**DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER**

Colossians 4:2-18

Key Verse 1

 “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

**Introduction**



 One of the most important tasks of our Christian lives is that of proclaiming the gospel to people who are in the darkness and sins. To do this we must devote ourselves to prayer. In this lesson, Paul emphasizes a life of prayer and thanksgiving. Paul mentions many names stressing the importance of building up co-working relationships with other believers. May God help each of us to grow up as servants of prayer and faithful gospel workers.

1. Read verses 1-6. What did Paul instruct the Colossians? (2) Why are being “watchful” and “thankful” necessary? What were Paul's prayer requests? (3, 4) How did Paul tell them to deal with outsiders? (5,6)

 1-1, Read verses 1-6.

 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. **5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

1-2, What did Paul instruct the Colossians? (2)

***Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.***

* Devote means to “set apart for a special purpose.” Prayer is fundamental to our spiritual life, like breathing is to our physical life.
* Prayer requires a certain discipline, making time pray. It requires heart. We need to put our hearts into prayer and not just go through the motions.
* Prayer is privilege. We should thank God that we could stand before the throne of God to pray. Prayer is conversation with God where we meet with God personally.
* We need to have frequent conversations with God. Whenever we find the time and the place of prayer, we offer our prayer to the Lord.
* In fact, Paul himself set a good example as he began to write this book with his personal prayer dedication for the Colossians. (Chap. 1:3, 9-11)

 *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you...****9*** *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,* ***10*** *so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,* ***11*** *being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,* ***12*** *and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

1-3, Why are being “watchful” and “thankful” necessary?

* We must be watchful. Satan tries to attack us in every possible way. Satan is always prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
* We must be watchful or we will be pounced on and devoured. If you are overconfident in yourself and in your own strength then you will surely fall.
* That is why prayer is imperative and even devotion is beneficial in our daily spiritual battle to be watchful and humble always.
* Thankfulness is also an important factor in prayer. Paul exhorts these Christians to be thankful in all circumstances.
* 1 Thess 5:17-19 reads,“pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”
* The devil knows that pray is the most potent weapon in the spiritual battle. When we are full of complaints then we can not pray.
* But when we are full of thanksgiving to God then prayer can flow out from our hearts.
* We think that prayer is only to pray about problems. But prayer is also a chance to praise God and renew God’s grace, personally, so that we can be thankful.
* During prayer, try to remember God’s grace and everything will look different and prayer will flow naturally.

1-4, What were Paul's prayer requests? (3, 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.***

* His prayer was that God may open a door opportunity for the Gospel to be proclaimed clearly.
* Paul did not pray for himself to be released from Roman prison, but for the door for effectual gospel work to be open.
* He did not fall into the trap of focusing exclusively on himself or his own situation. He was genuinely concerned that the Gospel go everywhere.
* When we pray and are watchful we then can begin to see open doors. When UBF believers prayed earnestly under the direction of late Samuel Lee to pioneer CIS, God opened the door in a remarkable way.
* We will hear similar stories through 2018 International Bible conference through many witnesses in their mission fields.
* Paul accepted his prison as his cross and as God’s will. He knew that his chains would advance the gospel. He was like Jesus who prayed not for the cup of suffering to be taken from him. (Lk 22:42)
* There are times when persecution is a better environment for advancing the gospel than security and comfort is. Actually there is more work of God in persecution than in security, peace, and comfort.
* Paul wanted to proclaim the Gospel message clearly. Proclaim means to reveal. Paul knew that making people believe was God’s business, but one thing he could do is make the gospel clear and pray that people may understand it.
* The mystery that needs to be proclaimed clearly is that, in Jesus, God has opened the way for all people to receive salvation and eternal life.
* It was a mystery because it was hidden. It must be revealed clearly. Even though we have the Bible, we need to make it clear to the new generation.
* There are so many things that makes the gospel blurry. Our own desires, our own fixed ideas, our sins and our life styles make the gospel unclear to others.
* It has been also said that it is difficult to see Jesus because of the Christians. We need to get out of the way to identify ourselves as the salt and the light of the world through this coming conference, so that others may see Christ clearly!

1 Peter 13:15 reads,

“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.”

* In the Roman world, Paul endeavored to make the Gospel clear for each one of them. That means he needed to flexible enough to become servants for all.
* He needed to study each culture and be culturally sensitive to each city that that he entered. We too need to be culturally sensitive to the people we are trying to reveal the gospel clearly.
* Though we all live in this vast melting pot like great Los Angeles county. As we are assigned with campus souls, we have to be sensitive to California campus culture to make the gospel clear.

1-5, How did Paul tell them to deal with outsiders? (5,6)

***5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.***

* We can help others to understand and accept the gospel by being wise in our actions and in our conversation, especially around non believers.
* Part of being wise is being careful and graceful in our conversation. Wisdom also has to do with making relationships with other people.
* Not many are wise, but we can all get wisdom. Wisdom comes from the fear of God, for “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”
* Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor. Obtain wisdom from Jesus and become a wonderful counselor like Jesus!
* Live sincere life of faith. Have graceful speech. Speak the truth. Then go to an unbelieving world with the clear message of salvation. May the Lord richly bless our LBCC and CSULB group studies with God’s wisdom and prayer.

