

“DEVOTION TO PRAYER”

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

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INTRODUCTION

Verses 2-4 focus on the believer’s prayer life.

- Paul exhorted these Christians to make prayer their business, and his work the subject of their prayer.
- Prayer is a vital part of the work of the Church.
- Charles Spurgeon when asked the reason for the success of his ministry replied, “My people pray for me.”
- Remember the words of Lord Tennyson, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”
- Moreover, not to pray and intercede is sin: “God forbid that I should cease to pray for you” (I Sam. 12:23).
- Through a strong prayer life, the Christian will find **God’s presence real, His power felt, His will clear, His service easy.**

YOU MUST MAKE PRAYER YOUR MOST IMPORTANT LIFE’S WORK.

We may outline these verses concerning prayer: 1) Continuance, 2) Watchfulness, 3) Thankfulness, and 4) Intercession.

The closest parallel once again is with Ephesians 6:18-20—esp. vv. 19-20; parallel expressions are underlined below:

I. CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER (2a)

This verb means “to busy oneself with, be devoted to, “hold fast to, persevere in”; see Acts 1:14—the early believers; 6:4—the apostles; Rom. 12:12—believers in Rome—**all of these have reference to being devoted to prayer**), and Acts 2:42—prayer, along with teaching, fellowship, and breaking of bread. Also see LK. 18:1—pray and don’t give up, and I Thes. 5:17—pray without ceasing.

“Whatever may be the attitude of the body, the soul should be always on its knees. Just as uninterrupted breathing is the natural expression and necessary function of our bodies, so is constant prayer to our souls.”

All Colossian believers were to busy themselves with and to devote themselves to prayer.

II. WATCHFULNESS IN PRAYER (2B)—the manner by which one devotes himself to prayer.

The verb once speaks of being “**awake**”—alive; of being **awake and alert and not sleeping**, and **figuratively of being “watchful.”** The most common NT application of such alertness/watchfulness is in relation to the second coming of Christ—12 of the 24 uses. See I Pet. 5:8—“Be of sober spirit, **be on the alert**. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour

Biblical examples:

1) The inner circle disciples Peter, James, and John fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had told them to “keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38).

2) The incident of Jesus’ Transfiguration on the mount—the same disciples had been sleeping (Lk. 9:32).

3) Paul commands the Thessalonian believers to “not sleep as others do, but **be alert** and sober” (I Th. 5:6).

Hendriksen mentions that this alertness concerns 1) personal, family, church, national, and world needs, dangers and temptations faced, blessings both promised and already received, and knowing God’s will.

III. THANKFULNESS IN PRAYER (2c)

- “With thanksgiving” gives the practice that accompanies the prayer, or as Vaughan states, “the spirit in which prayers should be offered” (221).
- This is another of the references by Paul to thanksgiving in this epistle; see 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 16, 17.
- **A true appreciation of the believer’s status, ‘dead’ to the world and its powers, ‘alive’ to God in Christ with all one’s sins forgiven, and destined for glory, will inevitably produce thanksgiving.**

IV. INTERCESSION IN PRAYER (3-4)—Shows Paul’s dependence on the Lord and humility in asking for prayer.

A. For the Apostle and his co-workers

1. Timothy—1:1
 2. Epaphras—1:7; 4:12-13
 3. Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Luke, Demas (vv. 10-14)
- B. For God to Open a Door for the word/utterance/message (3a)
- Opportunity for ministry; common figure of speech: 1) a wide open door in Ephesus despite many adversaries (I Cor. 16:9); 2) an open door in Troas for the gospel preaching that Paul could not take advantage of due to the absence of Titus (**II Cor. 2:12**).
 - God is the one who sovereignly controls such open doors **Rev. 3:7-8**.
 - Note that the opportunity here is for the “word/message” itself, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Such a statement places emphasis upon “the dynamic, almost personal, character of the ‘word’ with the power to transform lives.
 - The opportunity is “for us”—men must proclaim this word; for their advantage and that of their listeners.
1. To speak the mystery of Christ (3b)
 - What has been hidden but now made known.
 - Especially about the union of Gentiles with Jews in one body (Eph. 3:1-6).
 - The mystery especially is Christ—see 1:26-27; 2:2.
 2. To speak even though imprisoned (3c)
 - a. Paul is imprisoned for the mystery/the gospel message
 - Thus, he is imprisoned for the sake of Christ
 - He also is imprisoned for the benefit of the Gentiles—for us!
 - b. He wants an effective ministry even though in chains.
 - c. Whether freed or not, his passion is to preach the word, to preach Christ.
 - II Tim. 2:8b-9; “According to my gospel; for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal, **but the word of God is not imprisoned.**”
 - What an encouragement to us preachers.
 - What a challenge to us!
 3. To “reveal the word/make it clear/ manifest it”
 - a. “As I ought” relates mainly to the necessity of making the word known.
 - b. But, when compared with Eph. 6:19-20 and other passages, the way he does so is also important.
 - He must speak clearly, for otherwise it would not be “revealed.”
 - He would speak boldly, since he uses that expression in the parallel passage (Eph. 6:19).
 - He would speak graciously—see his words immediately following in v. 6.
 - He would speak wisely, knowing what approach to take with each various group, whether **visitors, guards, or Roman officials** or even as a free man if released.
 4. This is what Paul “ought to speak”
 - He is under obligation (Rom. 1:14-16).
 - God called him, commissioned him, gave him the message to proclaim (Acts 9:1-9).
 - Woe is he if he does not (I Cor. 9:16).

CONCLUSION

If Paul were released—or even if not:

Paul was a great preacher, and very successful. Yet, he was never completely satisfied with his efforts and was always looking for improvement in his preaching and in its effects. Robertson adds, “What preacher can be?” (509).

And the believers have a part in all this through their prayers!

WE MUST CONTINUE IN PRAYER, BE WATCHFUL IN PRAYER, BE THANKFUL IN PRAYER, AND INTERCEDE IN PRAYER.

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