

Colossians 4:2 to 4:18

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Date: 28 February 2021

[0 : 00] So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God. We've already opened up with a word of prayer, so we'll get right into the Word, and then we'll see the application or truth it contains and the application thereof.

Paul writes, Devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us as well that God will open up to us a door for the Word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ for which I have also been imprisoned, that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

Conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bondservant in the Lord, will bring you information, for I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.

And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here. Aristarchus, our fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings, and also Barnabas' cousin Mark, about whom you received instructions.

[1 : 15] If he comes to you, welcome him. And also Jesus, who is called Justice. These are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings and also Demas. Greet the brethren who are at Laodicea and also Nipha and the church that is in her house.

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and you, for your part, read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which you have received, and the Lord that you may fulfill it.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you. You may be seated. Colossians 4, starting in verse 2 and going down to verse 18.

I want you to see this morning, because of the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ, we ought to be concerned about this final thing, and that is the advancement of the gospel. The advancement of the gospel.

[2 : 30] If Jesus is supreme and if he is sufficient, then it is very becoming of us, and really it is a burden laid upon us to be very, very concerned and really very much involved with the advancement of the gospel message.

If I asked you to tell me, what is the best thing you heard this week? Or what is the best thing you have seen this week? Or what is the greatest news you have this week?

None of us would really have a problem with coming up with something to talk about, including myself. And we would have plenty to talk about. But the reality is, is that the best thing we could ever come up with, Jesus is greater than that.

The best thing that ever happens to us, the best thing that we ever see, or the best thing that we ever read, or the best thing that we ever ate, or the best circumstances that we ever encounter. Jesus is greater than that.

And we love to tell people good news. We love to tell them something that excites us. And we love to tell people something that if we knew this thing, this is all you need, then we would love to tell people that.

[3 : 32] But that is what the gospel is. It is the good news, it is the reality, that Jesus is the best thing I have ever encountered. And that Jesus is the only thing every individual I ever meet will ever need.

Now whatever is above and beyond that, he will provide. So this is the gospel. And since he is supreme, and since he is sufficient, then we need to be concerned about the advancement of the gospel in our own spheres, but also in the spheres around the world.

That is the global advancement of the gospel. This is why I am so excited about the business meeting that we have coming up. I am just super excited about that, because we have yet another opportunity to get involved in these things as a church.

So I want you to take part in that. I want you to have a word. But I also want you to be excited along with that. I will pick on Ms. Lynn for just a moment. She wanted me to tell you that we had a big deal in the business meeting, and that everybody needed to be in the business meeting, because there was a big announcement coming.

And then she said, that way everybody will think maybe you are resigning, so everybody will show up. And I said, Ms. Lynn, I have only been here five years. Surely you are not trying to run me off, are you? And she said, well, I mean, that way maybe everybody will just be nosy, and they will show up thinking Billy Joe is about to quit.

[4 : 37] I am not about to quit, okay? So I will just go ahead and put that out there. I don't want that rumor getting started, because somebody might get excited about it, and then the business meeting may turn into a vote that I am not really prepared for. So there we go.

I have kind of put all my eggs in one basket here. The Lord has called me, and hopefully he has left me. So we are here. But anyway, I am excited about this, because it brings us in line with gospel, biblical principles.

And this is exactly what we see here. There are four great things that must happen in individuals' lives, but also in the church corporate life, because this is written to a church, right?

Things that must happen for the gospel to advance, because Jesus is supreme and sufficient. And they're laid out right here in this closing. And Paul was busy about advancing the gospel.

And this is what Paul did, right? You can turn to the back of your Bibles, many of you, and there's these great colorful maps in the back of your Bibles. And those maps, one of those maps, are probably the missionary travelings or the missionary journeys of Paul.

[5 : 35] And you can see many of these places which Paul wrote his letters to. And you understand that Paul is sitting in prison when he is writing this letter. This is one of his prison epistles, right? He wrote this letter while sitting in prison for the advancement of the gospel.

