

Praying For Us
Colossians 4:2-4
ABC 3/8/20

In January we talked about being *devoted to prayer* from Col 4 & I told you we'd be looking at some of the great prayers of Scripture throughout the year. We then spent 3 weeks looking at Daniel's prayer in chpt 9. The goal for each of us is to pray more this year than we did last year. Prayer isn't to be like a little red box on the wall of your Christian life with the words, *For Emergency Use Only*, written on it. Prayer is our oxygen. If you're going to live, you need to breathe. If you're going to live & grow & bear fruit as a Christian, you need to pray. How's it going so far? Today we're looking at Col 4 once again & look at what Paul says about prayer & what he requested prayer for. &, yes, I chose this somewhat selfishly, as you'll see. But if Paul needed the prayers of others, I certainly do! & so do you. As you know, I'm leaving for Ethiopia this Thursday & I, & the whole team, need your prayers. Our responsibility as Christians is steadfast, watchful, thankful prayer which brings the blessing of God's power & grace. As we're devoted to prayer with alertness & thanksgiving, this text gives us hope that God will open a door for the Word in Ethiopia so that faith in & knowledge of God will grow in all involved. But let me begin with a story:

The story is about Duncan Campbell,¹ a pastor in Scotland. He had many stories of God's work during the late 1950s & '60s in the Hebrides (the islands just west of Scotland).

On the Monday after Easter in 1952, Duncan was seated on the platform after speaking to the Faith Mission Convention in Northern Ireland, when he sensed the inner voice say to him, *Berneray!* (which is a small island at the southern tip of the outer Hebrides). Duncan bowed his head & prayed silently. Again came the name *Berneray*. He prayed on, & the name came a 3rd time.

Campbell turned to the chairman & whispered, *Brother, you'll need to excuse me. The Holy Spirit has just told me that I am to go to Berneray*. The chairman objected mildly, *You're the speaker tomorrow*. But nothing could stop him. He knew the Spirit had spoken. He later said, *I had never been to Berneray, had never known anyone from there, & had never received a letter from anyone there*.

He went to the hotel & packed his suitcases & contacted the airport. There were no connections with Berneray because it was too small & out of the way. So he caught the 1st flight to the nearest island. When he got there he went down to the coast & asked how to get to Berneray. The answer from a fisherman was that there was no commercial way, but that he'd take him for a price. It was almost the exact amount Campbell had in his pocket.

¹ <http://articles.ochristian.com/article13380.shtml>

When they got to Berneray the fisherman returned & left Campbell alone on the shore. He climbed the bluff & found himself on the edge of a plowed field & a farmer not far away. He said to the farmer, *Please go to the nearest pastor & tell him Duncan Campbell has arrived.*

The farmer responded, *We don't have a minister for the church now.*

Do you have elders? Campbell asked.

Yes, he said.

All right, go to the nearest elder & tell him, Duncan Campbell has arrived.

The farmer looked at him quizzically, then started off across the field as Campbell rested on his suitcases. After a while the farmer returned & said, *The elder was expecting you. He has a place ready for you. He has announced the meetings begin at nine o'clock tonight.*

While Campbell had been ministering in the convention in Ireland 3 days earlier, this elder, Hector McKennon, had spent the day praying in his barn for God to send revival to the island. His wife in the house heard him praying in the barn, *Lord, I don't know where he is, but You know, & with You all things are possible. Send Duncan Campbell to the island.* Duncan had been used of God to bring revival to other parts of Scotland & Hector knew in his heart that God was going to bring revival in Berneray as well. He was so sure that he'd be there in 3 days that he made all the arrangements to use the local church & had announced the services before he ever arrived.

