

Session 4: Corporate Prayer, Part 1

2018 Fall Bible Conference

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Brethren, there is a well-known account of the English Baptist, Charles Spurgeon, who was showing two American visitors around the Metropolitan Tabernacle and one of those visitors asked Spurgeon, and I quote, "What is the secret of your success?" The account goes Spurgeon took them to the basement hall where the weeknight prayer meeting was conducted and directed attention to it, and quoting now from Spurgeon's autobiography, "I cannot tell you how much I owe to the Monday evening prayer meetings and the other prayer meetings that are held so frequently in connection with our work here. I do hope that we shall never have them less frequently for those prayer meetings have been the strength of this pulpit. The pillars on which our ministry rests are under God, the prayers of our people." In a message entitled "Fighting and Praying," prayer is the engine of the church. It supplies the force. And again, the prayer meeting much be maintained at all cost.

In volume 2 of his autobiography in the chapter entitled "A Typical Week's Work," we read and I quote, "All who are familiar with Spurgeon's writings know that he regarded the prayer meeting as the thermometer of the church and judging by that test, the spiritual temperature of the large community under his charge stood very high. In Spurgeon's eyes, the prayer meeting was the most important meeting of the week and then later for many years Spurgeon had on Thursday evening in the Tabernacle lecture hall from 6 o'clock to nearly 7, what he termed the pastor's prayer meeting. This was an extra gathering specially convened for the purpose of pleading for a blessing upon the word he was about to preach, and most refreshing and helpful it always proved both to himself and the people."

Now it seems evident that the great 19th century preacher understood the primacy and the centrality of corporate prayer in the life of the church and his understanding was not merely notional or theoretical, it was manifest in the actual practice of the tabernacle, a practice that it appears is very far removed from the church culture of American 21st century Christianity. He assessed the prayer meeting as the very pulse of the church and during the mid-week meetings delivered messages aimed at instructing and moving the church to pray. There is a collection of those prayer meeting addresses published and I would assume still available under the title "Only a Prayer Meeting," studies on prayer meetings and prayer meeting addresses.

Now we might pause and ask was Spurgeon's emphasis on corporate prayer revealed in Scripture? Was or is there a biblical warrant for the practice of frequent corporate gatherings for prayer at the Tabernacle or, we might ask, is there so little revealed truth about corporate prayer that one might say the low and dispensable view of a church's gathering for the work of prayer is defensible? My response is that the practice of the Tabernacle reflected what can be called the normal attitude and obedient response to what the Bible does teach about this central aspect of a church' life together, and in this hour and in the next, Lord willing, by means of six headings, I hope I can lead your thinking through those sections of the word of God beginning in the Old Testament that reveal to us what ought to be a front-burner exercise of church life.

Now in the interest of time, I'm not going to announce these six headings now. I will announce them and hope to make them clear along the way through this hour and the next, but each of these six headings includes the terminology of corporate prayer and thus I'm going to pause and define the terms. First, the term corporate. What I signify by that term is a united body, a community of people together praying. Members of a church together united in the exercise of prayer, striving together jointly, collectively in prayer, employing the various modes of prayer that are revealed in Scripture: praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, and when warranted, imprecation. Corporate, a body of believers such as you coming together to collectively, jointly do the work of prayer.

Now the second term to be defined is prayer and I'll define it from three perspectives. First, my own definition. Prayer is the believing, Hebrews 11:6, we must approach God in faith. Prayer is the believing, intelligent 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I shall pray with the mind." It is the believing, intelligent and heartfelt, 1 Corinthians 14:15 again, "I shall pray with the spirit," minor case "s" again. It is the believing, intelligent and heartfelt outpouring of the soul to God through God the Son in utter dependence upon our living advocate, our representative, our great high priest who resides at the right hand of his heavenly Father, and this prayer is aided by God the Spirit. Prayer is the believing, intelligent and heartfelt outpouring of the soul to God through God the Son aided by God the Spirit.

Now another statement, a second statement, the Larger Catechism, Question 178, "What is prayer? Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ by the help of the Spirit with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

Then thirdly and finally, the words of Bunyan. Bunyan writes, "Prayer," or preached, "is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God through Christ in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit for such things as God hath promised according to the word for the good of the church with submission in faith to the will of God."

