service (cf. Matt. 6:4, 6, & 18). Seek not the glory of man, but the glory of God.

END OF COLOSSIANS. TOMORROW: Philemon. No post on Saturday or Sunday.