Revival came to the island of Berneray & a great door for the Word was opened that no man could shut because God opened it. Here's the lesson: When God has people who prevail in prayer, there is no limit to what God can do.²

Let me ask you, will you pray for the ministry in Ethiopia like Hector prayed for Berneray? Would you pray that God would open a door for His Word & revival in Ethiopia? Let's look at our text in **Col**

4:2-4. PRAY

Why does Paul encourage the Colossians to pray for him? What's the point of his asking them to ask God to open a door for the Word? Why does he urge them to pray that God would give him clarity of speech? Isn't it enough that he ask God himself? He evidently believed it would help his cause if others joined him in asking God for His blessing. Does this imply God is more inclined to say *Yes* to our requests if more people are involved in asking Him for them? That seems odd, doesn't it? There's no way I can comprehend the tension between God's sovereignty & our responsibility other than to know that the Bible clearly teaches both & they somehow work together. By asking others to pray was an acknowledgment of Paul's dependence on God to make his ministry fruitful. I'm sure Paul prayed for himself & his ministry faithfully. But he didn't leave it

² Wesley Duewel, *Let God Guide You Daily*, pp 117-119

at that. He knew God had tied the spread of the gospel & the growth of Christians to the prayers of the saints. Paul believed in the power of prayer as the foundation for ministry (Rom 15:30-32; Eph 6:19; Phil 1:19). Therefore, Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him just like I'm asking you to pray for me. Let's look 1st at the process of prayer & then at the requests of this prayer. How does Paul want them to pray & what does he want them to pray for?

1. How Are We to Pray? Paul mentions 3 things in **vs 2.**

A. Devote yourselves to prayer We talked about this in January. If you missed it, or don't remember it, find it on the church's website. Briefly, being devoted to prayer means to pray with constancy & steadfastness. It's the opposite of hit & miss. It's praying without ceasing. It implies earnestness & serious pursuit of God, not just casual contact. It implies pressing on & not giving up.

B. Keeping Alert Be devoted to prayer with alertness. **Keeping alert** means being vigilant, like a sentry on duty outside the camp knowing if you fall asleep, all can be lost. Paul urges the church to remember how tremendously serious the battle is. A spiritual battle is going on, so stay alert in prayer. Be watchful, awake, & vigilant. Staying alert looks out at the world & in at the heart. It looks out to the world knowing the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pt 5:8). We have an enemy & we need to be watchful & on our guard. But we also need to take watch over ourselves, our own hearts, which are desperately wicked & deceitful above all things. Who can understand them? (Jer 17:9). Our hearts are twisted & perverse & so we need to keep watch over our hearts. There's a spiritual vigilance necessary against the schemes of the devil & about the subtle deceptions of our own hearts. Be devoted to prayer with alertness & what?

C. With an Attitude of Thanksgiving What is it that we're to be thankful for? What does Paul have in mind? I can't say for sure, but I imagine it's at least these 3 things:

1) Thankful for Our Own Salvation It's impossible to pray for God to open a door of faith for others without remembering He did this very thing for us. When we pray for the salvation & growth of others, isn't the fervency of our prayer a mirror of how thankful we are for our own salvation? If we don't feel thankful for our own salvation, for the time when God prepared the soil & opened the

door of our heart, then how can we pray devotedly with alertness for Him to do the same with others? Be thankful for your own salvation & you'll pray with passion for others.

2) Thankful for All God's Blessings When we remember & retell all the ways God has showered His blessings upon us in the past it strengthens our faith for the future. It's good advice to *count your blessings, name them one by one, Count your blessings, see what God has done!*³ Our prayers include thanksgiving to God for all His blessings.

3) Thankful for What God Is Going to Do The other thing I think Paul means is that we should be thankful for what God is going to do. Not just what He has done for us, but for what He will do in answer to our prayers. In other words, pray with thanksgiving means pray with expectant faith. Be thanking Him in advance for what He's going to do. Alertness married to thankfulness strengthens faithfulness in prayer.

Now we turn briefly to the FOR of these prayers. That's HOW we're to pray. Now...

