

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



COLOSSIANS: ROOTED IN CHRIST – PART 17

“Private Prayer, Public Witness”

Colossians 4:1-6

“¹Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. ²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³meanwhile 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, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. ⁶Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” -Colossians 4:1-6 (NKJV)

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND FOR COLOSSIANS

The following is some of the general background information for the book of Colossians. Let's quickly review what we have previously said about the book of Colossians just to give us a bit of context...

Some General Background Information on Colossians:

- (1) **The author of Colossians = The Apostle Paul** - The Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author (1:1; 4:18)
- (2) **An important character in Colossians = Epaphras** - Epaphras likely planted the church by bringing the gospel he heard under Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) back to his home city of Colossae (1:7; 4:12)

- (3) **Date, place and type of writing** = A.D. 60-62, A prison epistle/letter written from Rome - Paul writes this letter from a Roman prison around 60-62 AD (4:16)
- (4) **Important information about Colossae** = Small but diverse city - Colossae was a small but diverse city in Rome's Asia province, modern day Turkey
- (5) **2 key words to understand Colossae** = Pluralism and syncretism - They were immersed in an environment of pluralism and syncretism where most people simply borrowed from the religious and philosophical ideas of the day
- (6) **Identified false teaching/doctrine in Colossians** = "The Colossian Heresy" - Throughout the book Paul hints at a "Colossian heresy." However, he focuses on Christ-centered, correct teaching rather than the contents of the false teaching
- (7) **What we know about this false teaching/doctrine** = It is "not according to Christ" - Whatever this false teaching is, it is "not according to Christ" (2:8) and it undermines the sole supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus
- (8) **John Calvin's summary of Colossians** = "This Epistle...to express it in one word, distinguishes the true Christ from a fictitious one."
- (9) **Layout of the book** = Half doctrinal, half practical - Like other Pauline letters, the first half builds a rich theology that the second half exhorts us to then live out
- (10) **Relation to other N.T. books** = Ephesians and Colossians are companion books - These two books/letters were written around the same time, and they overlap greatly and can help explain one another

Our theme verse for this study is Colossians 2:6-7. This passage not only serves as a premise for this particular study, it also identifies a primary purpose for Paul's letter...

"⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." -Colossians 2:6-7 (NKJV)

Application Questions

1. Some say that since there is no biblical command or example of praying for someone's salvation, we should not do so. Your response?
2. How can we know when to persevere in prayer and when God is saying "no"?
3. What do you find most difficult about witnessing? Why?
4. How can we be more alert to opportunities for the gospel?

There are two subjects that probably cause more guilt among believers than any other, namely, prayer and witnessing. *Why do you think that might be? How do you remedy that?*

PRAYER

If you feel like a failure in your prayer life and in personal evangelism, welcome to the club! You are certainly not alone in your feeling for a lot of Christians.

Years ago, pastor Tim Keller wrote in his book *Prayer*, “Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change—the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things he has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life.”

If all of this is true about prayer, and it is—praise God—why do Christians so often struggle to pray consistently?

Acts 2:42 lists prayer as one of the practices to which the early followers of Jesus committed themselves, and plenty of other biblical passages make the importance of prayer quite apparent. Prayer is, among other things, the primary means by which we communicate with the God of the universe. It is central to developing and maintaining an intimate relationship with God, keeping us from seeing him as a sort of far-off deity who is not interested in being in relationship with us. In a perfect world, prayer would be the most joyous rhythm of discipleship that requires little convincing. But, it is not so.

So why do Christians so often struggle and feel guilty in their prayer life? Many Christians feel guilt over their prayer habits because of a combination of cultural expectations, personal expectations, and spiritual misunderstandings. Here are seven common reasons:

7 Reasons Christians Often Feel Guilty About Their Prayer Life

- (1) **Cultural and classical expectations** - Some believers hear or read about long, set prayer times—like Martin Luther’s “first three hours in prayer”—and compare their own shorter or more casual and sometime seemingly anemic prayers to these ideals.

