

# “The Great Commission Lifestyle” —Pt. 1

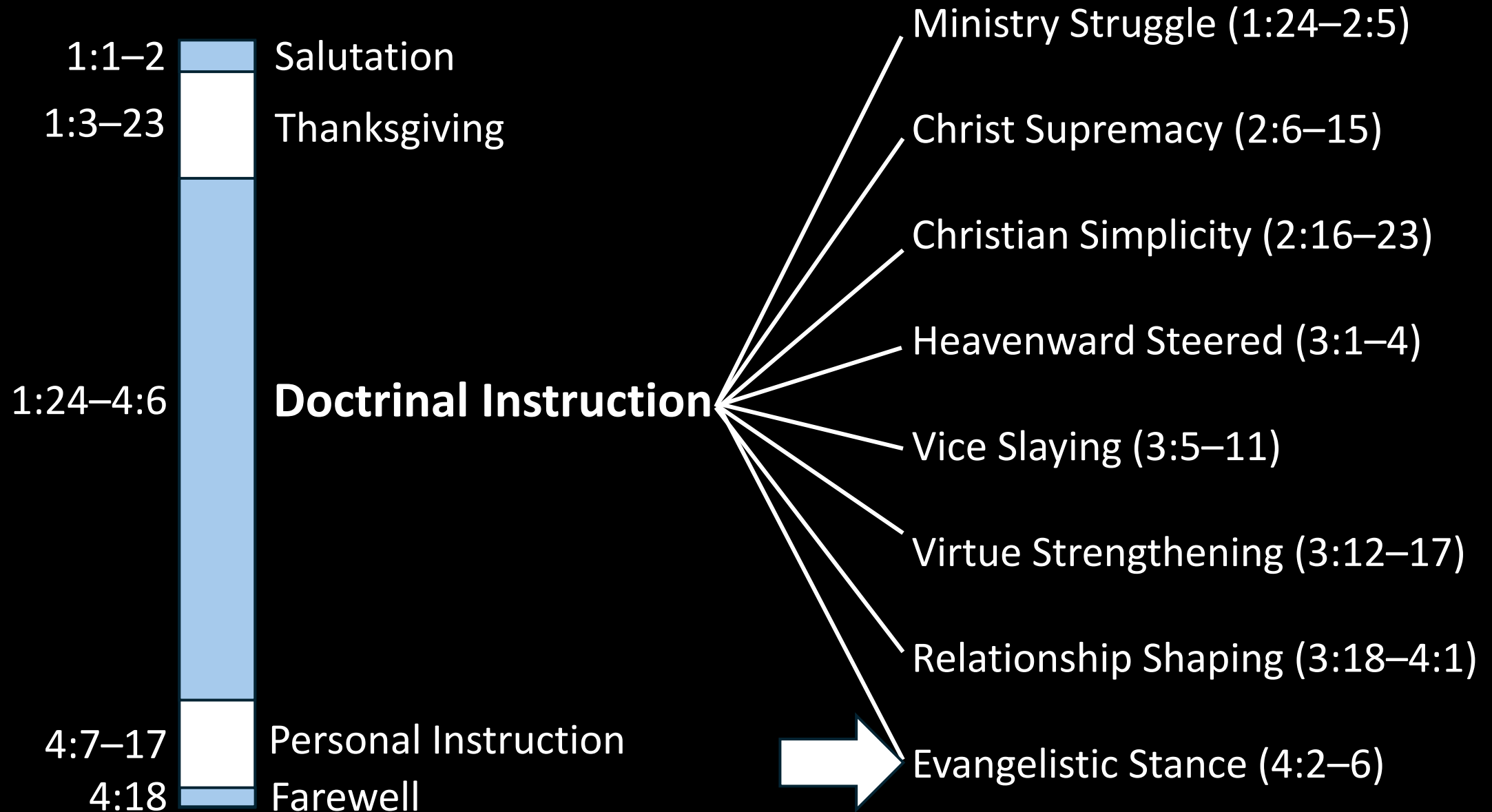
Colossians 4:2–6

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*Christ over All:  
Paul's Letter  
to the Colossians*



# THE OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS



## COLOSSIANS 4:2–6

“Devote yourselves 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 yourselves 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.”

