

Reasons for Disobedience

International Bible Lesson

Colossians 4:2-17

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"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:3, 4—KJV).

"At the same time pray also for us, so that God will give us a good opportunity to preach his message about the secret of Christ. For that is why I am now in prison. Pray, then, that I may speak, as I should, in such a way as to make it clear" (Colossians 4:3, 4—GNB).

"At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should" (Colossians 4:3, 4—NRSV).

Evil religious and political leaders imprisoned and persecuted the apostles, because the apostles acted on their beliefs and publicly declared; “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29). When they chose to obey their King, Jesus Christ, first and foremost, they knew they would suffer the consequences from their evil leaders. In answer to the prayers of His people, God sometimes worked miracles and freed His beloved from prison (see Acts 5:12-33; Acts 12:1-17). At other times, God gave His chosen ones the strength to die for their faith in the true King of the universe; just as James, the brother of John, died at King Herod’s command (Acts 12:2). Both the Old and New Testaments give examples of how those loyal to God sometimes need to disobey civil and religious authorities for the sake of God’s kingdom, for the sake those God loves (born and unborn), and for the sake of a humane future on Earth.

Paul’s prayer requests from prison seem remarkable. He did not pray to avoid suffering; rather, Paul wanted prayers “that God will open to us a door for the word” that he might “declare the mystery of Christ” and “reveal it clearly.” God answered and opened “a door for the word,” because for almost 2,000 years people have studied Paul’s letters from prison about the mystery of Christ. In order to keep open “a door for the word,” believers must pray to stand wisely against evil.

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Thinking Further

1. Other than a religious activity, what is an activity that many people devote themselves to each week? How much energy and time do you estimate they devote to that activity?

2. Do you suppose most people devote more or less time to that activity than they do to a religious or spiritual activity? How might their lives and the lives of others be different if they devoted that much energy and time to prayer?

3. What are some actions that we might take in order to clearly declare and reveal the mystery of Jesus Christ?

4. What does Paul teach about asking and answering questions?

5. Why is it important that after Paul wrote his letters he sent them to their destinations using trusted Christian messengers?

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