So this was something he was very much concerned about, but something that he was leading other churches to be concerned about as well. As a matter of fact, every church which he wrote to, he was calling them to do the very thing.

Now, this is important because he did not plant the church at Colossae. This letter is written to the church at Colossae, which had never seen the face of Paul. Paul was not the originator of it.

Paul wasn't the church planter of it. Paul had never been the pastor of it. Paul had never even led a Bible study in it. Paul had preached a message somewhere in Asia that someone from Colossae heard, accepted Christ, and went back home and told others about the gospel.

And when Paul writes this letter, he is laying down foundational issues. Here it is, okay? Here is God's man of the day, who is Paul. We don't want to put him on a pedestal. He is an apostle born out of due season.

[6 : 36] He is suffering persecution for the sake of Christ, he says, for the hope of the resurrection. Here he is sitting in a prison cell, taking a moment to write a letter to a church, and he is laying out some important matters for this church.

And the very thing he ends with is how to advance the gospel. Which should not surprise us, because the very last thing that Jesus Christ told his disciples to do was advance the gospel. Their great commission given right before he ascended into heaven on the clouds was about the advancement of the gospel. So Paul, following in the footsteps of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is calling the church to advance.

Here they are. Number one, the first thing which must happen, and you probably see it, it's right there in your text, the first thing that must happen is prayer. Gospel advancement never moves beyond the power of the prayer in the individual's life and the body's life.

Because the reality is, is this is a spiritual exercise. Advancing the gospel in your life, in my life, in the corporate church life, as a body.

[7 : 47] Now, in my corporate, I don't mean business, right? I mean the body. In the church body life, it's not a matter of do's and don'ts. It's not a matter of physical limitations. It's not a matter of putting in the effort.

We never advance the gospel beyond the extent of our prayer. Never. Ever. Every great mission movement that you can ever trace throughout history.

Billy Graham used to say, every great movement of God can be traced back to a kneeling figure of man. Every great mission movement that you can ever have throughout history, not just Southern Baptist history, but any church history, is traced back to prayer.

Every great awakening that has ever taken place, that I have ever heard, recorded, or seen written details of. Great awakening. I mean, not like this great, everybody got goosebumps. I mean, this great movement of God, where the people of God were awakened and put on a mission, or really began to proclaim the message, and people were brought into the kingdom, finds its roots in prayer. The Welsh Revival started with a haystack prayer meeting. It was called the Haystack Revival for a while, because two men would gather behind a haystack in the field and pray. There was the first great awakening that set up across America started, because a layman in New York City decided that people had a long lunch break, and at their lunch break, they could pray.

[9 : 01] So they'd gather together, two or more would gather together and pray on lunch break.

And then before they knew it, they were having to find other venues throughout the city to pray, and there were hundreds of people that were gathering on their lunch hour to pray.

And then all of a sudden, God began to move the pastors, because hundreds and hundreds of laymen were praying, and finally the pastors were moved by the Spirit of God to begin proclaiming the Word of God, and God began dragging people in. Hudson Taylor, the founding of China Inland Mission, which was really the first of its kind to go into China and preach the message, and to begin to proclaim the hope of Jesus Christ, was solely and wholly founded on nothing other than prayer. Hudson never asked for anyone to donate any money. George Mueller founded missionary work in London, England, because of the destitute position that he saw a number of young boys around the city, and he saw this hopelessness because of people who were fatherless and motherless, and he founded it solely based upon prayer.

Prayer has been the great fuel that has moved this great movement of God in the advancement of the gospel. Paul says, devote yourselves to prayer. First thing we need to understand, I mean, it doesn't take many of us to acknowledge this, and if we took a poll, we could say it, prayer is not an easy exercise.

How many of you, if you could be completely honest, say that you are more distracted when you try to pray than any other time? It's because Satan does not like it when you are in the presence of the king.

[10 : 22] And the distractions abound, right? The distractions come. I listen to music when I study. That's just how my mind works. When it's completely silent, I get completely distracted, and my mind just wanders, so I have to listen to music.

