

Christian Prayer

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Date: 09 February 2025

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[0 : 00] I think your Bibles this morning and turn to Colossians chapter 4. Colossians chapter 4, two weeks ago, we covered a passage in Colossians chapter 2, but that was a rerun due to my father being sick.

So today we are in Colossians chapter 4, back in the normal progression through this book. And I prepared to preach through verses 2 through 6 this morning. I was going to cover Christian communication.

I was going to cover communication with God and how we pray and then communication with outsiders and how we talk to them. But as I worked on this this week, it became evident, unless you wanted to be here for two hours, this is going to be just one sermon.

So we're looking at verses 2 through 4 today in Colossians chapter 4. I'll read that, follow along in your Bibles, Colossians chapter 4.

Let me pray.

[1 : 15] Lord, our prayer, my prayer, is the same as Paul's. Lord, we want your word to be clear. We want your word to have a door opened that your spirit would use it to work in our hearts, would convict us of our sin, draw us to the gospel, remind us of the saving work of Christ for sinners.

Be with us as we look at this passage. Give us a desire to see your name glorified. Give us a desire to pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. If you look at the larger context of this passage, Paul, throughout the whole book of Colossians, is setting out this multi-step argument for the church in Colossae.

He starts with letting them know in chapter 1 of his love for them. He tells them that he's praying for them. He tells them, I pray that God will strengthen you. He tells them he prays for them to be filled with knowledge.

And then he wants them to walk in the way that glorifies God. He moves into doctrine. He wants that knowledge that he's praying for about God. He wants them to know that knowledge.

[2 : 27] So he spends the rest of chapters 1 and 2 going through a very high view of Christ and what Christ has done. He wants them to know what has God accomplished through Christ and our salvation.

He then turns a corner from the knowledge about God to walking and living like God. To walk in a manner worthy of our calling, as he says.

In chapter 3, he starts off with these commands to put off the old self. To put off the sin nature, the ways that are of our old nature, and put on the new. Paul starts with the individual who's hearing his words.

Paul starts with the person who's hearing, and he says, Seek the things that are above. Set your mind on Christ. He says, To do that, set your mind on Christ.

Putting off the sinful things in your personal life. Put off the sinful ways that you interact with other Christians. So he starts with the person. Put off all the sexual immorality, the things that are personal to you.

[3 : 36] And then he broadens it out. In relation to other people in the church, Don't lie. Don't be slanderous. Don't put off obscene talk. Naturally, he then goes on to what the Christians should put on.

He says, To put on the new, Put on as God's chosen ones, Compassionate hearts, Kindness, humility. So Paul goes from the self, To relationships with other people in the church.

And then in verses 18, Paul then broadens it out a bit more, And he goes into the relationship of the house. How do families interact with each other? How does a husband and a wife and parents and children interact?

And he moves out to work. How do slaves and masters or employees and managers React or relate to each other?

He lays out how the knowledge of Christ, What we know about God, What we know about Christ, What God has done, Should impact the deepest levels of our heart, And then the ways we interact with other people, More and more.

[4 : 43] That should broaden it out. And in this passage, He broadens it out further. He says, I want you to pray for me, Because I'm taking the gospel throughout the world. I'm sharing the gospel.

He says, Continue, God would open the door for the word. He wants the people who are hearing the gospel, To hear it, But that it would be successful.

And as I was preparing to preach, Well, as I've preached on this book the past few years, I felt varying levels of confidence and conviction, Or comfort and conviction, Based on the topic that we've covered.

It's probably pure pride, But I felt pretty comfortable talking about marriage. I've got a great marriage. I've got a great wife. I feel comfortable, After 16 years, Talking about how marriage functions well.

But I felt less comfortable talking about Parenting. Because I see my own failures as a parent. I see the ways that I sin against my children Quite frequently.

[5 : 48] Then when it came to Slaves and Masters, Again, I felt confident. I felt that I like studying leadership. I like understanding what it means to be a good employee And a good manager.

