

# What We Are Called To Be As Christians

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now let's turn back to Colossians. Chapter 4. Just read verses 2 to verse 6 again.

Passes that we'll focus on. Devote yourselves to prayer. Being watchful and thankful and pray for us too that God may open a door for our message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains.

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Let's pray as we come back to God's Word. Heavenly Father, we pray for your help as we open your Word. That you would be at work, Lord, in the power of the Spirit.

That you would take hold of us. That we would be attentive. That we would be responsive, Lord. That we would sense your presence. That we would speak and hear your Word. And, Lord, that you would mould us and shape us.

[ 1 : 18 ] So that we would become more like Christ. And if we have not yet received Christ. That even over these minutes that we would receive Christ. We pray for the children, Lord, as we have done already.

We ask, Lord, that as they take time in Sunday school. And then as some of them meet this evening for YF. That you would be at work in their lives. That they would remember and trust their Creator in the early days.

Help their teachers as they break down the Word of God for them. We pray, Lord, for all who meet as we do here and elsewhere. Asking that you would build up your church, Lord.

And that the Word of God, as it's proclaimed faithfully, will go forth and will not return void. But will achieve much for your glory. We pray for those who would like to be here this morning.

But they're not able to be here. Some who are struggling with their health and with age. And we ask that you would draw near to them where they are. And minister to them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[ 2 : 23 ] We pray for others, Lord, who may want to be here. But who are struggling in their minds with different things. A battle going on where they're being drawn. And yet there is fear and there's different things.

There may be depression, Lord, in the minds of some. You, Lord, know each one who is in their home just now. And we ask that you would minister to them.

And that you would draw them to yourself. And we pray for any others, Lord, who may have desire and opportunity to be. Who may have the opportunity to be here. But have no desire at present.

And we ask, Lord, that you would be at work in their lives. You're the one who creates a soul first. And we pray that they, as they come to our minds, would have that soul first renewed for Christ.

So hear our prayers and help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. From time to time, but often at this time of year, you see these manuals, these kind of how-to guides that often end up on our stockings along with the brooms and our willy or these annuals that we get every year.

[ 3 : 41 ] but you quite often see on the shelves at this time of year these how-to guides DIY for dummies I've received that in my stocking many times it's not improved my skills in any way I have to say Idiot's Guide to the Internet it's another one I've seen published on shelves in different places and then there's the Haynes Manuals I was visiting somewhere recently I won't tell you where in case you are tempted to go and steal the car but I went to this garage and in this garage was this pristine, beautiful Mark II Volkswagen Golf GTI immaculate condition original model I had various of these in much worse condition over the year and it brought back to my mind these Haynes Manuals you buy old cars they invariably go wrong and see there's some basic things that you can do and you can sort of try to work out you know how to repair corroded brake pipes how to fix a car battery how to repair an oil leak and the Haynes Manual you'd open it up and it would give you the step-by-step-by-step guide on how to fix these things well

Colossians chapter 4 verses 2 to 6 in some ways is like that now you cast your mind back two weeks we were in that very challenging passage of scripture where God as he moves Paul to write to the Colossians addresses them and us on our homes and on our workplaces and on our hearts and we're challenged over the kind of husbands that we are we're challenged over the kind of fathers that we are if I speak for myself we're challenged as to what's going on in our hearts we're challenged as to how things are in our workplace and what impact we're having for Christ in our workplace and if you're if you're anything like me having spent time studying that passage and looking at myself in the mirror of God's word if you're anything like me you'll feel like your best efforts in the home and your best efforts within the workplace your best efforts as a husband as a father as a wife as an employer as an employee they fall far short of what the Lord asks for from us certainly my feeling if you're anything like me you'll feel spiritually speaking very often as you look at God's word about like a broken down old golf and you'll want to know how can we be fixed you know what's the step by step guide to getting our homes our marriages our working relationships our whole Christian lives into better shape than they currently are well here

