

- I) V2 INTRO: **Continue earnestly** in prayer, being **vigilant in** it with **thanksgiving**
AS WE BEGIN
- II) In the previous verses, Paul had written concerning family and relationships
He now writes concerning the Christian's personal **spiritual priorities**
- III) He begins by exhorting them to **continue earnestly in prayer**
Why: Because without prayer Christians will not fulfill the duties required of them
- IV) **Wives** pray to become better wives; **husbands** pray to become better husbands
Children, fathers, slaves and owners (employees/employers) pray to become godly
HE NOW COMMANDS US TO PRAY
- V) Prayer is one of the earmarks of the believer and the habit of the early church
Ac 2:42 they **continued steadfastly** in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in **prayers**.
WHAT IS PRAYER
- VI) **Prayer** is conversation with God and reveals **faith** that He hears and answers
Heb 11:6 without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder** of those who diligently seek Him.
- VIII) Prayer is one of the most basic ways of developing our relationship with Him
- VIII) When Jesus gave us His model prayer in Mt 6, He gave insight to us
He made it clear that we can be **close to Him** because God is **our Father**
Mt 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and **your Father** who sees in secret will reward you openly.
- IX) Because He is **our Father**, we can trust in Him to lovingly care for us
As His children, we can approach Him as our Father through Jesus
Jn 14:13-14 whatever you ask **in My name**, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **If you ask** anything in My name, I will do it.
Heb 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
- X) This prompts us to **approach Him** and to confidently make our requests of Him
Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and **supplication**, with **thanksgiving**, let your requests **be made known** to God

- I) God has invited us to pray, and we can do so whenever we desire to
We can approach Him because He has forgiven us of our sins
Ps 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry
- II) Because of this, we develop our fellowship with Him as we pray
When we are saved, prayer becomes **the habit** of the believer's life
It is something that is constant and natural because we are God's children
- III) In V2 Paul gives us insight into the practice and heart of prayer
In one verse he gives us three commands concerning prayer
He commands us to pray **habitually, earnestly, vigilantly** and **thankfully**
HE BEGINS
- IV) V2 **First:** Continue earnestly in prayer being vigilant in it with thanksgiving
Continue: Devote yourself, stand ready
- V) **Tozer:** A life lived in Christ becomes in the true sense a life of unceasing prayers
1 Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing
- VI) When we become believers, prayer becomes the habit of our lives
It is what we do when we are about to go to sleep, and when we wake up
Ps 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.
- VII) As we follow Jesus, prayer becomes our regular habit
Phil 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus
- VIII) Obviously, sometimes our prayers seem to go unanswered
WHY?
- IX) Sometimes it may be because our prayers are simply **selfish prayers**
Jas 4:3 When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
- X) Sometimes **we do not expect** God to answer them, so they are faithless prayers
Jas 1:6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

I) Sometimes our requests do not line up with His will

1 Jn 5:14-15 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

II) Finally, sometimes our prayers are unanswered **because of sin**

Is 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

THE ANSWER: REPENT

III) When it seems the answer is withheld, we hold on and continue in prayer

Ro 12:12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, **continuing steadfastly in prayer**

Our prayers are answered with a yes, no, and sometimes wait

SECOND

IV) We continue **earnestly** (fervently) because **prayers not felt are seldom heard!**

Earnestly: Devote, continue, be steadfast, be strong, be persistent

Jas 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The **effective, fervent prayer** of a righteous man avails much.

