

## **OUR PRAYER LIFE AND THE GOSPEL**

### **CONTINUING STEADFASTLY IN PRAYER TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN**

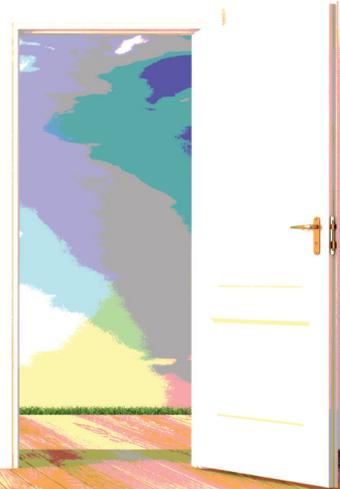
#### **PRAY WITH ...**

AN ATTENTIVE SPIRIT AND  
A THANKFUL HEART



#### **PRAY FOR ...**

AN OPEN DOOR AND  
A CLEAR MESSAGE



WITH THANKSGIVING

PRAYING DEVOTEDLY

COURAGEOUSLY PERSISTENT

WATCHFUL

CONTINUING STEADFASTLY

Prayer is not simply an act of presenting one's personal wishes and desires to God; rather, it is a way for believers to participate in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan in history (David Pao).

The Colossians were to pray with mental alertness. Presumably, this meant that they were to know the circumstances of life, particularly those which affected the spread of the gospel (Richard Melick).

Thanksgiving ... "thanksgiving" gives the pervading element or influence, in or under which the prayers of the Colossians were to be offered (H.D.M. Spence-Jones).

What the "watching" believers are to do in these texts is not watch for Christ's return, but watch their own life in light of the return of Christ. Believers need constantly to be "awake" to the nature of the times they live in ... and to orient their lives accordingly. ... the devotion to prayer that Paul calls for should be characterized by a strong sense of expectation about Christ's near return that governs and motivates prayer (Douglas Moo).

**OUTLINE-COLOSSIANS 4:2-4**  
**PERSEVERING IN PRAYER TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN**

**1. TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST KNOWN TO THE WORLD AROUND US WE MUST PERSEVERE DEVOTEDLY IN PRAYER, 4:2.**

- (Colossians 4:2 NIV) Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.
- (Colossians 4:2 ESV) Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

**A. We guard the CHARACTER & CONTENT of our prayers by persevering in watchfulness.**

**To continue steadfastly means ...** to persevere devotedly—to persevere in some activity or cause to the point of devotion; to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing; to persevere and not to faint.

The Colossians were to pray with mental alertness. Presumably, this meant that they were to know the circumstances of life, particularly those which affected the spread of the gospel. Informed prayer is likely to be more purposeful, personal, and powerful. [Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 321–322). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

To Paul, prayer is not simply an act of presenting one's personal wishes and desires to God; rather, it is a way for believers to participate in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan in history ... Here Paul encourages believers to continue to participate in this mission of the gospel through prayers. [Pao, D. W. (2012). *Colossians and Philemon* (p. 290). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.]

To continue steadfastly is to persevere, and to persevere is to busy oneself with the task in hand ... A characteristic mark of the earliest Christians is their devotion to intercessory prayer. Was it that the visitors laid small stress on this that Paul must emphasize so clear a duty? More

likely the Colossians had grown sleepy, if our own experience is any guide: and such failure to 'watch and pray' had made them **poor guardians** when the testing crisis came. It is in a prayerless church that the enemy can best do his work of disruption. [Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (pp. 171–172). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.]

What the "watching" believers are to do in these texts is **not watch for Christ's return, but watch their own life in light of the return of Christ**. Believers need constantly to be "awake" to the nature of the times they live in ... and to orient their lives accordingly. ... the devotion to prayer that Paul calls for should be characterized by a strong sense of expectation about Christ's near return that governs and motivates prayer. [Moo, D. J. (2008). *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (p. 320). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.]

**B. We guard the CHARACTER & CONTENT of our prayers by persevering in watchful prayer with thankfulness.**

Thus, Paul urges them to be devoted to prayer by/in guarding that prayer life, and then that guarding of the prayer life is to be done "in thanksgiving." ... The grammar then informs us of this: Paul wants them to devote themselves to prayer and to do so by guarding that prayer life in thanksgiving. [McKnight, S. (2018). *The Letter to the Colossians*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (p. 370). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]

Thankfulness is the environment for good praying, and it provides a safeguard for informed praying. Paul's circumstances could have been discouraging as he awaited trial for the gospel. To ensure a proper perspective, Paul urged that their prayer be offered in an attitude of thanks. This kind of prayer sees clearly the obstacles and difficulties but recognizes that God is able to work. [Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians*,

*Colossians, Philemon (Vol. 32, p. 322). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]*

... “thanksgiving” gives the pervading element or influence, in or under which the prayers of the Colossians were to be offered. [Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Colossians* (p. 209). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.]

