

KEEPING CHRIST ON YOUR LIPS

Colossians 4:2-6 ² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

What can you do? I gave a mission presentation to the children out in Mountain View, CA. At the end Sara Pfeifer asked me “what can the kids do?” I had neglected a rather key component to a good presentation, the call to action.

Paul has just finished giving a wonderful presentation of the grace and glory and hope that is our in Christ Jesus through baptism. And now the question comes what can you do to share this Christ with others?

Paul doesn't forget the call to action. Everything we see here in these five verses, verses 2 through 6, is a call to action focused on the proclamation of Christ. A call to keep Christ on your lips in both your prayers and speaking to others. What can you do?

First “continue in prayer”

Notice the ongoing persistent nature of prayer.

Christ our Lord spoke about the persistence of prayer in the parable of the friend at midnight. A man went to the house of his friend at midnight and knocked saying give me three loaves of bread. The friend did not want to get up and told the man to go away. But the man continued to knock until the friend finally did get up and give the bread just to get rid of him.

So the Lord teaches us to persevere in all prayer, not to give up easily but to continue to bang on his door. He will answer, and in the meantime He does not want us to forget what we are waiting for.

For this reason there are certain things that we pray for every single week in our general prayer, and continue to pray for again and again and again in a simple and straightforward way. Why because they are things that need to be prayed for and we don't do them once or twice but we continue steadfast in those prayers probably our whole life, as Paul here encourages us to.

All prayer should be persistent, but especially Paul has in mind persistence in praying for the ability and opportunity to share Christ crucified.

There is a story of a man at work who was passed over for a promotion again and again for 20 years. Finally he asked his boss why he was never given the opportunity. To which the boss responded, "You never applied. I didn't know you were interested."

If we wish to be faithful witness of Christ we need to pray for the ability, and opportunity. Those who ask receive and those who ask to have opportunity to witness receive opportunity to witness.

There was once when I was visiting my doctor and I thought that maybe I should try to witness to this man. Not sure what to do I prayed in my head. Immediately the doctor asked me what the difference was between the Lutheran view of justification and the Roman Catholic.

Pray for opportunities to share Christ and the Lord will open doors.

Second prayer is to be filled with thanksgiving

Paul himself is a master at this. His letters are filled with prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord for all that He has done. Even here in this letter Paul is in chains, yet he does not complain about being in prison but instead rejoices in Christ. He doesn't even pray to be released but only prays that he might have opportunity to preach. If being in chains leads to an opportunity he is glad to remain in chains. If he needs to be released to preach than that is what he is praying for. Whatever leads to more opportunity to preach Christ.

Notice that Paul says "be watchful with thanksgiving."

A heart of thanksgiving to the Lord is one of the best defenses against the tricks and traps of Satan. Always focusing on what we don't have leads to sin. Constantly reminding ourselves of all the wonderful things Christ has done for us lead us to rejoice in the gospel and be glad in every situation as Paul says.

Giving thanks to Christ therefore ought to be a regular and abundant part of our prayer. Thankful for His baptism by which he washed. Thankful for his cross by which our sins are forgiven. Thankful for his presence with us and protection. Thankful for our kids, our family, our nation, and many other things which He has given you. As parents we often pray for God's blessing on our kids but do we remember to thank the Lord for the blessing which are our children?

Thirdly don't forget to pray for your called workers

If we are focused on sharing the grace and gifts of Christ we need to also remember to pray for our called workers. We are of course on the front line of our witness and we need your prayers. That God would give us wisdom and grace and probably more than anything humility.

Now being filled with prayer Paul offers advice on how to share the word

1. Walk with Wisdom
2. Redeeming the time
3. Speech seasoned with grace

Walk with wisdom means getting your facts down, studying, be pre-read. We have to know the scriptures, but it is also good to know how to speak. To know the philosophies of the world around us. We have to give ourselves to study so that we might have a good answer to give to those who question us.

Redeeming the time - John 9:4 ἔρχεται νύξ – the night is coming. My Greek teacher always had a poster up saying ἔρχεται νύξ. The night is coming when no one can work we have to make use of the time when we have. Redeeming the time making the most of every opportunity. Pray for opportunities but then also use the opportunities that God has given you. Life is flitting by faster than you know, use the opportunities that you have now.

Speech seasoned with grace. You can eat chicken without salt but its bland and unappealing. So Paul is calling us when we speak of Christ to season our words, that is do our best to make our speech appealing to those who hear it, speaking the truth to be sure but speaking the truth in the most gracious way possible.

Our speech is to be characterized by graciousness that it may be as appealing as food properly seasoned. Such gracious speech will commend to the hearer the substance of what the speaker says, including the grace of God. Speech that is sullied by profanity, gossip, animosity, or speaking in a pretentious, verbose or tactless manner, besmirches one's witness. (paraphrased from *Colossians* by Paul E Deterding, page 179)

If a guy shows up at your house and says, "I'm going to bulldoze your house." You're probably going to be pretty upset. But if he says I'm going to bulldoze your house here are the keys to your new million dollar mansion in Hawaii, well maybe not so upsetting now.

Sometimes we are so focused on telling people why they are wrong we forget to share the Gospel. Keep Christ in view. Tell them about how much they have in Christ rather than just telling them they are wrong. You need to show them that there is a much better option, Christ and him crucified, and you need to show them this in a loving way.

What can you do? Nothing by yourself of course, but through prayer you can arm yourself and prepare asking the Lord for both opportunity and ability to make use of that opportunity to share the Gospel. The time is short the harvest is vast, May the Lord bless our work.