

Continue in Prayer

Colossians 4:2

03/09/2023

Joshua Koura

Camden Valley Baptist Church

www.cvbaptist.org.au

Colossians 4:2-6

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Father, we come before You and remember the text that was read earlier, that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And so, Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would see fit to pour out Your Spirit upon us, that we might hear the Word of God and rejoice in it, that His ministry would be evident amongst us. And also upon me, Father, that I will preach Your Word in His power and not in my own wisdom nor in my own strength. We come to You in the name of the eternal Son of God, the Lamb that was slain for our sins, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We come to the final section of our epistle, and here in this final section, we move from the home, the Christian home, which we had been considering over the last eight or so weeks. And we move into these final, but general charges, we could say, or instructions before we move into the final greetings of Paul, by which he will bring this epistle to a close, and indeed this glorious epistle to a close.

And Paul, in this section of the epistle, as we read this morning from verse 2 down to verse number 6, he basically gives us three instructions. One has to do with prayer, the other has to do with our walk, and the other one has to do with our talking or with our speech. So with our praying, with our walking, and with our talking. And Paul gives these as general instructions, not necessarily isolated from the rest of the epistle, but nevertheless not directly, perhaps, connected to the preceding verses that we've been considering. But nevertheless, what Paul does here is he introduces these three last instructions before going into the final greetings by which

he brings this epistle to a close.

Now, the first of these, which we'll be considering today, this morning, and next week also, is the instruction regarding prayer. As we see in verse number 2, it says, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." Now, at the beginning of this epistle, if you remember, Paul opens in prayer. He prays that they would be filled with the knowledge of His will, and he prays that the believers at Colossae would not only be filled with the knowledge of His will but they would be a people that would walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. And Paul prayed for this church, and obviously, he was continuing to pray for this church, that they would be a people that would live the life which he now has unfolded to them in these four chapters.

And even more, if we want to know what the knowledge of His will is, we can just go through what is the knowledge of His will for how we should live in the home. Look at what we just looked at the last few weeks. What is the knowledge of His will for how we should respond to even false teaching and other philosophies out there? You can look to this Word to tell us. What is the knowledge of His will regarding how the new man should live? We can find that right in this text of Scripture, that he should put off the old man and put on the new man. And what should we live? How should we live in the church of Jesus Christ? What is the knowledge of His will for the church? Well, that we would let the peace of God rule in our hearts, to which we have been called, and be thankful and sing the praises of His glorious name.

And so, what we see in this passage is that Paul begins by opening in prayer, and he says in the beginning of this Epistle, he says, "I do not cease to pray for you." But now, at the end of the Epistle, he calls the church to unceasing prayer also and says, "Continue in prayer." And what Paul is simply saying is, "I'm praying for you, but you must pray also. I'm praying for you that all the things that have unfolded to you and more will be true in your life. But listen, dear people of God, you must pray also. You must continue in prayer. What a way to close this Epistle! For many of us, we come to the Scriptures thinking in textbook fashion. If I can just get a list of the things that I need to do and not to do, and I apply my intellectual powers to those things, I will have everything right. But what Paul is reminding the people here is that whatever I have instructed you to do, do it, but cover it all in prayer. If you think we have a handle on the mortification of sin without prayer, we're deceiving ourselves. If we think we have a handle on unity in the Christian Church without prayer, we're deceiving ourselves. You see, my friends, prayer is the arm of faith that calls upon the arm of the Almighty, and all the things that we have looked at in this epistle require the grace of God for their fulfillment. You can't be a good

husband or a good father or a good mother or obedient child by simply just applying intellectual power and pure grit to those Scriptures. You need to be covered in the grace of God through the means of prayer. This is how God has designed that His work would be carried out: by means of prayer. And so we come to consider the call to prayer that is here in this passage found in verse number two, where Paul says to them, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

And what Paul simply does is he mentions the word "prayer" but surrounds it with three "how-to's." So here we say, "Continue earnestly in prayer," so the subject is prayer, but we are to pray with earnest and to continue in it. And then he talks about vigilance in prayer and he talks about thanksgiving in prayer. And so, Paul introduces the idea of prayer but doesn't just leave us without the how-to of our prayers, what our praying should look like.