The Prayer Live of Historic Christian Leaders:

1. **John Wesley = 2 hours** – Founder of Methodism, Wesley dedicated two hours every morning to prayer, believing ministry could not be effective without it. He often said, “*God does nothing but in answer to prayer*”, and his own prayer life fueled the global spread of Methodism
2. **Martin Luther = 3 hours** – A central figure in the Protestant Reformation, Luther maintained three hours of daily prayer and also fasted regularly. He saw prayer as essential to spiritual warfare, stating, “*If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day*”
3. **George Whitefield = 2-3 hours** – Known for his powerful preaching, Whitefield retired at 10 p.m. each night and rose at 4 a.m. to pray. His disciplined morning prayer was part of his spiritual preparation for ministry

4. **Jonathan Edwards = 13 hours in prayer and Bible study** – Jonathan Edwards spent about thirteen hours a day in study, and he did so prayerfully, so that prayer and study were intertwined throughout his day . While the exact number of hours dedicated solely to prayer is not specified in the sources, his devotional life was so intense that it is said it was “hard to find a daily routine for him that wasn’t permeated with it” He maintained daily set times for prayer, often speaking aloud, and set aside particular days for solitude, meditation, and fasting . Prayer was not a separate “compartment” in his schedule; it was woven into his work, study, walking, and even physical exercise.
5. **E.M. Bounds = 3 hours** – Bounds was known for his extremely disciplined and lengthy prayer habits. Historical accounts indicate that he prayed for three hours every morning before beginning his day. This routine began early in the day, with him rising at around 4:00 a.m. and praying until about 7:00 a.m. In his later years, his prayer regime became even more intense. For the final seventeen years of his life, he prayed four hours each morning before 7:00 a.m. and then devoted the rest of his day to writing his very influential books on prayer.
6. **William Wilberforce = 3 hours** – Leader in the abolition of the slave trade, Wilberforce gave himself to three hours of prayer daily and organized Christians to pray before major parliamentary debates. He famously said, “*When I pray, coincidences happen; when I don’t, they don’t*”
7. **Charles Spurgeon = 3-4 hours** – The famed preacher emphasized “knee work” — long periods of kneeling in prayer — as the source of his spiritual power sometimes spending 3-4 hours in prayer
8. **James Duncan = 13 hours** – A powerful preacher claimed his secret was thirteen hours of consecutive prayer, which he believed prepared him for ministry
9. **Charles Finney = 2 hours** – Historical accounts and biographical sources indicate that Charles Grandison Finney dedicated a significant portion of each day to prayer, often spending several hours in prayer every day. While exact hours are not always specified in general summaries, his own writings and the testimonies of those who knew him describe a life deeply rooted in constant communion with God. Finney was known for his intense spiritual discipline. He would often begin his day with extended prayer sessions, sometimes lasting two or more hours
10. **D.L. Moody = 8 hours** – Historical accounts indicate that D.L. Moody often spent up to eight hours a day in prayer. This intense devotion was a defining feature of his life and ministry, shaping both his personal relationship with God and the effectiveness of his evangelistic work.
11. **George Muller = 3 hours** - George Muller dedicated significant time to prayer, often spending three hours each morning in personal prayer, along with additional time throughout the day. His commitment to prayer was a cornerstone of his life and work with orphans.

**Now, how does that make you feel about your own prayer life?*

This can create a sense of inadequacy, especially if they feel they're not meeting a "perfect" standard. It may so disenfranchise us, dissuade, deter and dishearten us that we give up on prayer since we can never measure up anyway.

- (2) **The guilt cycle** - When a Christian misses a prayer time, guilt can build up. This guilt may lead to avoidance rather than action, creating a cycle where the more they feel guilty, the less likely they are to pray. The silence between them and God can feel loaded with accusation, making prayer feel like an avoidance rather than a welcome.
- (3) **Misunderstanding what prayer is** - Some people see prayer as a rigid ritual or a long, uninterrupted session, rather than as an ongoing, woven-in part of daily life. This misunderstanding can make it harder to start or sustain prayer, especially when life is busy
- (4) **Spiritual warfare and distractions** - Prayer can feel difficult because of spiritual opposition and distractions. Satan knows the power of prayer and may try to keep believers from it, while busyness and interruptions make it hard to find time. This can lead to frustration and self-blame.
- (5) **Lack of understanding God's character** - If prayer is seen as a way to "earn" God's favor or fix problems, it can become a burden. But prayer is fundamentally about communion with God, not a transaction. Without understanding His character, prayer can feel like a chore rather than a gift
- (6) **Self-comparison and perfectionism** - Comparing one's prayer life to others'—especially those who pray long hours or in public—can fuel guilt. The desire to "do it right" can paralyze rather than motivate.
- (7) **The "to-do" prayer model** - Some Christians are told to add prayer to their to-do list, which can make it feel like a task to be completed rather than a relationship to be nurtured. This can lead to inconsistency and guilt when it's not done