2. What Should We to Pray For? Paul's focus is very clearly on prayer for his ministry. Yes, pray for the sick. Yes, pray for guidance. Yes, pray for daily bread. Yes, pray for forgiveness & grace to press on. But he says, **At the same time, pray also for us** (ESV). Remember Paul's circumstances as he writes this? What does the text say? Where is he? He's in prison for the sake of the gospel. He might have legitimately asked them to pray for his release & for some relief of his trials & sufferings. He might have prayed & asked them to join him in praying that all of this might be overturned & he might be set free. But here he has an opportunity to ask for prayer & the thing that comes to Paul's mind aren't his chains, but the progress of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what he wants more than anything else. So, yes, pray for our health & travel & all that. But at the same time pray that God's kingdom would advance through the preaching & teaching of His Word. Paul wants the Christians of Colossae to pray for 2 specific things: An open door for ministry & for a powerful word. Or, to put it another way, Paul wants God to work in those who hear God's Word & he wants God to work in & through those who proclaim God's Word.

A. For an Open Door for the Word In vs 3 he says, **3.**

³ *Count Your Blessings* by Johnson Oatman, Jr. #

That God will open up to us a door for the word is literally, *a door for the Word*. What does he mean by this? Christians are to pray for open doors because it is God who opens them. 3 other times Paul used this same imagery.

1) At the end of his 1st missionary journey with Barnabas, Paul reports to the church in Antioch about what God had done. Luke puts it like this: **they began to report all things that God had done with them & how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27)**. God opened a door & the result was faith.

2) In 1 Cor 16:8–9 Paul explains his itinerary like this: **I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, & there are many adversaries**. Here the open door is a set of circumstances or a climate of receptivity that is making Paul's work unusually fruitful.

3) In 2 Cor 2:12-13 Paul says, **when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ & when a door was opened for me in the Lord, I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia**. Again the open door seems to be a remarkable set of circumstances that would have been effective for the gospel.

Interestingly, Rev 3:7 describes Jesus as the One **who opens & no one will shut, & who shuts & no one opens**. So when Paul pleads with the Colossians to be **praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word**, I take him to mean when Christians pray, God changes circumstances & attitudes & receptivity for the Word so that instead of hitting a brick wall, the Word finds an open door, good soil that's been prepared, & becomes unusually effective. We have the responsibility to pray that God will open the doors of opportunity wide so that we can make Christ known to others. Every one of us as a Christian has the opportunity to open doors for others through our prayers. You can open doors for me & I can open doors for you as we pray for one another.

Paul identifies the proclaimed message as **the mystery of Christ**. This points back to **1:26–27**.

Here he defines **mystery** as divine truths that had been hidden but were now being revealed. In 1:27a the mystery is the riches of salvation shared with the Gentiles, but is then (1:27b, 2:2–3, 4:3) described as Christ Himself, **Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27)**. Paul asks the Colossians to

pray that he'd have an open door to speak the full truth of the gospel. His imprisonment didn't spell the end of his ministry. It was during this period he wrote Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, & Philemon. He also evangelized those he came in contact with, whether the mob in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1ff), Felix (Acts 24:10ff), Herod Agrippa (Acts 26:1ff), Roman soldiers (Phil 1:13), members of Caesar's household (Phil 4:22), or members of Rome's Jewish community (Acts 28:17ff). Paul's activity during his imprisonment in Rome is summed up in Acts 28:30–31: **He stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, & was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, & teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. For Paul, there were no devastating circumstances, only unique opportunities.**⁴ His imprisonment emboldened believers to **have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear** (Phil 1:12-14).

So the 1st thing I want you praying for is that God would work in all the circumstances surrounding this trip & teaching, including the hearts of those who come, to open a wide & effective door for the Word of God. Pray the students' hearts & minds are eager to learn & then take it & effectively teach others as well. Remember, the key to opening the door of God's blessing on the proclamation of His Word, whether here or in Ethiopia, is your prayers! Geography & distance are no barrier when God is involved. Pray for God to open doors for the Word to go forth in power. Pray that God would blow the door off the hinges in Ethiopia. While you're at it, pray He'd do the same here at ABC. That's the 1st goal the text mentions for prayer, the 1st thing we should pray FOR.

