

The Kingdom Advancing Life

Colossians 4:2–6 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: Well football season is over and once again - Alabama is yet again the national champs. The cool thing about sports in general and football in particular is that while there is a lot of strategy and nuance involved the goal is remarkably simple - score more points than the other team. For the individual player - get the ball a little further down the field.

I think Paul would say that in many ways life for the Christian is just as simple. All you have to do is get the Gospel ball a little further down the field. Advance the Kingdom.

So it's not about how much you accumulate. It's not about your degrees and titles, your cars or you land - it's about... do more people understand and believe the Gospel because you were alive. If so - you are winning.... if not - you are losing. It's that simple.

I think that is in essence what Paul is teaching us today in our text.

Paul is reminding the Colossians that they are called to live a life that advances the Kingdom... that gets the ball further down field. Today, there are at least 3 principles in our text that help us to live a **Kingdom Advancing Life**....

CONTEXT: We've been in this part of the letter called the household code. Paul has talked about the role of husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, children, employees and employers... today he gives us a few principles that applies to every station of life.

TEXT: Colossians 4:2–6 (ESV)

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

1. Pray Diligently

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Paul began this letter by saying - **Colossians 1:3 (ESV)**

³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we **pray for you,**

Now he is closing it by saying you are steadfast in prayer, be watchful and thankful.

The Greek term translated **steadfast** literally means - attach yourself to, or permanently latch onto. So in other words you are permanently latch yourself on to prayer.

The same idea is communicated in **1 Thessalonians 5:17** (ESV) where Paul says we are to ¹⁷ pray without ceasing.

It doesn't mean to be vocalizing a prayer 24/7 up to God. But it has the same idea of what Paul told Timothy about preaching... preach the word in season and out. Well that's all the time. It's either hunting season or it's not. But he doesn't mean pray 24/7 he means when it's good preach the word, when it's bad preach the word!

In Jeremiah 13 God says, "As the belt clings to the waist of the man so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah to cling to me"

God's people are designed to **CLING** to the Lord - prayer is the primary means of doing that. If you are not clinging to the Lord, no wonder things aren't making sense in your life.

As you remain steadfast in prayer -

- **being watchful in it with thanksgiving.** - In the English it looks like Paul is calling us to two distinct things - we are to be steadfast in prayer with WATCHFULNESS and THANKSGIVING. But in the Greek the idea is that our watchfulness occurs within a heart attitude of thanksgiving.

So the idea is we are being WATCHFUL in prayer with the assumption that God is willing and able to bring about a positive response to our prayer. So as we pray, we gaze through a thankful lens.

Martin Luther said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness."

So thanksgiving always marks the believers prayer life.

But here he says we are to be ALERT in heart attitude of thanksgiving.

The same word is used in **1 Thessalonians 5:6-7 (ESV)** ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake and be sober.** ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at

night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

So the watchfulness we are called to is contrasted to the absent mindedness of being drunk. Why does one get drunk? To forget, so that they will not be focused on the cares of life. Paul says - the alertness you are called to is the opposite of that. You aren't trying to forget the issues of life - you are taking them to the only one who can do anything about them.

So you are watching for things to carry to the Lord - with the heart attitude of thankfulness because you know he is willing and able to bring about a positive result that will bring Him great glory.

PRACTICALLY - if you are going to be diligent in prayer you **MUST** be **intentional**. I've never met anyone who accidentally became a great prayer warrior. Let me give you a few practical words of advice:

a. Start Each Day in Prayer -

Mark 1:35 (ESV) ³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

In the Bible many godly men and women rose early to meet with God.

- Abraham (Genesis 19:27)
- Job (Job 1:5)
- Jacob (Genesis 28:18)
- Moses (Exodus 34:4)
- Hannah and Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:19)
- David (Psalms 5:3; 57:7-8)

Hudson Taylor said, *"You don't tune up the instruments after the concert is over. That's illogical. You tune them up before you start."*

The great revival among British college students in the late 19th century began with those historic words: *"Remember the Morning Watch!"*

Jesus said, "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added".

b. Have a Regular Place to Pray in the Morning -

- *Mk 6:26... He departed to a Mountain to pray.*
- *MT 14:23... He went up into a Mountain to pray*
- *LK 9:29 ...Went up into a Mountain to pray.*

- JN 8:1...Jesus went to the Mount of Olives
- LK 22:39... And he came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mt. of Olives

*Within that Mountain there was a little Garden that he would go to....
"The Garden of Gethsemane"*

Knowing that, it is no surprise that when Jesus faced the greatest trial of His life, where did he go? The same place he had gone to practically every day of his life.

You will do the same thing. If you develop the regular practice of meeting with God under normal circumstances, he will not seem like a stranger when you face the inevitable trials of life.

Find a place that has a measure of seclusion. Apart from distractions like email, text messages, calls, children, husbands, etc. Hopefully, you can find a place where you can pray aloud. In the summer, this is outside on my front porch.

c. Have a Plan for Prayer

ACTS - Prayer Method.