And then I came to this chapter. And Paul says, Continue steadfastly in prayer. And I felt the most conviction and fear Standing before you, Talking about how to pray well.

Because honestly, Prayer is a struggle for me. I've struggled with it even this week. While I've prepared a message on prayer, My mind seemed pulled away.

Multiple things came up. Multiple issues came up. Distractions of my own doing came up. So I say all of that not to make you pity me. But because like Paul, I need you to pray for me.

But more importantly, I don't think I'm the only person in the room That struggles with prayer. I don't think I'm the only person That struggles to find time. Or to prioritize it.

[6 : 53] Or to understand what God calls us to do When he calls us to pray. So my hope, With the power of the Holy Spirit, Is that we get an understanding Of Paul's commands here.

And then with the Spirit, Put to death the things that hinder Our prayer. Repent of our apathy. Repent of our Lack of Pursuit of God.

And then we pray as God commands us. So to do that, We'll look at, Really, Paul's Commands to pray. We'll look at, What he tells the people in Colossae to pray for.

And finally, We'll apply this to, How do we pray as people with our Busy, Distracted lives. We'll start off with the, The fact that we're commanded to pray.

Paul says this is an imperative. Continue Steadfastly in prayer. Being watchful in it With thanksgiving. Paul's command to this church Is to continue Steadfastly In prayer.

[7 : 59] Some other translations might phrase this, Be devoted to prayer. Or just continue In prayer. But he's instructing them To persist. To push forward.

To make it an effort. To be watchful in prayer With thanksgiving. This exhortation At the end of this book Really mirrors The, Paul's own statements He made in the beginning.

He says in Colossians 1, We always Thank God, The Father of our Jesus Christ, When we pray for you. And then in Colossians 1, 9, He says, And so from the day we've heard, We have not ceased To pray for you.

Asking that you may be Filled with the knowledge Of his will In all spiritual wisdom And understanding. Remember, We've looked at this book Over many years, But they most likely Read this book In its entirety.

When it was received in Colossae, It takes about 10 minutes To read the whole thing In English. So they would have just heard Just moments ago, Paul saying, I always pray for you. I always thank God for you. And then now they're coming At the end of this book And Paul is saying, Now you always Continue in prayer.

[9 : 07] Pray for me. He's asking them To do the same For him. Paul wrote a similar command To the church In Ephesus.

In Ephesus 6, 18, He says, Praying at all times In the spirit With all prayer And supplication To that end, Keep alert With all perseverance Making supplication For all the saints.

Here in Colossians 4, It's a somewhat Abrupt statement. Why do we go From household codes And slaves and masters To prayer? And it's really Instructions On how you continue Living out, Putting to death The things that are earthly And putting on The things of Christ.

Fixing your mind On heavenly things. See, Paul calls us To continue steadfast, To persist, To have supplication At all times. And it's really, It's a call to action.

He says, Praying at all times, And he really is telling them, Persist. Push. Make it an effort. Do the work That is required To continually Be in prayer.

[10 : 20] Now, When do you need To tell someone To persist? When do you need To tell somebody, You need to keep going. Doesn't it usually mean That something That something Doesn't come easy?

It takes work To do something To persist in it. It takes focus. It takes putting aside Things that are actually easy To do something That's not easy.

Right? Have you ever had to tell someone To persist in eating their cake? Or persist in watching TV? Persist in relaxing. No, It doesn't take persistence To serve ourselves.

It doesn't take steadfastness To sit in bed And scroll on your phone. It doesn't take steadfastness And persistence To spend hours Watching TV. It doesn't take persistence To make sure your schedule Is clear So that you can relax And have that leisure That we so strongly crave.

But the good things In our life The physical things The spiritual things The discipline The exercise The things that are good for us The things that we need To be healthy people And healthy Christians Those are the things That take self-denial Perseverance And steadfastness.

[11 : 38] Given the choice Between prayer And something easy Or fun Like scrolling on my phone Or taking a nap To me Prayer too often Easily gets to second place.