B. For the Clarity & Boldness of the Preacher The 2nd thing to pray for is the clarity & boldness of those preaching & teaching God's Word. **4**

Paul doesn't ask his readers to pray he'd be set free. Instead, he asks for boldness & clarity in his current circumstances. He knows he's in prison for the gospel. He's not ashamed of his present situation & he makes no attempt to hide it. He simply asks prayer for boldness to preach even while he is in chains. He's not all about himself, he's all about Jesus! He wants to make sure what he says is easily understood by others. Anyone can make the simple complicated; it takes wisdom to make the complicated simple. I find this request fascinating because Paul knew better than

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1992). *Colossians*, p 184

anyone how to speak for Christ. He certainly knew the gospel better than these young Colossian believers. Yet he asks them to pray that he would do what he already knew how to do. Paul asked the Colossians to pray that when God opened a door for the gospel, **I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.** **Ought** can be understood in 2 ways. 1st, it refers to the compulsion Paul felt to preach the gospel. That was a constant burden in his life. To the Romans he wrote, **I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (1:16).** In 1 Cor 9:16 he said, **If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.** 2nd, **ought to speak** refers to the mandate for using the God-ordained method of presenting the gospel. Paul preached the gospel by **solemnly testifying to both Jews & Greeks of repentance toward God & faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).** **Solemnly testifying** means to give a thorough & complete testimony. The gospel should be proclaimed clearly, boldly (Eph 6:19), wisely (Prov 25:11), & graciously (Eph 4:15). In other words, not only is there a need for God to open doors, there has to be something clear & powerful to send through the door. What is it? The Word, the mystery of Christ, the gospel. This is a prayer for all those teaching & preaching God's Word that they would be clear & understandable. It doesn't matter how smart you are or how much you know, it doesn't matter how clear in your own mind your understanding of the truth may be if, when you share it with others, you're as clear as mud. Clarity is important. *Clarity* has been defined as precision wedded with simplicity. He wanted precision & accuracy spoken with simplicity, not overly *complexifying* anything.

So I ask you, pray for all of us in Ethiopia (some 20 teachers in 8 cities over 3 weeks). We need your prayers. I need your prayers! If Paul could imagine himself speaking the truths of God's Word in a way that wasn't clear & bold & powerful, how much more can I imagine that for myself. Think of it: the greatest preacher & missionary who ever lived (beside Jesus Himself) said the effectiveness of his preaching depended on the prayers of the church. If that's true for Paul, it's true a million times over for me. What happens over the next few weeks (as it is every Sunday I preach) depends to some degree on how you pray for me. I need your prayers so we might be effective in doing what God has called us to do. We must labor & pray so that our speech is clear

& plain, with no ambiguous phrases, & nothing left unclear. Along with this, pray for our translators. Obviously, they're a key to this. Not only must we be clear, the translation must be clear & accurate as well. God's Word isn't good news if those who hear it don't understand what's being said. Therefore, will you commit to steadfast, vigilant, thankful prayer that a door would be opened for the Word in Ethiopia & that I, & all those teaching & preaching, would speak God's Word with clarity & power? I can't think of anything more encouraging than knowing you are praying for me & all those involved in the training in Ethiopia over the next several weeks.

