

## **PRAYING ALWAYS: Ephesians 6:18.**

### **Reading: Ephesians 6: 10-24.**

Life in the local church is never quiet! There are always upheavals and changes of one kind and another. We have to bear losses and crosses, and there is always uncertainty about the future as we do not know what we will be facing this winter with the pandemic. We have had new friends joining with us for worship over the last year. Some of our recent and not-so-recent history is known to them. Some is not. We have of late experienced some remarkable divine help while we also have seen some disappointing behaviour. For myself, there is ever the challenge of discerning what the Lord would have me to do, and what are to be the emphases of my work for the Lord.

But the sermon title is a reminder to us of the absolute urgency of prayer. We are praying for this cause that the Lord would give us a future and a hope. We feel the urgency of this and all the more at this moment in history. This exhortation to prayer comes at the end of the teaching about the armour of God. Prayer kindles a sense of the righteousness of Christ, makes us keenly aware in our minds about the salvation we have, strengthens our faith, gives us clarity of thought, and all-terrain gospel manoeuvrability. The Christian life is not something romantic. We have seen remarkable things. But we need to press on.

#### **1. Pray for the ministry of the word.**

The main part of this apostolic instruction is to pray for the ministry of the word of God. We are to pray for all preachers, whether in pulpits or in the Open Air, in small churches or in larger churches. How important it is to pray for their personal holiness. They need to preach out of a living experience of Christ, not from yesterday's blessings and light. There is the hard work of character development that they need to undergo. It is not a matter of busyness or 'hours clocked up'. Sometimes it is true that less is more.

We need to pray that preachers would preach boldly out of personal conviction and with the authority that comes from that. They need to be able to address hearers with clarity. Included in this is the reproof of sin, starting with the actual sin of people and then calling people to repent. Examples are to be found at Acts 2:36, Act 3:14-15 and Acts 4:10. Paul asks the church at Colosse to pray that he would speak boldly (Colossians 4:1-4). This will mean treading on people's toes and saying things they do not want to hear. It will mean causing upheaval and unhappiness among some (see Acts 16:20; and 17:6). The gospel is a call for radical change, to have no idols but only the true God. It is to refuse to bow to the demands of people who would try to outlaw calling people with

homosexual temptations to repent. It is unwilling to accept the narrative of white sin being the driver of all misery in the world. It calls people of all backgrounds to repent.

## **2. Pray for future ministry.**

We need to pray for those who will follow us. This may be the generation of preachers, more than ours, who end up in prison for their unwillingness to compromise precious biblical truth and reality. The present ruling ideology is against reason, evidence, moderation, and the challenge of competing views and does not have an adequate view of who man is. We can see the hardening of these tendencies from past events and eras, but observe that they intensified and began to go mainstream in the 1960's. In the process, so much of the church has ended up becoming a feeble imitation of these currents of thought.

There is then in this day the need for courage and resolve (2 Timothy 1:7; 2:1-3; and 3:10-11). We have to ask what we are passing on to the generation to come. Are we passing on fear to them? Or a spirit of moaning, complaint and general negativity? Are we bequeathing them a legacy of legalism, poor spiritual reasoning or even an addiction with self? We must pray the next generation goes beyond us and our blind spots, the places where we have been unteachable, and our lack of sanctification and discernment. We must pray they will not get it wrong but will be alert, vigilant, thoughtful, bold, holy and powerful.

## **3. Urgency**

We finish with this thought of the urgency of the hour. The Christian Institute has called this week a Week of Prayer for the nation. The needs are urgent. We have our weekly Prayer Meeting. Are you able to join us? Do you care enough about the local church to pray for her wellbeing? Do you care about other churches? Or about young people? Or about the state of our nation? We need to grasp how serious the situation is. People are being anaesthetized to accept transgenderism and much else besides. Too much of the church is absorbed in looking cool to this generation. Pray here at the church. Pray at home. Pray everywhere!