A Great Commission lifestyle requires:

- I. **A Prayerful Posture (vv. 2–4)**
- II. **A Worthy Walk (v. 5)**
- III. **A Suitable Speech (v. 6)**

# I. A Prayerful Posture (4:2–4)

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## A. Pray for the lost (v. 2).

“Devote yourselves to prayer,  
keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*.”

- “Devote yourselves” – “busy oneself with, be devoted to, be engaged in”; the verb implies “both earnestness and continuity”; the command implies *habitual practice*, not monotonous repetition.
- “To prayer” – a general term for prayer, but the context makes clear that *intercession for others* is emphasized.

THE EXAMPLE  
OF PAUL

“For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God . . . .”

—Colossians 1:9–12

THE EXAMPLE  
OF EPAPHRAS

“Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave 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.”

—Colossians 4:12

THE EXAMPLE OF  
THE EARLY CHURCH

“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”

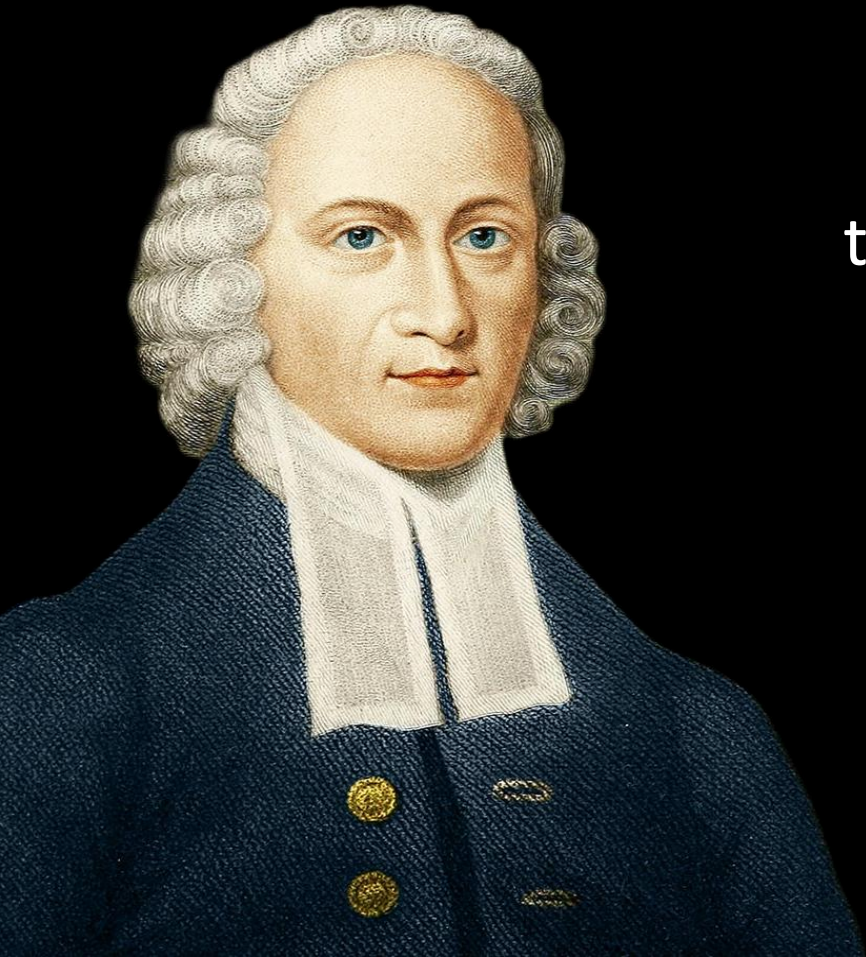
“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

—Acts 1:14; 2:42

THE EXAMPLE OF  
THE APOSTLES

“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

—Acts 6:4



“It is God’s will through his wonderful grace, that the prayers of his saints should be one of the great principal means of carrying on the designs of Christ’s kingdom in the world. When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of his people; . . . when God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he will begin by remarkably pouring out the spirit of grace and supplication.”