One final matter before taking up the first heading. With the terms defined, corporate, prayer, a qualifier and the qualifier is this: the circumstances and the schedules, the

routines of given local churches may differ and may warrant different arrangements whereby a given local church applies in its life together the exercise of corporate prayer, and my intention is not to assert a one size fits all application or schedule. In Ballston Lake, we have our own circumstantial arrangement that includes admittedly the mid-week prayer meeting but that's Ballston Lake. Again, it is not my intention to assert a one size fits all application. The matter of corporate prayer permeates our life together. Our corporate worship, our stated meetings for prayer and perhaps other exercises, in our case a monthly men's prayer meeting, a monthly women's prayer meeting, but I would say that a given church has to work that out according to its own life together.

Well, we come now to the first of six headings and it is this: corporate prayer prophesied, and our text is Isaiah 56:7. Now broadly speaking, the theme of Isaiah is the salvation of the Lord. Yes, a near-term deliverance or salvation from Babylon by the Persian Cyrus, we read of that in Isaiah 44:28 into the opening verse of the next chapter, yet a greater deliverance is prophesied, one accomplished by the obedient servant of the Lord, one that will extend to the ends of the earth encompassing Jew and Gentile and one that is consummated, Isaiah 66:22, in the new heavens and the new earth.

Now the transition point in Isaiah's prophesy is at chapter 40 where in verse 1 there is announced the comfort of the Lord, "Comfort ye, O comfort My people." This comfort arising from the coming of the messianic obedient servant of the Lord, his work of salvation and the restoration of his people. Chapters 49 through 57 focus prophetically upon him and following the highly descriptive suffering servant prophesy of Isaiah 53, the compassion of the Lord upon his people, is affirmed in chapter 54, especially in verses 8 and 10. Chapter 55 largely consists of invitation and exhortation and that brings us to chapter 56, the sense being these invitations to call upon, to seek the Lord are extended to all men and specifically to those outside of the old covenant theocracy.

I read now in Isaiah 56 at verse 1,

1 Thus says the LORD, "Preserve justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed. 2 How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil." 3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from His people." Nor let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." 4 For thus says the LORD, "To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, 5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. 6 Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; 7 Even those [those outside the theocracy] I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

Now at the time Isaiah prophesied, the house of the Lord, formally the tabernacle, then the temple, his dwelling place wherein there was his promised presence and his people carrying on the central activity of his worship, was not yet a house of prayer for all the peoples, but that would be the character of the new covenant's spiritual house constructed of living stones when the Messiah, the living stone and cornerstone, would come. Lines of distinction such as separated Jew and Gentile would be broken down, Ephesians 2:11-22, and all the peoples in the language of Revelation 5:9, tribes, tongues, peoples and nations, will be members of God's house, children in the Father's house wherein a primary central activity will be prayer.

Albert Barnes writes and I quote, "There are two ideas in the passage as used by Isaiah. First, that the temple should be regarded as a house of prayer, and secondly, that the privileges of that house should be extended to all people." The main design of the temple was that God might be there invoked and the inestimable privilege of calling on him was to be extended to all the nations of the earth. In the language of E. J. Young, "The emphasis upon prayer shows that the holiness of the temple consists of prayers continually being offered there. Here is the beauty of holiness, men from all nations brought to his household by sovereign grace lift up the sacrifice of prayer unto His holy name which they love and in His name serve Him in his house."

First heading, corporate prayer prophesied. Secondly, corporate prayer purposed. Corporate prayer purposed. Twice during the Incarnate ministry of the Lord Jesus, he discovered that the Jerusalem temple was being profaned and on both occasions, you'll recall, he vigorously responded. The first of those two occasions occurred early in his public ministry and is narrated in John 2:13 through 17. I'll not read that text but in summary the worship of God had been displaced and had become a noisy money-making bazaar. Reverence, heart engagement, prayer, had been chased away by the hawking of animals and currency trading. The central issue was the nature and purpose of his Father's house, the place of his Father's presence and worship. Jesus actively, vigorously responded to purge and restore it and his response brought to the disciple's mind, Psalm 69:9, "Zeal for thy house will consume me." Perhaps suggestive of how susceptible the house of God is to being profaned by men, to being turned away from its purposes is the reality that about three years later this happened again. A second occurrence on Monday of our Lord's Passion Week, and that second occurrence is recorded in Matthew 21, Mark 11 and Luke 19. I'll read from the account in Mark 11.