But I can't listen to my normal music, and I'm just kind of an odd guy. Maybe I'm the only odd guy in the room. So I have found that when I'm going into a prayer time, I have to turn it on to just like classical piano music.

And not that I'm necessarily a fan of that. I'm not necessarily, I don't oppose it. I just have to put it on that because it's the one thing that if I hear any other words, then I start listening to those words, or I start getting carried away here, or if it's silent, my mind wanders.

What we see is Paul says, devote yourselves to prayer. The reality is that prayer is a discipline that we must put forth great effort in. And I say we because I need to put more effort into it. And we need to devote ourselves to it.

Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers in London, during his day, there would be thousands and thousands of people coming into what they called the London Tabernacle. And he built this church, and he built this huge building.

[11 : 19] And at that time, they didn't pass the plate for collection. They didn't do offerings. The way the churches raised funds is you would have to purchase a ticket to come into church. That was kind of your offering.

And I'm so glad we don't do this, by the way. And I think Spurgeon stopped doing this because of the practice, because the more you gave, the closer you set to the pulpit. I think in today's Baptist churches, which, by the way, they were Baptist, the more you gave, maybe the further you would sit from the pulpit.

I don't know. But at that time, the more you gave, the closer you got to sit. And there would be doors at the end of each pulpit. And you would have a key to your pulpit because you had a ticket you could get into church.

And in London, at that time, you had some great preachers. But Spurgeon's Tabernacle would be completely packed. And people would be standing outside to hear through the windows. Because if you've ever read Lectures to My Students by Charles Spurgeon, and I'm sure you have, it's a five-volume set.

It's an easy read. Where Spurgeon would say, Open the windows and let a little fresh air in because the dead air in the church will kill you. So he would open the windows. They didn't have heat in there, right? So he would open the windows and people could hear him preaching.

[12:20] And people would be gathered around. Thousands and thousands of people coming to Christ on a weekly basis. He was showing an individual around the church at one time and said, Can I show you the power supply of this church?

And the individual said, Yes, I'd love to see it. So Spurgeon took him through the main hall. They went to the back door. They went downstairs. And directly underneath the platform where Spurgeon stood, there was a large room.

And every time Spurgeon stood up to preach, more than 200 people would be in that room beneath his feet praying for him, lifting him up. He would say, The reason we see so many people coming to Christ is because I'm literally standing on the prayers of the saints.

And underneath him, hundreds and hundreds of people would pray. And they never failed to see people coming to Christ. They devoted themselves to prayer. Look at what it says. Devote yourselves to prayer.

Keep alert in it. Keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. This is what I have found.

Keeping alert in prayer is a hard thing. The easiest way to stay alert is to quit just going to God with our needs and start going to God with our thanksgiving.

[13:31] Come before him with thanksgiving, right? Keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. The more I get distracted as I'm praying, and I'm just being honest with you, when I start getting distracted, I stop interceding or I stop petitioning and I stop requesting God to do something.

The moment I get distracted, I begin to praise him. And when I begin to focus on all he's done for me, it calls me back to attention. And this is exactly what Paul says. We ought to keep alert with an attitude of thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word.

Here it is when the individual begins to devote themselves to prayer, can stay alert in prayer. I remember when we read the text, and Jesus goes into the Garden of Gethsemane, right?

He needs to pray, and he takes all the disciples, and he takes three of them, Peter, James, and John, right? These great Peter, James, and John. And this is Peter who says, I'll die for you and all this other good stuff, right? And Jesus says, my soul is heavily burdened.

Stay here and pray. Stay here and pray. Pray for me. And Jesus went a little further and prayed, and he came back and he found them asleep, and he walked away and said, Peter, you'll die for me, but you can't stay awake an hour and pray with me?

[14:39] He said, the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak, right? You need to devote yourself to it. And he left them there, and he went and prayed again. He came back, they were asleep, went back, and he finally woke them up when it was done. What we see here is this exercise, and what Paul is saying is when we can build this exercise, and we can stay alert in it, and our prayer life is increasing, then we begin to pray for others.

