

Colossians 4:2-4

Well, we are nearing the end of our study in Colossians. Today we will look at verse 2-4. Next week we will look at verses 5-17. We will finish our study the following week by focusing on verse 18. I hope you have been challenged and encouraged.

READ/PRAY

Today, I want us to consider the most difficult discipline in the Christian life. Not only is this the most difficult, but it is the most important I believe. Paul gives us 4 tips for prayer.

1. Be Devoted v2a

Literally, Pray with constancy.

1. This is the opposite of hit and miss.
2. This is a persevering in prayer, not giving up, but earnestly, seriously, and consistently pursuing God.

This is what the early church did. The devoted themselves to prayer.

1. Acts 1:14 *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*
2. Acts 2:42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*
3. Acts 6:4 *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*
4. Acts 12:5 *So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.*
5. Acts 14:23 *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

The true church lives and moves and has its being in prayer. Ravenhill

1. Is this not an indictment against us? on a personal level and on a corporate level?
2. *Let's spend so much time in public prayer in our churches that some people are bored of talking to the God they only pretend to know. Mark Dever*
3. Devote yourselves to prayer. Continue steadfastly in prayer.
4. This is a command...for us...and for the church.

2. Be Alert v2b

This can also be translated, be watchful or vigilant.

1. This implies that we should be like a soldier on duty outside the camp at night knowing that if we go to sleep on this job, the enemy can overthrow us and our mission.
2. Matthew 26:37-41 *And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*
3. Paul urges the church to remember how tremendously serious the battle is. So be watchful,

awake, vigilant.

4. Ephesians 6:18 *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

- Wednesday, August 13, 1737. A little group of Moravians were waiting in a prayer meeting. At 11 suddenly the Holy Spirit came and that prayer meeting lasted 100 years. That prayer room was not empty for a century. Even children 6 and 7 years old fervently prayed for countries whose names they could not spell! They devoted themselves to prayer.

At the judgement seat the most embarrassing thing the believer will face will be the smallness of his praying. Ravenhill

3. Be Thankful v2c

I fear that we underestimate the importance of thanksgiving.

1. Psalms 50:14, 23 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High... The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me."*

2. Luke 17:11-19 *While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? 18 Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.*

3. Thanksgiving should permeate our prayers...and may be more important and productive than requests.

Philippians 4:6 *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

4. Be Missional v3-4

Listen carefully....these are ways that you can pray for me and the other pastoral staff.

1. Open doors v3a

a. Acts 14:27 *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.*

b. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*

c. John Piper takes Paul to mean here, "When Christians pray, God changes circumstances and attitudes and receptivity for the Word so that instead of hitting a brick wall, the Word finds an open door and becomes unusually effective."

2. Open mouths (declare) v3b

- a. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?...opening their mouths?
- b. There has to be open mouths...speaking what? Paul said, the mystery of Christ?
- c. What is this mystery? We have already seen it in our study

1. Colossians 1:25-27

2. Ephesians 3:4-6 *When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

3. Open minds v3c

- a. Make plain...illumine...manifest
- b. Pray that doors will be opened for me to open my mouth and manifest His glory so much so that minds will clearly see and understand the mystery that through Christ we can be heirs, members, and partakers of the promises of God!

Conclusion:

There is no power like that of prevailing prayer—of Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heartbroken with remorse and grief, Jesus in sweat of blood. Add to this list from the records of the church your personal observation and experience, and always there is the cost of passion unto blood. Such prayer prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. Samuel Chadwick

So, we need to pray. We need to make prayer a priority, both personally and corporately as a church.

1. We need to be vigilant and thankful.
2. We need to pray missional prayers
3. We need to devote ourselves as individuals and as a church to prayer...so let's do it.

There is going to be a bit of a shift in how we bring the sermons and services to a close.

1. We want you to use this time to pray as you reflect on what you have heard from God.
2. We want you to cross the aisles and pray together.
3. We want you to feel free to come forward and grab one of the ministers on the front rows and we will pray with you and for you.
4. We welcome you to come and pray for us if the Lord should lay one of us on your heart.