I look back over my life At the times When I've prayed the hardest. When I felt like I've persisted in prayer. And it's those times When everything Gets stripped away.

When life and death Are in the balance. When there's nothing Else you can do But run to God. When it seems like Everything in life Has gone off course. It's easier To persist In prayer.

It's those times When my true helplessness And dependence on God Is tangible. And evident. It's those times That it's easy To persist in prayer.

It's almost impossible Not to pray. I'd imagine that's true For most of you. Prayer becomes easier. Steadfastness. Pursuit of God.

[12 : 40] And prayer becomes easier. When you realize That's all that you have To yourself. But in 99% Of all the other times In our life. The day to day life stuff When life's going okay.

And things are okay. And you have the money To pay the bills. And the car is working. Your kids are healthy. Steadfastness Becomes harder.

It's easy to throw A few sentences Out here and there As a quick prayer And move on. Or we'll plan To do it later. We'll pray Maybe tonight Or we'll pray tomorrow Or we'll do better At getting up early tomorrow And tomorrow Becomes tomorrow And tomorrow Maybe And I hope But maybe I'm the only one That struggles Here But I don't think so I would guess That most of you Many of you If I asked you To grade your prayer life Would express Many of the same struggles I think Paul recognizes that He gives this command To pray But then he helpfully Adds on Two other statements He says that we should be Watchful In prayer With thanksgiving The command To be watchful In prayer Is helpful Because when we aren't Watchful In our prayer When we're not intentional When we're not Watching and alert Coming to God Is easy To drift off It makes it easy To just not pay attention

If it's only the difficult times That drive us to prayer That being watchful In prayer means I'm alert And looking for ways And things to pray for If I'm watchful In prayer I don't need emergencies To bring me to Christ To pray It's not just The next tragedy That pushes me Into watchful prayer I remember Driving home From work one day On 80 And I was behind A pickup truck I kept going From shoulder To shoulder Hitting rumble strips Jerking back Into the lane And go off There's shoulder Rumble strips And I wanted To be past This truck Because I didn't Want it to Wreck and hit me So I passed it And as I look over There are two guys Who are trying To stay awake They are Nudging each other Their eyes are wide open They're trying To stay awake But I could see them Fighting to keep Their eyes open Every rumble strip Every bump That wasn't supposed To be in the road Would wake them up And they would be

Alert They would be Ready to focus But then when They were driving And things were Going okay They would nod Back off Once the immediate Danger Once the adrenaline Passed They stopped Being alert Their alertness Went back To normal And they drifted Off to sleep They failed To remain alert They failed To remain watchful Mark records A similar scene Of sleepy people Unable to stay alert When they were told to Unable to stay watchful In the garden Of Gethsemane We read just up To that point In our reading This morning Jesus had just Finished telling His disciples They were all Going to leave him They were all Going to depart him They were all Going to abandon him And he tells In Mark That Peter Would deny him Three times The people Had to sense Something was coming They had to know There was something Different They had just done The Passover Jesus said

[16 : 08] Someone was going To betray him They had to sense There was something Different about tonight They go to the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus is distressed He tells them He's sorrowful Even unto death And he tells them To stay and watch And he walks away There's his words Still ringing in their Mind Stay and watch And he walks away And he falls to the Ground And he starts praying That God would remove This cup of wrath He was about to drink But he submits To the will of the Father He walks back to his Disciples And what does he find He finds the people Who are closest to him Asleep Their masters Distressed Looking into the Cup of God's wrath He's about to consume And he finds them Asleep He rebukes them He told them To remain there And watch Keep alert Watch and Keep alert But now he says

To them Watch and pray Mark 14 37 and 38 Jesus is talking And he says Simon Are you asleep? Could you not Watch one hour?

