

INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE MOVING INTO HIS FINAL GREETINGS ~ TO THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ Paul gives ~ some final instructions, ~ finishing up the body of his letter ~ in 4:2-6.

▷▷ And today ~ we'll begin looking at them.

IN THIS BRIEF PARAGRAPH, ~ PAUL HAS ~ INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS ~ IN TWO areas.

▶▶ 1st, ~ instructions for prayer, ~ verses 2-4

▶▶ And 2nd, ~ instructions for effective evangelism, ~ verses 5-6

TODAY, ~ WE'LL CONCENTRATE OUR ATTENTION ~ ON PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR prayer, ~ Col. 4:2-4.

BROKEN DOWN THIS WAY.

▶▶ In verse 2, ~ Paul educates us on ~ how ~ to pray. ⇔⇔ Vs. 2.

▶▶ In verses 3-4, ~ he asks for prayer ~ for ~ himself and his missionary team. ⇔⇔ VV. 3-4.

VERSE 2 ~ AND PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS ~ ON HOW TO PRAY.

THERE ARE THREE PARTS TO THESE INSTRUCTIONS. ¶¶ 1/14

▶▶ Verse 2a, ~ the first ~ of two ~ exhortations.

▷▷ Continue steadfastly in prayer. ⇔⇔ Devote yourselves to prayer.

▶▶ Verse 2b, ~ the second of two exhortations.

▷▷ being watchful in it. ⇔⇔ Stay alert in it.

▶▶ And verse 2c, ~ the attitude ~ we should have in prayer.

▷▷ With thanksgiving.

THE FIRST EXHORTATION, ~ VERSE 2a.

DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER.

▶▶ Exhortations to pray ~ are common in Paul's letters.

▶▶ Some examples.

▷▷ Rom. 12:12, ~~ Be constant in prayer.

▷▷ Eph. 6:18 (CSB), ~~ Pray at all times.

▷▷ 1 Thess. 5:17, ~ Pray without ceasing.

▶▶ The frequency of these exhortations ~ point to three implications.

▷▷ 1st, ~ prayer is absolutely important. ⇓ 2/14

↳↳E.g. ~ Paul makes this abundantly clear in his discussion of spiritual warfare.

→→He shows us that ~ prayer is crucial ~ to believers holding our position ~ ¶¶

↳↳against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

▷▷2nd, ~ the frequency of these exhortations ~ implies that ~ we need prayer.

↳↳Jesus is our model.

→→Lk.: before choosing the 12, ~ whole night in prayer.

→→Before teaching disciples how to pray, ~ Lk: ~~ Jesus was praying.

→→Garden of Gethsemane. ⇔⇔ If Jesus needed prayer

▷▷And 3rd, ~ the frequency of the exhortations ~ implies that ~ ¶¶

↳↳we are to take this matter of prayer ~ absolutely seriously.

NOW, ~ WE MUST BE CAREFUL ~ AND NOT MISINTERPRET THESE COMMANDS.

▶▶Not: ~~ always saying prayers ~ 24/7.

▶▶God does not call us ~ to jettison our common sense ~ when reading/studying the Bible.

▷▷Unfortunately, ~ some do.

▷▷And common sense tells us ~ that ~ this would be impossible. ¶¶ 3/14

▶▶Point: ~ prayer ~ is to become ~ a routine part ~ of our daily lives.

▶▶In fact, ~ Col. 4:2a ~ can be paraphrased this very helpful way.

▷▷Always maintain ~ the habit ~ of prayer.

↳↳Sums up all of the exhortations quite well.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SUMMARY EXHORTATION ~ ARE ENORMOUS.

▶▶Just three here.

▶▶1st, ~ prayer in the believer's life ~ is not ~ just an option ~ for occasional emergencies.

▷▷Solely foxhole praying ~ is not ~ a valid option for us. ~~ Sadly do sometimes

▶▶2nd, ~ prayer for the believer ~ can never ~ be a sporadic thing.

▷▷Paul and his team ~ were models of this.

↳↳E.g., ~ in Col. 1:9

↳↳Paul in prison. ⇔⇔ Not self-focused.

