

JESUS IS ENOUGH!!!

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Walk Wisely and Seize Opportunities!

As we pass through this world on our way to heaven, witnessing should be the priority in the life of every Christian. The truth is God's children are under obligation to do our part in directing people to come to Christ now! (*Matthew 28:19-20*) Prayer is one of the best tools available for our witnessing endeavors.

Prayer is not designed as an intercom between us and God to serve the domestic comforts of the saints. It's designed as a walkie-talkie for spiritual battlefields. It's the link between active soldiers and their command headquarters, with its unlimited firepower and air cover and strategic wisdom. – John Piper – Desiring God

Never underestimate the power of speech. Whether the communication is oral or written, there is great power in words. Warren Wiersbe says, "I am told that for every word in Adolph Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*, 125 persons lost their lives in World War II." Words are important and Jesus is The Word!

Prayer is conversation with God - not meditation or contemplation. That prayer can be verbal or mental. Prayer is "beseeching the Lord" for others like Moses did on behalf of the children of Israel. Prayer is "pouring out the soul before the Lord" like Hannah did when she prayed to have a child. Prayer is people bonded together "praying and crying to heaven" like Hezekiah and Isaiah did when their country was in danger. Prayer is "drawing near to God" as Asaph mentioned in *Psalms 73:28*. Prayer is "bowing the knee".

Can prayer change things? I personally know it does; but, you don't have to take my word for it. Jesus Himself said in *Luke 11:9-10 (ESV)* ⁹ *And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* ¹⁰ *For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*

Pray Persistently – Watchfully – Thankfully

Read Colossians 4:2 (ESV) ² *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

As I think of persistent prayer a story Jesus told comes to my mind as the perfect example.

Read Luke 11:5-8 (ESV) ⁵ *And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves,' ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother*

me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything’? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

When the neighbor said, “Don’t bother me. I’m already in bed with my kids,” the man who needed the bread didn’t just hang his head and go home. He kept knocking. He had no ‘Plan B’ in the works. His neighbor was his only plan – his only answer; therefore, he remained persistent. Jesus said that because the man persevered the friend got up and met the need.

Jerry Bridges relates on the Billy Graham website, “John Knox, one of the great preachers of Scotland...prayed: ‘God, give me Scotland, or I’ll die.’ There was no Plan B for John Knox. And God answered his prayer. He gave John Knox Scotland. Knox’s sermons turned that country upside down...”

I keep wondering why we are not seeing the movement of the mighty hand of God within our own congregation? Can it be that we are not being persistent enough in beseeching the Lord to ‘give us Jacksonville.’

Paul also told the Colossians to be *watchful* in their prayer life. The picture of watchfulness is played out in the experience of Nehemiah. When the enemy tried to stop him from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he did not just throw in the towel and cry out that he couldn’t do the job. Nor did he simply say, ‘Well, we’ll make it a matter of prayer,’ and continue on as before. He said in *Nehemiah 4:9 (ESV)* ⁹ *And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.* Use common sense! As we beseech the Lord to ‘give us Jacksonville’ we must also get busy working in his harvest field now.

Pray thankfully – Paul tells us this to give us confidence and not fear. There are so many reasons to be thankful in our prayers. Our Father in heaven is alive, alert, and never sleeps. Yes, He lives, He loves us and He listens to us! How wonderful to be included in His process of bringing others to Himself and everlasting life.

Pray for an Open Door

Read Colossians 4:3 (ESV) ³ *At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—*

Paul was not asking for his prison doors to be opened. He was asking the Colossians to pray that the doors of ministry might be opened. Wiersbe comments, “In all of Paul’s prison prayers, his concern was not for personal safety or material help, but for spiritual character and blessing”.

I spoke of mysteries near the beginning of our Colossian study. I will refresh your memory. The word *mystery* was a word that was used by the Gnostics who gave Christ a place **below** the Godhead. During this time, there were also mystery religions that were characterized by elaborate initiation rituals and secret rites. Herschel Hobbs says, “God’s purpose to save

Gentiles as well as Jews in Christ was a mystery hidden in the mind of God through the ages; but it was revealed in Jesus Christ.” A study of Paul’s ministry, reveals that the Jews listened to Paul until he spoke the word *Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22)*. Even among some believing Jews, there was a kind of bigotry that wanted to force the Gentiles into a lower position (*Acts 15:1*). It was Paul's concern for the Gentiles and his ministry to them that put him into prison.