Paul asks God the Holy Spirit inspires him in a sense he gives us a page out of the manual he gives us some steps here in these verses that help us to know how to get our lives back on track and help us how to know day by day by day no matter how well or otherwise we may be doing how to keep our Christian lives on track for Christians and the instruction the steps that Paul details here are perhaps not what we would expect you know we might expect having focused on the workplace and having focused on the home we might expect Paul to kind of drill down a little deeper and get into the nuts and bolts of how to be a better father and how to be a better husband and how to be a better employee and a better employer we might expect a bit more detail we might expect something that we could kind of put together to use as a as the beginnings of a course on Christian living but in actual fact what Paul gives us in these verses is something that's far more helpful it's far more penetrating than that

God through Paul he he lifts our our drooping chins so he see our short fox and he redirects our focus to the Lord and he reminds us essentially of the core of what we're called to be as Christians not just in the workplace not just in the home but in every part of life all of the time so the question today is what is it that we are called to be as Christians if we're Christians and the first point is we're called to be prayerful we're called to be prayerful verse 2 devote yourselves to prayer if you've ever been in the maternity room when a newborn baby comes into the world there's always a moment or two of pensive silence when the child is delivered before there's that cry of life you know that cry that we love to hear as the child reaches out audibly for their parent and you know when we are born again one of the clearest evidences of that is that we pray

Thomas Watson said prayer is the soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly father Octavius Winslow says prayer is the pulse of the renewed soul and the constancy of its beat is the test and measure of the spiritual life if we're alive if you're a Christian this morning you'll know that because you pray the reality is if we're honest you know our spiritual lives they ebb and flow they go up and down and there's a direct correlation between how lively you and I are spiritually and how much progress we're making as Christians and how prayerful we are if you're finding that life is draining out of your spiritual experience then we can always trace that back ultimately to a lack of prayer that's something that's taught in scripture that's something that you and I know from experience certainly

[ 11 : 49 ] I do Spurgeon understood this I've shared this with you a number of times Spurgeon saw thousands of people come to faith under his preaching but as he preached there were 200 people in the basement of his church praying for his preaching and praying for the people who were sitting in the pews that they would be taken hold of by the word of God and it was Spurgeon who said this he said neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church if we're honest the reality is we don't always feel like praying and yet it's usually when we least feel like praying that we need to be praying the most the medics will tell us when somebody is at their sickest it's when they least want to eat and yet it's when they most need to eat and in prayer it's when we are reluctant in the private place it's when we're reluctant to come together to pray that we're at a point of most critical need and that's why we need to devote ourselves to prayer you've got the ESV that says continue steadfastly in prayer now like a runner

I see Caskey passing my window I see him in the sunshine and I see him in the rain and the hail and the snow and the winds there's a commitment there there's a discipline there's a steadfast continuance to train and my expectation is for runners like that there are days when they're probably sitting in their homes putting on their trainers hearing the wind against the window thinking to themselves this is the last thing I want to do but these runners on these dark cold winter mornings understand that if they're going to stay fit they need to do it and they'll tell us that once they're out there they're pounding the road they actually love it and prayers like that we often struggle to start there are a thousand distractions there are a thousand things that are pulling us away but when we actually take that discipline to come together with

God's people to pray to go into the closet and to pray and God draws near there's nowhere in the world we'd rather be Tom Swanston the church Scotland minister in Inverness many years ago used to say pray when you feel like it pray when you don't feel like it pray until you feel like it perseverance in prayer Jesus needed to pray and he did and he shows us that so often in the gospels if Jesus needed to pray how much more do you and I need to pray we need to be prayerful it's the first point the second point the second step here in our Christian lives the things that we're to be committed to is we're to be watchful devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and I want to think about that watchfulness in three senses of the word first of all we're to be watchful in that negative sense and I want to tell you a wee about Shoros the dog my girls are very pleased with Shoros mainly because he comes into my sermon illustrations more than they do now and that's a relief to them the wee