Watch and pray That you may not Enter into temptation The spirit indeed Is willing But the flesh Is weak Watch and pray He says Watch and pray That you may not Enter into temptation Because the spirit Is willing But the flesh Is weak Jesus comes back Two more times All three times He finds that They are no longer Watching and praying But they are again Sleeping Jesus says What we painfully As humans Experience The spirit Is willing But our flesh Is weak Jesus prayed For hours Knowing what Was coming Anticipating That doom That was coming When he was Faced with his Impending death He was steadfast He was Watchful in prayer He pursued The face of the Father The disciples However Like us Even though They were warned Of the impending Doom Weren't alert They weren't

Watchful Well you might Ask how How is that Helpful How is Paul's Statement To be watchful In prayer Helpful to us How does that Help us Remain steadfast Well First Knowing that Our flesh Is weak Knowing that The simplest thing Can distract us From prayer Allows us to be Alert and watchful For those distractions During our prayer Knowing you've got A problem Is the first step Towards repenting Of it Right Is your flesh Weak Do your phone Notifications And social media Distract you When you try to Pray But in a different Room Walk away From your phone Is your flesh Weak When you try to Pray sitting up In bed Or laying in bed You fall asleep Be watchful Be alert Move to a room Where you can Stand up Or sit In a place That will keep You awake Does your weak Flesh Cause you to Drift off course While you're Praying And before you Know it

You're thinking About the budget Or the car The kids The work Who's going to Win the Super Bowl Pray out loud Pray out loud I found That I was able To pray through An entire Wednesday night Prayer list Allowed On my 35 minute Drive to work Just by praying Verbally It feels awkward At first To talk When there's Nobody there But those Have been Some of The best Times of Prayer When I'm Speaking Uninterrupted Because it's Easier To get Distracted When you're Being quiet Right You talk To yourself Next thing You know You're thinking About this And that And that But when You're Speaking You have To stop And pause Speaking To stop Praying It's much Harder To get Distracted When you're Talking Out loud Now these Aren't Commands I'm not Telling you You have To speak Out loud Or you Have to Go someplace Else!

[20 : 13] Find the Things that Help you Pray With a Watchful Spirit So knowing Our weak Flesh Can cause Us To distract Us The second Way That Paul Says being Watchful And alert Is a Help Is that It reminds Us that We don't Need to And that We should Not wait Until those Emergency Life altering Situations Happen to Us to Praying If we're Watchful If we're Keeping Alert for All the Ups and Downs That might Come We should Be Continuous In Prayer Because we Know that We've Been Surprised By Difficulty But even Outside of Difficulty There are Things that We need To pray For There are Plenty of Routine Things On your Wednesday Night Prayer list That you Could pray For Every day Without Needing to Have some Emergency Pull you Into Prayer You Can Pray For The Spread Of The Gospel Which We'll Talk About In Just a Second You Can Pray That The Gospel Goes Out

In Success Jesus' Command to The Disciples Was to Watch And pray That you Don't Enter Into Temptation We're Going to Struggle With Sin And Temptation All Of Our Life Until The Day We Die If We Want To Put Sin To Death If We Want Increase Victory Spend Ten Minutes A Day In Prayer Just Verbal Whatever Ten Minutes Journaling Prayer And See How Your Attitude Towards Sin Changes See Other Things That Used To Draw You The Sinful Evil Things Those Sexual Immorality The Impurity The Passions Evil Desires Covetousness See How Those Things Feel After You Spent Time With God Our Prayer Life Will Make Us By Necessity Hate Our Sin More Paul Wraps Up His Commands Related To The Motivation And Method

Of Prayer With The Command That Our Watchful Continuous Prayer Should Be Done With Thanksgiving Remember We Talked When Paul Prayed For The Church In Colossae He Says We Always Thank God The Father Of Our Lord Jesus Christ When We Pray For You In Verse 12 He Says!

I'm Always Praying That You Would Give Thanks To The Father Who Has Qualified You To Share In The Inheritance Of The Sons In Light Thankfulness To What God Has Done Is A Powerful Catalyst To Improving Your Prayer Life Paul Spent Multiple Chapters In Colossians And Ephesians Talking About What Has God Done Through Christ The Glories Of Christ The Preeminence Of Christ And Paul Says That Should Move Us Towards!