—Jonathan Edwards

“Devote yourselves to prayer,  
**keeping alert in it** with *an attitude of thanksgiving*.”



- “Keeping alert in it” – describes the manner of such devoted praying; “to be in constant readiness” —the opposite of sluggishness (see also Eph 6:18).
  - The term is used especially in *eschatological contexts* that emphasize the *imminent appearance of Christ* (e.g., 1 Thess 5:6).
  - **Colossians 3:3–4** – “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”



“The devotion to prayer that Paul calls for should be characterized by a strong sense of expectation about Christ’s near return that governs and motivates prayer.”

—Douglas Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 320

“Devote yourselves to prayer,  
keeping alert in it **with an attitude of thanksgiving.**”

- “**With thanksgiving**” – the theme of thankfulness is notable in Colossians (see 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17); Paul connects it regularly with prayer.
  - **Ephesians 5:20** – “always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”
  - **Philippians 4:6** – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”
  - **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18** – “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you . . . .”
- Thankfulness is the natural response to God’s gracious act of redeeming us through union with His Son (Col 1:13–14; 2:13–14).

## B. Pray for the evangelists (vv. 3–4).

“praying at the same time for us as well . . .” (v. 3a).

- “Praying at the same time” – emphasizes simultaneous occurrence—in addition to the intercession for the lost.
- “For us as well” – Paul humbly asks prayer for him and his ministry companions as well:
  - Timothy (1:1)
  - Epaphras (1:7–8; 4:12–13)
  - Aristarchus (4:10)
  - Jesus, called Justus (4:11)
  - Luke (4:14)
  - Demas (4:14)



“. . . **that God will open up to us** a door for the word” (v. 3a).

- “**That God will open up to us**” – the chief content of the prayer; Paul recognized God’s sovereignty in directing the movement of the gospel; open and closed doors was the story of his life!
  - **Acts 16:6–9** – “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”



**Journeys of St. Paul**  
 — 1st journey  
 — 2nd journey  
 — 3rd journey  
 — 4th journey

“... that God will open up to us **a door for the word**” (v. 3a).



- “**A door for the word**” – a figurative expression, to describe *an opportunity*, specifically, for evangelism (see Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:8–9; 2 Cor 2:12–13).
- This door is “**for the word**”; Paul himself was behind mandatory *closed doors*—house arrest (Acts 28:30–31)—as he wrote this request (see 2 Tim 2:9).

- Paul specifies two resulting requests related to the *open door*:
  - “so that **we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned**” (v. 3b).
    - **“We may speak forth”** – “to proclaim”; evangelism is about *authoritative words*; Paul and his ministry team desired more than all else the opportunity *to declare*.
    - **“The mystery of Christ”** – the gospel—specifically, the inclusion of *the Gentiles* in the inheritance of salvation through union with Christ (1:12, 25–27).
    - **“for which I have also been imprisoned”** – caused by the opposition/jealousy of the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27ff).

“By referring to this [Eph 2:11–22], when you read you can understand my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.”