And so I want to begin by first unfolding the importance of prayer, and I think that will help us with our consideration of how to pray. Prayer is in view here, and Paul gives the command to pray, and he gives the command so as to reveal that prayer is part and parcel of the Christian life. Prayer is part and parcel of the Christian faith. Paul doesn't consider prayer as an optional extra to be added on whenever we feel like it or just something that is there to make us necessarily feel good. Prayer is something that is integral to the Christian faith. Prayer is something that is essential to the Christian faith. It is not something that a few people do or that a few people are meant to do. It is something that the whole Church here in this Epistle is called upon to do. Prayer is essential to the Christian faith, and Paul gives the command to all the Church, suggesting that they should all be continuing in prayer.

You know, Spurgeon was asked the question, "What was more important: the prayer or the Bible reading? Prayer or the Bible reading, Mr. Spurgeon?" And Mr. Spurgeon, in his classic wit, replied by saying back to him, "What's more important: breathing in or breathing out?" That's a good instruction for us, is it not? We breathe in a lot of Bible, but do we breathe out a lot of prayer? And both are vital. You hold your breath for too long, you will die. And if you don't take a breath in, you also will die.

And so the Christian life is not only to be a life of Bible reading but also a life filled with prayer. It is so essential that it is seen in the Scripture as the first mark of the Apostle Paul's newfound conversion. And William Plumer says this: "To speak of a prayerless Christian is as absurd as to talk of a living man who never breathes. As soon as Saul of Tarsus met with a changed heart, it was said, 'Behold, he prayeth.'" Now obviously, Paul had been praying prior to this time as a Pharisee. He would have prayed

twice in the week, as the Bible says, and fasted and given all that he has done. But these prayers were, as the Scripture says, "he prayed thus with himself." And it's important to realize that the mark of a truly regenerated heart is that it rises up in true worship and adoration and prayer toward God. It's a prayer that is directed toward God from a true heart of worship toward Him. It's not the ticking of a box. It's not the mere duty that's being performed. There is the true communication between the soul of man and the heart of God.

And this is exactly what we need to realize about prayer. So this is not, if you don't know Jesus as your Savior here and you're with us amongst us this morning and are not yet being born again, you need to pray that you be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ and call on His name so that He may give you a true heart to pray unto Him and to truly worship Him in spirit and in truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

But prayer is not only the first mark of a Christian, but it also is the maturing mark of a Christian, the perseverance of that prayer, and that is important to realize. Prayer is necessary; it's a necessity and a necessary part of the church and the life of the church. In fact, the book of Acts, you can't go very far without seeing believers praying.

The book of Acts is a book that is written to help us understand what the church should be. This is the church filled with the Holy Spirit, moved by God, by the grace of God, to carry out the mission of God in the world. And the Bible shows us, gives us a little historical glimpse of what the church is to be like. In the epistles, we see what the church is instructed to do, and therefore we understand what she should be doing. But we have a helicopter's view in the book of Acts that tells us what the church was doing with their time, with their life, with the way that they responded to situations, and so those glimpses are glorious and helpful for us.

But the church, as she should be, is seen as a church that prays. You can't get past the first chapter unless you find this group of disciples there in the upper room, meeting together, seeking the Lord, waiting for the promise of the Father. So here's a group of believers gathered together. You move from there, and the day of Pentecost breaks forth. The work of the Spirit of God is poured out upon the church. Great things are happening before the eyes of the unbelieving world. Peter preaches a sermon by which 3,000 souls are converted, and then we have a little commentary on what the church was doing, and it says, "and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

It was one of those essential foundational things that the church was doing. They weren't just breaking bread; they weren't just there in having

doctrine, but they were there praying with one another. You move on to Acts chapter 4, where the church is being persecuted and they're being threatened for the sake of the gospel, and what do they do? The apostles get together, and they cry out to the Sovereign Lord who rules heaven and earth, and they call upon His name to do great and mighty things in their midst in the face of such threatenings, in the face of such opposition.