Thankful Prayer We Should Be Praying Thankfulness If You Struggle To Make Time To Pray If You Struggle To Stay Focused In Your Prayer It's Time To Revisit Colossians Chapter Three Where Paul Says If Then You've Been Raised With Christ Seek The Things That Are Above Where Christ Is Seated At The Right Hand Of God Set Your Mind On Things That Are Above Not On Things That Are On Earth Remind Yourself Of What God Has Done Remind Yourself Of This Gospel That God Has Transferred You From This Kingdom Of Darkness Into His Kingdom Of His Beloved Son Remind Yourself Of The Truth Of Second Corinthians 5 21 That Says For Our Sake He God Made Him Christ To Be Sin Who Knew No Sin So That In Him We Might Become The Righteousness Of God Rehearse

[24 : 16] And Thankful And Steadfast Prayer That We Were Dead In Our Sins We Were Destined For Hell But God Being Rich In Mercy! Because Of The Great Love With Which He Loved Us Even When We Were Dead In Our Trespasses Made Us Alive Together With Christ By Grace You Have Been Saved The Gospel's Good News Should Be The Heartbeat And The Power Behind Our Prayers They Should Be That Which Breathes Life Into The Hearts That Were Once Dead But Are Now Alive In Christ Thankfulness For What God Has Done For Us And Others Should Be A Big Part Of What Encourages Us To Pray It Should Shape Our Prayers Many Of The Times We Pray We Pray For Things That Need To Be Done We Pray For Supplications We Pray For Requests We Give God Requests Requests For God To Do Something To To Accomplish

Something But Even During That Fact We Can Come Before! God In Thankfulness Even Thankfulness That Gospel And Its Impact To Us Should Have A Positive Impact On How And Why We Pray But Should Also Motivate Us To Pray For People Who Have Not Heard The Gospel To To Pray For The Power Of The Gospel To Go Out Through The World And That's Paul's Second Point In Colossians Chapter Three Four Verse Three He Says 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 That I May Make!

It Clear Which Is To Earlier in Ephesians, Paul had said what this mystery of Christ was.

He says, This mystery is that Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. He asks these churches to pray that the gospel would have freedom to spread to all people.

They would have the ability to spread the good news that the Gentiles are fellow heirs. They would be able to communicate and proclaim and declare the gospel in bold, clear ways.

- [27 : 25] Paul wants this church to pray for the propagation of the gospel. After Paul became a Christian, he made it his life's sole purpose to boldly preach the gospel.

In Acts 9, we're told that when he came back to Damascus, he preached boldly in the name of Christ, in the name of Jesus. And you know Paul's stories.

He's traveled on multiple missionary journeys. He's been whipped, stoned, jailed, shipwrecked, all for the sake of proclaiming the mystery of Christ.

Hardship after hardship, it was all counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Paul had an amazing desire and drive to spread the gospel.

But he asked that these churches would pray that his efforts of spreading the gospel would be met with open doors. He wants the gospel to spread, but he recognizes the gospel spreads because God opens doors.

- [28 : 24] The apostle that's been commissioned by Christ needed those people that were saved by Christ to pray for the success of the gospel of Christ.

The apostle of Christ needed the people who were saved by Christ to pray for the success of the gospel of Christ, for the salvation of those who've been called by Christ.

And certainly, therefore, if the apostle needed them to pray for it, we do too. We need to pray for it. It should be our motivation to pray for the propagation and spread of the gospel.

Is your flesh weak? If your flesh is weak and you don't know what you should pray for, if you don't know what your focus of prayer should be, pray for an open door of the gospel.

Pray that when the word is preached, people's hearts receive it. Pray for your church. Pray for its pastors. Pray for its missionaries. Pray that the gospel goes out in their open doors, that it spreads throughout the world.

- [29 : 31] Paul then asks for prayer in verse 4 to declare the mystery of Christ clearly. He wants it to be clear in his speaking and preaching. In Ephesians he says that he wants to proclaim it boldly.

