



Colossians 4:2–4

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Reflection

Genesis 1:1, the first verse of the Bible, and the beginning of the known universe, be-

gins,

In the beginning God...

John, the gospel writer, also chose to begin his gospel right at the beginning. He began,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In the beginning was Jesus, the eternally pre-existent Word, the ultimate communication of God. In the beginning was the Communication. Before there was time or earth or water or fire or darkness or light; before we were, God had determined to communicate with us so that he could have relationship with us, because communica-

tion is the essence of relationship. And so it's no wonder that Christianity, right at its heart, is a personal relationship with God. And like all relationships, our relationship with God is built around communication. God speaks to us through his word and his Spirit, and we speak to him through prayer. And like all good relationships, the strength of our relationship with God is based on how well we communicate with him – how often we listen to him speak to us through his words in the Bible and how deeply we consider what he has to say; and how often we speak to him in our prayer life. And it's this side of the relationship that Paul concentrates on in today's passage, the sharing of our daily life with God in prayer. In Colossians 4:2–4, Paul says,¹

1 R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ* (Preaching the Word; Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books, 1989), 135–36.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

As we've just established, in the beginning, before there was time or earth or water or fire, even before we were made, God had determined to communicate with us. Prayer, in its fullest sense is then continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which will eventually become a full encounter with him when Jesus returns. And this continuation, this continual and ongoing conversation through prayer, is what Paul is

speaking about in verse 2 where he says,

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

The Bible urges us to make prayer one of the major vocations of our life. We're to talk to God continually as we go about our lives. Jesus taught us in Luke 18 that we should always pray and not give up. Paul teaches us in 1 Thessalonians 5 to pray continually. James, that

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Jas 5:16

And in a similar passage in Eph 6:18 to today's one, Paul teaches us,

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occa-

sions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

To this continual conversation with God that deepens our relationship with him, Paul adds in today's passage the elements of being watchful and thankful. We get the impression of always being on the lookout for both the dangers of life and the needs of those around us, but also for opportunities to thank God for his daily blessings in our life.

Paul then asks for prayer. He began his letter by sharing his daily prayers for the Colossians and now he closes it by asking to be part of their daily prayer life. Verses 3 and 4,

3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Prayer makes all the difference in communicating the gospel and so Paul enlists the help of the Colossians. Paul asks them to pray for God's intervention so that doors might be opened, not prison doors that he might go free, but doors for the good news of the gospel, so that Paul might continue to preach it powerfully and clearly like he should.

Think

Take some extended time this morning to consider your prayer life and how you might increasingly devote yourself to prayer. As you do, you might like to consider how the Bible is marked by prayer. Right throughout its pages the practice of prayer is a constant theme. And nowhere more so than in the life of Jesus. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, healed people with prayers, described God's intention for the temple in Jerusalem as a 'house of prayer'. Jesus prayed often and regularly with fervent cries and tears, and sometimes all night. The Holy Spirit came upon him and anointed him while he was praying; at his transfiguration he was in prayer. As he faced his greatest crisis in he did so through prayer. On the night before Jesus died we hear him praying for his disciples and the church, then petitioning God in

agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next day, Jesus dies praying. ²

The Son of the God prayed continually. Jesus devoted himself to prayer. And in doing so set the model for all Christians who would follow him. Immediately after Jesus' death, his disciples prepared for the future by being 'constantly in prayer' together. All church gatherings in the book of Acts are described as being 'devoted ... to prayer'. The power of the Holy Spirit descends on early Christians in response to powerful prayer and in Acts prayer is one of the main signs that the Spirit has come into the heart through faith in Jesus. The expectation then on for Christians is to have a regular, faithful, devoted, and fervent prayer life as we're carried along

² Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014), 26–28.

by the Holy Spirit who gives us the confidence and desire to pray to God. Devote yourselves to prayer and pray without ceasing, Paul teaches the Colossians, and Thessalonians, and us.³

Pray

So pray to God today asking him to bless your prayer life. Pray that you would be too busy not to pray. Pray that prayer would come naturally and regularly to you as the Holy Spirit grows in you the desire to deepen your relationship with God. Pray that you'd constantly be chattering away to your Dad, sharing each day of your life with him. Pray that the eyes of your heart would be watchful for danger in your Christian life and for the needs of those around

³ Ibid.

you; and pray also that you would see every blessing that God so richly gives you as an opportunity to thank him. Why not try and stop and thank God intermittently through your day today for every blessing that comes to mind, big and small?

And finally, pray continually that doors would open for the gospel of Jesus Christ, in your friendship circles, your family, your local community and in the wider world. Pray today that the gospel would be proclaimed clearly, powerfully and effectively and that through it many would be brought into a living relationship with their Father in heaven.