“being watchful in it [prayer] with thanksgiving” ... This phrase not only provides the proper conclusion to the previous section, where the lordship of Christ is so strongly affirmed, but it also points to the need to continue living a life of thanksgiving as believers affirm the lordship of Christ. The appearance of this note on thanksgiving in an eschatological context may surprise modern readers, but unlike our notion of gratitude as an expression of thanks for a prior act of kindness, for Paul thanksgiving can be forward-looking as it represents a call to respond to God’s future act as if it is already an accomplished reality. [Pao, D. W. (2012). *Colossians and Philemon* (p. 291). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.]

## 2. TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST KNOWN TO THE WORLD AROUND US WE MUST PRAY THAT GOD WILL GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL, 4:3.

- (Colossians 4:3 ESV) 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—

## 3. TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST KNOWN TO THE WORLD AROUND US WE MUST PRAY THAT WE WILL SPEAK WITH CLARITY—THAT WE WILL MAKE THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL CLEAR—AS WE SHOULD, 4:4.

- (Colossians 4:4 ESV) That I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.
- (Colossians 1:5–6 ESV) Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also

does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

### A. We must pray that we will make the gospel message clear.

We must pray that we make the gospel message clear because there are some who trouble us and want to distort the gospel.

- (Galatians 1:6–7 ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, **but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel** of Christ.

In v. 3a, “proclaim,” as we noted above, translates a rather general and colorless Greek verb (*laleō*, “speak”). **Here, however, it translates the more pointed verb “manifest,” “make clear” (*phaneroō*;** cf. ESV; HCSB). [Moo, D. J. (2008). *The letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (p. 325). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.]

In addition, Paul wanted to proclaim Christ’s gospel “clearly” ... **this is not always the concern of preachers, as we often hear of “a mist in the pulpit and a fog in the pew.”** [Hughes, R. K. (1989). *Colossians and Philemon: the supremacy of Christ* (p. 137). Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.]

The verb “I may proclaim ... clearly” (*φανερῶσω*) often carries the sense of “revelation”: **“that I may reveal it clearly”.** [Pao, D. W. (2012). *Colossians and Philemon* (p. 294). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.]

### Verses/notes-“make it clear” ... ΦΑΝΕΡΩ ...

**5319 φανερώω [phaneroo /fan·er·o·o/]** ... to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown; to make actual and visible, realized; to make known by teaching; to expose to view. [Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.]

- (Colossians 4:4a ESV) That I may make it **clear**.
- (Romans 1:19 ESV) For what can be

known about God is plain to them, because God **has shown** it to them.

- (Romans 3:21 ESV) But now the righteousness of God **has been manifested** apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.
- (Romans 16:26 ESV) But **has now been disclosed** and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—
- (Ephesians 5:13–14 ESV) But when anything is exposed by the light, it **becomes visible**, 14 for anything that **becomes visible** is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

#### **B. We must pray that we will preach the gospel message as we should.**

- (Colossians 4:4 ESV) That I may make it clear, **which is how I ought to speak**.

Paul further asked the Colossians to pray that when God opened a door for the gospel, I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak ... ought to speak refers to the mandate for using the God-ordained method of presenting the gospel. Paul preached the gospel by “solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (**Acts 20:21**). “Solemnly testifying” is from *diamarturomai*, which means to give a thorough and complete testimony. [MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1992). *Colossians* (p. 184). Chicago: Moody Press.]

#### **NOTES ON ACTS 20:20-21**

- (**Acts 20:20–21 ESV**) How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 **[solemnly] testifying** both to Jews and

to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul uses the word *diamarturomai*, translated “declared” here. This word conveys the idea that evangelism is a serious responsibility as it calls people to repentance and faith. [Fernando, A. (1998). *Acts* (p. 533). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.]

**Christian witness communicates critical information.** Paul emphasizes that he “proclaimed” (*ἀναγγεῖλαι*) everything to them; i.e., he provided information about God’s new revelation, he announced Jesus as Israel’s Messiah, and he taught about the significance of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation. 1777 Paul also “taught” (*διδάξαι*); i.e., **he provided a structured explanation of the gospel, with the goal that the Ephesians would remember the content of the teaching.** [Schnabel, E. J. (2012). *Acts (Expanded Digital Edition, Ac 20:20–21)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.]