In summary, guilt about prayer often comes from unrealistic expectations, misunderstanding its nature, spiritual resistance, and self-comparison. Overcoming it involves redefining prayer as an ongoing, natural part of life, seeking God's character rather than our own performance, and recognizing that even small, consistent acts of prayer are acts of faith.

WITNESSING

But I said there are two subjects that probably cause more guilt among believers than any other, namely, prayer and witnessing. ***What do you think might cause guilt in the life of a Christian over the subject of witnessing and why?***

We hear the sermons and Bible studies on the subject of soul winning, witnessing and sharing our faith and usually walk away feeling very inadequate, and convicted even guilty for our lack in sharing our faith.

If you feel like a failure in personal evangelism, you are not alone. A lot of Christian, truth be known, feel like a failure when it come to witnessing, soul winning and evangelism... sharing their faith. ***Why do many Christian feel like a failure when it come to witnessing and sharing their faith?***

Christians often feel guilt or shame about personal evangelism due to a combination of psychological, spiritual, and social factors. Based on the context from multiple sources, we can categorize these reasons as follows...

7 Reasons Christians Feel Guilt or Shame in Witnessing/Personal Evangelism:

(1) Fear and intimidation

Many Christians experience intense fear when it comes to sharing their faith:

- **Fear of rejection or ridicule:** They worry about being mocked, offending others, or harming relationships
- **Fear of failure:** Concerns about saying the wrong thing or appearing unqualified lead to discouragement
- **Fear of inadequacy:** Feeling unprepared, lacking confidence, or not knowing how to present the gospel amplifies guilt

(2) Guilt from perceived negligence

Christians often internalize guilt for not evangelizing "enough"

- Evangelism is framed as a duty from God (Matthew 28:19-20), and many feel they fall short
- Guilt arises from awareness of the eternal consequences for others if the gospel is not shared
- There's pressure to meet spiritual 'standards,' leading to felt inadequacy or shame about missed opportunities

(3) Negative past experiences

- **Clumsy or coercive evangelism:** Previous awkward or forced encounters, or exposure to overly aggressive evangelists, can leave lingering shame
- **Unfruitful efforts:** Repeated attempts that seem to bear no visible results may reinforce self-blame and guilt (these even cause some to doubt their own salvation)

(4) Distorted views of God

- Some Christians project guilt onto God, imagining Him as demanding or impatient with their efforts
- Misunderstanding the nature of grace can leave them feeling responsible for outcomes beyond their control

(5) Perceived inadequacy and comparison

- Seeing others who are more articulate, confident, or effective in evangelism can trigger self-criticism
- Lack of personal evangelism skill or theological knowledge can heighten shame

(6) Cultural and social pressure

- Evangelism is often viewed culturally as a moral obligation or Christian identity

marker. Non-participation may be felt as moral failing

- Within churches, comparison to peers or leaders reinforces guilt and self-evaluation as inadequate

(7) Apathy or spiritual disconnection

- Some may feel disconnected from a sense of personal calling or emotional engagement with evangelism, which creates guilt for not acting despite awareness of its importance

Common Consequences

- **Superficial engagement:** Sharing faith solely to alleviate guilt, rather than from joy or conviction
- **Avoidance:** Some Christians hide or withdraw rather than risk failure
- **Emotional burden:** Persistent guilt can lead to spiritual paralysis, anxiety, or resentment toward God

Key Understanding

Guilt in evangelism is often a symptom of misaligned motivation or unhealthy self-assessment. Effective pastoral guidance emphasizes:

1. Rooting evangelism in **grace and joy** rather than guilt
2. Encouraging gradual growth and skill development rather than perfectionism
3. Correcting views of God as loving and empowering rather than punitive
4. Normalizing failure and unfruitfulness as part of faithful living under God's sovereignty

Christians feel guilt or shame about personal evangelism due to fear, inadequacy, negative past experiences, cultural pressure, and distorted perceptions of God's expectations.

