

Sermon Notes & References

Prayer for the Work and for the Workers

Ephesians 6:18-24

January 11, 2009

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—{1}. **Ephesians 6:18-24** **Prayer for the Work & for the Workers**

A. Introduction

1. today we are concluding our series on the book of Ephesians
 - a. which presents the doctrine of the church
 - (A) a mystery, a truth previously concealed, but now made known in the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - (B) the message of 'God's New Society' —{2}.
 - b. of a people redeemed from sin and death
 - (A) by the grace of God
 - (B) through the death of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross
 - (C) and through His resurrection showing Jesus to be both the Messiah of the Jews and the Lord of life
 - c. and last week, we found that we as such redeemed people
 - (A) are now engaged in a battle
 - (B) a battle against Satan and his demonic followers
 - (C) against whom we need to take up the armour provided
 - (D) a God-given, spiritual armour available to each of us
 - d. and today, in coming to the end of this letter, Paul
 - (A) who burst into praise and prayer before in this book
 - (B) now reverts to that subject
 - (C) not simply as though it were one more unnamed weapon to be taken up in our spiritual battle
 - (D) but as a exercise which should pervade our lives in every way so that we are always prepared for battle

2. Prayer

- a. is often a difficult subject for us to comprehend
 - (A) it is no wonder that the disciples in seeing the prayer life of Jesus, asked Him to teach them to pray
 - (B) of it we are often confused, recognizing that God is
 - (1) transcendent, far above all we understand
 - (2) changeless, the unmoved Mover of all things

- (C) we have hard time believing that such an infinite God
 - (1) would actually divert His path to answer our pleas
 - b. so we couch our prayers in such conditions and phrases
 - (A) 'if it is Your will'; 'if it will bring You glory'
 - (B) that in our desire to avoid being presumptuous
 - (C) we approach or fall into the state wherein James says that our prayers will not be answered: *'⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (James 1:6-7 NAS)'*
 - c. or, we express such sentiments as
 - (A) *'Prayer's power is in what it accomplishes in changing the life of the one who prays than in changing externals'*
 - (B) *'Prayer's purpose is to bring our mind into tune with God'*
 - (C) and, while these words may have an element of truth
 - d. yet they tend to ignore such clear declarations as
 - (A) *"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22 NAS), and,*
 - (B) *¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15 NAS)*
 - (C) for prayer is given to members of the body of Christ, given by our loving heavenly Father, whereby He may demonstrate His grace to us by granting our requests
3. so Paul here encourages the church – you, me – to pray
- a. so that we may be successful in spiritual warfare
 - b. so that the gospel may flourish
 - c. so that the body life may be complete

B. Scope of Prayer

- 1. Its universality – *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 6:18*

- a. it is 'ALL prayer and petition'
 - (A) the Bible shows us many forms and kinds of prayer
 - (B) some are hurried pleas for help
 - (C) some, as in some of the Psalms, are carefully designed and phrased, with great eloquence and beauty
 - (D) and some, are almost incoherent, in grief and worry
 - (E) yet all form part of the way that God grants to us His children whereby we can bring our needs to Him
 - b. it is 'at ALL times in the Spirit'
 - (A) it is 'in the Spirit' a term describing it as worship
 - (B) prayer is not limited to a Wednesday evening or to a Saturday morning prayer breakfast
 - (C) every situation and season is a time of prayer
 - (D) it is continuing and continual; we are instructed, 'pray without ceasing; (1 Thessalonians 5:17 NAS95)'
 - c. it is to be 'on the alert with ALL perseverance'
 - (A) prayer may not be easy, but as soldiers of Jesus Christ we are asked to be vigilant in prayer
 - (B) it takes determination to be consistent in prayer
 - (C) Daniel persevered in prayer against the edict of the king because he had made it his habit to pray thrice daily – it takes practice to struggle in prayer
 - (D) The devil, that roaring lion, turns and flees when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.
 - d. and, it is 'for ALL the saints'
 - (A) that is for every believer; not just those for whom we have a special affinity or attachment
 - (B) but all those whom God has brought into our lives
 - (C) as well as those whom we know of in general
 - (1) as those undergoing an especial persecution
 - (2) as those in needful circumstances
 - e. ALL prayer, ALL times, ALL perseverance, ALL saints
2. Its example – and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in

proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. 6:19-20

- a. Paul was a prisoner; Paul had a 'thorn', a physical ailment
 - (A) on his behalf, did he ask for deliverance from these?
 - (B) no, as with the apostles in Acts 4:29, 'And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence'
 - (C) pray that I may, says Paul, be able
 - (1) to speak out the gospel message
 - (2) to make it clear and known
 - (3) to be bold as I ought to be bold
- b. e.g.: the seven points of prayer for missionaries (and this can be extended to all who serve the Lord): pray that their
 - (A) spiritual life be marked by fellowship with God
 - (B) personal life be consistent with their testimony
 - (C) communication be honouring to God
 - (D) relationship with others be gracious
 - (E) proclamation of the gospel be fruitful
 - (F) discipling of others be true and faithful
 - (G) country of service may give free course to the gospel

C. Attitudes in Prayer

- 1. the parable of the Prayers of the Pharisee and of the Publican
 - a. is probably familiar to all of us, but as a reminder
 - b. we read that the Pharisee
 - (A) prayed with himself
 - (B) his prayer not for request ... he perceived no needs
 - (C) but a false gratitude to God for his own goodness
 - c. and then of the Publican
 - (A) in deep sorrow, unable to lift his head
 - (B) asking God only for mercy to him 'the sinner'
 - d. two different men, two entirely different attitudes

- e. Paul has been speaking of prayer
 - (A) asking for prayer for each of the body of Christ
 - (B) asking for prayer for himself and his work
 - (C) He reveals his prayer attitude by the attitude that he reveals concerning one of his fellow workers, Tychicus

- 2. Attitude of High Regard – ... Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord 6:21b
 - a. He highly regards Tychicus as a fellow child of God
 - (A) as we pray for others, how Satan would like to have us pray the Pharisaic, 'I'm glad I'm not like him!'
 - (B) rather we should "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2 NAS95)
 - b. He highly regards Tychicus for his consistent service
 - (A) sometimes Paul had to defend his apostleship, and, in his own words, to speak 'as a fool'
 - (B) but more often, as he speaks of his fellow-workers, we find that it is with great appreciation of their service
 - (C) we, as we pray for one another, should take to heart the admonition, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith." (Romans 12:3 NAS95)

- 3. Attitude of Deep Trust – But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, ... will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. 6:21a, 21c-22
 - a. Paul was a prisoner; chained to a guard in Rome
 - (A) desiring deeply that he could see his beloved readers
 - (B) but knowing that God has given Tychicus to Paul as a fellow-worker,
 - (C) he entrusts him with taking news to the church – the evidence is that Paul was sending this letter and that to the Colossians by the hands of Tychicus who would bring them up to date about Paul's situation

- (D) he entrusts him with comforting – strengthening – the hearts of the people in the church
- b. our attitude in prayer should be trust that God knows what He is doing when He puts people into our life & our church

- 4. As we pray, then, one for each other – despite the frailty that may be seen in each of us – let us pray fully remembering
 - a. that we are beloved brethren one of another
 - b. the faithfulness with which each serves the Lord
 - c. that God has given a mutual entrustment in His kingdom whereby we are to help and comfort one another

D. Blessings of Prayer – the closing benediction or prayer of blessing – *Peace be 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 with incorruptible love.* 6:23-24

- 1. Peace – Love – Faith
 - a. from prayer and in prayer these are the blessings
 - b. that we would seek for every brother and sister in Christ
 - c. and that we will find for ourselves as we pray for them
 - d. each of these – peace, love, faith – is a subject of great magnitude that cannot be exhausted in a lifetime of study
 - e. each of these is so simple that
- 2. may God grant to you this day that by the grace of God
 - a. shown to us and to the world
 - b. by the cross of Jesus Christ
 - c. you will know the peace, love, faith that is the rightful possession of every child of God
 - d. for these let us pray for ourselves and for each other

E. Conclusion – Oh that the Lord may teach us to pray!

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2. The title of John R. W. Stott's commentary on this book, InterVarsity Press, 1979