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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

C O N T E N T S

THE FIVE "FAITHFUL SAYINGS"	145
THE TESTIMONY OF BIBLE PROPHECY ...	154
WORLD LEADERS IN THE FINAL CRISES	161
THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	166
NOTES ON HEBREWS	171
THE HEBREW PSALTER	178
HOW TO STUDY AND UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE	184
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS ...	190

is no knowledge and no consciousness of God in the soul. This Bible then is a nexus with God. Study it as it should be studied and you will have in your soul the consciousness of the eternal God as revealed in His Son.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

Chap. 4: 2

Concluding Exhortations

Having dealt with the relationships in the family and household, Paul now turns to make an appeal for the distinctive "atmosphere" in which alone such relationships can function smoothly and in a manner pleasing to God. A prayerless Christian home is a spiritual tragedy to be avoided indeed!

Verse 2

Tē proseuchē proskartereite, grēgorountes en autē en eucharistia (continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving). The present tense of the verb *kartereō* with *pros* has the meaning of persevering attendance (on a person or some duty), see e.g., Acts 10:7—those "who *waited on* (Cornelius) continually." So the believer needs to maintain his or her prayer life with assiduous care; the great Enemy of prayer and the soul is ever ready to weaken us just there. Linked to the exhortation, therefore, is the challenge to "watch therein". It may be freely rendered "stick to your praying and stay awake while praying" (Robertson). It is not merely watch for the answer, but to be alert and eager in praying, not careless or sluggish either in the act or habit of prayer (cf. 1 Thess. 5:6; Eph. 6:18). In this way thanksgiving will always be an accompaniment of prayer. "Ceaseless prayer combined with ceaseless praise was the atmosphere of Paul's spiritual life" (Beet).

Verse 3

proseuchomenoi hama kai peri hēmōn, hina ho theos anoixē hēmin thuran tou logou. (Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door for the word). Cf. Rom. 15:30;

Eph. 6:18, 19; 1 Thess. 5:25; 1 Thess. 3:1; Heb. 13:18, where the apostle iterates similar requests. Great man as he was, both in prayer and faith, Paul coveted for himself and his co-workers the prayers of the saints in every assembly. In this he doubtless taught them the immeasurable value of such fellowship. It is the same today: There is no service where the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of people where the workers can do without the fellowship of prayer, even of those not actually engaged in their immediate circle. The particular subject of the request is that a "door for the word" might be opened—such is the force of the article before *logou*. It may be either the door of opportunity to preach (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12; and possibly Rev. 3:8); or the door for liberty of utterance ("the emboldened mouth"), as in Eph. 6:19, 20. Probably it was the former that was in the apostle's mind (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9). The preaching of the Gospel requires both these features in evidence.

lalēsai to mustērion tou Christou, di' ho kai dedemai (to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:) This was Paul's burning ambition ever—"to speak for Christ." No other theme so pressing or so necessary, except perhaps the "building up of the assemblies in the truth." Both go together, however, for Christ is the centre of both aspects.

"*The mystery of Christ*" (cf. Ch. 1:26; 2:2). The same expression occurs also in Eph. 3:4, and in both places it undoubtedly refers to the Divine plan of salvation revealed through Christ, and of which Christ is the very core; or (as Moule puts it) "with Whose Person, work and life, the great Secret was vitally bound up." In experience, its essence was "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The N.T. connotation of the word "mystery" is not of some esoteric "secret" in which only a select circle of "the initiated" can share, but the revelation of God in Christ available to *all* believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It occurs in eleven passages in this epistle and Ephesians, and in each except one (Eph. 5:32) the special aspect presented would appear to be that of the admission of the Gentiles on the same level as the Jew (whose covenant position was already something special) into the one Body of which Christ is the Head and Corner-stone. Some would interpret it as having a wider connotation, viz., that it includes the whole purpose of God for the redemption of humanity, but this seems to us too vague. Then follows the personal word:

"For which I am in bonds". It is almost a note of triumph rather than regret, as if he would remind us that, even though he was bound to a Roman soldier, he was daily preaching Christ in his prison. The greatest activity of that masterful mind was displayed as much, or even more, during his imprisonments as when pursuing his many perilous journeys through Asia Minor.