V) C. S. Lewis: I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me **all the time**—waking and sleeping. It does not change God—**it changes me**

THIRD

VI) We are **vigilant** (on guard, wide-awake) when we pray

There are two reasons to remain vigilant in prayer

VII) **One:** The Christian life is filled with Spiritual warfare and temptations

There are **spiritual mine fields** that we can stumble in to, so we are alert

Eph 5:15-16 Pay careful attention, then, **to how you walk**, not as unwise but as wise redeeming the time, because the days are evil

VIII) Because the Christian life has certain qualities, carefully order your steps

Conduct your life appropriately, worthy of what the gospel promises

IX) Key: Be aware of what surrounds you, and **redeem the time**

1 Pe 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

- I) Two: Be vigilant and on the alert for opportunities and open doors
We will see this again in V4
FOURTH
- II) The spirit in which prayer is offered is one of **thanksgiving**
Be thankful to God for all that He has done for you, through Jesus
Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God.
- III) We have thankfulness of heart to God for all He has done and is doing for us
Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.
Eph 5:20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- IV) When we are going through a trial, it is easy to complain
Paul reminds them that they have been blessed, so they should be thankful
- V) 1 Th 5:18 in everything give thanks; for **this is God's will** for you in Christ Jesus
As Christians, we come to learn that whatever comes our way strengthens us
Under the most difficult pressures we can cast our cares on the Lord
- VI) We do this because we know that God is in control, and He hears us
The knowledge that **God is for us** gives us the ability to be thankful
Ro 8:31 What then shall we say to these things If God is for us who can be against us
- VII) God's will is **that in everything** we would give thanks
Thankfulness is not an obligation, or a duty: **It is a continuing possibility**
- VIII) In every joy, and even in every sorrow, the thing that keeps us going is trust
It is this knowledge that strengthens us in everything we go through
- IX) We learn to give thanks when we have a strong faith that God is in control
Though we become confused, or struggling we trust Him in everything
TRANSITION
- X) V3-4 Meanwhile **praying also for us** that God would open to us a door for the word
Paul's desire was to be used by God to preach the gospel throughout the world

- I) Jesus set him free from his self-righteous life, and he was refreshed in grace
This love for Jesus impelled him to share the gospel wherever he went
Ro 15:20 I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation
- II) His concern was that he may be faithful and effective in proclaiming the gospel
To be effective requires people praying for him (**as is occurring right now**)
- III) There is much opposition, and prayer is necessary in ministering His word
2 Th 3:1-2 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith
- IV) He had a similar prayer request when he wrote to the Ephesians
Eph 6:19 (Pray) for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth *boldly*, to make known the mystery of the gospel
Here he desires opportunity, there he recognizes his need **for power**
- V) V3 Pray that God would open to us a door for the word to speak the mystery of **God** opens doors of opportunity for sharing your faith
2 Co 2:12 I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord
- VI) V3 His desire was to speak the mystery of Christ (the gospel)
Mystery: Something that was once hidden that is now revealed
- VII) V3 Notice how Paul refers to himself as being *in chains* (in prison)
Though he was in prison, the gospel still was being preached with impact
Though, **at that time**, he was chained, Paul was able to share with the guards
- VIII) QUOTE: I can take a man's liberty, but I cannot touch his freedom
Phil 1:12-13 I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ!
- IX) *Prison ministry*: We believe the message sets people free
Heb 13:3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them

- I) V4 That I may make it *manifest*, as ***I ought to speak***
Manifest: Pray that I may communicate this mystery in an understandable way
- II) ***First***: I have a great compulsion to preach the gospel
As a believer, it is something that *I ought to be doing*: pray that I do so faithfully
1 Co 9:16 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
- III) ***Second***: There is a proper way of proclaiming the gospel
Pray I communicate boldly, clearly, wisely, gracefully, and centered on Jesus
1 Co 2:4-5 my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you. I did this so that you might trust the power of God rather than human wisdom.
- IV) ***Third***: He preached the gospel to people to repent and yield faith to Jesus
He wanted to keep Jesus and salvation ***at the center*** of the message
LET ME DEVELOP THIS
- V) The message of the gospel can be presented in various ways
Not all methods present the gospel accurately or clearly
- VI) ***First***: There is what can be called experience-centered evangelism
This revolves around stories, feelings, experiences, and testimonies
- VII) The fruit of this is people enjoying the stories, and ***not repenting of their sins***
They like what they hear, claim to become saved, but under pressure, give up
- VIII) ***Second***: There is a kind of preaching that promises to make the person feel better
It promises health, prosperity, popularity, and plenty of earthly comfort
When the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches crowd in, they fall away
In reality, it is simply a man-centered gospel
- IX) ***Third***: We tailor the message to the audience without giving the whole counsel
We make Jesus acceptable to people instead of making people acceptable to Him
- X) Paul's concern was that he may be faithful in proclaiming the gospel
1 Co 1:18 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God