▶▶And 3rd, ~ take the area of spiritual warfare, ~ which we've already alluded to.

▷▷The constant spiritual battles ~ in which we are engaged ~ call for us ~ 77

↳↳to always ~ maintain the habit of prayer. 77 4/14

▷▷ If we are to hold our position ~ against Satan and his fellow fallen angels ~ then, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in addition ~ to putting on the full armor of God, ~ prayer ~ must become ~ a routine part ~ of our daily lives.

JESUS, ~ TOO, ~ CALLS US TO ~ ALWAYS MAINTAIN ~ THE HABIT ~ OF PRAYER.

▶▶ But notice how he puts it ~ in Lk. 18:1 (CSB).

▷▷ Now he told them a parable ~ on the need for them to pray always ~ and not give up.

PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER ~ WAS EXEMPLIFIED ~ IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

▶▶ Acts 2:42 (CSB), ~ They devoted themselves ~ to the apostles' teaching, ~ to the fellowship, ~ to the breaking of bread, ~ and to prayer.

WHY PAUL'S REPETITION TO ALWAYS MAINTAIN THE HABIT OF PRAYER?

▶▶ And why does Jesus ~ say, ~ "Don't give up"?

▶▶ Because ~ we are tempted to give up on prayer.

▷▷ When our prayers seemingly go unanswered, ~ we can become discouraged.

↳↳ Adoption ⇔⇔ Loved ones

▷▷ Also, ~ too often ~ we don't take the long view on prayer, ~ and so get discouraged.

↳↳ Drive-up window.

↳↳ Pizza Hut ⇔⇔ Today instant ⇔⇔ God works as always did (Abraham). ¶¶ 5/14

▷▷ Furthermore, ~ prayer often ~ brings on ~ spiritual attack.

↳↳ Hard work ⇔⇔ Spiritual battle

↳↳ Our sinful nature ~ wants no part of prayer, ~ and so it fights us.

↳↳ On another front, ~ Satan knows the power of prayer ~ better than we do.

→→ Pulls out all of the stops ~ to get us ~ to stop praying.

↳↳ And we grow weary in the battle.

▷▷ What's more, ~ life gets in the way

▶▶ So, ~ why not give up?

▷▷ Well, ~ for one thing, ~ the Lord tells us ~ not to give up.

↳↳ Command

↳↳ Restrict freedom? ⇔⇔ Knows what's best for us.

▷▷ And for another thing, ~ because of what Paul says ~ in 1 Cor. 15:58.

↳↳ Therefore, ~ my beloved brothers, ~~ be ~ steadfast, ~ immovable, ~~ always abounding ~ in the work of the Lord, ~~ knowing ~ that in the Lord ~ your labor ~ is not ~ in vain.

▷▷ I.e., ~ nothing we do for the Lord ~ is ever useless, ~ including prayer. ⇓⇓ 6/14

NOW PAUL'S SECOND EXHORTATION ~ IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO PRAY.

VERSE 2b (CSB). ⇔⇔ STAY ALERT IN IT.

▶▶ The Greek word for "alert" ~ literally means ~ to be awake, ~ to keep watch over.

▶▶ Figuratively.

▷▷ He's referring to ~ having an alert mind.

↳↳ Could express this way.

→→ Devote yourselves to prayer ~ with an alert mind.

▷▷ Same in 1 Pet. 5:8.

↳↳ Be sober-minded; ~ be watchful. ~ Your adversary the devil ~ prowls around like a roaring lion, ~ seeking someone to devour.

▶▶ And here in Col. 4:2b, ~ Paul applies it to prayer.

▷▷ He wants us ~ to keep our minds ~ alert ~ when it comes ~ to the area of prayer.

APPARENTLY, ~ IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW ~ PRECISELY ~ TO ~ what this phrase refers.

▶▶ It seems to be ~ an umbrella phrase, ~ covering a lot of territory.

I SUGGEST ~ THAT IT COVERS ~ AT LEAST ~ THE FOLLOWING FOUR POINTS.

▶▶ 1st, ~ pay attention ~ to what we are saying to God. ¶ 7/14

▷▷IOW, ~ don't be mindless in our praying.