Verse 4

hina phanerōsō auto hōs dei me lalēsai (That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.) Not only should they pray for the opportunity to preach, but for the grace also to use it aright. The "mystery" is to be "displayed" openly and widely, not merely by lip but by life also. *Phaneroō*, see Ch. 3:4; 2 Cor. 4:10, 11; 1 John 4:9; etc. Paul felt the pressure of *obligation* born not merely of zeal in a good cause but of love to the One whom he preached (Rom. 1:14, 15; 1 Cor. 9:16; Acts 20:24). How often (or seldom) in comparison, do we share this "holy urge" of the Spirit? Let us catch something of the apostle's intensity conveyed in that "ought to".

Verse 5

In verses 5 and 6 the apostle turns to the thought of *their* part in spreading the knowledge of Christ and His Gospel.

En sophia peripateite pros tous exō, ton kairon exagorazomenoi (Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time). "Go on walking", with the idea not merely of continuation but of effectively displaying the mystery just alluded to. *Peripatein* "denotes life in its action and intercourse" (Moule), and occurs frequently in Paul's epistles, mostly, however, in Ephesians (e.g. Ch. 4:1, onwards). *Sophia* is not wisdom in the abstract but "sanctified commonsense" and tactfulness both in manner and word in every approach to the unsaved. The Lord's own word to His disciples is as relevant as ever: "Be ye *wise* as serpents, and *harmless* (R.V. marg. '*simple*') as doves" (Matt. 10:16); and the imagery is worth pondering if we would be successful winners of souls.

Tous exō ("outsiders") is used to describe those who are in need of salvation without any distinction of race or character, and contains no idea of contempt. See 1 Cor. 5:12; 1 Thess. 4:12;

(Concluded on cover page opposite)

1 Tim. 3:7. It certainly has no reference to any ecclesiastical or merely religious distinctions.

The verb "redeeming" occurs in Eph. 5:16, and twice in Galatians (Ch. 3:13; 4:5). It literally means "to buy in the market", from other ownership. Dan. 2:8 (in Aramaic and Gk.) has the same phrase: "I knew of a certainty ye would buy the time". The thought is probably buying back (at the expense of personal watchfulness and self-denial) the present time, or opportunity, which is now being used to lesser purpose (Eph. 5:16). "Time" here is *kairos*, (not *chronos*, which means time in general or in duration) and usually means a moment or period, with some idea of crisis or opportunity attached to it. Ramsay puts it: "making your market fully from the occasion (or opportunity)".

Verse 6

Ho logos humōn pantote en chariti, halati ērtumenos, (Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt.) After the reference to the walking, comes the appeal for a corresponding talking, for both must correspond if either are to be effective. This is not merely "preaching" but the often more effective personal conversation made with others. Moule would however see in it a more special reference to "discourse about the Gospel with those 'without'". Such converse must contain not only "graciousness" but the "purity" of salt—to preserve the message from being misunderstood or vitiated by unwise levity or looseness of speech or manner (cf. Eph. 4:29; 5:4. Also see Matt. 5:13).

eidenai pōs dei humas heni hekastō apokrinesthai. (that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.) It is a great thing "to know how" to say the right word, at the right time, in the right spirit. This is not learnt in a day, nor "by rote", but by the help of the Spirit of God alone. This requires a spirit of prayer and a heart filled with yearning to help souls into the joy of the Lord,—all goes to make the "wise-tongued eloquence" of simple speech which reaches the heart (see 1 Pet. 3:15, 16). There is much to be gained also from a study of the apostle's own method mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:20-22.—A. McD. R.

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