This is what I have found as a church. When the church is effectively, efficiently praying for its own needs, then the church begins to pray for the needs of others. I was thinking this morning in my office, and I got so excited. This is why I got so excited.

It's because I know two church planners now. I know much more than that, but I know two right now that preach their messages about two to three hours after we gather together, which means we have the opportunity every Sunday morning to come together to hear the word and then to pray for

those.

One is like one hour after us, and the other one is like three hours after us. One's in Utah, one's in Hawaii, okay? I'm telling you. And so we can go before them in the spirit of prayer, right? And lifting them up.

This is exactly what Paul is saying. Think of the opportunity there. God, would you be with them? Would you open the door for them? Would you be with Kirk Schoen? Would you be with Marcus McBean? Would you lift them up? And you say, well, Hawaii, that'd be a great place to minister.

[15:48] Well, that sounds like it until you live there. It's a very, very difficult place to minister, and it's a very dark place to minister, but we understand this. Paul says, pray for us as well, that God will open to us a door for the word, so then we can be like those people who are standing under the feet of Spurgeon, right?

Having a part in the progression of the gospel simply by our prayers. The gospel advances on prayer.

Secondly, we see the advancement of the gospel is directly connected to our personal witness. By the way, we don't get to the second thing until we accomplish the first thing, so don't ever jump in. I'm a very linear thinker, a lineal thinker. I think in a line. Let me just say it that way, okay?

Everything connects. Many of you know that about me, and I don't know why. It's not like I'm super intelligent.

That's just things have to matter. Things go together, and you have to do A, and then you get B, and then you get C, and things of that nature. So you get the first thing, and then it kind of leads you to the second thing. So until prayer is really built in as a devotion, then we really don't get to this personal witness thing, right?

[16:55] Because Paul says, pray for us, that a door will be open. Now, an open door does not necessarily mean an advancing gospel, because once the door is open, then Paul says we need this, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned, that I may make it clear in a way I ought to speak.

Think about this just for a moment. Listen, Paul is asking a church whom he has never seen, whom he has never preached in front of, who did not know him from anyone else. This is Paul.

Paul is asking the church to pray for him that he would know how he should talk. I mean, this is Paul who was, we call it the silent years. He was three years in silence after he came to Christ, after he left Damascus, after he was lowered over the wall in a basket, and he went to Jerusalem, and then he left there, and for three years, Paul was silent.

We don't know much about the silent years of Paul, other than he was in the desert, he was in the desert for three years, and he said that Jesus tutored him. Think about this just for a moment. He saw, literally, I believe, we read it in text, that he saw the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ for three years, teaching him the truth of the gospel, and yet he still requests churches to pray that he may know what he should say.

Wow. What if we began to pray for one another, that everyone beside us would, Lord, I pray and intercede for my brothers and sisters, that they would know what they should say, that they would know how they should talk, that you would give them the opportunity, and with the opportunity, you would embolden them, and you would give them the words.

[18:18] Why? Because personal witness and advancing the gospel is a spiritual exercise. I can go ahead and tell you this. Your personal witness is not determined on how much you know of scripture.

Your personal witness is not determined by your intellectual knowledge of the Bible. As a matter of fact, some of the most educated individuals that I have ever heard or read of in scripture were people who opposed faith in Jesus Christ.

Because we do not come to Christ intellectually, we come to him as the wind, Jesus says in John 3, the spirit blows where we know not is a spiritual exercise. So our personal witness is a spiritual exercise.

And Paul is like, Lord, help me to know what I should say. And then he goes into verse 5. By the way, it's understanding what we should say. What if you pray for me, and I pray for you, that God would give you the words when he opens the door.

And now all of a sudden, we have an open door. We have the right words to say. And then Paul unites this. Here, our personal witness, conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

[19 : 25] Conduct yourself with wisdom. Now, this is where we begin to see the church was always seen, not as a closed group, but as a separate group. Those who were not in the church were considered outsiders, right?

And so he says, conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders, knowing that people are looking into the church. By the way, that wasn't just something that was happening in Paul's day. There's something that's happening today.

