

Paul opens this section by laying out beautifully how we ought to pray.

He gives us four things to consider when coming to the Lord in prayer:

First he says we should be devoted, watchful, thankful, and purposeful.

Col 4:2-18

2 Continue earnestly in prayer (be devoted), being vigilant (keep alert) in it with thanksgiving; 3 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, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Paul mentions four things we should be doing, the first is to:

2 Continue earnestly in prayer (be devoted), (2nd) being vigilant (keep alert, be watchful) in it with (3rd) thanksgiving; and (4th) he said to be purposeful.

Paul asked the Colossian church to pray that he and Timothy would speak the mystery of Christ.

He opened this letter to the Colossians by letting them know of his devotion in prayer for them:

Col 1:3

3 We (Paul and Timothy) give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

The greatest weapon we have as believers is prayer.

Paul was a man of prayer, and he tells us in verse 2

- that we are to be devoted to prayer.
- That means to pray with intense effort.
- To be persistent in our prayer.

Rom 12:12

rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Eph 6:18

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints –

Many prayer warriors in church today, many in the past.

When you read the term “continue earnestly” in the Greek,

- it focuses on the idea that prayer is work,
- it’s strenuous, and it requires commitment.

We shouldn’t be surprised that **prayer is persistence**.

We have something that unbelievers don’t have, and that’s **access to the Father**.

Judge assaulted: Why did the person assault her?

- He was angry knowing that the judge was getting ready to speak
- and in her words would decide his fate.

A doctor can give us great news or disheartening news.

- It’s important for us
- to go to the Lord in prayer
- in good times and in bad.

Paul encouraged the church to continue steadfast in prayer.

God **will not** always answer your prayers immediately.

- But His delay doesn’t necessarily mean His denial.

The parable of a woman’s persistent prayer is a good example:

Luke 18:1-8

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Jesus gave another parable of a man needing food at midnight. The man persisted in asking until his friend got out of bed and gave him some bread.

God is not an uncorrupt judge or an unresponsive friend not willing to help.

- He knows us and calls us by name.

When Jacob wrestled with God at Peniel in Gen 32, he was determined not to let go until God blessed him.

That's the kind of prayer that costs us something,

- hence Paul says we must continue earnestly in prayer,

Don't say to yourself, I'll save the best part of the day for the Lord,

- I'll pray when I'm in bed.

That's not the best scenario for prayer.

Prayer in the garden. Jesus told the disciples to wait while He went to pray. He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. **Jesus then told them,** Stay here and watch with me.

Jesus continued walking and praying because He knew His time had come. When He returned, He found them sleeping and said to Peter,

Matt 26:40-41

40 "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The disciples didn't quite understand the spiritual warfare that was taking place.

Paul says, we are to be watchful, to stay alert, why! Because Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Col 4:2

2 Continue earnestly in **prayer**, being **vigilant** in it with **thanksgiving**;

I believe Paul was saying to be watching for our prayers to be answered and (thirdly) we are to be thankful when we see those prayers answered.

Paul's prayer was that the Lord would open doors for them to share the gospel with others.

Notice the 4th motivation for prayer. Paul says in verse 3:

Col 4:3

3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ,

He was specific in his prayers.

- Be specific in your prayers,
- be purposeful or intentional,

A biblical story that comes to mind is Abraham telling his servant

- to swear he wouldn't allow his son Isaac
- to marry a local Canaanite woman

- but told him to go to his homeland
- and find a wife for him there.

Gen 24:5-7

5 And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?"

6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7 The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

The lesson for us is to know and to trust when the Lord tells you He's going to do something, He will do it.

So, the servant went to the land where Abraham's brother Nahor lived. While he was there, he prayed something simple.

Gen 24:14

14 Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' – let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

He was specific in his prayer request.

- And when he saw the Lord answer the prayer,
- he didn't question that it was of the Lord.
- He trusted the Lord answered his prayer.

Col 4:5-6

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Most of us here can probably say

- there have been times when
- we didn't walk in wisdom.

That is, times when we were not following Christ as an example to others,

- especially to those outside of the faith.

Paul knew what that looks like,

1 Cor 10:32

32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

As Christians, we are to make the most of every opportunity.

- When Paul says to redeem the time,
- he's saying to buy up or to buy out.

In other words, every opportunity we have, snatch it up!

We should cease those opportunities when they come:

There is an old epigram called,

Seize the Opportunity

Long ago, in one of the old Greek cities, stood a remarkable statue. Every trace of it has vanished now. However, we still have an epigram which gives us an excellent description of it and the lesson which those wise old Greeks meant it to convey.