When Peter was imprisoned in Acts chapter 12, the Bible teaches that the church gathered together and prayed continually for his release, and God heard their cry, and Peter was delivered from prison. When the church was gathering together in prayer, God was speaking to them and saying, "They were in the place of prayer when God was communing with them and revealing to them who God had called among them for the work that they were called to."

You know, when Paul and Silas were imprisoned, they not only sang praises but they prayed unto God and filled the prison cell with prayer and praise. When Paul visits the church at Ephesus and he gathers the elders together there in Miletus, he calls the elders of the church together, and he addresses them, but he does not leave them without praying. He weeps and prays together, and he goes and may never see them again, but he's praying and leaving them through prayer.

You see, when he comes to Tyre, the same thing happens. These believers that take him in, these disciples that take him in, they're about to send him off, and they come to the seashore, and the Bible says they bowed their knees before God, and they prayed and committed Paul's way to the Lord. Everywhere you look in the book of Acts, there's prayer and prayer and prayer and prayer, in so much that when the widows, the issues regarding the widows, threatened the prayer life of the apostles, what did they say? "We need deacons. Why? So we can give ourselves to the ministry of the word and prayer." In fact, it says, "give ourselves continually to the ministry of the word and the ministry of prayer." You see, the church recognized and realized that prayer was an integral part of her life, and that unless they were calling upon the name of the Lord, very little would happen in their midst. And so they realized that this was part and parcel of Christian living; this is part and parcel of the church's life.

So we see that example of the early church, and we think on our situation or the situation of the church in the 21st century, and we see more what is the neglect of prayer than the continuing in prayer. Most Christians in our generation have little time for prayer, little time for private prayer, little time for public prayer, little time for gathered prayer. For them, prayer is something that some people like to do, some people don't like to do. But if you like to do it, do it. If you don't like to do it, don't do it. The Bible doesn't

speak of prayer in that way. It speaks of prayer as an integral part of the life and ministry of the church. And the neglect of prayer is not something that we should be happy about in our day.

Most Christians are happy to be attending a Bible study, but very few would like to attend a prayer meeting. And such prayerlessness is probably the bane of the spiritual fervor and power that is now lacking in the church of Jesus Christ today. You see, the failure of God's people to pray is a failure on the part of God's people to commune. And a failure to commune with God leads to a lot of spiritual defects in that situation.

You see, the Bible calls us to pray. Prayer is communion. And if we don't commune with God, then what is there for our spiritual life? What is there for our spiritual power? How then can we walk in such holiness if we're not communing with the Holy One? How is it that we should awaken within ourselves the realities of God's word without praying over the truths of God's Word?

You see, the Bible teaches us that prayer, as I said, is an integral part of the life of the Church, and it's not something just to be left along the side. All the scriptural truths that are seen, all the glorious truths that we read about in the Word of God become realities in our experience by means of our communion with God in prayer. It's amazing how much a Christian can know about what the Word of God says about things but yet have so little power, so little life, so little joy, so little satisfaction in God, which speaks to the reality of the fact that knowing is not enough, but praying brings to light and to life those very things that we know. It invigorates the soul, it draws the soul to God and draws God to the soul, and rejoices in the realities that God has taught us in His Word.

By prayer, God's hand draws near to His people. By prayer, God's help is at our right hand. It is by prayer that we sense God's presence amongst us and with us and working with us in our midst. By prayer, the Bible teaches that our joy will be made full. By prayer, the Bible teaches that what we ask for, we will obtain. He says in the Book of James, "You have not because you ask not." Therefore, the lack of what we have must have a direct connection to our lack of praying.

In fact, the Bible teaches in the same epistle that it is the prayer of faith that will heal the sick. If there are sick amongst us, we are called upon as God's people to pray. The elders of the church are called upon if the people call for that, which by the way is a willingness and a readiness to anoint your head with oil and pray that the Lord would heal you. But it won't come unless we pray, dear people of God. This is what God has ordered.