- I) Paul desired to continue effectively sharing the true gospel, and needed prayer
HOW CAN WE MAKE THE GOSPEL ATTRACTIVE
- II) V5-6 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time
At this point Paul gives practical advice concerning the sharing of the gospel
- III) He begins by encouraging believers concerning their conduct
Why: Because what they live like gives credibility to what they say
Pr 20:11 Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right
- IV) The way we live makes an incredible impact on people
The gospel is not simply something we talk about; it is something we **live out**
Our lives are the evidence of our beliefs
- V) If we are going to have an impact for the Lord, how **then should we live**
- VI) V5 Walk in *wisdom* towards those who are outside: Do not live foolishly
Paul is encouraging them that their lives should measure up *to their words*
- VII) If we live wisely, the watching world will see the power of God at work in us
Mt 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- VIII) This does not mean we live self-righteously, but caring about Jesus and others
MY ADVICE
- IX) Be careful to seek God to help you become humble and caring
Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
- X) When we claim to be Christians but do not live for the Lord, people can see this
When we do not truly seek the Lord, people will normally not listen to us
Non-Christians will reject the gospel because it does not change our lives!
- XI) V5 **Second**: Redeeming the time
Redeeming: This is a market term, meaning to buy out or to use completely
- XII) **Thought**: Buy up those moments others seem to throw away
Use the time you have for the advancement of the kingdom of God

- I) God set our boundaries, and our service is bordered within these boundaries
Christians know that each moment is a gift so we live redeeming these moments
Ps 39:4 LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days,
that I may know how frail I am.
Ps 90:12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
WHY REDEEM THE TIME
- II) We are to redeem our time because according to Eph 5:16 *The days are evil*
Evil: full of labors, hardships, pain and trouble
In an ethical sense, it is that which is wicked or bad
- III) This **moment in history** is identified as active opposition to our message and us
We have little time left and much opposition
- IV) At that time they were being tempted to live like the pagans surrounding them
Paul told them to flee lying, violence, stealing, profanity, malice, and immorality
This is how they at once lived and the culture was constantly drawing them back
- V) Resist this temptation and instead, reach the culture
- VI) V6 **Let your speech** always be with grace seasoned with salt that you may know
As you walk in wisdom, this should be the way you speak **in general** (V8)
Eccl 10:12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious
- VII) The way we speak reveals the abundance of our hearts
If we are saved, our speech should reveal the work of grace in our lives
- VIII) If you swear one moment and preach the next, you undermine the message
Eph 5:3-4 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such
sins have no place among God's people. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse
jokes--these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.
- IX) Our speech is to be seasoned with salt (purity and grace)
Purity; preserving from corruption; an emblem of value and wisdom
- XI) We season our food to make the meal more enjoyable
We season our speech with the grace of God, making the conversation healthy
A harsh method of witnessing only repels men from the way of salvation

- I) **FINALLY: That you may know how you ought to answer each one**
With experience, we learn how to respond to questions and objections we hear
- II) **Peter gives us insight into this**
1 Pe 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect
- III) **If we want to be used by the Lord, our heart is first set apart for God**
In Scripture, it represents the center of all belief
Pr 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
This will give you strength to resist yielding to pressure to deny the Lord
- IV) **V15 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you**
We need to know, not only knowing in whom, but also what we believe
Answer: Verbal defense, speech in defense; a reasoned statement or argument
- V) **Know what you believe, and be prepared to share**
This comes through reading and studying God's word, and being taught properly
- VI) **V6 In this manner you will be prepared to answer each one**
Read God's word, attend studies, pray for opportunities, and be prepared