

Colossians 4:2-6 Speech and the New Man

1

Introduction

Paul continues the discussion of the new man and now focuses on the speech of the new man. Speech is important for it reveals the heart of a person. Speech is also one of the ways the world evaluates Christianity.

Speech is also one of the most difficult area for believers to control.

Paul puts emphasis on four areas of speech: the speech of prayer, the speech of proclamation, the speech of performance, and the speech of perfection.

2

Colossians 4:2-6

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.

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The Speech of Prayer

Colossians 4:2

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Prayer is the most important speech the new man can utter. Prayer is the strength of the believer's fellowship with the Lord and the source of his power against Satan and his angels (cf. Eph. 6:18). Through prayer, believers confess their sin, offer praise to God, call on their sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 4:15–16), and intercede for each other. Prayer from a pure heart (Ps. 66:18) is to be directed to God (Matt. 6:9), consistent with the mind and will of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18), in the name of Christ, and for the glory of the Father (John 14:13).

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In 4:2, Paul touches on an often overlooked aspect of prayer, that of perseverance. **“Continue earnestly”** is a compound word meaning “to be steadfast,” or “to endure” and a preposition that intensifies the meaning. The idea is “to be courageously persistent,” “to hold fast and not let go.” Paul is calling strongly on believers to persist in prayer. They are to “pray at all times” (Eph. 6:18; cf. Luke 18:1), “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and be devoted to prayer (Rom. 12:12).

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Praying at all times is not necessarily limited to constant vocalizing of prayers to God. Rather, it refers to a God consciousness that relates every experience in life to Him. That does not, however, obviate the need for persistence and earnestness in prayer. Such persistence is illustrated repeatedly in Scripture. The 120 disciples gathered in the Upper Room “were continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14). The early church followed their example (cf. Acts 2:42).

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Our Lord told two parables illustrating the importance of persistent prayer.

Luke 18:1-8

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ² saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' ⁴ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" ⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? ⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

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Luke 11:5-10

And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? ⁸ I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. ⁹ "So I say to 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 he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

The point of both those parables is that if unwilling and sinful humans will honor persistence, how much more will our holy, loving heavenly Father?

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True prayer also involves **being vigilant**. In its most basic sense, that means to stay awake and not fall asleep during prayer. While in Gethsamane, “Then He [Jesus] came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.” (Matt. 26:40–41).

It is impossible to pray while sleeping. Christians should choose times when they are awake and alert to pray.

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Paul’s thought here, however, is broader than mere physical alertness. He also means that believers should look for those things about which they ought to be praying. Christians sometimes pray vague, general prayers that are difficult for God to answer because they do not really ask anything specific. To be devoted to prayer requires something specific to pray for. We will never persistently pray for something we are not concerned about. And to be concerned, we must be alert to specific needs.

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A third element in prayer is **with thanksgiving**. This is the fifth time that Paul has mentioned gratitude in this epistle. Believers are to be grateful for salvation (1:12), for growth (2:6), for fellowship with Christ and His church (3:15), for the opportunity to serve (3:17), and, here, for the guarantee that God will answer prayer in accordance with His purpose. That, of course, is what is best for our good in time and our glory in eternity.

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When believers pray, they can begin by being thankful for the following spiritual blessings and privileges.

First, believers are to be **thankful for God's presence**. In Psalm 75:1, the psalmist writes, "We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near."

Second, believers are to be **thankful for God's provision**. Adrift at sea in the midst of a raging storm, Paul nevertheless was grateful to God for the food He provided: "He took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all" (Acts 27:35).

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Third, believers are to be **thankful for God's pardon**. Paul said in Romans 6:17, "But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." Christians should be grateful for their salvation.

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Fourth, believers are to be **thankful for God's promise**: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57; cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). "For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Finally, believers are to be **thankful for God's purpose**: "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

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So What ...

Take a minute to evaluate your prayer life. This is between you and God.

Do you take time to commune with God?

Do you pray with persistent diligence? Don't give up!

Do you prayer with purpose? I would encourage you to create a prayer journal. Record what you are praying for, so you pray with purpose. Record when God answers prayer so you can see His faithfulness.

Do you pray with thanksgiving? Think about all that God does and has done for you. Thank Him for answered prayer!

Be purposeful as you walk through this life.