▷▷Jesus warned us about this ~ in the sermon on the mount.

↳↳Matt. 6:7. ⇔⇔ And when you pray, ~ do not heap up ~ empty phrases as the Gentiles do, ~ for they think ~ that they will be heard ~ for their many words.

↳↳Pagans ~ repeated ~ the names of their gods ~ or the same words ~ over and over ~ without thinking.

→→1 Kings 18:26a. ⇔⇔ And they took the bull that was given them, ~ and they prepared it ~ and called upon the name of Baal ~ from morning until noon, ~ saying, ~ "O Baal, answer us!"

↳↳Jesus ~ is prohibiting ~ mindless, ~ mechanical ~ repetition, ~ not ~ ↴↴

→→the earnest repetition ~ that flows ~ from the imploring heart.

↳↳Mk. 14:39. ⇔⇔ And again he went away ~ and prayed, ~ saying ~ the same words.

↳↳Repetition ~ is not the issue

▷▷Don't be mindless ~ in our praying.

▶▶2nd, ~ keeping our minds alert for prayer no doubt includes ~ knowing the circumstances of life.

▷▷IOW, ~ be aware of ~ what's going on in the world ~ and around us.

↳↳Then we can pray intelligently. ↴↴ 8/14

▷▷Certainly, ~ this would fall under Paul's admonition in Eph. 5:15 (CSB).

↳↳Pay careful attention, ~ then, ~ to how you live ~ not ~ as unwise people ~ but ~ as wise.

▶▶3rd, ~ keeping our minds alert for prayer ~ would surely include ~ 77

▷▷being on guard ~ against ~ our ~ worldly and selfish desires.

▷▷James warned about wrong motives in prayer ~ when he rebuked his original readers.

↳↳James 4:3 (CSB). ~ You ask and don't receive ~ because you ask with wrong motives, ~ so that ~ you may spend it ~ on your pleasures.

▷▷Now it's important to understand here.

↳↳They were not accused ~ of praying ~ for sinful things.

↳↳But their basic purpose ~ in making their requests ~ was to further ~ their personal pleasures.

↳↳It is possible ~ to ask ~ for good things ~ for a bad reason.

▷▷It's not ~ that we are not to pray for our needs.

↳↳Told to

▷▷Their problem was ~ worldly, ~ self-centered ~ desires ~ invaded their prayer life.

▷▷We need to make sure ~ this doesn't happen. 11 9/14

▶▶ And 4th, ~ keeping our minds alert for prayer would undoubtedly include ~ ¶¶

▷▷ being aware of the prayer needs of our fellow believers.

▷▷ Paul calls us to intercessory prayer in Eph. 6:18b (NLT).

↳↳ Stay alert ~ and be persistent ~ in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

↳↳ Our natural tendency is to focus mostly or totally on our own concerns.

→→ Paul turns us away from that thinking ~ by telling us ~ to remember ~ ¶¶

↳↳ our fellow believers in our prayers.

↳↳ Another tendency we have ~ is to limit ~ most of our praying ~ to prayers for people in crisis.

→→ While that is important, ~ there is much intercessory prayer ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that needs to take place ~ before the crises hit.

CONTINUING ON WITH PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRAYER, ~ NOTE VERSE 2c.

HERE ~ PAUL POINTS OUT ~ THAT WE ARE TO HAVE ~ A THANKFUL ATTITUDE ~ when we pray.

▶▶ This ~ is the 6th time ~ in this letter ~ Paul has called on believers ~ to be ~ a thankful people.

▷▷ 1:12; ~ 2:7; ~ 3:15; ~ 3:16; ~ 3:17; ~ and now in 4:2c. ¶¶ 10/14

▶▶ As we noted before, ~ the emphasis on gratitude ~ highlights ~ the importance ~ 77

▷▷ of being grateful to God ~ and ~ of expressing that thanks ~ in word and deed.

AND AGAIN, ~ WHY THIS EMPHASIS?

▶▶ As we've observed before, ~ could it be ~ that by nature ~ we hard-wired to be ~ ungrateful people?