This is something that I need constantly to be reminded of and something that I'm so thankful for. I was sharing with an individual just this past weekend, and many of you know, I either coached with you or I coached against you or you were around me when I coached, and I have coached a lot of sports over the years.

And it seems like it's in that time when I'm around outsiders and the sport, the game gets excited, I kind of begin to lose my wisdom. You know, I kind of, the adrenaline gets, and I was sharing with an individual that many years ago, I was coaching baseball, and I had just, you know, the Lord had just called me into the ministry, and the Lord had just called me to preach, and Carrie had always kept my books for me.

She was in the dugout, and you know, I was kind of arguing a call one time, and she would, well, not one time, most times, and she would always stand behind me and go, remember you're a preacher, remember you're a preacher, remember you're a preacher, and she always had that chain link fence, and she was giving me wisdom, and there was one particular time I knew I was right, I knew the umpire was wrong, and I was going out there, and the whole way she was going, remember you're a preacher, I think she followed me down the fence, remember you're a preacher, remember you're a preacher, and I remember when I finally got to that home plate umpire, all I could do was give the man a hug, and I told him I loved me, and I walked off, and the only thing I can count that to is divine interference, okay, that was probably the wisest thing I could have done at that time, but I wasn't necessarily operating in the spirit, but someone was interceding for me to operate in the spirit, I need that quite often, because how often do I lose my mind towards the outsiders, knowing that our personal witness is not just what we say, but who we are, because people do not, studies reflect, by the way, what you believe about a person, or how you hear a person, and most teachers understand this, what you hear, is only about 15% of what they say, what you hear, is only about 15% of the words they say, up to 85% of how you hear an individual, is determined by their actions, what you know about them before they start talking, what you know about them while they're talking, and how you see them in the community, when you begin to tell people about the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, only 15% of what you say is going to determine if they accept that or not, conduct yourself with wisdom towards outsiders, redeeming the time, making the most of the opportunity, the problem is not a lack of opportunity in Billy Joe's life, the problem is the redeeming of the opportunity in Billy Joe's life,

[22 : 39] I don't know about your life, but that's mine, God gives me many, many opportunities, it is opportunities missed, not opportunities lost, not that they're not there, it's that I missed the opportunity, let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person, now let's say, let's just go right here, I love the salt illustration that we have in scripture, and I know we're taking a little time, but it's okay, and that was a good place to say amen, salt in scripture is a good one, salt does not necessarily mean that when it says let your speech always be with grace, it doesn't mean you always need to tell people what they want to hear, your personal witness is not telling people what they want to hear, because the reality is the natural man does not like the gospel, the natural man does not need to know that Jesus is all he needs, and Jesus is above all he can ever think of or dream of or any of that else, because the natural man, even the good man, especially the good man, I was a good guy, especially the good man, the good man likes the thought of something he does matters, the good man relishes the thought that he has a part in his salvation, that because I am better than other people,

Jesus will save me, the truth of the gospel is it does not matter how good we are, right, it does not matter, our goodness is nothing, because it is Jesus Christ, it is not telling people what they want to hear, because salt, salt has this great thing, salt is appealing, but salt also cures, and salt also burns, and salt also stings, salt is a preservative, because it leads to the drying out of meat, and things of that nature, it pulls out things, before it puts in flavor, so we ought to speak with grace, but sometimes it's going to sting, sometimes it's going to burn, because it's the truth, told our youngest

one last night, every time I open the Bible, I read something that God tells me is wrong, that doesn't mean that God is bad, that just means that God is right, and he is good, because he's telling me where I'm wrong, in context, he was saying, daddy, you were really mean to me in a basketball game,

