

Title: **A Call to Pray with Grit and Gratitude**
Text: **Colossians 4:2**
Date: **January 1, 2023**

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Big Idea

Praying is something easy to talk about but hard to do. Paul knows that. And that's why here in our text he offers help. He shows us how to pray with both grit and gratitude!

Having just spent almost a month or so reflecting on the wonders of Advent, Christmas, the incarnation, and the arrival of God in human flesh and history, it seem to me that, in some respects at least, prayer is naturally the next topic for discussion. If Jesus is not Immanuel, if Christmas is not an historical fact, then prayer is just wishful thinking at best, and utter foolishness at the bottom. But if Jesus has come, if God really has torn the roof from the universe and stepped inside, then prayer is the only rational and appropriate thing we should now be concerning ourselves with.

Exhortation #1: Be Steadfast in Prayer

Question #1: What's the Meaning?

Interestingly enough, though I suppose we should expect this, Col. 4:2 is not the only place where this word *proskartereō* is used in relation to prayer. In fact, so far as I could see, of the ten occurrences of this word in the Greek NT, precisely half of them have to deal with prayer in one way or another. Think of all the things God could call us rightly to be committed to. It's not insignificant that the Bible places the greatest accent, far and away, on our commitment to prayer.

Question #2: What's the Reason?

Negatively understood, I think one of the reasons we're so prone to give up on prayer, is we have no idea the kind of war we're really in. We can't imagine the spiritual dimension involved in this, and so we naively esteem ourselves as sufficient. We don't turn to prayer and reliance on God and Christ, because we don't think we really need him. We think we can handle it. And as such we bring our little knives

to a gunfight, our nerf guns to a world war. A foam dart isn't going to drop the devil. Oh but Jesus can—he has and he will (cf. Col. 2:12). And we get access to his victory and power through prayer.

But positively, and related to this, here's the other side: not only is God the only one who can truly overcome the bad, he's also the only one who can truly provide the good. As James tells us in James 1:16-17: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." And, again, we access this goodness of God through prayer.

Exhortation #2: Be Thankful in Prayer

Question #1: What's the Meaning?

On the one hand, Paul's exhortation to us here surely implies that we are to pray and then look for God's answer to our prayers and give him thanks accordingly. But, on the other hand, I do think there may be a second layer to this. I think part of the call here could be, not just keep an eye out for answered prayers and give thanks if you see them, but, in a sense, let gratitude permeate all of your prayers . . . all the time. Retune all of your prayers, even your requests, as it were, to the key of gratitude.

Question #2: What's the Reason?

Our gratitude is tethered ultimately to the gospel and triumph of grace for us at the cross. You can give thanks to God right now, whatever you may be dealing with, whatever seemingly unanswered prayers you may still be wrestling with, why? Because in an ultimate sense your destiny has been commandeered and transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and, in him, you're headed not for hell but for glory (cf. Col. 1:11-14).



Reflection Questions

- Paul's exhortation that we be steadfast in prayer presupposes that there will be times we'll want to give up on it. Be honest. What are some of the reasons you've been tempted to give up on prayer? Why would Paul call us still to press on? What steps can you take to be more steadfast in it?
- How would your prayer life be different if you retuned it all to the key of gratitude? Give it a try this week!

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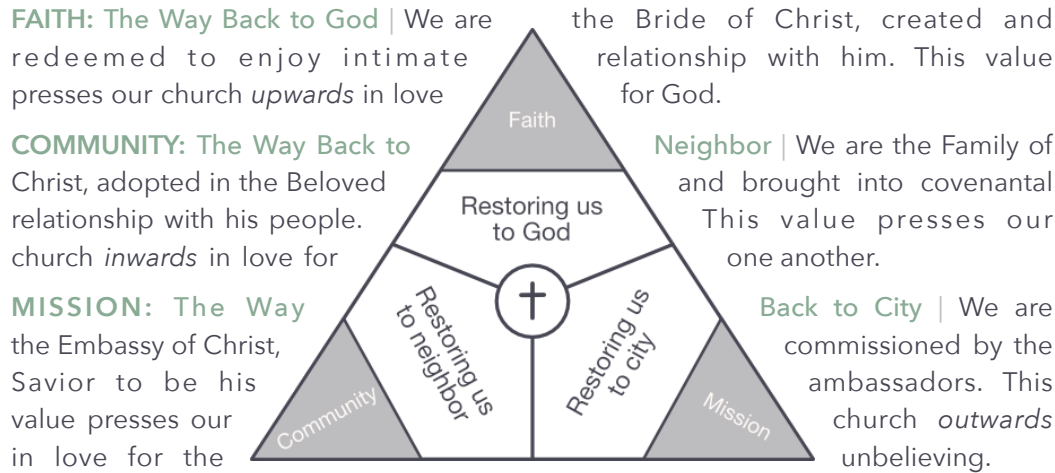


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Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Week of Prayer - Kicking off Today!

The church is always called to be praying and seeking God together, but sometimes it is good to set aside special time to do so. That's what we are looking to do on this first week of the year—Sunday (1/1) thru Sunday (1/8). Here are just a few things to look forward to:

- We will have special sermons delivered on either end of this week (1/1 and 1/8) to help our community see the importance of prayer in the life of the church.
- On the first Sunday of this week (1/1), we invite you to consider fasting from lunch or dinner and would especially love it if you'd join us for our All Church Prayer meeting in the evening later that day where we'll have an extended time of prayer together (see our online calendar for more info).
- We will provide a Prayer Guide to give you ideas of what to pray for as well as space to record your prayers and things God is putting on your heart. The start of a new year naturally gets us reflecting on things—where we've been and where we hope to go. This guide has been designed to help you in this and offer a framework for your evaluation and planning.
- We invite you to seriously consider jumping into our online Prayer Room on Wednesday of this week (1/4) from noon to 1:00pm (see our online calendar for more info).
- We will be encouraging all of our Home Groups to discuss the sermon and Prayer Guide and to give additional time during their weekly meetings for prayer. (If you're not already a part of a Home Group, now's the time! Find one to join online.)

We really hope you will dive into this with us. We're excited to see what our God will do!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

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