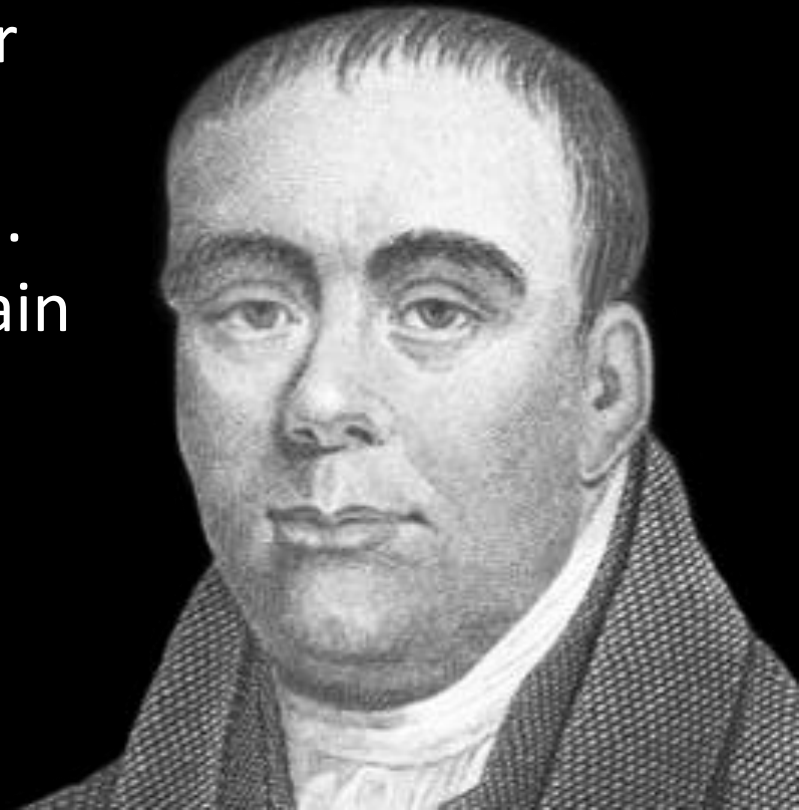
**—Ephesians 3:4–7**

“that **I may make it clear** in the way **I ought to speak**” (v. 4).

- “I may make it clear” – “disclose, show, make known”; emphasizes the *exceptional* content of their speech; it wasn’t *common knowledge*.
- “I ought to speak” – the language emphasizes the *divine obligation* of this preaching; it was a matter of obedience.
- **Ephesians 6:19–20**
- **1 Corinthians 9:16** – “For 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.”

