

Devoted to Prayer

Oak Ridge Church of Christ

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by: Chris Eppler

REFERENCE

Colossians 4

READING

Colossians 4:2-6

OBJECTIVE

Faithful people in our Bible were devoted to prayer. Paul commands us to do the same.

KEY POINTS

Many people in denominations are more fervent in their prayer than are we.

Paul commands the Colossians to be devoted to prayer, to be alert when they pray, to be thankful when they pray and to be spiritual when they pray.

If we want the avenue of prayer, we must be His.

I. Introduction

A. Paul writes the following at Colossians 4:2: “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

1. Being devoted means to give a large part of one’s resources to something.
2. These saints needed to give a large part of their time and energy to prayer.

B. Some in this world are very devoted people, though misled.

1. December 12 is the Dia de la Virgen.
 - a. The event is celebrated in Mexico City by Catholics annually. Each year the participants go to one of the two basilicas, stopping some distance away. Sometimes several miles. Then they crawl on their knees, many with no pants covering their kneecaps, whatever distance they have selected to do to the Basillica!
 - b. It is hard to imagine people doing such things. I was just down on my knees busting out old tile at the house and I thought that was going to end me, let alone walking on bare knees over stone and pavement for two or three days!
2. The Muslim prayer life.
 - a. We have all seen the clips on TV and the pictures in the magazines and such of Muslims prayer in their temples. A large crowd of people on their prayer mats facing mecca and praying prostrate on the ground.
 - b. The prayer process is quite complex. They pray five times a day. Before prayer they must purify themselves through a long process that is spelled out. Then there are words that must be said to open a prayer and to close it, with the prayer largely being made of recitation from the Qur’an.

C. While the devotion to prayer and worship by these aforementioned individuals is misguided, one cannot help but to admire them for their devotion to what they believe is truth. We must be devoted to prayer!

1. Faithful men in our Bible had set times that they had set apart to go to God in prayer. Genesis 24:63 tells us that Isaac went out into the field to meditate as was apparently his custom. Daniel 6:10 tells us that Daniel had the custom of praying 3 times daily facing Jerusalem.
2. However, to us, these ideas are foreign to us. Schedule prayer? Meditate? Is that even scriptural?!
3. While no one is saying that we must meditate in a field or schedule our prayer times, someone is telling us that we must be devoted to prayer. If scheduling is necessary, then so be it! What I fear is that many people talk to God once a day, at dinner time!

D. We would do well to consider what Paul has to say about prayer to the Colossians. What does it mean to be devoted to prayer and how do I get there? Are there changes that I may need to make in my prayer?

II. Devoted to Prayer

A. Be Devoted (Colossians 4:2)

1. As previously mentioned, devotion is to dedicate a large part of one’s resources to a pursuit. Paul says Prayer should be a large part of our day. Our focus. Our one thing that will get done even if nothing else gets done.

2. Consider what is going on with Paul. He knows well the encouragement one needs from God. Look at Colossians 4:3, 10. Where is Paul? He is in prison. Why is he there? No fault of his own. He is imprisoned simply for preaching Jesus, or as he says in Acts 23:6, "I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"
3. What are we devoted to? The average person watches 4 hours of TV a day which amounts to 9 years of a 65 year life watching television. My friends, that is devotion! The average person spends 7 hours a month on facebook alone which amounts to half a year of a 65 year life. My friends, that is devotion! The average person spends 32 hours a month on the internet which amounts to 2.2 years of a 65 year life. My friends, that is devotion!
4. Why is it so easy for us to be devoted to wasting time and so difficult to be devoted to prayer? What if we told ourselves that we would spend as much time in prayer as on Facebook at minimum?
5. There are many things that we can be devoted to, but prayer must be at the top of the list!

B. Be Alert (Colossians 4:2)

1. How many of you do a good bit of reading? Ever read an entire page or more and not have any clue what you read? Boy that can be aggravating! What about driving? I remember one time when I worked offshore, I was driving home through Oklahoma City. I was really tired and there was not another car on the road, it being around 4 AM. All I know is that I remember going into the City and then coming out, but nothing in between. Driving on autopilot through OKC was scary! Our minds have the ability to do amazing things on autopilot.
2. Prayer is something that should not be done on autopilot!
 - a. When we pray, we should have invested some time into thinking about what our needs are and what the Lord has already done.
 - b. Look at Hannah's prayer at I Samuel 2:1-10. She was alert. She was careful to speak what needed to be spoken.
 - c. Jesus warns against meaningless repetitions at Matthew 6:7. Sometimes we just pray words that we are used to praying without putting thought into them. If you think about them and mean them every time, fine. However, if they just come out because that is what you always say, then there is a problem.
3. May we ever be alert when praying realizing we are approaching the Creator!

C. Be Thankful (Colossians 4:2)

1. When I was young I remember momma saying a few times that her name is not "momma can I" or "momma will you". That is because we chased her around all day making our requests known. Of course, as most kids do, we took for granted all that she always was doing for us!
2. It does not get much better as adults. Prayer after prayer where we make our requests known to the Father. There is nothing wrong with this. Paul tells us to do it at Philippians 4:6. However, if you could put your requests made in one side of a scale and your words of thanksgiving in the other, which way would it tip? I would imagine that if we were honest, most if not all of us would say that we spend much more time thinking and speaking needs over thanking Him for what He has done!
3. Looking back at Philippians 4:6 and Colossians 2 and considering other passages on prayer, we realize that the writers always speak of thanksgiving when they speak of prayer. That should always be a part of every prayer! Give Thanks!

D. Be Spiritual (Colossians 4:3-4)

1. We are spiritual beings in an earthly vessel. We think about this earth much. It is very evident in our prayers. We pray for the sick. We pray for jobs. We pray for what we view as needs. Sometimes we pray for our wants. However, when we look at our New Testament, you are hard-pressed to find instances of prayers being made for physical things. Jesus tells us to pray for our daily needs (food and clothing) and III John 2 includes a prayer for health and prosperity. Beyond these instance, the physical was not mentioned.
2. As we look at Colossians 4, what does Paul want them to pray for? Spiritual things!
 - a. Paul requests prayers that he would boldly proclaim the message and that a door for preaching be opened to him.
 - b. He also wanted them to pray that they would do the same. Notice that he goes on to tell them how to deal with outsiders.
3. While the physical is fine to request, our focus should be on the spiritual!

III. Conclusion - Prayer is reserved for the servant of God. Would you like to become one tonight? Let us not waste our privilege!