This passage indeed also talks about the fact that the gospel won't have such an effectual advancement without prayer. And so we must not think of prayer as something that is just ineffectual and unimportant. The Bible teaches quite the opposite: that prayer is not a disruption of the work of God, but rather is an essential part for the effectiveness of God's work, and beyond that, it is actually part of the work itself.

I love what Martin Luther said. He said, "Martin Luther, when asked once what his plans were for the following day, he answered, "Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." That was his personal commitment; that's not Scripture to spend that many hours in prayer. You spend as much prayer as God gives you the grace to spend in prayer, but the issue is simply this, dear people: Luther understood that work, work, work, if I'm going to be effective in it, it needs prayer, prayer, prayer that precedes the work. And he's praying during the work and after the work.

The Bible does not speak in vain when it talks about this same thing in the book of James. It says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). You know what the word "avails much" means? It accomplishes much. You know what God's trying to teach us here in His Word? Much is accomplished by means of prayer. This false understanding in our minds that may keep some of us from praying is simply, "If I do things, things will get done." My friends, praying is part of the doing. In fact, it makes the doing effectual, and the prayer itself accomplishes much.

What God accomplished by means of Elijah's praying was more effective than what Elijah could have accomplished without praying. And we have to realize this: that the hand of the Almighty is near us, is by us, is before us, ready to be stretched out, but it will not be stretched out unless God's people pray. And what God can do in a day, we can't accomplish in a lifetime. Therefore, dear people, realize the importance of the necessity of prayer. Prayer works, and we, here in this text of Scripture, are called to it.

Now let's consider here how we should pray. There are three things in this text that we can consider. Firstly, we are instructed to pray earnestly. It says in verse number two, "Continue earnestly in prayer" (Colossians 4:2). The word "continue earnestly" is the command, and it's a command to earnestness or holy persistence and perseverance in our praying.

Now, what this does not mean: it does not mean an extreme intensity in all our praying. That's not what this text is meaning. That we cannot pray with a measure of gentleness and a measure of residing in our God, but we must always have full and extreme intensity. No, it's not teaching this. That's not teaching that intensity is wrong, but it's simply not teaching the

earnestness. This is not simply saying there always are to have, as it were, red faces in our praying or to be stressed in our praying. This is not necessarily what it's referring to.

Nor does it mean that we are to neglect every other spiritual discipline as unimportant but just have prayer. That would be a wrong understanding of this text. Paul is not saying, "Now forget about doing all the things that I've told you in this epistle because the only thing that really matters is prayer." No, this is one more, yes, vital and essential part to the whole that must also be obeyed. And so, therefore, we must think about continuing in prayer in such a way that it doesn't also cause the neglect of being a husband, a father, a mother, and all the other things that the epistle has given us to do.

What this does not also mean is that it's not calling necessarily for 24/7 praying, because there are things that we cannot pray when we're doing certain activities that are engaging our minds. So, what does this mean? Well, it means that we are to persevere in prayer, be constant in prayer, be consistent in prayer. And what it means is to be engaged in prayer and attending to it often.

We looked at the examples in the Book of Acts for the necessity of prayer, but in those examples, there is this word "continue earnestly" which appears several times. In Acts 1:14, it says that they were continuing earnestly in prayer there in the upper room. In Acts 2:42, the same word is there: "They continued steadfastly," that's continuing earnestly in prayers also. And in Acts 6:4, when they said, "We must give ourselves continually to prayer," that is the very same word that is used here, that this is the idea of the fact that we must keep on persevering in our praying and cannot be losing that focus at all.

And so, the Bible teaches us that praying is this continuing earnestly in prayer, which is fervency, but not only fervency but also perseverance, a frequenting of the throne of grace, taking everything to the Lord in prayer, not praying when it's the last thing to do on the list, but praying before, during, and after, always having prayer and praise on your lips.