The epigram is in the form of a conversation between a traveler and the statue:

“What is thy name, O statue?” “I am called Opportunity.” “Who made thee?” “Lysippus.” “Why are thou on thy toes?” “To show how quickly I pass by.” “But why is thy hair so long on thy forehead?” “That men may seize me when they meet me.” “Why, then, is thy head so bald behind?” “To show that, when I have once passed, I cannot be caught.”

Remember, Christ says, that the present opportunity may never be yours again, seize it while it is near you.¹

Col 4:6

6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

In order to be prepared to cease the moment,

- we too must be seasoned with salt.

One of the purposes of salt is to preserve food.

Matt 5:13

13 "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.

There was a metaphor of “salty” speech which was common in the ancient world.

It says there is nothing worse than a tedious monologue when it comes to sharing the gospel.

¹ *AMG Bible Illustrations* (2000). Chattanooga: AMG Publishers (Bible Illustrations Series).

In other words, when we share the gospel,

- it shouldn't be a one-way conversation.

Always share the gospel thru the love of the Holy Spirit.

Final Greetings
(cf. Eph 6:21,22)

Paul will now give his final greetings to the church of Colosse.

7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he (you) may know your (our) circumstances and comfort your hearts, (why? so he may encourage you) 9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.

There was an old commercial years ago, its slogan was, "if you want the job done right, do it yourself."

It's not always possible to do something yourself

- so you get someone you can trust to get the job done.

In the case of Paul, he sent Tychicus, but not only him,

- he sent two trusted friends
- to give an update on himself.

Tychicus was a friend to someone (Paul)

- that was always on the hotseat with others.
- He was a friend to a person that had many enemies.

Someone once said the best ability in the world is dependability, that was Tychicus.

Are you one of those friends someone can depend on.

Paul also mentions Onesimus and says he was one of those faithful friends.

Here was Onesimus, a believer for only a short time,

- and Paul calls him faithful and beloved.

Paul sent Onesimus and Tychicus to Colosse for two reasons,

- to encourage them and to inform them of his situation.

Paul wasn't seeking anything other than prayer.

- He wanted the church to stand in the gap for him.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 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.

These men, Aristarchus, John Mark, and Jesus Justus were all Jewish men.

- The three were characterized by their faithfulness to Paul
- and were with Paul in his time of need.

I'm sure Paul had other friends, but only a select few are mentioned in scripture.

- They must have been his most trusted friends.

Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner with Paul.

- He was from Macedonia, Acts 19:29
- and originally from Thessalonica, Acts 20:4.

He's the same person who risked his life during the riot in Ephesus, Acts 19

- he was also involved in
- the shipwreck mentioned in Acts 27.

John Mark.

What an amazing story John Mark is.

- If you've ever failed in your walk,
- if you've ever stumbled or waived
- for whatever reason,

John Mark is the example for you and for me.

A native of Jerusalem, his mom's name was Mary.

- She was a believer and kept an open house,
- People gathered regularly at her home for prayer.
- John Mark had a cousin by the name of Barnabus
- whom we know as an encourager.

When Paul and Barnabus set out on their first missionary journey

- they took John Mark along with them.
- At some point during the trip
- John Mark decided it was time to go home.

Paul became upset with John Mark and refused to take him on the second missionary journey,

- Barnabus wanted to take his cousin along, not Paul.

Eventually Paul and John Mark settled their differences.

- He caused some division between Paul and Barnabus,
- they reconciled their differences
- and continued together in ministry.

This is a great example of an older more mature Christian in Barnabus

- taking a younger Christian in John Mark
- and getting him back into a relationship with the Lord.

John Mark is the person who wrote the gospel of Mark.

Jesus Justus.

- He too was a Jew.
- Jesus in Hebrew is Joshua
- and Justus is a Greek name.

It wasn't unusual for a Jew to carry a Roman name as well.

We don't know much about this Justus person.

- He was one of those who worked behind the scenes,

12 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. 13 For I bear him witness (I can testify) that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Epaphras:

- He prayed fervently - he agonized in prayer.
- He prayed personally - He prayed for the believers by name.
- He was specific in his prayers.
- His prayers were definite - He wanted Christians to know and to do the will of God.
- His prayers were sacrificially - it takes hard labor when you're exhausting everything in prayer.

John H. Jowett once said, "Praying that costs nothing accomplishes nothing"

Epaphras' ministry was prayer.

14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

Luke was probably the only Gentile to write any book in the bible.

Demas:

Paul mentions Demas in his letter to Philemon and calls him a fellow laborer.

- However, this man had a sad ending.

Demas who once walked with Paul in faith eventually departed later from the faith.

2 Tim 4:10-11

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica – Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world.

Closing Exhortations and Blessing

16 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. 17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." (so that you may be complete)

18 This salutation by my own hand – Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.