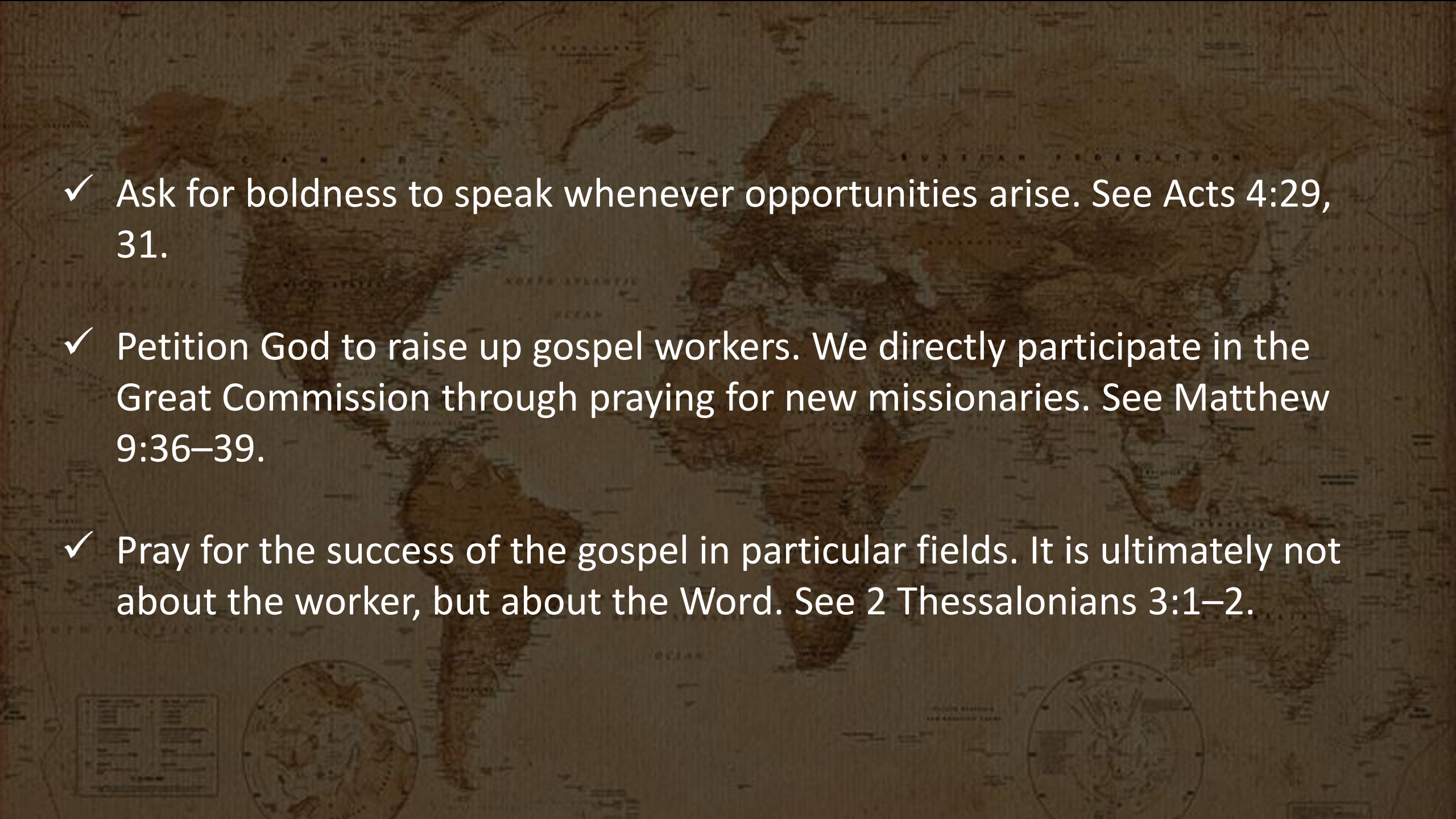
“Finally, brethren, let us not forget to intermingle prayer with all we do. Our need of God’s Holy Spirit to enable us to do anything and everything truly good should excite us to this. Without his blessing all means are without efficacy and every effort for revival will be in vain. Constantly and earnestly, therefore, let us approach his throne. Take all occasions especially for closet prayer; here, if anywhere, we shall get fresh strength and maintain a life of communion with God. Our Lord Jesus used frequently to retire into a mountain alone for prayer, he, therefore, that is a follower of Christ, must follow him in this important duty.”

—Andrew Fuller



## PRAYER AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

- ✓ Pray for a greater love for the lost. The root of much of our inaction is an apathy toward the fate of the lost. See Romans 10:1–2.
- ✓ Appeal to the love of God. Evangelistic prayer—concern for souls—is consistent with the character of God. See John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:1–4.
- ✓ Pray specifically for those who sin against you. Our experience of their actions must motivate us to compassion. See Acts 7:59–60.
- ✓ Ask for opportunities to proclaim the gospel, and the insight to know when those opportunities come. We often have not because we ask not. See Colossians 3:3–4.

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- ✓ Ask for boldness to speak whenever opportunities arise. See Acts 4:29, 31.
  - ✓ Petition God to raise up gospel workers. We directly participate in the Great Commission through praying for new missionaries. See Matthew 9:36–39.
  - ✓ Pray for the success of the gospel in particular fields. It is ultimately not about the worker, but about the Word. See 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2.

“The melancholy aspect of the times and the deplorable state of precious souls, should much excite and quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. . . . All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when *the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth* more skillful, faithful, wise, and industrious *laborers into his harvest*; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it. . . . It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it.” —Matthew Henry