Addressing these emotions involves emphasizing God's grace, cultivating confidence and skill, and reframing evangelism as a joyful spiritual discipline rather than a burdensome obligation.

But my aim today is not to add to your guilt... about either prayer or personal evangelism. While God used my guilt over my failure at witnessing to motivate me to get some training on how to do it better, generally I find guilt to be a lousy motivator. **My aim today is to give some practical help from our text on how to pray more faithfully and to bear witness more effectively.** The connection between these two areas is that a private life of prayer is the foundation for a public life of effective witness.

In private, we are to be persistent in watchful, thankful prayer. In public, we are to be wise in our conduct and winsome in our words so that we might be effective witnesses of Christ.

2 Key Parts to Paul's Words in Colossians 4:1-6:

- (1) In private, devote yourself to prayer**
- (2) In public, be a godly witness for Jesus Christ**

KEY THOUGHT: *In private, devote yourself to prayer; in public, be a godly witness for Jesus Christ.*

IN PRIVATE, DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER

*²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³meanwhile 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, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”
-Colossians 4:2-4*

The NIV (New International Version) translates Colossians 4:2-4 this way, *²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And 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. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”*

First, Paul tells us *how* to pray; then he tells us *what* to pray for.

2 Things Paul Tells Us About Prayer:

(1) He tells us how to pray = persistently, watchfully, and thankfully –

3 Ways to Pray: (According to Colossians 4:2-4)

1. Pray persistently - The Greek verb that is translated “Continue earnestly” (“Devote yourselves” in some translation) is often used in connection with prayer. ***What does it mean to pray persistently or pray with persistence?***

- Acts 1:14 says of the early disciples before Pentecost, *“These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer....”*
- After the Day of Pentecost, we read of the early church (Acts 2:42), *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”*
- Later, rather than getting distracted by waiting on tables, the apostles declared (Acts 6:4), *“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*
- In Romans 12:12, Paul says that we should be, *“rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, [and] devoted to prayer.”*
- And in Ephesians 6:18, Paul uses the noun when he commands us to pray *“with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”*
- Paul cites his own example of persistent prayer in Colossians 1:3, where he says that we are *“praying always for you.”*
- He adds (Col. 1:9), *“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”*

- Referring to his prayers for them, he adds (Col. 2:1), “*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf*”
- And he mentions (Col. 4:12) that Epaphras was “*always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers.*”
- In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul gives the brief command, “*Pray without ceasing.*”

“*Without ceasing*” does not mean praying nonstop every minute of the day, which would be impossible. Rather, it means coming back to prayer again and again. It was used of a nagging cough, which a person does over and over again (James Moulton & George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Eerdmans], p. 9). Jesus taught persistent prayer in two humorous parables.

Jesus Teaching on Persistent Prayer:

- [1] **Luke 11:5-8 = “The Parable of the Persistent Friend at Midnight”** - In the first (Luke 11:5-8), a guy and his family are in bed at midnight when his friend starts banging on the door, asking to borrow some bread for a visiting guest. The guy in bed tells him to go away, but the guy won’t quit knocking. So finally, he gets up and gives him what he’s asking for.
- [2] **Luke 18:1-8 = “The Parable of the Persistent Widow”** - In the second parable (Luke 18:1-8), a widow bugs an unwilling judge to give her legal protection from her opponents. At first he resists, but finally, because of her perseverance, he relents and grants her request. The point of both parables is not that God is unwilling or unconcerned about our needs, but rather that we should persist in asking until He grants our requests.

With regard to prayer for family or friends who are lost, is there a point where we should quit praying? Well, probably not until the person is dead.