I said, why, he said, because you kept telling me I wasn't doing right, well, you weren't, when you threw it over your back, out of bounds, that's not doing right, that's just not what we do, right, I said, just because somebody tells us we're wrong, it doesn't mean that they're not good, God always tells me I'm wrong, but it's because he's good, he wants me to get better, so we see this seasoned with salt, so there's our personal witness, the third, the last two are good, by the way, they'll be a little bit quicker, so we won't spend as much time, the third key element to the advancement of the gospel is partnership, and it's partnership, because Paul begins to list those who are with him, and I love how he lists them, right, he starts this in verse 7, that's all my affairs, he said, I didn't write this letter so you know how I'm doing, he said, I didn't want to write about me, I didn't want you to know how I'm doing, because Tychicus will come, and he will tell you how I'm doing, but look how he describes Tychicus here, he says, the beloved brother, the faithful servant, and a fellow bondservant in the Lord, now isn't it good to be around people like that, that are a beloved brother, a faithful servant, and a fellow bondservant, that is a fellow slave of Jesus Christ, those are the people you want to hang around with, especially if you are in prison for the sake of the gospel, those are the people you want around you, and then he begins to list all these people,

Onesimus, he is being one who was sent back to Colossae, because there's another letter, Philemon, who goes there, because Onesimus is the slave who ran away, and he's going to go back, and he's sending him back with this letter, so you can go read that short letter that goes along with this, and then there's Aristarchus, and all these others, and then there's Barnabas' cousin Mark, remember Paul got mad at Mark on the first missionary journey, because Mark left and went back home, and in the second missionary journey, Barnabas is like, we can take along Mark, and Paul's like, Mark left us, I'm not taking him, Paul was a little bit upset with Mark, well evidently he reconciled that, because Paul was but a human, and Mark is useful for the gospel, and then there's Epaphras and Justice and all these people, but what we see is that Paul is not alone, it's a partnership, there are people around him, but the reality is he's asking Colossae to partner with him, he says pray for me, but here's the thing, a partnership works both ways, right, Paul doesn't say, I don't just need you, I have these people around me, and I'm sending them from me to you, because they're going to encourage you, I remember one of the things that I read, the first time it blew my mind,

I read this reality of Paul, when Paul was writing to the church at Rome, again another church whom he did not know, he had never been there, Paul was so excited to get to Rome, because he wrote to the believers at Rome, he said, I can't wait to be with you so that I may be encouraged by you, and you may encourage me, Paul said, these brand new believers are going to be an encouragement to me, and I'm going to be an encouragement to them, friends, the reality is, is the advancement and the progression of the gospel is a hard, hard work, your personal witness, when you go talk to somebody, it's difficult, anytime you share the gospel of Jesus Christ with anybody, and by sharing the gospel, I mean you begin to share your life, I'm not telling you, did you go the Romans road, I mean if you want to, that's great, but if you just open your life up to them and begin to proclaim what is supreme and sufficient for you, most people are looking for something to fill the gaps, and Jesus is that thing who makes no gaps, right, so when we begin to do that and we begin to be honest, it is difficult, people are going to let you down, people are going to oppose you, people are going to talk about you, people are going to, all these things, it's hard work, but it is good to know you're not doing it alone, you're in partnership with others, this is what the corporate gathering of the saints is to be, an encouragement, a weekly encouragement or a bi-weekly or a tri-weekly encouragement of coming together where we begin to say, you know what, it was a hard week but I did it, and someone else will say, you know what, it was for me too, can I pray for you, and something that's just spontaneously moving of the advancement of the gospel where we begin to partner with one another, how can I pray for you, how can I lift you up, who can I pray for that you're sharing the gospel with, or who can I pray for that you're ministering to at this moment, and here's who you can pray for for me, and it is this ministering of one another and partnering where Paul says, these people are an encouragement to you, they're going to be an encouragement to you as well, they're an encouragement to me,