Shoros the dog his favourite spot in the house is on the spine of the couch looking out the window not supposed to be on the couch but any chance he's up there he's on the arm he's up a wee bit further and he's on the spine of the couch and that gives him enough visibility to see the whole of Tarbert so whatever you're watching on television whatever you're doing whatever you're saying Shoros knows about it from there he watches and he actually watches in one way in a negative sense because he seems to have grasped already that some of the raiding sheep that come into our territory are just not the most welcome guests so when they come along the road and they start to climb the drive and they get close to the garden gate Shoros lets us know there's a kind of low growl as if to say they're here again and when we see them coming close and making their move towards the car we can go out and say off you go he's watchful

Shoros and in that negative sense you and I as Christians we as a congregation we're to be watchful the new American standard version which is a very literal version translates this as keeping alert Jesus said in Matthew 26 and verse 41 watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation the book of Nehemiah which we studied some time back in Wednesdays remember Nehemiah's commission to do this work for God's glory as he's rebuilding but the Lord's enemies are always trying to distract him they're always trying to destroy the work they're always trying to undo what God has called him to do so Nehemiah gets to the stage where he recognises this and he engages people specifically to watch to be on guard so that the building work can go on whatever God is at work the devil will have an interest he prowls around looking for those that he can devour so we need to stay awake need to be watchful

[ 19 : 01 ] I've said often Mr. Still in Aberdeen would so regularly say I always have one eye on the brute it's not paranoia that's wisdom that's watch from us Alistair Ben he talks about prayer in terms of it being like a missile that the devil has no protection against so he he says prayer is the one missile the devil has no armour against but he laments the fact that so often we fail to launch it we have to be watchful because we have an enemy and he's always industrious so we're called to be watchful in the negative sense we're also called to be watchful in the positive sense take you back to Shoros on the spine of the couch he sits at the window when the sheep make their approach he growls disapprovingly to warn us there is enemies approaching but round about three o'clock in the afternoon

Shoros seems to have a whole lot better grasp of time than I do certainly in this hour and round about three in the afternoon Shoros seems to realise the bus is almost here so he finds his way to the spine of the couch he finds his way through the window he watches for the bus and the second the bus pulls up and the girls jump out he's yelping and he's barking and his tail is going crazy and he's intimating to everybody in the house they're here they're here those people who will play with me those people who will give me all the food that I'm not supposed to have they've arrived let's celebrate you know he's watchful in that positive sense he's expecting at that time each day they're coming and you know we are called to pray be prayerful and we pray as God's people that the

Lord will come with power into our lives we pray as God's people I hope we do anyway that God will come with power into this building into this meeting this morning and this evening to do work in our lives we pray that God will be at work in the lives of those whom we love but whom we seem to struggle to encourage to come near to God we can't reach them but we pray that the God who can reach them will reach them we pray for our community and we watch we wait we expect that the Lord will come don't we so around about 1950 where we had that great period of spiritual awakening and revival in Lewis

London Harris God came in great power so I'm here to tell you about what that was like many people came to faith whole communities came to faith so what was the secret what was the key that unlocked this awakening this revival was it the great preaching well not really because by all accounts the preachers were fairly ordinary you know was it some new method of evangelistic outreach no it wasn't it was because these elderly ladies steadfastly faithfully expectant they prayed and they watched for God to come so let's be watchful as we pray let's look for answers you praying for individuals

I hope you are are you looking into their lives for how God is going to work are we believing as we pray that the Lord will answer so we're to be watchful in that negative sense we watch for the enemy we watch for the positive sense we watch for God to come in power and we're to watch also in that ultimate sense Jesus says in Matthew 24 verse 42 therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come you know it's good for us to remember it's important for us to remember every day Jesus is coming back this is the time of year that we celebrate the fact that he came for us and he died for us and he rose for us he ascended into heaven but he promised he's going to return so we must be watchful