And I think we see illustrations of this, as was read to us this morning. But there are two in the Gospel of Luke that are for our consideration. The first one in the Gospel of Luke comes from Luke 18, where the Bible teaches us that there was a parable that Jesus gives of a widow. And this widow was in some certain trouble, and she needed the help of an unjust judge. But the judge was unjust, and she, therefore, pleaded with the judge. She pleaded with the judge and pleaded with the judge and pleaded with the judge. And the judge said, "All right, I'll give you what you asked for."

And Jesus gives this parable, and He says at the beginning of this parable that men are always to pray and not faint. And the purpose of this parable, therefore, is to show that this widow had an unfainting spirit in her commitment to getting what she needed, which was the justice from an unjust judge. And how Jesus finishes this parable is like this: He says, "How not God then avenge His elect, which cry both day and night to Him?"

And what He says is that this little widow, who had a troubled situation, she came to this judge in a measure of persistence. And the judge yielded to her request. And He's saying to us, "Don't give up praying." And He says, "But don't you know that I am a just Judge? And if that unjust judge will avenge this widow of her persistent praying, how much more shall God avenge His own people who cry?" And listen to these words: "Day and night." They're persevering in prayer. They're crying day and night. I don't just think that's a set time in the day and a set time at the night. That is a way to describe a life of prayer.

And the God of heaven and earth will avenge and help and assist those who pray to Him; He hears. And as was read to us this morning also from Luke 11, we have a similar parable. And what Jesus' disciples ask Him is, they say, "Lord, teach us how to pray, as John taught his disciples." I mean, we want to learn how to pray. And so, Jesus teaches them how to pray, gives them the Lord's Prayer: "This is what you can pray. Here's a good outline for you to pray. These are some things that you can mention in prayer to God."

But Luke goes on to show not only what they should pray, but Jesus goes on to explain how they should pray. And Jesus says, "I'm going to tell you, teach you not only what to pray, but I want to teach you how to pray." And He tells a parable of a man who had a friend, and that man needed bread because he had some guests that came to his house from afar and didn't have anything to put before them. And he basically goes to his friend's house next door and he knocks on the door and says, "I have people that have come. And in classic Middle Eastern hospitality, we've got to give them some food. They've come in the Middle East, and they've come. What are they doing at midnight anyway? Who eats at midnight? But anyway, the point is they're hungry. They've come on a long travel. I need to put some food before them."

And the friend said, "I'm asleep. And hey, my kids are sleeping." And they always sleep in one bed in the ancient world. And so, you know, husband, wife, kids in between kind of a thing. They had like one room. He's thinking if I get up and open the big lock on my door, it's going to wake up the whole household. "Listen, I've got my kids here. Just leave me alone." What did

the friend do? "I need some bread." And the Bible teaches us, it says he will rise and give him not because he is his friend, but because of this man's persistence.

And then Jesus goes on to say, "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be open unto you" (Matthew 7:7). And the asking, the seeking, and the knocking are all in the continuous present tense. You know what He's simply saying? Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking, not on your friend's door, but on heaven's door. And God, who is not an unreluctant friend but a gracious God that is better than a father is to his own son, will give you what you ask for.

But the parable, both parables, even though it tells us that God is not like this judge and not like this friend, Jesus never relents from the idea of persistence. And for some of us as Christians, we come to the idea of these texts of Scripture and say, "Well, Your Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him. So what's the point of asking Him?" Well, Jesus says, "Ask, and you'll receive; seek, and you'll find; knock, and it shall be open unto you" (Matthew 7:7). James says, "If you don't ask, you won't have" (James 4:2). And so we have to be careful of these things that keep us from persistence in our praying.

But the command of Scripture is clear that we are to be constant in our praying, to keep on seeking, keep on knocking, keep on asking. I love what Spurgeon says, "Heaven's gate is not to be stormed by one weapon but by many. Spare no arrows, Christian. Watch and see that none of the arms of thine armory are rusty. Besiege the throne of grace with a hundred hands and look at the promise with a hundred eyes. You have a great work on your hand, for you have to move the arm that moves the world. Watch then for every means of moving that arm. See to it that you apply every promise, that you use every argument, that you wrestle with all your might." Christian, we are to persevere in prayer.

