

Message Four

Persevering in Prayer

Scripture Reading: Col. 4:2; Eph. 6:18; Matt. 26:41

I. “Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving”—Col. 4:2:

- A. To persevere is to continue persistently, steadfastly, and earnestly.
- B. We need to persevere in prayer because prayer involves a battle, a fight; two parties, God and Satan, are hostile to each other; the third party consists of God’s chosen and redeemed people:
 1. The meaning of the name Satan is “adversary”; Satan is both the enemy without, trying to defeat God, and the adversary within God’s realm, seeking to cause damage—cf. Rev. 12:10; Job 1:6-12.
 2. God’s chosen and redeemed people will actually decide the outcome of the battle between God and Satan—cf. *Hymns*, #880.
- C. In order to fight on God’s side against Satan, we need to persevere in prayer; this perseverance is needed because the course of the whole world is away from God:
 1. To pray is to go against the current, the trend, in the fallen universe.
 2. Persevering in prayer is like rowing a boat upstream; if you do not persevere, you will be carried downstream by the current.
 3. The entire universe is under Satan’s influence and is contrary to God’s will; hence, there is a strong current in the world in opposition to the will of God—cf. 1 John 5:19.
 4. As those who take sides with God, we find that the whole universe is against us and, in particular, against our prayer.
 5. Many of the experiences we have with respect to prayer day by day prove that Satan opposes our prayer in every way possible; resistance to prayer lies not only outside of us but even within us.
- D. Before we try to persevere in prayer, we should first make a vow to the Lord concerning our prayer life:
 1. Pray to Him in a definite way and say, “Lord, I mean business with You about this matter of prayer. I call heaven and earth to witness that from this time forth I will have a life of prayer. I will not be a prayerless person. Rather, I will be a praying person.”
 2. If you do not have such a prayer to the Lord, you will not be able to persevere in prayer; we need to say to Him, “Lord, I am desperate about this. I offer myself to You so that I may have a prayer life. Lord, keep me in the spirit of prayer. If I forget this or neglect this, I know that You will not forget it. Remind me again and again about prayer.”
 3. This kind of prayer may be regarded as a vow made to the Lord; we all need to make a vow to Him concerning our prayer life; we should tell the Lord, “Lord, I know that if I forget this vow, You will not forget it. From the very beginning, Lord, I want to clearly hand the responsibility over to You. Lord, don’t let me go. Remind me to pray.”
- E. After we make such a deal with the Lord concerning our prayer, we should set aside definite times for prayer; during these times, prayer must be the top priority; our attitude should be that prayer is our most important business and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with it—Dan. 6:10.

- F. In order to have more time for prayer, we should try to save time during the day; unnecessary talk weakens our praying spirit, damages the praying atmosphere, and occupies time that could be used for prayer—Eph. 5:16.
- G. Persevering in prayer has many benefits:
1. Prayer is the only way that we can set our mind on the things above—Col. 3:2:
 - a. When we set our mind on the things above by praying, we shall not pray for trivial matters; instead, our prayer will be occupied with Christ’s heavenly intercession, ministry, and administration—Heb. 7:25; 8:2; cf. Acts 6:4.
 - b. When we set our mind on the things above during our times of prayer, we become a reflection of Christ’s ministry in the heavens; through our prayer, Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body.
 - c. Because Christ is interceding for the churches around the world, we also pray for the churches.
 - d. When we pray, we are heavenly ambassadors on earth with the extension of God’s kingdom; only when we pray do we become an ambassador of the heavenly kingdom on earth in a practical way—2 Cor. 5:20.
 2. Prayer is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies and come forward to the throne of grace so that we can receive mercy and find grace to meet our timely need—Heb. 4:16:
 - a. When we pray, approaching the throne of grace, grace will become a river flowing in us and supplying us.
 - b. Whether or not our prayer is answered is secondary; the primary thing is that grace flows like a river from the throne and into our being—*Hymns*, #770.
 - c. To receive this river of grace is to have our spiritual battery charged with the heavenly current; this heavenly current, the divine electricity, is the Triune God as grace flowing out of the throne and into us; the supply and enjoyment this brings is unspeakable—cf. Rev. 22:1; John 7:37-39.
 - d. Christians today are weak because their spiritual batteries are not charged; because they are short of prayer, they are short of the heavenly transmission; again and again during the day, we need to be charged with the divine electrical current—cf. Eph. 3:16-17a.
 3. Another benefit of praying is related to fellowship with the Lord:
 - a. When we pray, we enter into fellowship with the Lord and become conscious of the fact that we are truly one spirit with Him and that He is actually one spirit with us—1 Cor. 6:17.
 - b. The more we pray, the more we experience being one with the Lord and the more we enjoy His presence and have fellowship with Him; what a marvelous reward!
- H. For a normal Christian walk we need to set our mind on the things above, have the renewing of the new man, have the peace of Christ arbitrating in us, and allow the word of Christ to inhabit us; prayer ushers us into the reality of these four things and keeps us in this reality—Col. 3:2, 10, 15-16; 4:2.
- I. In prayer, we need to be watchful and alert, not negligent; such watchfulness should be accompanied by thanksgiving:
 1. A lack of thanksgiving is an indication of prayerlessness; the prayer life is kept by watching with thanksgiving—1 Pet. 4:7; Phil. 4:6.
 2. If we continually offer thanks to the Lord, the adversary will not be able to carry us away from our prayer life—1 Thes. 5:17-18.
- J. To have a prayer partner (or partners) not only can help us to pray better but also can help to sustain our prayer life—Matt. 18:19-20; Dan. 2:17-23.