See, Paul was a very educated, smart man. If you read any of his biographies, he had a lot of classic training, very smart. And he had the ability to make people feel dumb.

Not that he did that, but he could have made people feel dumb. Some people work really, really hard to sound smart. They want to use lots of big words.

They want to sound educated. And Paul's prayer request was that he would make the gospel clear. I've heard people say that you don't understand something until you can explain it to a five-year-old.

How would you explain the gospel, this mystery of Christ, to a five-year-old? Could you do it in a single sentence? How much work would you have to take to craft a few sentences that are not complicated, but are still biblically accurate?

- [30 : 39] I asked AI to define the gospel in smart academic terms. It took seven paragraphs and used words like post-lapsarian and vicarious atonement and meritorious obedience.

And those are powerful words that would be fun to unpack, but they aren't clear to everyone, let alone a five-year-old. So I asked AI to define the same theology, but how do we make it clear to a five-year-old?

And this is what it said. God made the world and loves it very much, but people disobeyed him and brought sin and sadness into the world. Because God loves us, he sent Jesus to rescue us by dying on the cross and coming back to life so we could be forgiven and be part of God's family forever.

One day, Jesus will come back and make everything new and perfect again. And so then, we love God, love others, help make the world better. Now, AI is not the Holy Spirit, but how do we make the gospel clear?

How do we proclaim it? How do we pray that those who are proclaiming it can make it clear? Not throw big buzzwords in. That's been Paul's prayer.

[31 : 59] Paul's prayer is that he preaches the gospel clearly and boldly. And it should be our prayer too. Paul's desire is that the gospel goes out clearly. He can speak it in ways that are evidently and clearly the gospel.

In spite of the fact that it was the gospel that put him in prison. He's asking, I'm in prison because I preach the gospel, so please pray that I can preach the gospel even better.

He's chained to a guard, in prison because of his preaching, asking people to pray for him to preach better. If the apostle Paul needs people to pray for him to proclaim the work of God clearly, how could we think that we're strong enough or spiritual enough to do the work that God's called us to do in our home and in our churches and our work and our life without praying ourselves and others praying for us?

If Paul needed prayer from these churches, then so do your pastors. So do your missionaries. So do the churches that we pray for every week. Paul recognizes that prayer is the means that God has ordained to accomplish his plan.

Prayer is the way. It's the means that God has ordained to accomplish his plan. God desires the gospel to spread, and he's commanded people to do the work of spreading it.

[33 : 28] And God commands here through Paul that people pray for his messengers to share the gospel. If your flesh is weak and you don't know what to pray for, pray for your pastors.

Pray for your missionaries. Pray for the Sunday school teachers who talk to your children. Pray for your own gospel discussions. Pray for your own gospel. It would be clear and bold regardless of the consequences.

Now, I've tried to make most of this sermon application already, but I want to spend a few minutes applying this and thinking through some of these questions because we can talk easily about the theology of why we should pray.

But I want us to think and ask ourselves, why don't we pray? Why don't we pray? So I've got a bunch of reasons that I've put down.

Some of these are from D.A. Carson's book, *Praying with Paul*. Some of them are from my own. But why don't we pray? Maybe the first reason is we say we're too busy.

[34 : 37] Our anxiety maybe overpowers our basic needs. Do you ever skip to meal because you felt you were too busy to do something? In Luke 10, the story of Mary and Martha, they're at Mary and Martha's house.

They're together for a meal. And Martha is anxiously, busily working and making food and cleaning and getting things ready for lunch. And Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet.

And Martha complains and asks Mary to help. Jesus replies, Martha, Martha, you were anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.

See, we make time for what's important to us. If we don't feel like we have time to pray, then we don't prioritize prayer. It's not important to us.

So we don't pray because we're too busy to pray. Maybe we'd say, I don't need to pray because God is sovereign, right? God's in control. He'll do whatever he wants to do.