And that is not to simply make one little prayer in the morning and forget God throughout the rest of the day. But we are to be at the throne of grace as the hours pass, as the minutes roll, as we are presented in our lives with new challenges, with new problems, with new issues throughout the day. We ought to be like Nehemiah and pray to the Lord in the presence of the king, in our hearts, even just for a moment before we have to speak a word. A life filled with prayer and a persistence in prayer to seek the God of heaven and earth is what the Christian church is called to.

Therefore, the text says here, "Continue earnestly in prayer" (Colossians 4:2). Persistence is what we are required to first have. That is the first "how" – our persistence. The second is not only our persistence, but the

Bible teaches us here that we are to be watchful in prayer. Look at Colossians 4:2, it says, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." And the Bible teaches that we are to be watchful; that's what the word "vigilant" means. It means to basically not let lethargy keep you from praying, not just to pray and be awake in the hour of prayer.

Sometimes we think of it, and we should think of it also in relation to what Jesus said to His disciples, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40) because they were sleeping and not praying. And that's true. But this idea of being watchful in prayer has much more to do with just being awake while you're praying. It has to be in regards also to our entire life, which should be a life by which we watch unto prayer.

Meaning, it's not just when we are praying, but it's also that we lead a life by which we are alert to prayer. And it's important that the Christian does not get to pray and go to prayer simply because he's been stirred up. And as long as he's been stirred up, that's as long as his prayer will last. I mean, it's very easy perhaps after a sermon like this to go in the strength of this meat for 20 days or seven days. But we must not go in the strength of the meat of this sermon.

The aim of this sermon is to drive you to go to God, who in His bosom has many blessings and graces to give to you throughout all your days. That you might know Him and pray to Him, whether you are stirred today or not today, or whether you heard this word or not this word. But the importance is, dear people of God, that God has a constant supply of coal to invigorate and put into fire your praying. Therefore, go to Him and be watchful in prayer.

Watchfulness not only speaks of that watchfulness in the hour of prayer, but as I said, we don't want to fall into a spiritual coma regarding our prayer life. Or we don't want to slump into unbelieving prayer also, whereby we no longer expect answers from God. I think one of the ways in which we can struggle with watchfulness in prayer is that we no longer expect God to answer prayer. Prayer becomes something that we do, and we leave it, and our minds aren't watching and waiting and engaging with God in prayer, awaiting the answer of the things that we have prayed for.

And we have to be a people that have this discipline, not that we go through the duty alone, but our minds are engaged to await the answer, to look and long in believing prayer. And therefore, we must be a people who watch unto prayer and be a people that pray with watchfulness. But lastly, what we also have here is not only watchfulness in praying, but we also have in verse number two, we have thanksgiving in prayer.

Praying is not just about requesting from God the things that we desire and the things that we want. We are called not only in this text to ceaseless prayer, but we are called in this text also to ceaseless praise. That God would not only have our lips in regards to asking Him for things, but that He would have our lips in regards to praising Him for things. That we would see that our prayers are covered not only with requests but with thanksgiving. Ceaseless prayer, but also ceaseless praise. Coupled with our requests must be thanking God, even for the things that we pray for.

You know, sometimes we pray about things, and we really want something. Can we stop in that prayer and thank God for what we do have of those things already? Sometimes, I just think, you know, some people pray for a job, and they need money. And that's a good request to pray. You need work, whatever it may be. But have you stopped to thank the Lord even in that prayer? "I thank You, Lord, that You've put food on my table up until this day, and that You'll never leave the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. Lord, I can trust in You. I thank You that You are a trustworthy God."

We can couple even our wants and our desires with the coupling of thanksgiving, even though we have not received the very things that we have asked for. And what we need to have in prayer is a mind that is not consumed with the things that we want necessarily, but with a mind that is more consumed with honoring the God who made us and the God that we're praying to. That what we want from Him is to reciprocate praise back to Him. And as we pray to Him, we are covering all that in praise and thanksgiving to Him.

