

Final Instructions about Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-24

Ephesians 6:18-24 - *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.*”

Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

Background Notes

In this closing section of the letter, Paul referred to himself as an “ambassador in chains” (v20). Remember, Paul was literally chained to a Roman guard as he wrote or dictated this letter. Acts 28 tells us that Paul was under house arrest while he awaited his trial in Rome. He lived in his own rented house, but he had to put up with the inconveniences and discomfort of being chained to a guard at all times. But Paul did not let this unpleasant situation hold him back. He was an ambassador for the Lord, even though he was in chains. No doubt he witnessed to all the guards. He preached to all who came to the rented house. He mobilized the team of fellow workers. He wrote letters. He truly was an ambassador for the Lord in chains.

What a lesson for us! Maybe you’re experiencing some kind of “chain” or limiting circumstances in your life. Chances are you, like Paul, can be an ambassador for the Lord in whatever situation you’re in right now. In fact, maybe because of that chain (whatever it may be), you can be even more effective as an ambassador for the Lord!

The first half of this letter to the Ephesians, chapters 1 to 3, is doctrinal in nature, and the second half, chapters 4 to 6, is more practical in nature. Chapters 4 to 6 contain a series of ten practical exhortations or instructions for the believer, based on the doctrine in the first three chapters.

1. Believers should keep the unity of the Spirit in peace (4:1-6).
2. Believers should recognize and use their spiritual gifts (4:7-16).
3. Believers should put off the old man and put on the new man (4:17-24).
4. Believers should have a changed lifestyle (4:25-32).
5. Believers should walk in love (5:1-2).
6. Believers should walk in light (5:3-17).
7. Believers should be filled with the Spirit (5:18-21).

8. Believers should submit to one another (5:22-6:9).
9. Believers should put on the whole armor of God (6:10-17).
10. Believers should pray at all times (6:18-20).

Doctrinal Point

Believers should pray at all times.

Verses 18-20: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

The apostle Paul had a busy prayer life, didn't he? And so should we! This instruction to “pray always” is an instruction – it is not an option. Prayer could be considered another piece of the spiritual armor, in view of the context here. Remember the old saying that “the devil trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees”?

We are to pray at all times. Verse 18 says, *“praying always...”* 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says *“Pray without ceasing.”* That is, we are to be in an attitude of prayer and ready to pray all the time. How about when you're driving? Yes, of course you can pray while driving - just keep your eyes open!

To pray *“with all prayer and supplication”* means that we should not just be involved in formal prayer at church services. And we are to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance as to the content of our prayers, both in public and in private.

What do we pray about? There are two areas for prayers mentioned in this passage: the needs of the saints and the proclamation of the gospel.

a. **Pray for the needs of the saints** (v18). *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”* Pray for the needs of the saints - and not just for their physical needs. We tend to pray about their physical needs, don't we – sickness, loss of job, loss of a loved one. It's not wrong to pray for physical needs. When our fellow believers are sick or lose a job, it would be wrong not to pray for these needs. So we are to pray for physical needs - but we should pray for more than just physical needs.

Listen to Paul's prayer for the believers in Philippi: *“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God”*(Philippians 1:9-11.) When was the last time you prayed a prayer

like that for a fellow believer? Paul always prayed for the spiritual needs of the people he knew and with whom he was working. We need to pray prayers like this as well.

Notice that we are to be “*watchful*.” We are to be spiritually alert. Remember, we are involved in spiritual warfare! It’s too easy to get lazy in our prayer life. And notice, too, that we’re to pray for *all* the saints. Do you pray for all the saints? Remember - this instruction is mandatory – it’s not an option. Look around you. What saints don’t you pray for, and why? It’s a sin not to pray for *all* the saints.

b. Pray for the proclamation of the gospel (v19-20). “*And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*” Notice that Paul didn’t ask for prayer for his physical needs. He didn’t say, “I can’t stand being cooped up here under house arrest. The Roman guards are so gross, bad breath and all. I need relief. Please pray for my release.” No, Paul didn’t ask for prayer in those physical areas, as we probably would.

Instead Paul requested prayer for boldness to proclaim the gospel! Mostly likely, Paul was thinking ahead to his upcoming trial, and he wanted to have the courage to preach the gospel there. Think of the apostle Paul praying - and asking for prayer - that he would be bold to witness. If Paul asked for courage, how much more should we pray for courage to witness? And shouldn’t we request brothers and sisters to pray that we would be bold in presenting the gospel? So often we “chicken out” - we fail to boldly present the gospel.

An illustration - I’ve been invited to speak at one of the local high schools on the subject of science and the Bible. Like Paul, I would ask you to pray for me, that I would have boldness to preach the gospel.

Why the phrase “*mystery of the gospel*” (v19)? Remember, in the Bible a “mystery” is truth that was concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. The gospel of good news has come to light with the coming of Christ.

Practical Application

Are we content to “only deliver the mail”?

In the closing section of this letter, Paul mentioned a beloved brother named Tychicus (v21). “*But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.*” Tychicus was appointed by the apostle Paul to carry this letter to the Ephesians, and on the same journey he also carried the letter to the church at Colossae. Colossians 4: 7-8 reads, “*Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this*

very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts.” Tychicus was a “mailman” - and he was a very important and faithful mailman. Aren’t you glad he didn’t lose the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians?

Here’s the point. Tychicus was a faithful mailman – and he was *content* to be a mailman. He was happy with the job God had given him, even though his job didn’t put him in the spotlight. Are we content to take a behind-the-scenes role of just “delivering the mail”? Or are we always looking for a more up front job? Some Christians are not content to “deliver the mail.” They want people to notice them. They want to be in the limelight. But God has not called them to a public role - at least not at this point.

Notice in verse 22 that Tychicus was also able to minister to the believers at Ephesus and Colossae. He brought them news of the apostle Paul, and he comforted their hearts. Even though Tychicus was not serving in an upfront or public position, like the apostle Paul, he had a very important role to play.

The same is true of us. Every role or job God gives us is important and valuable in the service of the Lord. For example, maybe you’re thinking, “All I can do is pray.” *All you can do?* Prayer is a very important function! Don’t ever take the attitude of “all I can do is pray.” That’s a very important role!

Maybe God has placed you in a sphere of service that doesn’t get a lot of attention or public recognition. Listen - just be faithful! God sees and remembers all your faithful service. Tychicus was content to do whatever had to be done. He was a faithful mailman. Are we content to “only deliver the mail”?