

Committed to the Cause

Colossians 4: 2-6

Today is the first Sunday of the New Year. Most have celebrated the New Year and have likely made some resolutions for the coming year in an attempt to improve their lives from the past year. The resolutions are varied, and most of them are beneficial. Many resolve to improve their health, lose weight, achieve an elusive goal, spend more time with family, and so forth.

We do not know the exact time of year that Paul had written this letter to the Colossians, but this passage is certainly applicable for the New Year. He urges them to be earnest in their prayers and to make good use of their time. Surely we all could be more earnest in our praying, and I believe that most of us could be better stewards of our time. Consider these statistics regarding a man's life.

A study revealed that an average seventy-year-old man has spent twenty-four years sleeping, fourteen years working, eight years in amusements, six years at the dinner table, five years in transportation, four years in conversation, three years in education, and two years in studying and reading.

His other four years were spent in miscellaneous pursuits. Of those four years, he spent forty-five minutes in church on Sundays, and five minutes were devoted to prayer each day. This adds up to a not at all impressive total of five months that he gave to God over the seventy years of his life.

Even if this man had been a faithful churchgoer who attended Sunday school and three one-hour services per week, he would have spent only one year and nine months in church!ⁱ

Many of these pursuits are necessary, but it is clear that those of eternal significance receive the least attention and time. I want to examine this portion of Scripture and consider the [priorities](#) Paul reveals regarding the believer as I preach on the thought: [Committed to the Cause](#).

I. An Exhortation to Pray (2) – [Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving](#). This simple phrase reveals much concerning prayer. It reveals we must:

A. Pray Continually – [Continue in prayer](#). We are also familiar with [1 Thes.5:17 – Pray without ceasing](#). We are to be in a continual state of prayer. I know that we can't spend twenty-four hours a day with our heads bowed in prayer. This has the idea of praying *frequently* throughout the day. It is living in a continual attitude of prayer. We ought to be so accustomed to praying that it is almost "second nature" to us. That is not to say that we pray in vain, or carelessly, but that we become a

people of prayer! Prayer ought to be so familiar to us that we find ourselves praying immediately when a need arises. Rather than the last effort we put forth, prayer should be the first!

- We also need to realize that praying continually involves praying *passionately*. If a burden or need has moved us to pray, we must pray frequently and passionately about that need. [1 Chron.16:11 – Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually.](#)

B. Pray Consciously (2) – [Continue in prayer, and watch in the same.](#) Paul knew there were many needs in the lives of the Colossians. They faced great adversity and needed the strength of God to endure. They had specific needs that needed a particular answer. Paul urged them to be in an attitude of prayer continually, constantly aware of the needs around them. Watching has the idea of “*arising and arousing from sleep; a conscious mind and awareness of threatening danger.*”

- Much of the praying that is done in the average church is feeble and weak. We have developed a pattern of phrases that we repeat, with little regard or concern for the urgent needs of our day. We need to be a people who watch in prayer, arousing from our sleep of complacency, and developing an attitude of earnest labor in prayer. We all face specific needs and we need to mention those specifically to the Lord. Let us pray about the urgent needs we face!

C. Pray Confidently (2) – [Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.](#) Isn't that amazing when we think of it? We typically offer thanksgiving for something we have received, and that is exactly what Paul is speaking of. We are urged to pray continually, consciously, and with confidence and thanksgiving that God has heard, knowing He will answer our prayers!

- Doubt and fear are two of the greatest hindrances to our prayers. We know that God is able; we have witnessed His mighty hand in similar situations, but somehow we doubt that God will meet our need. We need to approach the throne of grace with boldness, confident that God will work in our situation and provide exactly what we need. [1 Cor.15:57 – But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.](#)

I. An Exhortation to Pray (2)

II. An Eagerness to Preach (3-4) – The issue of prayer is still being discussed, but in his exhortation to pray, Paul reveals his desire to preach the gospel. All are not called of God to preach, but all have an obligation to share the gospel. We too ought to possess the eagerness Paul had to reach those around us for the Lord. Notice:

A. The Opportunity Desired (3a) – *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance.* Paul was bound in a Roman prison, but he never lost his desire to preach the gospel. Even while confined to a prison cell, chained to guards much of the time, Paul hungered for an opportunity to tell the good news of Christ. He earnestly desired that the church pray for the Lord to open a door of opportunity for him to share the gospel with those who were lost. He longed to tell the world of the Savior who loved them and died for their redemption.

- Should that not be our desire as well as we look toward the New Year? What is more important than sharing the glorious gospel with those who have not heard or do not believe? May we pray that God would open a door of utterance for us as well. There is much that we will engage in during the course of the coming year, but nothing is more needful than sharing the gospel.

B. The Objective Defined (3b) – *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ.* Paul desired a door of utterance so that he would have the opportunity to speak the mystery of Christ. He knew that was the point of significance. He was aware that the latest philosophies and ideas of men were subject to change. He knew the world around him was lost and undone before God. He knew he had received what all men needed: salvation in Christ. Paul was committed to the cause. He was determined to preach Jesus!