George Muller began to pray daily for the salvation of five individuals in November, 1844. After 18 months, the first man was converted. After five more years, the second man got saved. After six more years, the third man came to saving faith. At the time Muller mentioned this in a sermon, he had been praying daily for the salvation of the other two men for 36 years! Just before Muller died in 1897, 53 years after he had started praying, one of the last two men got saved. The fifth man was saved a few years after Muller’s death (see Roger Steer, *George Muller: Delighted in God* [Harold Shaw Publishers], p. 267). While I don’t come near to Muller’s faithfulness in prayer, he is an encouragement to persist.

“

2. **Pray watchfully** – Paul says we should pray “being vigilant” or “keeping alert” may also be translated, “staying watchful.” “²*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*” It’s often used in the context of mentioning our adversary, the devil. After urging us to cast all our anxieties on the Lord, because He cares for

us, Peter exhorts in 1 Peter 5:8, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

Jesus tells us to be on the alert regarding His second coming (Matt. 24:42; 25:13). In the Garden, just before His arrest, He told the disciples (Matt. 26:41), *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

If we knew that a dangerous lion had escaped in our city Sunday morning and the authorities had last seen it near Bluff St., we’d all be very watchful as we left church to head toward our cars! Well, a dangerous lion is on the loose in Buda, America, not just on Sunday mornings, but all the time! Prayer is how we stay on the alert against this unseen, but frightening enemy (Eph. 6:10-18).

3. Pray thankfully - Here are Paul’s words again in Colossians 4:2-4, *“²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³meanwhile 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, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”* To pray thankfully is to pray in faith, especially when our circumstances often do not seem to be in our favor.

- Perhaps you’ve lost your job and have a pile of bills due.
- Maybe your teenager is rebelling and running with the wrong crowd.
- Your doctor has just diagnosed you with a serious illness.

Whatever the overwhelming trial, it takes faith to pray, *“Lord, thank you for this trial, because I know that it’s not too difficult for You. I know that You are for me and You intend to work it together for my good. You will use it to strengthen my faith. So I ask You to answer for Your glory and Your name’s sake.”* So we’re to pray persistently, watchfully, and thankfully.

(2) Paul tells us what to pray for = Pray for God’s kingdom to expand through the spread of the gospel – Look at verses 3-4 of our passage... Paul says, *“³meanwhile 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, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”*

Paul goes on to ask for prayer for himself. If you were in prison unjustly for the sake of the gospel and sent out a prayer letter, it would probably include first, *“Pray that I’ll get out of here soon!”* But Paul, in effect, prays, *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done....”*

He says (Col. 4:3-4), *“praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”*

John Piper points out that “One of our major problems with prayer is that we have made it a domestic intercom to call for refreshments from the butler rather than a wartime walkie-talkie to call in support for the troops.” *What do you think He means by that?*

He (John Piper) puts it like this...

“Here’s one way to picture what is going on here. Paul and Timothy (1:1) and Aristarchus (4:10) and Epaphras (4:12) are a unique team of storm troopers in the spiritual battle to recapture the hearts of men for God. They have made a strike at the enemy lines and met a tremendous counterforce. Paul and Aristarchus are prisoners of war. And it looks as though the enemy has a tactical victory in his pocket. But Paul manages to smuggle a letter out of the prison camp to some fellow soldiers stationed to the rear—that’s the Colossians. In the letter he asks them to get on their walkie-talkie, call command headquarters, and ask headquarters to fire a missile that will blast open a door in the prison wall and in the enemy’s front line so that Paul and his squad can get on with their mission to release people from the power of Satan and bring them to God. Praying for God’s kingdom to expand involves praying for the workers, for open doors, and for gospel clarity.”