And yet, Paul was asking the Colossians to pray that God would help him do the very thing that had caused his arrest! Would we ever be that serious in our desire to share the gospel? Paul had no intention of giving up his ministry or of changing his message. When John Bunyan who wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress* was arrested for preaching illegally and put into prison, he was told that he would be released if he promised to stop preaching. Bunyan said, “If I am out of prison today I will preach the Gospel again tomorrow, by the help of God.”

Read Colossians 4:4 (ESV) ⁴ *that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.*

The spread of the gospel is empowered by prayer. A visitor at Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London was being shown around the building by the pastor, Charles Spurgeon. “Would you like to see the powerhouse of this ministry?” Spurgeon asked, as he showed the man into a lower auditorium. “It is here that we get our power, for while I am preaching upstairs, hundreds of my people are in this room praying.” Prayer makes the difference.

As I think of our congregation, it is easy to be reminded that in many ways we are a church of little strength. We are for the most part an older congregation. We do not have wealthy people who fund our ministries. We are located in a town that many consider to be beyond our heyday. The church of Philadelphia was a church of little strength and yet Jesus said to them in **Revelation 3:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Though we may be a church of little strength, nevertheless, the Lord has set before us an open door – there are souls on every street of our city who need the Lord. This is why we need to walk in wisdom.- not man’s wisdom but the wisdom of God and make good use of the time we have been given.*

Read Colossians 4:5 (ESV) ⁵ *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*

When we accept Christ, we become ‘spiritual insiders’ because we belong to God’s family. We need to be wise concerning outsiders – people who do not know the Lord. Walking in wisdom is a reference to our daily life. We cannot act like the devil to our neighbor or a clerk at Wal-Mart on Saturday and expect them to be interested in worshipping with us on Sunday.

We currently live in a time when nothing is private or hidden anymore. However, such was not the case in the early 20th century. This story has often been told about Dr. Will H. Houghton who served as president of the Moody Bible Institute. The story goes that when Dr. Houghton became pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, a man in that city hired a private detective to follow

Dr. Houghton and report on his conduct. After a few weeks, the detective was able to report to the man that Dr. Houghton's life matched his preaching. As a result, that man became a Christian. And I want to point out that it is no matter if others do not see our actions – the King of heaven sees and cares.

We are all ‘time conscious’ these days and we can get very nervous when we feel ‘pressed for time’. Most of us probably need to be more ‘time conscious’ concerning the desperate need of people to hear the gospel. The days are short – the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We need to be open to opportunities to share the good news of Jesus. We need to be aware of those needing to hear the story and ask the Lord to open the door. We should never force our way in. Just pray for the Lord to open the door. You will be so glad that you did.

Read Colossians 4:6 (ESV) ⁶ *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

God’s people should be the most gracious people on the planet because we are the recipients of God’s grace and mercy. What a shame for a non-Christian to speak with more grace than a professed Christian.

David McFadden on Sermon Central relates, “Salt can have many uses. From the Morton Salt Company, come these household tips for using salt: Stain Removal: use salt to clean stains from coffee pots and other household appliances. Wellness: gargling with salt water alleviates mild sore throats. Soaking in warm salt water soothes tired feet after a long day. Eliminating odors: salt can remove odors from hands, cutting boards, and even garbage disposals. but the most common use for salt is what Paul references here. It is used for seasoning, so our food tastes better.”

When there is no salt, a meal tastes bland. By contrast, the Christian’s speech should make unbelievers want to know more about the Lord. **Psalm 34:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!* Christianity is not boring and bland. When we are excited about the Lord, it will help others to be excited as well.

In **Matthew 13**, Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower and He speaks of the various soils where the seed (the Word of God) is planted. Jesus tells how not everyone is at the same place with respect to readiness to receive the Gospel. Some are hard soil, others are rocky soil, others are thorny soil, and others are good soil. As we speak with grace and love, we can help people move along from being hard soil or rocky soil or thorny soil to becoming good soil who will receive the message.

We can’t know it all and if we encounter someone who wants to do nothing but argue, we may never be able to satisfy their questions and transfer them to better soil. However, this I know: We live in a world filled with desperate dying people who do not know the Lord and nothing will ever soothe the heart like Jesus!