[28 : 51] I thank you for your prayers but we've been praying for you also, and then he takes it a little step further, he says, when this letter comes to you, have it also read in Laodicea, and you on your part read the letter that I'm sending to the Laodiceans, now, if you go to the back of your map, like I know some of you did earlier, and you look at the missionary travelings of Paul, one thing you will find is here's Colossae, and here's Laodicea, it's almost like Bilbo con Wartres, Paul says, I know you're alone there in Colossae, there's another group of believers called the church one city over, you're not alone, there are other believers there too, and Paul is encouraging them, because there are other people doing the same thing, and it is a partnership in advancing the gospel, fourth and finally, how are we going to do it, as long as it's through prayer and personal witness and partnership, fourth and finally, it is through perseverance, it's through perseverance, because the tendency is to stop, I've always said that Satan cannot take you out of the hand of the Father, and the reason I say that is because Paul says that very same thing in Romans chapter 8, that nothing can take you out of the hand of God, neither height, nor death, nor powers, nor principalities of the air, nor spiritual forces, or darkness, nothing can take you out of the hand of the Father, and while Satan knows that he cannot take you out of his hand, the one desire that he has is to render you useless while in his hand, that is just to cause you to stop, discouragement, to stop in your fellowship with other believers, to stop in your prayer life, to get discouraged, and the one way to push through that is through perseverance, scripture speaks often of perseverance, that we may know how to persevere, but Paul says in verse 17, say to Archippus, say to Archippus,

Archippus by the way, if you read the book of Philemon, you will see there that Archippus is the pastor of the church there, he is the son of the husband and wife that Onesimus was the runaway slave from, the church was in their home, so he is saying to the pastor of the church here, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it, take heed to the ministry which you have received from the Lord that you may fulfill it, now the wording is that you may continuously fill it up, it doesn't mean to fill it up and leave it, just fill it up, empty it out, fill it up, empty it out, fill it up, empty it out, continuously fill it up, here's the reality friend, listen, God has given every believer a ministry, we have received a ministry from the Lord because God has prepared you for good works which he has ordained for you before the foundation of the world was laid, God has called you to a work, he has entrusted you with the ministry, mine so happens to be a pulpit ministry,

God has called me to preach the message, to Ephesians 4, equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, right, that is my glorious calling and I enjoy it, but then there are personal callings for each one of us, I have other personal callings as well, we have all received a ministry from the Lord, not a ministry of our choice, not a ministry that we picked and chose off of a pegboard somewhere, not somewhere that we went to a job fair, a ministry fair and said oh I want that, God has put a burden on your heart, God has put a fire in your soul, God has put a desire in your being for something that is unique to you, he has given you a ministry, see to it that you fulfill your ministry, see to it, see to it, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you, only you, may fulfill it and keep filling it up, keep filling it up,

I know it's hard, I know it's difficult, I know it's trying, they tell pastors never to resign on Mondays, I don't have that problem but they tell pastors never to resign on Mondays, the reason they tell pastors that is because typically after a pastor preaches twice on Sundays, he's not thinking right on Mondays, very seldom do I take Mondays off, very, very, very seldom do I ever try to spend a Monday with Carrie because Mondays my brain is just not thinking, sometimes on Sundays my brain is just not thinking right but it's just kind of gone and it's really just that thing, nothing that you could really ever really describe or define, it's just a reality and most pastors think like yeah Mondays are pretty rough and they tell them not to because so many pastors are like I'm done, I'm done, I'm over it, forget it, it's gone and they're just done but the reality is that sometimes you persevere, sometimes you persevere and you push on and you push on and you push on whatever that day is for you, don't quit on that day.

You know what I do on Mondays? I start preparing another sermon on Mondays because if I don't get right back into Bible study and sermon preparation on Mondays, I'll just sit back and go I don't know.

[33 : 52] Start thinking again, persevere, push on, keep moving forward. Why? Because Jesus is supreme and He is sufficient not just for you but for all seven billion plus people in the world and if that is true then isn't it our responsibility to make sure the gospel advances at least as far as it can

as it pertains to us, as it pertains to me.

It is our due diligence and may we be found faithful in fulfilling that due diligence for His sake and not ours.

Let's pray. God, I thank You so much that You've given us this great and glorious opportunity. Lord, what a great privilege to gather with Your people.

Lord, as we have heard a word from You, Lord, I pray that it would not be my opinions, it would not be my thoughts, but God, that it would be received as the very word of God. May Your word speak to our hearts.

May it lead us to do that which only You can call and equip us to do. And may it be all about Your glory, Your honor, and Yours alone. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

[35 : 15] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[39 : 57] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Thank you.