3 Things to Pray For: (According to John Piper’s interpretation)

1. **Pray for the workers** - This includes those on the front lines, who are engaged full time in spreading the gospel. But it also includes all believers, that we all would keep our focus on lost souls and not get distracted with all of the worldly stuff that clouds our eternal - perspective. Get a church directory and pray for each person to be effective as a witness in his circle of friends. If you’re not on our church email prayer list, ask to be added to it. Whether it’s a need with our brothers and sisters in Iraq, Iran, Russia or Ukraine or those here in Buda, Texas, you can stop and pray when you get those emails.
2. **Pray for open doors for the gospel** - Even someone as gifted as Paul could not open his own doors for the gospel. He didn’t rely on clever methods or salesmanship techniques to get an opening. Rather, he relied on God to open the doors (Acts 14:27; 16:14; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12). God must open the door for witness (Rev. 3:8), but then we need to walk through it. When God opens the door and we share the gospel, it is powerful to save souls and transform hearts (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; Col. 1:6; 1 Thess. 2:13). So pray for yourself and for others in this church that God would open doors for the gospel.
3. **Pray for clarity in presenting the gospel** - This is Paul, the apostle who wrote 13 New Testament letters, including Romans, asking for prayer that he would be clear in presenting the gospel! He refers to it as “the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned.” He does not mean that the gospel is mysterious or difficult to understand. Rather, “mystery” refers to a truth that was previously unknown, but now

has been revealed. It can't be known by human wisdom, but only by God's Spirit. It especially referred to the truth that salvation, which had previously been revealed only to the Jews, was now available to the Gentiles, who now can enjoy right standing and equal access to God through faith in Christ (Col. 1:26-27; Eph. 2:11-3:7).

- The gospel (good news) starts with bad news: Our sins have alienated us from God. Because He is holy and just, God cannot just brush away our sins.
- The penalty must be paid. God has declared that the penalty for our sins is death, eternal separation from Him. No amount of good works can pay that penalty. But what we cannot do, God did. In love, He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. He lived in perfect obedience to the Father. His death on the cross was substitutionary. He paid the debt that sinners deserve.
- God raised Jesus from the dead and now offers a full pardon and eternal life to every sinner who will turn from his sins and trust in the risen Christ alone to save him (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4-5; John 3:16).

Praying for God's kingdom to expand through the gospel does not mean that we cannot pray for personal needs. Jesus instructed us to pray for our daily bread, for forgiveness of our sins, and for personal holiness (Matt. 6:11-13). But before we bring these needs to God in prayer, we should pray (Matt. 6:10), "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." I encourage you to pray persistently, watchfully, and thankfully for Christian workers, for open doors for the gospel, and for clarity in presenting the gospel. Private prayer is the foundation for public witness. To put it another way, talk to God about people before you talk to people about God. But then, talk to people!

IN PUBLIC, BE A GODLY WITNESS FOR JESUS CHRIST

"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." -Colossians 4:5-6

There are two parts to this... your walk and your words.

2 Parts to Our Witness for Christ:

(1) **A godly walk is the basis for effective witness** – Colossians 4:5 says, ***"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time."*** "Walk in wisdom" some translations say "Conduct yourselves" is literally, "Walk" a favorite metaphor of Paul.

- **Colossians 1:9-10**, ***"⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of***

God;” Paul prayed, “...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

- **Colossians 2:6**, “*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.*” In Colossians 2:6, he commanded, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (See, also, Eph. 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15.)

To walk with wisdom towards outsiders means to base your daily life on the wisdom found in God’s Word. In the Old Testament, “wisdom” comes from the word for “skill.” Just as a carpenter has the skill to take rough materials and craft a beautiful piece of furniture, spiritual wisdom is the skill to build a beautiful, godly life. Proverbs 9:10 states, “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” In Colossians 2:3, Paul says that in Christ “*are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*” He also has exhorted (Col. 3:16), “*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*”

So wisdom comes from fearing the Lord, knowing Christ, and letting His word richly dwell within you.

What does it mean to walk in wisdom?

- 1. To walk with wisdom toward outsiders means that we are to live in line with God’s Word so that those who are not Christians will see the beauty of Christ in our lives and relationships** - That gives us a platform to tell them the good news that changed our lives. A godly walk is the foundation for effective witness.
- 2. To walk in wisdom is to recognize that part of your godly walk is “making the most of the opportunity”** - When God opens the door, walk through it. The Greek word means to buy up or grab the opportunity. Some of you ladies have gone to a sale. You know what you’re looking for. When you see it on the sale table and it’s a steal, you grab it. Or, a businessman is looking for a good investment opportunity. The minute he sees it, he takes it before it’s gone. In John 4, there is a contrast between Jesus and the disciples with regard to the woman at the well. Jesus saw her as a lost soul who needed the living water that He alone could give her. And He had a harvest mindset: He saw the fields as white unto spiritual harvest (John 4:35). But the disciples were focused on getting Jesus to eat His lunch so that they could get on with their journey (John 4:31, 33). So Jesus made the most of the opportunity which the disciples totally missed. The foundation for buying up opportunities for witness is prayer for God to open doors for the word. Pray for God to give you gospel opportunities with people you have frequent contact with. The second He opens the door, you’re ready to go through it.