It's so easy to forget what God has done for us. We're faced with a problem, we're faced with a trial, and the only thing we think of is, "I've got to get out of here." There's so much to thank God for right there. "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith will have patience." You can rejoice in the midst of suffering, in the midst of trial, and thank God in all of it. Can we even thank God for the privilege of prayer? Our praying is not just about supplication; it includes adoration and thanksgiving. It should include all those things because it's part of our communion and worship of God.

And so, when we see in this text that we are to continue in prayer with watchfulness but also with thanksgiving, we have to realize that prayer is more than just asking; it's about worship. It's about worship; it's about being alone in solitude with God, beseeching your Father, calling on His name, rejoicing in His goodness, praising His works, honoring Him for His character, and trusting yourself into His care. Yes, bringing your requests to Him, but as Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer

and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

It is when we engage in prayer with thanksgiving that God shadows us with His peace, where we experience that near communion with Him because we get our eyes off the things that we don't have and we start remembering all the things that we do have. And you know what the logical conclusion of that is? Praise, adoration, and glory unto the God who gives every good gift from above (James 1:17).

And so, we're called in this text of Scripture not only to continue in prayer, not only to watch in prayer, but to be thankful in prayer. Now, dear Christian, the challenge is simple. If we were to take Acts 2:42 and apply it to our personal lives, apply it to the life of the church, will we be found continuing in the Apostles' Doctrine? Yes, we've got that sorted, perhaps we think to ourselves. And fellowship? Yes, we get together and we talk, and we have church lunches every month, and we get into each other's houses and all these things. Great. Breaking of bread? Yep, every fortnight we break the bread together and we remember the Lord together.

But what would be said of us as a church when it came to the last of those: continuing steadfastly in prayer? What would be said of us if the commentary of Acts was to be viewed, if we were to view our lives in the lenses of the commentary of Acts and examine ourselves as to the church as we should be? Would we be found praying? Yes, gathered in our private closets, yes, but even throughout the day. Would we be found with prayer and praise exhilarating our hearts and rising up to God moment by moment, by moment before Him?

Christian, don't be fooled. Prayer is an essential part of the work of God. You know, it was E.M. Bounds who said this: "The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use, men of prayer, mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost doesn't flow through methods but through men or people. He does not come upon machinery but on people. He does not anoint plans but anoints people, people of prayer."

People of prayer, men of prayer, women of prayer. God is not looking for better methods and better machinery; He is looking for men who will pray. He is looking for men and women that will pursue Him, that will seek Him, that will ask, that will seek, that will knock, that will take all the artillery of the Word of God and fire all the arrows to heaven, realizing that unless God moves, there is no hope for the Christian church. Unless God moves,

there is no hope for our society. Unless the Holy Spirit is poured out anew in revival, then what shall we make of our fellowship? And what shall we make of our doctrine? And what shall we make of the breaking of bread if God is not in the midst?

There's a passage in Isaiah 62 that always stirs my heart. Isaiah 62:6-7, I'll finish with this, it says, "I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem. They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Do you know what this text is teaching us? I say this reverently, - it's the Scriptures, so it's reverent anyway, "don't give God any rest". Be a watchman that continues to beseech heaven's throne of grace. "God, move! God, work in my family, in my life, in my loved ones, in the lost that are around me. Lord, move, work!" Be a watchman that gives God no rest until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth, until He hallows His name among His people, is the idea of the text.

Until God is magnified in the midst of His people, don't give Him any rest. Christians, don't keep silent in this matter of prayer. There is much to be praying about, there is so little that is being done, and there is a God in heaven whose hand is mighty to save, and His hand is mighty to transform, and His hand is all-powerful. Let us beseech Him for mercy, so that everything that we've learned in this epistle will be true of us and of the people in our lives and our church here as well. Let us pray and come before this God of grace.