[35 : 43] Sometimes we get so caught up in one area of theology that we neglect others. If we don't pray because we think it doesn't matter and that God will do whatever he desires, however and whenever he wants, then we've forgotten that the sovereign God has ordained both means and end.

He's ordained both the way it's going to accomplish and the result of the method, the method and the result. God ordains things to happen in response to our prayers.

So pray, trusting that God has planned and ordained for you to pray. He's commanded you to pray and he's ordained for you to pray. Maybe we feel too dry spiritually to pray.

And this reason and the one following both start with this phrase, I feel. I feel. I feel. As if we need to feel a certain way or a certain thing before we can go to God.

This might be an excuse. I don't feel like I'm at that point where I can pray. But it makes us the judge of whether we pray or not. It makes us the decider of whether God gets obeyed or not based on our mood swings.

[37 : 05] It makes us the one who decides instead of obeying what God has called us to do. If you don't feel like praying, pray to God the things that you are feeling.

The Psalms are full of lament. They're full of prayers where maybe God feels distant. Maybe God feels far away. And the psalmist is not content to just not praying.

God knows how you feel, how you're spiritually dry, you feel, the struggles you have. You aren't going to surprise him with your fears, your lament.

So go to God. Pray the things that you're feeling. Maybe you say, I don't really feel a need to pray. I don't feel like it.

I don't know. Well, maybe this is somewhat similar to feeling too dry spiritually. This is a case of feeling like prayer is not something you need to do.

[38 : 10] Maybe you don't need to do. Maybe other people should pray and maybe you pray on occasion, but life's going fine. God's been good. I haven't prayed and God's still giving me blessings.

Why should I pray? God hasn't needed my prayers yet. The danger is this is exactly the opposite. of steadfast, watchful prayer. It may be that God will bring you into a situation where you realize you have to pray and that won't be comfortable.

Our passage here is a warning against this feeling that you don't need to pray. We're called to pray. Maybe you're too bitter to pray.

If we live in this world, we're going to see people that are sin against us. Most of the times it'll be minor things. We'll forget about it. But sometimes there's someone who does something so heinous, so hurtful, we retreat into bitterness.

Sometimes that bitterness is even at God. And it may cause us to skip prayer because we know bitterness is wrong. and I'm going to go talk to God who I'm bitter at and I feel uncomfortable praying while bitter.

[39 : 31] God calls us to forgive others as we've been forgiven. He calls us to get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger. So when we forgive somebody, we're not saying that what they did was okay.

We're not saying it doesn't matter. We're not even saying the relationship is going to be back the way it should be. But if I'm bitter and too bitter to pray, then I'm holding on to things that God said he would judge.

Forgiveness releases any claim that I have on revenge or vengeance and entrusts God to be the rightful judge. So if you're too bitter to pray, trust that God will be just.

Maybe you're too ashamed to pray. Maybe you're like Adam and Eve in the garden. When they hear the voice of God, they hide. Sin makes us hide from God.

And if your sin keeps you from prayer because you feel guilty, remember there's nothing that's hidden from God. God is not surprised by your sin.

[40 : 38] But also remember the truth and the good news of the gospel. That Christ Jesus came to save sinners of which you may feel like you're the chief.

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. So if you struggle to pray because you're ashamed, may your first prayer be one of repentance and then thankfulness to God for his grace and his forgiveness.

Maybe your reason is, I don't trust that God's going to give good answers. I don't trust God's answers to prayer. Sometimes we avoid prayer because we're worried about what God might do.

Maybe he'll do the opposite of what I pray. Maybe he'll do nothing. Maybe he'll answer, but he'll answer in a painful way. But this misses the mark of who God is and what God's called us in two different ways.

First, it makes me the judge of what's good and appropriate. It makes me the decider of I prayed this and God did the opposite and so I don't like it so I'm not going to go to God because I'm afraid he's going to not do what I ask.

