

THE BELIEVER AND HIS PRAYER LIFE AND WITNESS COLOSSIANS 04:02–06

Introduction

This passage covers two of the most important subjects for the believer - that of his prayer life and his witness.

- I. Pray and continue in prayer (vv. 2-4).
- II. Walk wisely before people who are without Christ (v. 5).
- III. Speak with grace — answering and sharing what it is that makes your life different (v. 6).

I. *Colossians 04:02–04 Believer's Duty to Pray*

The first duty of the believer is to pray and continue in prayer. Four important instructions are given — instructions that desperately need to be heeded.

1. First, *continue steadfastly in prayer*. The word *devote* (proskartereite) means to be constant, persevering, and unwearied in prayer. It means to be in constant and unbroken prayer — to be in constant and unbroken fellowship and communion with God. It means to walk and breathe prayer — to live and move and have our being in prayer. It means to never face a moment when we are not in prayer.

How is this possible? When we have so many duties and affairs that demand our attention, how can we continue and walk in unbroken prayer? What Scripture means is that we...

- develop an attitude of prayer.
- walk in a spirit of prayer.
- take a mental break from our work and spend a *moment* in prayer.
- *pray always* when our minds are not upon some duty.
- *arise early* and pray before daily activities begin. Spend a worship time with God in prayer. Make this a continued practice.
- *pray before going to bed*. Spend an extended time in prayer before going to bed. Make this a continued practice.

In all honesty, the vast majority of us waste minute after minute every hour in useless daydreaming and wandering thoughts — wasting precious time that could be spent in prayer. If we would learn to captivate these minutes for prayer, we would discover what it is to walk and live in prayer. Note a critical fact: this is the duty of the believer. It is not something God can do for us. We are the ones who have to discipline ourselves to pray. If we do not pray, then prayer never gets done.

Scripture is clear: the believer is to continue in prayer, devote himself to prayer.

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Mat 7:7 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

John 16:24 *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

Phil 4:6 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

Col 4:2 *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

James 5:13 *Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*

1 Chr 16:11 *Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.*

2. Second, *watch in prayer*. The word *watch* (gregorountes) means to stay awake, be alert, be sleepless, be active, concentrate. It means to fight against distractions, drowsiness, sluggishness, wandering thoughts and useless daydreaming. It means to discipline our minds and control our thoughts in prayer. Being very honest, this is a problem that afflicts every believer sometime. Overwork, tiredness, pressure, strain — an innumerable list of things can make it very difficult to concentrate in prayer. This is the very reason Paul stresses the need to *be watchful in prayer*. But note: vigilance in prayer is the duty of the believer. Again, it is not something that God does for us. We are responsible for watching and concentrating. We are the ones who are to discipline our minds and control our thoughts. For this reason, we must never give up in prayer. We must...
 - always struggle against drowsiness and wandering thoughts.
 - learn to concentrate — to discipline our minds and control our thoughts.
 - teach ourselves to watch in prayer.

Mat 26:40-41 *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”*

Luke 18:1 *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

Luke 21:36 *“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*

3. Third, pray with thanksgiving. When someone does something for us, we thank that person. The One Person who has done more for us than anyone else is God. Therefore, we are to thank Him. In fact, God continues to bless and help us; His hand is constantly upon our lives, looking after and caring for us; therefore, we should continually thank Him. Our praise should be lifted up to Him all through the day as we go about our daily affairs. An hour should never pass when we have not praised and thanked God several times. We should never forget His Son — that He actually took our sins upon Himself and bore the judgment and punishment of them for us. This alone should continually fill our hearts with thanksgiving and praise.

1 Cor 15:57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 6:20 You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

2 Cor 9:15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Eph 5:20 Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Th 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Heb 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Chr 16:8 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

Psa 9:11 Sing praises to the LORD, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.

Psa 50:14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High.

Psa 67:3 May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.

Psa 68:19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.

Psa 92:1 It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High.

4. Fourth, pray for others, in particular for their ministry. Be an intercessor for God's ministers. Remember Paul was in prison, but note that for which he requested prayer. William Barclay points out that Paul could have asked that the church pray for his release, for a *not guilty verdict* in his upcoming trial (he was not guilty), or for a peaceful end to his life (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*).

p. 198f). But this is not what he requested. He requested prayer for his ministry. He wanted the believers praying that God would give him...

- opportunity for witnessing — for sharing the mystery or salvation of Christ.
- boldness in witnessing (v. 4).

We must always remember that prayer is one of the laws of the universe. Granted, it is a law that is denied by most and ignored by others. Even those who understand it to be one of God's laws often neglect it. Nevertheless, God has established the spiritual law that He works in response to prayer. Whether we believe it or not, God clearly says that prayer is a law of the universe. Prayer is the law by which He works and moves in behalf of men and their world. Therefore, if we want the blessings of God upon our lives and ministries — if we want the work of God going forth in power and bearing fruit, we must pray for the ministers of the gospel. We must learn to intercede in prayer.

James 4:1-3 *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

Mat 21:22 *"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

Psa 91:15 *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

Jer 33:3 *'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'*

II. Colossians 04:05 Believer's Duty to Witness

Walk wisely before people who are without Christ, redeeming the time. Note two significant points.

1. The word "*outsiders*" refers to the unbelievers of the world, those who are walking through life without Christ and God. Think what this means: they are walking...
 - without hope beyond this life.
 - without assurance of life hereafter with God.
 - without help in facing the trials and traumas of this life.
 - without peace.
 - without security.

- without God's care and deliverance.
- without fellowship with God and His family of believers.
- without freedom from guilt — no assurance of forgiveness of sins.
- without light — no freedom from the darkness of death and the grave.

Scripture paints a sharp contrast between unbelievers who are *outside of Christ* and believers who are *in Christ*.

Eph 4:12-13 *To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

2. Believers are to be wise toward those who are without Christ, redeeming or making the best use of their time. To be wise means...

- that we walk thoughtfully, figuring out how to live for Christ before the world
- that we walk righteously and godly
- that we walk guarding every step
- that we walk doing good works

And note: we make the most of every opportunity; that is, we seek to grasp every moment to live for Christ before the lost of the world. We always look for opportunities to do good and to let our light shine before men. We try to figure out how to make opportunity to bear witness by the way we live.

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Eph 4:1 *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Eph 5:15 *Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise.*

Col 2:6 *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him.*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

1 John 2:6 *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

III. *Colossians 04:06 Believer's Duty to Witness*

Speak always with grace, answering and sharing what it is that makes your life different. What an expectation God has of us: to be living a life so different and righteous that men ask us what it is that makes us different. How many live a life that is that different? That godly and righteous? Note exactly what is said.

When we are walking among unbelievers, we are to guard our speech and conversation. We are...

- to make sure that we speak *with grace* (en charita), that is, with kindness, courtesy and graciousness.
- to season our conversation with salt; that is, we are to flavour and turn the conversation to tasteful and enjoyable subjects and away from corruptible and tasteless subjects.

What happens when this is done is striking: unbelievers will begin to notice our lives and conversation — that we are different in a good and wholesome way. And some will ask us what it is that gives us such peace and security and assurance in life. Then it is that we have a unique opportunity to witness. Then it is that we can reach out and bring in those who are so tragically without Christ, lost and doomed in despair and hopelessness forever.

Mat 5:37 “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

Col 4:6 *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

2 Tim 1:13 *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

Titus 2:8 *And soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

James 3:2 *We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

1 Pet 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. ■*