

19. Learning to Minister to One Another

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk with new actions. We saw the importance of helping them learn to submit to one another in the various relationships that we have in our lives. This includes wives and husbands, children and parents and servants and masters. As we learn to walk with these new actions as Christians, we see that our lives will become an example for others to follow because we are showing how to treat one another with love and respect. In our topic today, we are going to see how to minister to one another as Christians.

Colossians 4:2-4 says, “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 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, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” Here, we see that a key way to minister to one another is through prayer. The word that is translated “to continue earnestly” means *to continue all of the time and not quit*. In Acts 2:42, it says about the early church, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 6:4, the apostles told the church, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” In both passages, we see that the early Christians give us an example to continue in prayer at all times and not quit.

As we minister to one another in prayer, we are told to be vigilant in it with thanksgiving. The word that is translated “be vigilant” means *to stay alert or pay close attention*. We are to pay close attention and pray about specific needs as we pray. The word is also used in 1 Peter 5:8 which says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” When we pray about the specific needs of people, we are helping to protect them from the adversary. At the same time, we are to pray with thanksgiving because we realize that the Lord has all power and has already defeated Satan.

Paul also asked the Colossians to pray for him personally. Paul asked them to pray that God would open a door of opportunity for him to share the Word of God so that he could share about the mystery of Christ. That mystery was explained in Colossians 1:27 where we read, “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ revealed that mystery to His disciples the night before He was crucified when He said that He would send the Holy Spirit so that He could dwell in them. Paul was a prisoner of Christ because he had faithfully shared the Gospel. He wanted them to pray that he would continue to teach others at every opportunity. Paul knew that continuing to teach others was what the Lord wanted him to do at every opportunity.

After telling the Colossians how to minister on his behalf, Paul began to give them instructions about ways to minister to others. Colossians 4:5-6 says, “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Here, we see that Paul gave instructions about how to minister to those who are not Christians. The word that is translated “walk” speaks about the way that we carry out the daily activities in our lives. Paul wanted the Colossians to seek the

wisdom of God about the way that they walked so that their godly lives would produce many opportunities to share the Gospel with those who were not Christians. We also want to help our children learn to walk so that they will have many opportunities to share the Gospel.

Part of that walk is the way that we talk. Paul urged the Colossians to make sure that their speech was always with grace. To speak with grace means to speak with love, kindness and sensitivity and to make certain that we always speak with truthfulness. Our speech is to be seasoned with salt. This word for “salt” is used eight times and the other seven are all in the same basic context in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Salt is used twice in Matthew 5:13 where we read, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” The words that we speak are to have a purifying and preserving influence in the lives of others. As a result, we need to pray continually that the Lord will give us His wisdom to answer the questions of others.

In Colossians 4:7-9 we read, “Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.” Here, we see that Paul had sent Tychicus and Onesimus to minister to the saints that lived in the city of Colosse. We will focus on Tychicus here and learn more about Onesimus in the next two topics. Paul described Tychicus in three ways. First, he was a beloved brother. Paul considered Tychicus a full partner in ministry and often sent him to other places when Paul was unable to go.

Second, Tychicus was a faithful minister. The word “minister” means *a servant or deacon*. Paul considered himself a servant of the Lord to the Gentiles. Ephesians 3:6-7 says, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Here, we see that Tychicus was a faithful minister who was carrying out the work of the Lord by delivering this letter, the letter to Philemon and the letter to the church at Ephesus. In each situation, he would also be faithful to encourage and strengthen the Christians. Third, Tychicus was a fellow servant in the Lord. Paul and Tychicus were both servants of the Lord who were serving the Lord together.

Paul also told why he was sending Tychicus to the Colossians with this letter. Paul said that Tychicus was coming to see how things were going for them in their spiritual growth and also to comfort their hearts. The word that is translated “comfort” means *to call to one’s side to encourage or strengthen*. Paul realized that the false teachers that had come to Colosse could cause discouragement to the Christians. They needed a brother who would come and encourage and strengthen them. Onesimus was also traveling with Tychicus and Onesimus was originally from Colosse. Paul said that these two men would let the Colossians know what was happening in the life of Paul.

Paul also sent greetings from some of the other Christians that were in Rome. Colossians 4:10-15 says, “Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom

you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 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. 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. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house.” Here, we see that Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner. He, Mark and Justus, who were fellow Jews, wanted to send their greetings to the Christians who were in Colosse. These men had provided comfort and encouragement to Paul.

One of the other men that was in Rome with Paul was Epaphras. Here, we see that Epaphras was originally from the city of Colosse because he was one of them. We see that he also considered himself a bondservant of Christ. We see how he ministered to the Christians in Colosse even though he was in the city of Rome at that time. First, he sent greetings to the Christians in Colosse. Second, he was continually praying for the Christians that were in Colosse. We see that he prayed for two specific things as he prayed for the Christians in Colosse. He prayed that they would “stand perfect”. These two words when placed together mean that Epaphras prayed that the Christians in Colosse would grow to full spiritual maturity. He also prayed that they would be complete in all the will of God. Here, we see that Epaphras prayed that they would become mature in knowing and doing the will of God.

Paul also describes the character of Epaphras. Paul said that he had a great zeal for the Christians in Colosse, in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. It is probable that Epaphras had helped start the churches in all three of these cities. We see that Epaphras has a great zeal or great concern for the Christians in all three of these cities. He was from this region and had brought the Gospel to Colosse and the region around it. Here, we see that he had the same concern for these Christians that Paul had for all Christians. 1 Corinthians 4:15 says, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” Epaphras had the concern of a spiritual parent for the Christians in these three cities.

Paul also sent greetings from Luke and Demas to these Christians. As a final encouragement to these Christians, Paul said in Colossians 4:16-18, “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. And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’ This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children develop a concern for other Christians also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister to one another.