5 Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; 16 and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. 17 And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written [and now our Lord brings forth Isaiah 56:7], 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." 18 The

chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

Now with regard to the three accounts of this second episode of the profaning of the Jerusalem temple, again Matthew 21, the Mark 11 account just read, the Luke 19 account, common to these three accounts are the following: Jesus' entry into the temple, probably the temple courts, and his discovery of its being profaned; secondly common to the three: Jesus' expulsion of those who had profaned it; and thirdly common to the three is the quotation from Isaiah 56:7, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," and unique to Mark's account is the addition that completes the Isaiah 56:7 prophesy, "for all the nations"; the fourth commonality is the angry reaction of the religious leaders.

Now our concern is what the Lord Jesus clearly expressed as to what his Father's house was to be, a house of prayer, a place where God and his people are present and central to what occurs there is their joint prayer. It is a house of prayer. A new covenant house of God is to be the house of prayer. Certainly individual Christians are to pray in connection with the private means of grace, are to pray without ceasing, but the concern here is what the gathered people of God are to be, a house of prayer.

One of my daily companions is the collection of Puritan prayers and meditations entitled "The Valley of Vision." It may be the daily companion of some of you. Within it, there is a selection for the Lord's Day morning entitled "Worship," and within that selection are these three pairs of affirmation and petition. It's interesting what the first one is: we are going to the house of prayer, pour upon us the spirit of grace and supplication. We are going to the house of praise, awaken in us every grateful and cheerful emotion. We are going to the house of instruction, give testimony to the word preached and glorify it in the hearts of all who hear. Three times there is the metaphor "house" used to designate the church and that's quite consistent with New Testament usage, and in the first of the three pairs, we are going to the house of prayer. As central to the nature of the new covenant house, our praise, the second affirmation and petition, and instruction, the third, is prayer.

The Lord Jesus using the prophetic words of Isaiah proclaims or purposes expressly that local churches are to be houses of prayer. Prayer is to characterize our nature and our practice and this is an express declaration rooted in Isaiah's prophecy, recorded three times in the Gospel records, and the question can arise: is such a clear indisputable emphasis reflected in professed churches today? It could be asked: can a professing church really be authentically a church if corporate prayer is not primary, pervasive, and the very atmosphere of its life and ministry?

If someone observed, I'll personalize this, the weekly schedule of our church in upstate New York, if they observed the churchmanship of our constituent members, the engagement of those members when present, could they honestly conclude that Jesus purposed our new covenant house in Ballston Lake to be a house of prayer? Well, obviously I would hope so but hoping is not necessarily reality. What would the reality be

in their minds? Does our practice, does our time spent together evidence and affirm expressly what Jesus stated as he reached back to Isaiah's prophecy and brought it forward into his Incarnate ministry? We're not straining at a gnat in this connection. This is an upfront, front-burner issue.

Now our third heading is this: corporate prayers' promises and our text is Matthew 18:19 and 20. Now in the preceding verses, 15 through 18, you may recall that the incremental steps of corrective church discipline are set forth: the private endeavor; the semi-private; tell it to the church and if the offender will not listen to the church, the offender is removed. And in verse 18, "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The statement looking back two chapters and yielding the understanding that the binding and loosing power invested in the church is descriptive of the authority of the church in the exercise of corrective church discipline. Corrective church discipline. Perhaps it could be said is as grave and solemn a matter as we ever face, particularly when a church has to go to the extremity of that discipline and put a professing member out.

Now what follows contextually in verses 19 and 20 is this: this is to be done in a climate of corporate prayer. Now that's quite logical. When you're dealing with disciplinary issues and offenders and the complexity of factors that can enter in, we should not resort to our own wisdom, we need help. Verses 19 and 20,

19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst."

Now the promises here are two. The first is the effectual nature of corporate prayer, verse 19. The second of the two promises, verse 20, is the presence of Christ amidst the church when it gathers to pray. Now again, the context is the church gathered, seeking perhaps wisdom and courage to go forward with the dreadful machinery of the church's corrective discipline, the church gathered praying for the obstinate offender. The promises, the promise of efficacy concern the Father's giving what is being asked, love for the offender, discernment to try to properly navigate through what may be confusing complex factors bound up in the episode, resolve to go forward, concern for the purity of Christ's church, and the vindication of it in view, perhaps, of a scandalous sinner, and again the promise of the presence of the Son with his praying people. While the church here, I would assert, is envisioned, carrying out the solemn exercise of corrective discipline within this context of collective and joint prayer, yet the promises of efficacy and Christ's presence to a praying church transcend that one circumstance. The whole life and ministry of the church should be carried out in a climate and a context of corporate prayer, prayer motivated by the promise of the effectual nature of the church so praying and the promise of the presence of Christ.

