

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Twenty-one
Putting Spiritual Flesh on Our Theological Bones
(Living the Truth We Know)

“² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:2-6).

It is important to note that Colossians 4:1 should actually be part of chapter three and 4:2 should be the beginning of chapter four. If we do not see the break here, the instruction of 4:2-6 would be understood to be to the “masters” of 4:1. This is obviously not the intention. This is intended for all believers.

The first part of the epistle to the Colossians establishes the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ. Chapter 3:1 through 4:1 shows us how to live the Lordship of Christ in our relationships. Chapter 4:2-6 commands the believer to minister the Lordship of Christ to others through two avenues. The believer is to pray for other believers (v 2-3) and live and communicate to the lost (v 4-6).

Continue praying (v 2)

Prayer is an area that many Christians do not understand. Prayer is as much an attitude as it is something we do. Prayer is living continually in conscious awareness of God’s presence and dependency upon Him. The attitude of prayer is an unbroken line of communication between the believer and his Lord. The admonition to continue in prayer is one of maintaining that unbroken line of moment by moment communication and dependency. The primary focus of maintaining “fellowship” (synergism) with God is to keep the lines of communication open. The flow of God’s power to our lives as Christians flows through that same line.

People of prayer expect God to act. “Watch in the same with thanksgiving.”

The word “watch” in Colossians 4:2 is from the Greek *gregoreuo* (gray-gor-yoo'-o). It means to watch for something to happen or come about. Metaphorically it means to give strict attention to something, be cautious, active, to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity might suddenly overtake you.

Those that understand the spiritual dynamic of prayer expect both God’s response and Satan’s opposition to that response. Prayer enters us onto the battlefield of spiritual warfare and into the battle of the ages for the souls of mankind. Prayer is serious business for serious people of God. We are powerless in the battle without the synergism that comes from yielding our bodies to the Lord (consecration) in holiness (sanctification). Prayer should never be something we enter into without first putting on our spiritual armor.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (I Peter 4:7).

If watchfulness is the *attention* of prayer, thanksgiving is the *intention* of prayer. The believer should live in constant praise and thanksgiving to God, because of continual access to His throne of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. How easily we forget that without Christ as our High Priest, Advocate and Mediator between God and man, we would have no access to God in prayer.

“¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The community in prayer; “withal praying also for us” (Colossians 4:3)

The word “withal” is translated from the Greek word *hama* (ham'-ah). It means at the same time, at once and together with others. It refers to the synergism of prayer. Prayer should be a central occupation in the assembling and communion of a local church. The prayer-life of every local church and every Christian should be focused prayer (*targeted*).

The focus of the communal prayer life of a local church was for open doors of opportunity for individual believers to preach the gospel publicly and privately to lost people. Targeted prayer takes two main directions. When the church gathers to pray, they should be praying for the lost and for each other to have opportunities to tell the lost of Christ and how to be saved. We need to pray for one another so that when God opens a door of opportunity we will be spiritually aware of it and have the boldness to present the gospel.

Prayer for other believers should also be focused on their being enabled of God to give the gospel to the lost so that the lost might see their need and Christ’s provision (4:4). The primary aspect of this pray life for one another is that we can maintain unbroken “fellowship” with God individually and corporately so that the dynamic of the spiritual synergism of the local church remains in tack and the “power” of God (II Timothy 3:5) abides in us as we abide in Christ (John 15:1-3).

The believer must be able to present the gospel with clarity. This requires the leading of the Holy Spirit, the convincing of the Holy Spirit, the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the empowering/enabling grace of the Holy Spirit (synergism).

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15).

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

The lost must receive the gospel with understanding. Notice how many times the Lord emphasizes the essential of understanding in the parable from Matthew 13 before anyone can be “converted.”

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15).

“¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. ²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. ²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. ²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:18-23).

In Colossians 4:5, the focus moves away from those within the local church to those outside (“without”). Just as the Lordship of Christ defines certain responsibilities of believers to one another His Lordship gives specific instruction on how to live before and among the lost.

First, we are to “walk in wisdom toward them.” The word “walk” is from the Greek word *peripateo* (per-ee-pat-eh'-o). It means to make due use of opportunities. It means to regulate one’s life or to conduct one’s self in a certain way. That *way* is defined by the word “wisdom.” In the context of this verse this means to live devoutly with proper prudence in relationships with lost people who are not disciples of Christ. It also means having skill and discretion in imparting truth to them and the knowledge and practice of the requisites for godly and upright living before them.

Secondly, we are to redeem time. In other words, don’t waste time. Use it wisely and for the furtherance of the cause of Christ. Time is not an endless commodity. Wasted time is usually wasted opportunity.

Thirdly, what we say to the lost should be preoccupied “with” the grace of God upon our lives and available to them. The grace of God refers to the divine empowering of the believer’s service gifts as defined in Romans 12:1-8. This emphasis on “grace” is an emphasis on the synergism that results when the trichotomy of a believer is completely yielded to God’s will (Romans 6:11-13). The epistle to the Ephesians church is an example of speech preoccupied with the grace of God. Look at a few selected verses through this epistle.

Ephesians 1:2, “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 1:6-7, “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

Ephesians 2:5, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

Ephesians 2:7-8, “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”

Ephesians 3:2, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:”

Ephesians 3:7-8, “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;”

Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Ephesians 6:24, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

It is this preoccupation with the grace of God that makes our speech pleasant and tasteful to the lost (“seasoned with salt”). The lost need to hear of condemnation, judgment, wrath and hell, but grace and love give balance back to the nature of God. The only why these unfathomable truths can be adequately communicated to the heart of a lost soul is through the synergism that exists between the Spirit of God a yielded Spirit “filled” believer.

Learning to be a spiritual diagnostician

Lastly, not every lost person should be approached the same way; “that ye may know how ye ought to answer.” An answer presumes a question has been asked. All too often Christians begin to give answers before questions are asked. Just as different questions require different answers, so do people with different beliefs require different truths. Sometimes before we speak to the lost, we need to listen to them. We need to ask the right questions and listen carefully to their answers. We need to find out what they believe and help them take those beliefs to the Word of God for comparison. We need to *expose* the lost to truth of the Word more than just *telling it to* them.

Open the Scriptures to a selected verse that corrects their false belief. Have them read the verse out loud. Ask *them* what the verse means. Try to help them understand the meaning without telling them what it is (if possible). What a person discovers for himself is always more solidifying when it comes to his convictions.

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1. Why is it important to understand that the break between chapters 3 and 4 in Colossians is really after 4:1? _____

2. What is the attitude of prayer? _____

From that understanding, what is the meaning of the admonition “continue in prayer” in Colossians 4:2? _____

3. What does the word “watch” mean in Colossians 4:2? _____

4. What two things does the real prayer of faith expect?

A. _____

B. _____

C. Why does it expect these two things? _____

5. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Why should all believers live in constant praise and thanksgiving? _____

6. What does the word “withal” mean in Colossians 4:3? _____

How does understanding this meaning effect your understanding of the rest of this verse? _____

7. What is meant by *focused* or *targeted* prayer? _____

8. Targeted prayer should go in two directions. According to Colossians 4:3-4 what are they?

A. _____

B. _____

9. What must a person *understand* before they can believe? _____

A. How would you pray specifically for another Christian so this can be accomplished? _____

B. How would you pray for the lost so this might be accomplished? _____

10. List the 4 responsibilities of the believer in living his life before lost people from Colossians 4:5-6.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____