K. “Concerning persevering in prayer, I wish to say once again that we need to be willing to make a deal with the Lord, even to make a vow to Him, that we shall be a praying people. If all the saints in all the churches make such a deal with the Lord, the recovery will be greatly enriched and uplifted. Furthermore, the saints will enjoy the Lord, His presence, and His instant and constant anointing. All day long, they will enjoy the smile of the Lord’s face. As we persevere in prayer, the living Person of Christ becomes our experience and enjoyment” (*Life-study of Colossians*, p. 584).

II. Colossians, a book on Christ as the Head, and Ephesians, a book on the Body of Christ, both end with the same charge to pray; Ephesians 6:18 says, “By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints”:

- A. According to the revelation of Ephesians, we have to pray at every time in order to have the Body life in reality; to have the church life depends on our continual prayer.
- B. *All prayer* means all kinds of prayers—short prayers, long prayers, loud prayers, silent prayers, public prayers by a number of saints, private prayers by ourselves, etc.
- C. *Watching unto this* means that we need to be on the alert for the maintaining of a prayer life.
- D. *All perseverance* means that we have to persist and insist to the uttermost; this indicates that there may be something holding us down, holding us back, suppressing, oppressing, depressing, and hindering us from prayer, so we have to persevere and not give up.

III. “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”—Matt. 26:41:

- A. When the Lord Jesus went to pray, Peter and the others went to sleep; when the Lord Jesus told them to watch, He meant, “Don’t sleep! Wake up!”
- B. According to the Lord’s word in Matthew 26:41, we are all sleepy persons; if we do not sleep physically, we sleep either psychologically or spiritually.
- C. To sleep psychologically means that our mind, attention, hearing, and realization are absent; to sleep spiritually means that our perception is dormant.
- D. To be a person who prays unceasingly, we must be watchful persons, persons fully awakened, fighting against our sleeping nature and our sleeping being.
- E. Paul’s speaking in Colossians 4:2 and Ephesians 6:18 corresponds with the Lord’s word in Matthew 26:41; in addition to telling us to watch, the Lord said, “The spirit is willing,” and Paul says, “Praying at every time in spirit.”
- F. We have to let our spirit rise up over our body and our psychology; then we can pray, and we can watch unto prayer in the way of all petition.
- G. The more we pray, the more we will have to pray, the more we will like to pray, and the more we will be able to pray; to be watchful helps us to build up a habit of prayer.
- H. We have to fight against the threefold sleep: physical, psychological, and spiritual.
 - I. To live Christ, to practice being one spirit with the Lord, is by our continual and unceasing prayer (1 Thes. 5:17); to have such a prayer life, we all must learn to watch, to be on the alert, to be awake; the habit of living Christ must be the habit of prayer.
 - J. All day long we should call on the Lord and talk to Him; this is to pray unceasingly, which is to breathe and live spiritually, and to live spiritually is just to live Christ—*Hymns*, #255.