

## Continue to Pray

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*Continue earnestly in prayer, being awake in it with thanksgiving.  
(Colossians 4:2, a direct translation of Japanese colloquial Bible)*

This is a verse in one of Paul's letters. Just the other day, a staff worker spoke solely on this verse in the Bible study, so I read it many times and finally ended up memorizing it. I am surprised to realize that such a short verse speaks of so many important things.

What is the meaning of "being awake in prayer"? Are there "awake prayers" and "asleep prayers"? If there are such prayers, does it mean that there are prayers that focus on God's will and prayers that do not? Are there prayers of the flesh and prayers of the Spirit?

I wonder if there are times when we pray for God's will to be done and times when we pray only for our own desires to be done.

Paul says, "Pray with thanksgiving." When we pray to the Lord, we are not always happy and thankful. We also pray when we are in suffering, in pain, in deadlock or in need of help . . . Mostly, I think, we pray when we are in suffering.

Nevertheless, Paul tells us to pray with thanksgiving. For him everything is "thanksgiving," including suffering, pain, hardship and deadlock. Yet it is not easy to give thanks in such difficult times.

*We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 RSV)*

In everything God works for good. "Everything" means that there is not a single exception. We usually think, "If only this obstacle were removed, I would be happy." However, Paul is convinced that God works for good in everything, including getting hurt by others, losing loved ones, going through sickness and even death.

It is because there is the cross of Christ, and because Paul knows the absolute love and forgiveness of the cross. Since he has decided to know nothing except Jesus Christ crucified on the cross, he really does not need to know anything else.

He says, "Continue earnestly in prayer." It is to pray tirelessly in zeal. It does not mean to pray frantically but to pray only looking at the Lord without turning our eyes away from Him. It is to fix our

eyes on the cross. Paul encourages us to pray constantly, saying, "Continue earnestly in prayer."

Continuing in prayer is more than just praying. It is just like continuing to believe is different from believing for a moment. If we believe only for a moment, we can stop believing at once, which is not to believe in a true sense.

To pray is to continue to pray. We may sometimes pray for a short time when we feel like it, but we can pray continuously only with faith. While praying, we might have anxiety, doubt or even anger. It is only by faith that we believe in God and continue to pray.

The Lord is the only One who can continue to pray to the end without wavering or doubting at all. However, I believe anyone can pray constantly because of His cross. It means that as long as we do not forget the cross, we can keep on praying.

It may sound contradictory, but since the Lord knows everything, it would be enough for us to pray to Him just for a brief moment. It should be no different from praying for ten hours, because the Lord hears our prayers even before we pray and even if we do not or cannot speak out our prayers.

Paul must have known it. Then why does he say, "Continue earnestly in prayer"? I think it is because there is something which can be realized, or made to be realized more easily, through our continuous prayers. Then, what is it?

I think it is the "body of Christ." Paul must have believed that the body of Christ would be built when each one of us looks at the cross of Christ not momentarily but continually. To continue to pray will prevent and decrease the work of the flesh in us. When we continue not moderately but steadfastly in prayer, our eyes will be fixed on Christ and our flesh will be diminished. I believe the cross is manifested in the body of Christ.

In every word of Paul, I see his decision to know nothing except Christ crucified on the cross and his earnest wish to build the body of Christ.

I believe what Paul desired and saw in faith will be realized as the *Church of the Wind*.

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being awake in it with thanksgiving.*

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