[ 24 : 43 ] Martin Luther said there are only two days in my calendar this day today and that day the day when the Lord will come so we're to be watchful for that day we're to live in anticipation of that day we don't know the day we don't know the hour but Jesus is coming Hebrews 10 25 says let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching it's approaching do we see it so we're to be prayerful but also to be watchful third point is we're to be thankful still in verse 2 devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and thankful and you could say well thankful for what that would be the obvious question if somebody just picked up the bible with no context and just read these words what is it that we're to be thankful for and we could answer that question a hundred times over we could be thankful for the water that we're able to drink here freely we can be thankful for the food that's on our tables we can be thankful for the building that we're in as a congregation we can be thankful for the homes that God has blessed us with the families that are around us the friends that we have the community that we share in all these things are reasons for us to be thankful but first and foremost we should be thankful for Christ for Jesus for who he is and what he has done for us the word thankful there in the Greek is the

Greek word Eucharista from which we get our word Eucharist communion and that's the sacrament that we're called to remember the death and the resurrection of Jesus so even loaded within that one little word we are drawn to look to the person and the finished work of Christ we're to be thankful for Jesus so I don't know if there might be anyone here this morning who's running a little bit low in thankfulness you know we have these periods in life we're struggling we might be tempted to get a bit disgruntled we might be tempted to become discontent and somewhat bitter if you're ever feeling like you're being short changed in life then look to Jesus that's the teaching here you're ever feeling you know like you're being short changed in life and you have cause for bitterness to set in then look to Christ go back to the cross where the prince of glory died for you go back to that empty tomb see the grave clothes lying there folded the grave clothes that he left behind when he rose from the dead showing that our sin has been paid for showing that death has been overcome

Satan has been defeated ultimately consider him and all that he's done for you the psalmist in Psalm 8 which we began with says what is man that he's remembered by thee and that's a reasonable question it's a very reasonable question I think we live in a culture where we have such a big view of ourselves and such a small view of the whole galaxy and yet our world is such a minuscule thing in the galaxy that God has created the psalmist looks up perhaps in a field one night tending his flock and seeing the vastness of the starry frame we can do that here and the reasonable question is to say what is man that you would be mindful of us and yet even as we think about christmas we see that man and woman and boy and girl is so precious to god that he god the son would come into this world to be our saviour what cause we have thankfulness i want to ask the question as i always do is he your saviour and paul is writing here to the christians in colossi but there were some who were reading this letter and they weren't christians they were sitting in the chairs they were gathered with god's people but they weren't yet christians i want to ask you the question are you a christian is jesus your saviour you know if he is you may have very little in terms of material riches in this world you may have struggles and trouble that are almost unimaginable but if we have christ then we have ten thousand reasons and more to be thankful and conversely this morning if jesus is not your saviour you might be rich you might be successful you might be popular you might be someone who has all the trappings of this world you might have a strong family unit around you and many friends that you lean on but you know there will always be someone missing and that's christ and he comes to you today in the word asking you to trust as your saviour and your soul will sing with thankfulness the moment that you do so we're to be prayerful we're to be watchful we're to be thankful fourthly we're to be wise verse five paul says be wise in the way you act towards outsiders it's very