- The church needs reminded of her objective. We have become program and activity minded. We are more consumed with getting people involved and active than we are seeking to lead them to Christ. Many of the things the church does is good, but I fear we have replaced the clear objective with secondary activities and programs. Our main objective must be to present the gospel clearly, so that the lost around us can see their need of Christ and come to Him in salvation. If sharing the gospel is not the priority, we have missed our calling and are not fulfilling that which the Lord has given us to do.

C. The Obstacle Disclosed (3c) – *Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:* Paul reminded the church in Colosse that he was not free to go and come as he desired. He was bound in chains because of his faith in Christ. This is not a pity party; Paul is not feeling sorry for himself, but he does acknowledge his limitations. He is committed to doing all he can for the cause of Christ in his present position, but he would love to have been set free in order to share the gospel with liberty.

- We too will face obstacles as we seek to serve the Lord in the coming year. In fact, they will probably more numerous than in years past. We might as well expect adversity in ministry, but we must also be committed to doing all we can within the boundaries we face. All will not receive the message, all will not welcome our witness, but we must continue for the glory of God even in the face of obstacles. When obstacles present themselves, seek a means to get around them.

D. The Obedience Displayed (4) – [That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak](#). Paul was confined to prison, but that did not negate his calling. He had been called of God to share the gospel with the world. His ministry may have been limited compared to years past, but he was still committed to the cause and remained obedient to his calling. He longed to share the truth of the gospel, and was determined to do so at every opportunity.

- What a challenge that presents to us today. Many worry about what others will think if they share their faith in public. Some fear ridicule or mockery. Others fear being considered strange or not being accepted by the majority. I know we all have fears and obstacles to overcome, but who among us has suffered for our faith as Paul did? Surely if he had the desire to remain committed while imprisoned for his faith, we can find the courage to fulfill our service to Christ.
- If God has called us to a particular task, He fully expects us to engage that task. What we fail to realize is that we are not expected to labor in our own ability. If we will obediently follow the Lord, He will provide the strength and wisdom we need to accomplish the work we are given.

I. An Exhortation to Pray (2)

II. An Eagerness to Preach (3-4)

III. An Expectation to Perform (5-6) – Paul closes these thoughts revealing his expectation for them to perform as God would have them too. He addresses:

A. Our Walk (5) – [Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time](#). We are to be mindful of our walk, determined to walk in the wisdom of God. Many are heading full steam ahead in a particular direction, but they are not walking in the way that God desires. We must ensure all we do is consistent with the Word of God and His will for our lives. Let the Bible be your guide in the coming year. Seek the wisdom of God and apply that to your daily life. [Gal.5:16 – This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh](#). Walking with the Lord will prevent a lot of heartache and despair!

B. Our Witness – [Walk in wisdom toward them that are without](#). Paul knew the Colossians were being watched closely by those who denied the gospel. They were looking for any inconsistency in their faith, any reason to doubt their message. It was imperative that they walk in a way that honored the Lord, making an impact on the lost.

- We have discussed this many times, but we must be reminded of our obligation to be a positive witness for the Lord. Many do not attend church today because of the witness of church members. We must be aware of our obligation to be a positive witness among those who are without, those who have never trusted Christ in salvation.

C. Our Work (5) – [Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time](#). Paul urged them to consider the time. They only had one life to live for Christ. They had only one chance to make a good first impression. None are promised tomorrow, so every situation is potentially urgent. There was no time to lose or be slothful in. They must seek to seize every opportunity for the Lord.

- Do you remember the statistics in our introduction? The average person is not redeeming the time. Most of our time is focused on self, with God getting a small portion of the leftovers. I pray that each of us will commit more of our time to the Lord in the coming year. Many will go out into eternity this year, and a good portion of those have not made preparation to meet God. We have the privilege and responsibility to share Christ with them. Let's redeem the time. [Ephes.5:15-16 – See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, \[16\] Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.](#)

D. Our Wisdom (6) – [Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man](#). The Colossians would face many obstacles in the days ahead. They would encounter many who opposed their witness and rejected their Lord. They would find themselves mistreated and abused for their faith. In each of these circumstances they were expected to respond in grace. That is not to say that they should abandon their faith or give in to the world's demands, but they must seek to portray a godly example.

- Our Christian experience will continue to face obstacles and adversity as well. We must remember that the world is watching our lives. Often in times of despair, they will look to us for guidance or godly counsel. We have an opportunity to make a difference in peoples' lives, but we must maintain a close relationship with the Lord, filled with His wisdom.

What is on your list of resolutions for the coming year? Have you given any thought to your service unto the Lord? Have you considered your Christian responsibility with a desire to do more for Christ than you have done in the past? I know we all could improve on our service to Him. Why not come and ask the Lord to help you fulfill your responsibilities for the coming year?

If you have never been saved, you are in a perilous condition. None are promised another moment and you could stand before for God today. Why not come and know that you began 2013 the best way possible, saved and secure for heaven?

Green, M. P. (1989). *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching : Over 1500 sermon illustrations arranged by topic and indexed exhaustively* (Revised edition of: The expositor's illustration file). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.