By prayer God changes the world. From our knees we can impact distant lands. We may never preach but our prayers may make the preaching of others successful. We may never be foreign missionaries but our prayers may open doors for others around the world. By prayer we partner with God's people everywhere. & we do that even though we never leave our home. Paul believed in the power of prayer. He wants the Colossians to pray. He really believes if others will pray, God will act. Prayer is the instrument that God has ordained to accomplish His sovereign plans. He wants to reach the world but He does it in response to your prayers & mine. So let's give ourselves to prayer. Continue steadfastly. Be devoted to it. Begin & go on. It's not for emergency use only. It is every day; it's oxygen for our lives. Be watchful. The enemy is on the prowl. There's a war on. Be alert. Our hearts are desperately wicked, deceitful above all things. So we need to keep watch & we must not neglect gratitude & thanksgiving. It strengthens faith & helps us press on. As we pray, God will answer & He will get the glory & sinners will be saved to the glory & praise of His name. May we be more like Mary Slessor, who said,

My life is one long, daily, hourly record of answered prayer for physical health, for mental overstrain, for guidance given marvelously, for errors & dangers averted, for enmity to the Gospel subdued, for food provided at the exact hour needed, for everything that goes to make up life & my poor service. I can testify with a full & often wonder-stricken awe that I believe God answers prayer. I know God answers prayer.⁵

Let me PRAY & then I'll give you a few details & try to answer any questions you may have. PRAY Thank you for your prayers up until this point & thank you in advance for your prayers in the future. In your bulletin is my itinerary. I'll be teaching starting, our time here, next Sunday evening at

⁵ An unknown Christian, *The Kneeling Christian*, p 94

10:30 p.m. until 3:30 a.m. If God should wake you during that time, pray for me. I've been given systematic theology 1 & leadership to teach. In theology I'll be covering why we study theology, the Bible, the doctrine of God, Jesus, & the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, that's a lot to cover. Pray that I'd be biblical & clear in all of this. In leadership we'll be looking at the shepherd as leader & then examining what leadership looks like in an episode in the life of Paul & in Moses' sister, Marian. Pray that the principles of leadership would be clear & applicable.

The first week I'll be in Nazaret/Adama which is on the rim of the rift valley & about 60 miles southeast of Addis Ababa. My 1st time in Ethiopia I taught here for 2 days. The 2nd week I'll be in Ziway located on a large lake about 70 miles southwest of Nazaret. I've never been to Ziway, but I hear it's a bird watchers paradise & that hippos inhabit the lake. Travel will take about 24 hours on the way there & 28 hours on the way home. I am taking a Malaria medication & have had no problem with it so far. Questions?



GTN ETHIOPIA PRAYER GUIDE

MARCH 12TH - APRIL 7TH, 2020

PURPOSE: To launch a two-year training for pastors and leaders, in 8 cities of Ethiopia, over 3 weeks. We will also celebrate with 250 students who will graduate from the program.

DebreZeit: Paul Madson, Larry Finch, Dave and Jan Franklin, and Kathy Reedy.

Nazareth: Joel Madson, Steward Toliver, Phil and Anita Paulsen, Nate Shinn and Russ Urness.

Bekoji: Dan Bushy and Sam Aberlarde.

Sheno: Christopher Schwarzen and Carl Palmer.

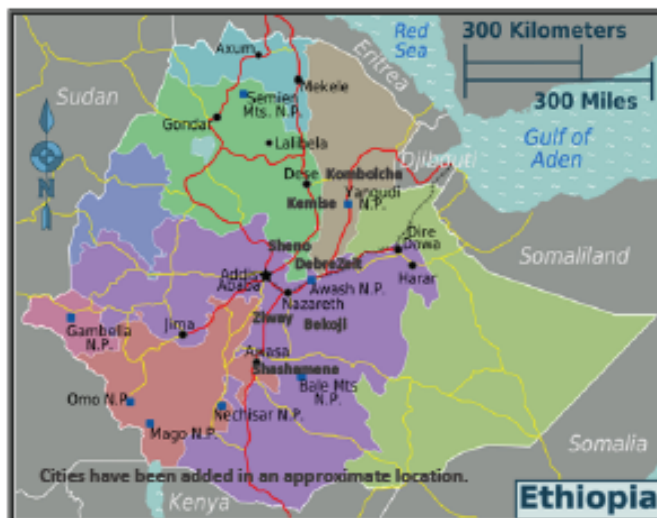
Ziway: Joel Madson, Steward Toliver, Christopher Schwarzen, Larry Finch, Nate Shinn and Russ Urness.