Matthew Henry writes and I quote. God's readiness to answer the church's prayers, that's promise number 1, verse 19, "Many promises we have in Scripture of a gracious answer

to the prayers of faith but this gives a particular encouragement to joint prayer. Christ has been pleased to be an honor upon and to allow a special efficacy in the joint prayers of the faithful and the common supplications they make to God." And then he takes up the second of these two promises, verse 20, the presence of Christ, "The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians, every believer has the presence of Christ with him but the promise here refers to the meetings where two or three are gathered in his name not only for discipline but for religious worship and any act of Christian communion. Assemblies of Christians for holy purposes are hereby appointed, directed and encouraged."

We come, then, to our fourth heading: corporate prayer practiced. That is, practiced by the early church, its practice narrated in the book of Acts and there are six occasions in the book of Acts where we can get a glimpse into the corporate prayer of the early church, especially the church in Jerusalem.

I begin in Acts 1:14, the Jerusalem church in embryo, we might say, awaiting the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and it is doing so in a context of devotion to corporate prayer. Quoting our text,

14 These all [the apostles named in the previous verse] with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

And moving forward to the opening verse of the next chapter,

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

That's our first of six episodes where we get a bit of a window into the church, in this case, awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon comments, "The prayer meeting is the place for the reception of divine power." Well, that divine power was indeed coming shortly.

Second episode of six is Acts 1:24. The embryonic Jerusalem church chose the apostolic replacement for Judas but they did it in a context of corporate prayer. Rather than rely upon their own wisdom, they collectively prayed and sought the wisdom of God, what we should do with regard to the matter of considering potential office-bearers: deacons, elders. Quoting at verse 15 of the first chapter,

15 ... Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together) [Peter spoke of Judas and the need for a replacement]...23 So they put forward two men... 24 And when they prayed and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship..."

Third glimpse into the life of the church as recorded in the book of Acts, Acts 2:42. After Pentecost, we have our first summary description of the church and it reveals that corporate prayer was one of its leading characteristics,

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Now I want to pause and focus attention on what the NAS translates there "continually devoting." This is the same present participle as was found in Acts 1:14, translated there "continually devoting." It is a compound term consisting of a preposition meaning "to or towards a thing," the sense of the direction of something or someone. In addition to the prefix, there is the root that means "to be strong." The root signifies a show of strength. In terms of being in view of the present participle, persistent in something, continuing fervently, steadfastly in an endeavor, staying with it. You put the prefix together with the root and you have an intensified verb meaning "to be strong towards prayer." Verse 14, now verse 42 of chapter 2. The sense is the direction of strength and persistence in the early church in this first summary description of the church's life post-Pentecost was unto prayer. It was not some peripheral matter, not something tacked on at the end of a worship service. The work of corporate prayer was a matter to which the church was devoted, a matter to which they were persistently strong towards.

We come to our fourth episode of the six, Acts 4:23-31. The Jerusalem prays upon the return of Peter and John from their first encounter with persecution. In verse 24,

24 And when they heard this [that is, when the church heard the report from Peter and John], they lifted their voices to God with one accord... 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Again, the succinct words of Spurgeon, "The prayer meeting is the resource of a persecuted church."

Fifth episode of the six recorded in the book of Acts, Acts 12, specifically verses 5 and 12, the church praying on behalf of the imprisoned Peter. Verse 5,

5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. [Upon his release] 12 ... he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Then there is Acts 13:1-3, the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas by the church in Antioch, and I would only say here that perhaps it's likely, it's not plainly recorded but likely that this episode involved church-wide prayer, though admittedly the prophets and teachers named seem to be those described in Acts 13:3.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

That's a quick survey of the six glimpses we have in the book of Acts of the church at prayer.

The example of the early church is an example of devotion to the practice of corporate prayer, an example of the ministry in this case of the Jerusalem church, in Acts 13 the church in Antioch, its ministry in a climate of corporate prayer and we might note something of the content of their prayers. They're not praying for petty matters. They prayed for wisdom in choosing a man. They prayed for the deliverance of Peter. They prayed for courage to speak in the face of hostile authorities. They prayed fervently and unitedly with one mind.

Now finally in this hour, the fifth of six headings: corporate prayer petitioned and there are eight times in the New Testament where this is done. Eight times where corporate prayer is requested, is asked for. The heading again: corporate prayer petitioned.