[41 : 48] It makes me the judge of what's good and appropriate. But it also presents this superstitious view of a God that just can't wait to jinx us. That's kind of looking for something to just step on our toes.

Just maybe wants to mess with us a little bit. That's not compatible with how Jesus describes God as a father that gives good gifts.

His gifts may be the gift of discipline. It may be the gift of blessings. But our God is a God that's too good to be unkind. We can trust his answers.

Maybe I'm just content. Content to be mediocre. Maybe you don't pray because you're content with the state of your spiritual life. You like that people think you're a Christian.

You enjoy coming to church. But maybe that is the extent of your spiritual life. Maybe your spiritual life only happens for an hour on Sunday. James warned Christians not to live nominal mediocre lives.

[43 : 00] In James 4 he says submit yourselves therefore to God resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners.

Purify your hearts you double minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

If that's your extent of your spiritual life your Sunday morning attendance maybe that's why you don't pray.

The final reason is maybe we're not a believer. Maybe the final reason for not praying is that you don't even know who this God is we're talking about. Maybe you're like Pharaoh when Moses told him to let the Israelites leave.

Pharaoh said who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord and moreover I will not let Israel go. If that's true of you if you don't know the Lord and you want to if you want to know this God who's given himself to save sinners talk with me.

[44 : 08] Talk with one of the elders. Talk to somebody next to you. Ask how you can know the God who created all things. As we close I want us to remember that God's called us to pray and sometimes those things may take baby steps.

It may be that if you struggle to pray you just need to pray a hymn or sing a song in worship to God. Pray a psalm. Pick a psalm read through it pray it pray it directly use parts of it to shape your prayer.

Pray the Lord's Prayer. The church has prayed this for thousands of years. Pray one of Paul's prayers that we've read. Start a timer on your phone and pray for one minute straight.

Increase that until you've built the habit of being watchful and steadfast. Remind yourself of the gospel and pray with thankfulness. If at this point you feel discouraged if you feel like you'll never get the prayer life you want I want to remind you that God's given us the Holy Spirit Paul says in Romans 8 the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

We don't know what we ought to pray for as we ought but the Spirit himself intercedes with us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

[45 : 34] But Jesus Christ also intercedes for us. Jesus prayed for us. The same Jesus that prayed in the garden prays now before the Heavenly Father saying over and over again I already paid for that.

Hebrews 7.25 says consequently he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. Remember the disciples in the garden Peter being warned beforehand that he was going to deny Jesus?

In Luke's account of this story he says Jesus says Simon, Simon behold Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail when you have turned again and strengthened your brothers.

The same Jesus that prayed for that man that was going to deny him. The same Jesus that sweat drops of blood praying before his death is now alive making intercession to God the Father.

May that thought drive us to pursue intentional steadfast watchful and thankful prayer. Let me close this in prayer. Lord we are fallen human beings who struggle with many if not all of those reasons why we don't pray.

[47 : 09] Lord I ask individually and we ask as a corporate body that you would forgive us for the apathy for the mediocrity the ways that we're okay with not praying.

Lord help us to love you help us to understand the good news of the gospel to pray with thankfulness help us to speak in ways that proclaim the goodness of God that doors would be opened and the gospel would be clear in Jesus name amen.

We're going to close with hymn 561 Lord speak to me that I may speak and the this hymn the tune is familiar to us the hymn is talking about I want to be able to relay the words that God has given speak to me that I may speak in living echoes of your tone as you have sought so let me seek your erring children lost and alone let's stand as we sing our final hymn ■ Your ready children lost and lost.

Oh, teach me more than I may teach The precious things you do impart And bring my use that I may reach The hidden depths of may upon.

Oh, fill me with your fullness, Lord Until my very heart foreclose In a plain thought and glory work Your love to tell, your grace to show Oh, use me, Lord, use me in me Just as you will and when and where Until your blessed face I sing Your rest, your joy, your glory share Receive this benediction The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make his face to shine upon you And be gracious to you The Lord lift up his countenance upon you And give you peace

[50 : 20] Amen Amen.