2. Read verses 7-15. Why was Paul sending Tychicus and Onesimus? (7-9) What did Paul say about Aristarchus, Mark and Justis? (10-11) What can we learn from Epaphras? (12, 13) Who else does Paul mention? (14, 15, Philemon 1:23-24, 2 Timothy 4:10-11)

2-1, Read verses 7-15.

 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29550a)] in the Lord. **8** I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29551b)]circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. **9** He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. **10** My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) **11** Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29554c)] among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. **12** Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13** I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. **15** Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

2-2, Why was Paul sending Tychicus and Onesimus? (7-9)

 ***Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.***

* Tychicus and Onesimus delivered Paul's letters to the Colossians. Apparently Epaphras, who brought the news from Colosse to Paul in Rome ([Colossians 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/colossians/1/7/s_1108007)), would not return to Colosse soon; so Paul ended up sending Tychicus and Onesimus instead.
* Tychicus had been Paul's representative on several occasions (Eph 6:21).
* Onesimus escaped to Rome. There he heard the gospel, repented of his sins and met Jesus, and now was returning to Philemon in Colossae as a dear brother in the Lord (Philemon 16). He co-worked with Paul while he was prison. Onesimus’ changed life bore witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

2-3, What did Paul say about Aristarchus, Mark and Justis? (10-11)

 ***My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.***

* These people were an encouragement because they were Jewish converts (11) actually co-working closely with him.
* Paul was persecuted by his own countrymen who tried to kill him. But these people worked with him, even at the cost of being rejected by their own people.
* They had faith. They were comforting. Aristarchus had been with Paul in some very trying times (Ac 19:29; 20:4; 27:2), and now he was with him in prison.
* Mark, who had once abandoned Paul in the mission field, was helped by Barnabas and Peter, later came back and grown into a useful servant of God (Ac 15:36-39). Mark had changed. Paul now said many graceful things about him.

2-4, What can we learn from Epaphras? (12, 13)

***12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.***

* Epaphras, was a preacher who went to his people as a servant of the Lord and was later arrested. (Phl 1:23) He was a fellow prisoner with Paul.
* He was a “hidden” prayer servant. Every church needs such, “behind the scenes” people for the church to grow strong.

2-5, Who else does Paul mention? (14, 15, Philemon 1:23-24, 2 Timothy 4:10-11)

***14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.***

* Luke the historian and evangelist was Paul's personal physician. He accompanied Paul on his journeys and recorded early church history.
* Demas was dear friend and co-worked, but later abandoned Paul (2 Tim 4:10). I’m sure Paul was thankful for the time spent with Demas.
* Nympha offered her home to be used as a house church, forfeiting much privacy and serving many. Paul recognized her offering and hospitality for others.
* Paul had such a beautiful relationship with his coworkers. Paul described them as dear brothers and sisters.
* Paul prayed for key leaders to be raised up. He honored them. He mentioned them by name. Only in Christ as we serve Jesus together!
* Jesus once prayed for all believers in 17:23, “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”
* Such unity is a sign that the work of God was going on among his people and is the way that non-believers will know that Jesus is the Christ.
* May we continue to build up such a vessel of love and co-working among us so that Jesus may be revealed beautifully. The book of Nehemiah will be studied after this chapter, for we will aim at beautiful coworking for Jesus!

3. Read verses 15-18. What did Paul say about the believers in Laodicea? (15, 16) What was Paul’s message to Archippus? (17) What was Paul’s final greeting? (18)

 3-1, Read verses 15-18.

Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. **16** After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. **17** Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.” **18** I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

3-2, What did Paul say about the believers in Laodicea? (15, 16)

***15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.***

* Paul wanted his coworkers to be world mission minded. Laodicea was a nearby city and more populated. A church had been planted there. The Laodiceans were “lukewarm” in their faith. (Rev 3:14-22)
* In mentioning Laodicea, Paul was encouraging Colossians to reach out to the Laodiceans and encourage them spiritually.

3-3, What was Paul’s message to Archippus? (17)

***17 Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.”***

* Archippus was a fellow “Christian soldier” with Paul. His message to Archippus is to complete the work he had received in the Lord while Epaphras was absent.

3-4, What was Paul’s final greeting? (18)

***18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.***

* Most people think that persecution would hinder people from coming to Jesus, but Paul’s chains were not a source of discouragement.
* On the contrary, they inspired people to give their lives to Jesus. Paul’s was continually working hard to expand the territory of the Kingdom of God, encouraging others to share in Christ’s sufferings and reminding people of the grace of God.

**Conclusion**

 In this passage we learn that we must be prayerful, watchful and thankful. We need to look for open doors to do the work of God and go through them. We need to get ourselves out of the way so that Jesus and his gospel may be proclaimed clearly to those whom we are called to reveal it. Finally, let us honor our fellow workers and build each one up spiritually so that we can be a team who can glorify Christ. Praise God!

**One word: Devote to Prayer!**