- (2) **Engaging words** are the means for effective witness – Colossians 4:6 says, “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*” Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” Here Paul tells us, “Be gracious; be interesting; and, be sensitive.

3 Things Paul Tells Us About and Effective Witness:

1. **Be gracious** - In light of Paul’s repeated emphasis on grace (Col. 1:2, 6; 3:16 [“thankfulness” = “grace” in Greek]; 4:18), this probably means that our presentation of the gospel should be permeated with God’s grace, the message that He gives salvation as a free gift to sinners who deserve His judgment. Since most people think that we earn salvation by our good works, it’s really important to make sure that they understand that salvation is by grace alone apart from any works (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:4-5). But, also, letting your speech always be with grace includes speaking graciously to others. As a sinner who has received grace, you don’t speak in a condescending or condemning manner to another sinner. You are kind and humble, letting the other person know that we’re all sinners who would be on the way to hell, were it not for God’s grace. Sharing the gospel is like one beggar telling another beggar where to get free bread.
2. **Be interesting** - When Paul says to let your speech be “seasoned with salt,” he doesn’t mean to use “salty” language, as sailors use, of course! Salt had two main uses in Paul’s day. It was used as a preservative from spoilage, which implies that our speech should be pure and free from corruption. It should show those whose lives are spoiled due to sin how they can be restored through the gospel. But, also, salt was used as a spice, to make food tastier. Our presentation of the gospel should stimulate people’s taste to want more. Learn some helpful illustrations to help explain the gospel. To explain what it means to believe in Jesus, you can talk about the difference between believing that a plane will fly and actually getting on board. To believe the gospel is to entrust your eternal destiny completely to Jesus and His death on the cross for your sins. He doesn’t need your help “flying the plane.” You just need to get on board!
3. **Be sensitive** - Paul says that you must “know how you should respond to each person.” This is where you must be careful about using a memorized presentation of the gospel. Such presentations are helpful to give you a general plan, but you need to tailor it to each person. One person may need to understand sin and judgment, but the next person may need to hear about God’s abundant grace for sinners who repent. Study Jesus’ witnessing encounters in the gospels. He never used the same approach twice. He dealt with each person individually. He confronted the proud Pharisees, but was gentle (although He still dealt with sin) with those who knew they were guilty. Pray for wisdom as you speak, so that you will know how to respond to this person’s unique needs.

CONCLUSION

Years ago, the China Inland Mission discovered that the number and spiritual strength of the converts at one station far exceeded anyone's expectations and could not be accounted for by anything exceptional about the missionary personnel there. The mystery remained unsolved until Hudson Taylor visited England. There, at the close of Taylor's message, a man from the audience stepped forward to greet him. In the ensuing conversation, Taylor learned that the man had detailed knowledge of this station.

"How is it," asked Taylor, "that you are so conversant with the conditions of that work?" "Oh," he replied, "for four years I have corresponded with my missionary friend there. He has sent me the names of inquirers and converts, and I have daily taken these names to God in prayer." Taylor realized the answer to the puzzle: the daily, specific, prevailing prayer of this man had brought eternal fruit for God's glory.

God wants us to prevail in prayer with Him concerning His plan of salvation for all people, both here and abroad.

2 Keys for Effective Christian Ministry/Service:

- (1) In private, devote yourself to prayer** - Pray persistently, watchfully, and thankfully. Pray for the workers, for open doors for the gospel, and for clarity in presenting the gospel.
- (2) In public, your godly walk is the basis for your effective witness** - Winsome words that are gracious, interesting, and sensitive are the means for effective witness. I hope you're encouraged to pray for revival and to be a part of it through godly witness.