Shashamene: Paul Madson, Steve Larson, Chuckk Gerwig, Phil and Anita Paulsen, Antoinette Williams and Lisa Woods.

Kombolcha: Joel Madson, Dan Bushy, Marian Nitu and Patrick O'Connor.

Kemise: Christopher Schwarzen, Chuckk Gerwig and Steve Larson.

Pray for Pastor Girma, who hosts and leads the entire program.



TEACHING: Church History, Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Bible Survey, Biblical Counseling, Servant Leadership, Systematic Theology I and II, Evangelism and Missions, Character and Integrity. We will work with Ethiopian Master Trainers in each city and provide them with resources for the ten courses we are teaching. This will allow our Master Trainers to continue teaching weekly after we leave. Grades and attendance will be recorded for first and second-year students.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Safety on our flights and in-country travels. (Ps. 91)
 - Physical health, strength and sleep for our team.
 - Health and protection for our families at home.
 - Wisdom, boldness, discernment, sensitivity and compassion. (II Tim. 1:7; II Cor. 1:3-4; Matt. 9:36)
 - Ears to hear and eyes to see God moving.
 - Effective, Holy Spirit led teaching and ministry.
 - Accuracy and stamina for our translators.
 - God's protection and provision for the pastors and leaders as they travel to and from the conferences.
 - God's blessing and clarity as the pastors and leaders seek to apply what they learn for ministry.
 - Holy Spirit transformation, renewal and commitment.
 - Protection from the enemy's attempts to distract, discourage and divide. (Eph. 6:12-13)
 - A bold, righteous, uncompromising, courageous leadership established in Biblical truth.
 - Many to come to Christ and serve Him boldly!
- To receive daily prayer updates from Joel, please email Kathy Madson at gtmprayer@gmail.com

TRAVEL AND MINISTRY SCHEDULE

MARCH

- TH – 12:** Joel & Russ depart at 10am from Seattle; connect with Nate, Larry, Carl, Phil & Anita along the way.
- FR – 13:** Arrive in Addis Ababa at 9:40pm; connect with Paul & Larry. Travel to DebreZeit.
- SA – 14:** Dan, Steward, Dave, Jan, Kathy, Sam, Christopher arrive throughout day. **Graduation in Nazareth.**
- SU – 15:** **Preach in Churches.** Travel to 4 cities.
- 16 – 20:** **DebreZeit, Nazareth, Bekoji, Sheno Conferences.** Chuckk & Marian arrive on the 20th.
- SA – 21:** **Graduation in Ziway.** Steve, Antoinette & Lisa arrive. Carl & Sam depart.
- SU – 22:** **Preach & Ministry in Churches.** Dave, Jan & Kathy depart. Half of team travel to Shashamene.
- 23 – 27:** **Shashamene & Ziway Conferences.** Patrick arrives on the 27th.
- SA – 28:** **Graduation in Shashamene.** Steward, Nate, Paul, Russ & Larry depart.
- SU – 29:** **Preach & Ministry in Churches.** Travel to Kombolcha & Kemise.
- 30 – 03:** **Kombolcha & Kemise Conferences.** Antoinette & Lisa depart on the 30th, Phil & Anita on the 31st, Dan & Marian on the 3rd.
- SA – 04:** **Graduation in Kemise.**
- SU – 05:** **Visit Lalibela ancient churches.**
- M – 06:** Joel, Steve & Chuckk begin their travel home.
- TU – 07:** Christopher & Patrick travel home. Joel arrives in Seattle at 6:28pm. Rest of team arrive home.

ETHIOPIA is 10 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

If you would like to know real time in Ethiopia, you can go to www.timeanddate.com or set up a world clock app on your phone. Thank you so much for praying!