▷▷ We are ~ ever more ready ~ to grumble ~ than to give thanks.

↪↪ Israelites

▷▷ We take for granted ~ what ought to be received ~ with humble gratitude.

▶▶ Such is the nature ~ of the human heart.

▷▷ Jer. 17:9 (CSB). ⇔⇔ The heart is ~ more deceitful than anything else, ~ and incurable ~ who can understand it?

▶▶ That's why God ~ gives us a new heart.

▷▷ One ~ that is more than capable ~ of developing an attitude of gratitude.

OUR PRAYERS ~ ARE TO BE ACCOMPANIED ~ BY THANKSGIVING, ~ PAUL SAYS.

▶▶ Paul ~ also links thankfulness to prayer ~ in Phil. 4:6b (CSB).

▷▷ but in everything, ~ through prayer and petition ~ with thanksgiving, ~ present your requests to God. 11/14

▶▶ Thankfulness ~ is a key component of ~ a meaningful ~ and effective ~ prayer life.

▶▶ Being thankful to the Lord ~ reminds us ~ of our total dependence on him.

▶▶ And being thankful ~ for answered prayer in the past, ~ will give us confidence ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that he will answer us ~ in the present. ⇨⇨ Ps. 13

▶▶ And we have much ~ to be thankful for

AND EXPRESSING OUR THANKS TO THE LORD ~ IS TO BE A CONTINUOUS ACTIVITY.

▶▶ Recall ~ back in Col. 3:15c, ~ Paul exhorts us, ~ And be thankful.

▶▶ As noted ~ the tense of the Greek verb ~ shows this ~ to be a continual thing.

▷▷ It could be translated as ~ And always ~ be thankful.

▶▶ Believers ~ are to have a continual ~ attitude ~ of gratitude ~ toward the Lord.

▶▶ And not just in our prayer life, ~ but in ~ every area ~ of our lives.

▷▷ Col. 3:17 ⇨⇨ 1 Thess., ~ give thanks ~ in all circumstances.

CONTINUING ON WITH PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRAYER, ~ NOTE VERSES 3-4

IN THESE VERSES, ~ HE ASKS FOR PRAYER ~ FOR ~ HIMSELF AND HIS MISSIONARY team. ¶¶ 12/14

▶▶ Here I want to highlight, ~ not the content of the requests, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ but ~ two ~ valuable lessons ~ we learn about prayer.

1st, ~ PAUL WAS BOTH A MISSIONARY AND A SPIRITUAL LEADER.

▶▶ We must not forget ~ to pray for ~ missionaries and our spiritual leaders.

▶▶ Since we do not hear from missionaries all the time, ~ it might be easy to forget to pray for them.

▶▶ Also, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we may think ~ that since our spiritual leaders ~ are spiritually strong and mature, ~ they might not need prayer.

▷▷ But Paul dispels that notion.

↳↳ No one ~ could accuse Paul ~ of being spiritually weak or immature, ~ and yet ~ even he asked for prayer.

▷▷ It doesn't matter ~ how spiritually strong or mature ~ our spiritual leaders are, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ they need prayer ~ just like every other believer.

THE 2nd ~ VALUABLE LESSON WE LEARN ABOUT PRAYER HERE ~ IS THAT ~ WE NEED TO pray ~ specifically.

▶▶ Notice ~ that Paul ~ has two specific prayer requests in verses 3-4 ¶¶ 13/14

▶▶ We must learn to pray ~ specifically.

▶▶ That's why it's so important ~ to open our lives up to each other ~ 77

▷▷ and share our burdens and needs, ~ etc., ~ so we can pray specifically for each other.

▶▶ It's a tactic of the enemy ~ to convince us one way or another to ~ not ~ ask for prayer.

▷▷ If we fall for it, ~ then he ~ can work on us alone ~ and destroy us.

▷▷ I believe the enemy ~ trembles ~ when believers are praying for one another.

▶▶ So let's not hesitate ~ to ask for specific prayer.

▶▶ So to help us pray for each other specifically, ~ let's share our burdens and needs, ~ etc. with one another.

LET'S PRAY 14/14