But the truth is - some days I get up and prayer flows like an artesian well. Other days it's like ADD on steroids. I need something to reign my attention in a focus me on the task at hand.

ILLUSTRATION: Prayer of Jabez.

Sometimes I run the bases when I pray... I don't know where to start start with Adoration, then Confession, then Thanksgiving, the Supplication (ask for things).

Sometimes, I've found that there is an overwhelming concern in my life... rather than fight against that, I've learned to assume God place that on my heart and I use the prayer guide as a filter to filter my concern through.

d. Develop Prayer as the Knee Jerk Reaction to Everything

- When you loose a child you pray, you loose your keys you pray.
- When you get cancer pray, you annoyed pray.
- When you are confused pray, when you gain understanding pray.

Principle #1 to the Kingdom Advancing Life is - Pray Diligently

2. Speak the Gospel with Clarity

³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door **for the word**, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Notice something - Paul begins by requesting that they pray for an open door - We typically look at an open door as the path of least resistance.

ILLUSTRATION: If we have 5 places we placed a resume and 4 of them don't call us back, one does and wants to hire us - we say, "God has opened a door for me". Right?

But that is never how Paul uses that phrase. - Open Doors are NEVER Easy Doors. Every time this phrase "open door" is used in scripture it is speaking of an open door for the Gospel to be proclaimed and believed.

Acts 14:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had **opened a door** of faith to the Gentiles.

By the way, that open door involved Paul being stoned and left for dead. Would you call that an open door??? Paul did! Because some people came to hear and believe the Gospel.

Some of you are saying, "I will share the Gospel as soon as God opens a door". Do you see that you can't tell if God has opened the door until you have shared the Gospel. If you wait for an easy opportunity - you will never do it. Satan will see to it.

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 (ESV)

⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a **wide door** for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

There he says the open door was accompanied by many adversaries - that is quite an understatement. Ephesus was one of the roughest cities Paul ever preached in! A CITY WIDE riot occurred - or as Paul calls it, "an open door"! Why does he call it an open door - because some heard and believed the Gospel.

And then notice his second request -

⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

GET THAT: Paul was the perfect missionary for this particular mission. His life was the convergence of three streams of culture. Roman, Jewish and Greek - he was extremely intelligent. Not only that he was remarkably successful. Yet Paul said, "Pray that I would be able to make the gospel clear and know what to say".

Because sharing the Gospel in a way that is clear to me is not my calling - I'm called to make it clear to YOU. It's easy to preach in a way that is clear to me - but I can do that and be a total failure. The Gospel MUST be clear to you if the Holy Spirit will use it to bring about conversion.

Gospel clarity comes through prayer. It's doesn't hurt to study the culture, get to know the person... but there is no substitute to prayer.

Principle #1 to the Kingdom Advancing Life is - Pray Diligently

Principle #2 to the Kingdom Advancing Life is - Speak the Gospel Clearly

3. Live Wisely

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Paul mentions two things -

a. How you Walk

b. How you Talk

You are to walk with wisdom and you are to talk with wisdom.

There are a lot of good definitions for wisdom, but I believe it's best understood as how to make a good decision in the areas where scripture has not spoken.

When you do what the scriptures tell you to do that is obedience - but when you can discern the right path where the scriptures haven't given crystal clear direction that is wisdom.

90% of life's most important decisions are in the arena of wisdom.

- You aren't told who to marry - you are given some advice and told to make a wise decision.
- You aren't told which job to take - you are given some parameters and told to make a wise decision.
- You are told kids are a blessing - but you aren't told when to have them, how many to have, etc. it requires wisdom.

Here Paul says walk in wisdom toward outsiders - outsiders is a general term that Paul uses to speak of those who are not, "In Christ" they are not in the family. Paul says, "be wise how you walk before them".

NOW - WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF WISDOM? Foolishness - Paul is reminding us to walk in wisdom toward outsiders because of our tendency to be foolish.

ILLUSTRATION: Paul reprimanded the church at Corinth for misusing the gift of tongues without an interpreter - one of his reasons was because the unbeliever would think you are crazy.

So even in the church - we are to remember that unbelievers are watching. Interestingly, the first and only aspect of our walk he directly addresses is our speech -
⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

There is nothing that does more damage to the progress of the gospel than a believer's foolish speech.

Consider your walk - the overall pattern of your life - unbelievers are watching.
Consider your talk - the words of your mouth - unbelievers are listening.
Consider your posts - the updates of your social media - unbelievers are reading.

The next time you are tempted to say something unwise, post something unwise or do something unwise - Ask yourself is it worth giving a lost person one slight nudge toward hell?

- Is the satisfaction of that post worth leaving a bad taste in an unbeliever's mouth?
- Would the relief I would feel in chewing out a waiter be worth the reaction of an unbeliever at the next table who also saw me ask Jesus to bless my food?

CONCLUSION - *When J.D. Greer ends the service at his church he always concludes with saying you are SENT... rather than you are DISMISSED.*

It seems Paul is concluding in much the same way - you are sent... so

- *Pray Diligently*
- *Speak the Gospel Clearly*
- *Live Wisely*