un-pc language isn't it you know for an age where we are so pc in the language that we use paul as god leads him here seems to jar against everything that's permitted in our day and in our context we just don't talk about insiders and outsiders but that's what's here and cultural or not this is the truth there are those who are in christ and there are those who are out of christ there's no in-betweeners there's no middle area in christ or out of christ insiders and outsiders so which group do you fall into but paul is addressing here those who are in christ he's addressing insiders and he says to them he says to us be wise in the way that you act towards outsiders now what does this mean well i think this means that we are to be careful that we practice what we preach i think this means that if we are christians if we are those who say that we are in christ there must be a clearly visible correlation between the way that we talk and the way that we walk it must be evident to the world as the world looks at us that we actually do practice what we preach we don't just say that we're in christ but we show in the way that we live that we are in christ and christ is in us that's what it means to be wise the fool in the bible is not the person who doesn't have knowledge the fool in the bible is not the man or woman that doesn't have letters after their names the fool in the bible is the one who has knowledge but doesn't act on it to the fool says there is no god and yet our hearts know romans chapter one that there is a god we know the reality deep down but the fool says i don't accept that reality and those who live foolishly even those who are christians are those who would say that they are in christ but fail to show that christ is in us to be unwise is to have knowledge but not to act on it now for example if you're driving a 17 and a half a ton truck and you come to a bridge and you see the bridge and it looks a little bit fragile and you drive over it and it crumbles then you've been a bit foolish you should have checked out the weight of the bridge but if you're driving your 17 and a half ton truck and you come to a fragile looking bridge and it says alongside the bridge safe load 15 tons no more and you take that knowledge in but you drive over the bridge anyway then that is very unwise it's very foolish so to be wise is not just to be a knower of the word it's to be a doer of the word and when that integrity is seen in our lives it will prompt people to ask questions about our lives and it will give us opportunities to tell them to answer them about

Jesus fifth point we're almost done is be opportunistic make the most says Paul of every opportunity many of you I know are actually very opportunistic some of you are football players and I watched you play football and when the ball comes into your path and you have a clear sight and goal you take the chance you take the opportunity you take the shot you don't miss these opportunities some are in business and you've got that alertness to be able to see a deal see an opportunity and strike it and Paul says take that quality into your Christian life pray for opportunities this goes back to prayer again pray for opportunities specifically live wisely make sure you walk as you talk you practice what you preach and then when people come to you and ask you what's different about the way you live your life take the opportunity that God gives you to share

[ 37 : 30 ] Christ with them Dale Ralph Davies the commentator he tells a story about a shoe salesman and he sent to a foreign fairly underdeveloped country and within hours of landing in this country this is many years back he sends a message back home he sends a telegram back to his employers and he pleads for them to send them back home and when asked why he says it's pointless me being here as a shoe salesman no one wears shoes so he gets hauled back home and the company send the next salesman to the same place and within hours the salesman is in contact with his employers saying send all the shoes you can manufacture the market is unlimited no one here wears shoes see one man sees nothing but problems the second man sees an opportunity and he takes it and Paul teaches us in the spiritual sense be like him take some of that entrepreneurial spirit into gospel mission not just making money not just scoring goals but reaching people for

Christ the final thing is be evangelistic so what does that mean well evangelism simply means good news and the good news is all about Jesus so Paul teaches us to tell people about Jesus and we'll revisit this next week as we come back to this small section be watchful be prayerful be thankful be wise be opportunistic and be evangelistic that's our calling so may God enable us to be what he calls us to be this week as we go from here let's pray heavenly father we thank you for this letter and it may be far removed from us in terms of geography and time but we feel the challenge and the encouragement of this letter as it comes to us as fresh today as it did in the day it was first written and we acknowledge

Lord that we are so often people who are slow to pray and yet we see here the reality is that until we pray we can do nothing so we ask Lord that you would hear us as we pray together and that you would help us Lord as we would desire and we would seek to want to pray more you are the God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine and you call us to ask you to be at work we confess Lord that often we try and do things ourselves but we know as Jesus taught apart from me you can do nothing so we come to you Lord in prayer and we ask that as individuals and as a congregation that you would be at work in us and that you would use us for your glory in this community and whatever you would call us to be help us we pray to live out all that you have called us to be in Christ and we thank you that as we do so there is greater blessing and enjoyment that we find in living in this way than we will find in any other course in life so lead us and guide us we pray help us as we come to you in Jesus name amen amen so don't maybeu

I love you honestly love you