Now the first of the eight is in Romans 15:30. Paul's letter to the Romans was addressed, going back to the opening chapter, verse 7, "to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints." Then in chapter 16, he conveys greetings to about 25 named brethren who represented, it seems rather plain, more than one church in the environs of Rome, and apparently these churches, if we deduce from the greetings, had fellowship with one another. Now in Romans 15:30 we read this,

30 Now I urge you [and the pronouns are significant, their number, this is plural, I urge y'all, you all], I urge you, brethren [that's plural], by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

Now while I think we can reasonably assume that the individual members of the church earnestly and whole-heartedly exerted themselves in prayer privately, yet this fact remains, the urgent request of Paul was directed to you, plural, brethren, plural, in a letter addressed to a church, and thus primarily it should be envisioned, I did not say exclusively but primarily based upon the text that the church corporately responded to his urging, in the language of verse 30, "to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

Now the second occurrence is in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was addressed, "To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia." Now we know of at least one church elsewhere in Achaia, it was the church in Cenchrea, and in 2 Corinthians 1:10, Paul writes of deliverance from, "peril of death," and expressed confidence, "And He will yet deliver me," and at verse 11, "you," it's a plural

11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.

In summary, Paul's deliverance which he attributed to the prayers of many was reason for more prayer by many that he might yet be delivered again. But again, my point is, who is addressed? A church and the plural number of this language. And again, I'm not saying that the individual constituent members of the church in Corinth or Cenchrea or wherever else, did not take this matter home with them. I think we can logically confidently assume they did but the point is primarily it's addressed to a church, the prayers of many.

The Ephesian letter was written, Ephesians 1:1, "To the saints who are at Ephesus," third petition now. At chapter 6, verse 18 we read,

18 With all prayer and petition pray [it's a plural participle] at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert [another plural participle] with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Who's addressed? What's the number of this language? The Ephesian church, plural.

The fourth petition, the Colossian letter, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae." It is a letter to be read among you, chapter 4, verse 16, and read in the church of the Laodiceans." Now in chapter 4 at verse 2 and following we read, "Devote yourselves," that's the imperative mode of that language that was explained back in Acts 1:14 and 2:42 but this time it's intensified because it's put forward in command form.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert [plural participle] in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying [plural participle] at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ

Philippian letter, chapter 1, verse 17. Or excuse me, the Philippian letter addressed, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, including the overseers and deacons," and at verse 19 of the opening chapter,

19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

In 1 Thessalonians I would say it becomes even plainer. 1 Thessalonians, going back to chapter 1, verse 1, "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians," and now going to chapter 5, verse 25,

25 Brethren, pray for us [second person plural, again an imperative]. 26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27 I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.

One of my favorite expositors is Edmund Hiebert, I'm not sure how his name is correctly pronounced. I heard earlier, well, this past week it was Hebert, but he comments here in view of the next verse, verse 26, "It seems clear that the writer desired to be remembered not only in their private prayers but also during the public worship services of the Thessalonian church, that is, in corporate prayer."

2 Thessalonians 3:1,

1 Finally, brethren [and again a plural imperative], pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, ... 2 and that we will be delivered from perverse and evil men

Finally, the Hebrew letter. Hebrews was written to a congregation of Greek speaking Jews with leaders "who keep watch over your souls," a church of some longevity. In chapter 5, "though by this time you ought to be teachers," a church that suffered in the past, "remember the former days when you endured a great conflict of suffering." The writer, the anonymous writer, desired to be restored to them and he petitioned, "pray for us."

In summary, these petitions for prayer, eight of them, in every case are expressed to local churches. Again, surely they would be responded to by the individual constituent members of their churches in their private praying in their homes and their families, surely that would be the case, but the fact remains the first application correspondent to each letter addressing local churches and corresponding to the use of the plural in all of the petitions is corporate praying, the corporate praying of the Romans, the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Thessalonians, and those Greek speaking Jews wherever they were. From these apostolic requests, one can deduce Paul's expectation that these local churches were houses of prayer; that they were praying churches. One can deduce the apostle's confidence in the efficacy of these praying churches and one can learn the kinds of things that ought to occupy our corporate praying, matters related to the advance of the Gospel, the preservation of persecuted brethren, the welfare of the saints. In Colossians 4:2, being devoted to prayer with an attitude of thanksgiving.

To corporate prayer we are to be devoted, in corporate prayer we are to strive together, wartime praying in dependence on the merits of the Captain of salvation, the ruling and living head of the new covenant house who has promised to be with his people when they gather together.

In the next hour, there will be one more heading and that is corporate prayer prescribed and that's going to take us to one of those particulars of how we ought to conduct ourselves in the house of God.

Let us bow.