

Series: Ephesians
Title: Praying Always
Text: Ephesians 6: 18-20
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Ephesians 6: 18: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19: And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20: For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

It goes without saying, believers pray. We never prayed until God regenerated us and gave us faith in Christ. But then the fruit of God's grace was: we began praying to God. Prayer is what Christ used to confirm to Annanias that Christ had indeed converted Paul. He said, "Behold, he prayeth."

Yet, because we have the old man of sinful flesh, throughout the scriptures, we are constantly reminded to pray and given much instruction concerning true prayer, as we are in our text.

ALWAYS PRAY IN THE SPIRIT

First, he says, "Praying always." (Eph 6: 18) It does not mean that believers are constantly praying. But believers live in the spirit of perpetual, constant dependence upon God our Savior, that is the spirit of true prayer. Believers do not pray only when we are in need or distress. We pray in good times as well as bad; when the way is clear as well as in trial.

Our minds are often thinking of God's free and sovereign electing grace—how God chose us freely by his grace; of Christ's suffering and successful redemption of his people, of us personally; of the Holy Spirit's regenerating power by whom we have life and faith; of the great blessing God gave us to have the gospel preached in spirit and truth; of the great gift of brethren; our minds are on our friends and loved ones who do not know Christ. As often as we think on these things, our hearts commune with God in prayer. "Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Php 4:6)

Then he says, "With all prayer and supplication." (Eph 6: 18) There are all kinds of prayer: public, private, vocal, silent, joyful, sorrowful, planned and impromptu, confessional and for giving thanks. And there is "supplication." Supplication is asking God to supply: new blessings, new mercies. It is asking God as did Solomon, "That he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else." (1 Ki 8: 59-60)

But here this is the point of the verse, when praying—in all prayer and all supplication—always pray in the Spirit. What does praying "**in the Spirit**" mean? We only have time for a few points here.

One, it is opposed to praying in the flesh—"the flesh profiteth nothing." (Jn 6: 63; Rom 8: 8) For instance, praying to be seen of men is praying in the flesh. In the home, believers should teach our children to pray—mealtime, bedtime, other times—our children should hear us pray. But in public places—restaurants or work—Christ said, "when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Mt 6:5) Another example of fleshly prayer is "saying" prayers or using form. Folks repeat the words Christ used to teach his disciples to pray but the "Lord's Prayer" is in John 17. Christ did not use the words he used when teaching his disciples. We are not to repeat any prayer of any other person.

To do so is to merely say a prayer and is fleshly. One more example of fleshly prayer are vain repetitions. Prayer without thought, without heart is vain. When we speak to one another, we do not repeat the person's name every other word; we don't have to repeat God's name. When talking to others, we do not repeat the same statements over and over. Christ said "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." (Mt 6: 7) These are a few examples of fleshly prayer. Praying in the flesh is the opposite of praying in the Spirit.

Praying in the Spirit is praying in the power of the Holy Spirit. True prayer is put in our heart by God. Seek to pray by the Spirit.

Romans 8: 15:...ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father...26: Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*" (Ro 8: 15, 26-27)

Also, praying in the Spirit is approaching God through Jesus Christ in his name.

Hebrews 7:25: He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through Him, seeing He liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 13:15: By Him, therefore, let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Brethren, whatever kind of prayer, pray always in/by the Holy Spirit. When God puts prayer in our heart then our prayer is according to God's will and God will bless it. But faithless, fleshly prayer, worldly lusts, and heartless form has no power with God. Never approach God with the tongue while the heart is far off. God abhors prayer where there is no heart-desire for God's glory and Christ's honor.

WATCHING WITH ALL PERSERVERANCE

Secondly, he says watch with all perserverance, "and watching thereunto with all perseverance." (Eph 6: 18)

Watching is opposed to being slothful and sleepy. Watch for the Spirit and pray in the Spirit; watch for Christ and pray in Christ. The context is speaking of our spiritual armor against our spiritual enemies. We have many cunning, crafty enemies who never sleep, who are always ready to devour. We must be watchful—diligent—to not grieve the Holy Spirit, so as to constantly commune with God in the power of the Holy Spirit, to use this spiritual weapon. Avail yourself constantly of this privilege of approaching God in the power of God's Spirit through Christ our Mercy Seat. Avoid all that would turn us away from Christ so that we are in constant communion with him. A believer watching in the Spirit will not be surprised when the enemy comes but will be awake and well-armed by God. When we are under the power of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to fall to the power of darkness. In the garden of Gethsemane Christ "soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." He was about to be made sin for his people. So he watched by praying to God the Father. Therefore, he knew when the tempter came. But the disciples slept. When the enemy came, Christ had to awake them. Imagine if he had not been there to wake them up! Our Lord Jesus told his disciples, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." (Mt 26:41)

Further, we watch, for Christ's return. These are the last of the last days. Christ will soon come! "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Pet 4: 7) Christ said, "But of that day

and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” (Mr 13:32-33)

Next, Paul adds, “with all perseverance” (Eph 6: 18) At times we ask but God does not give. It appears God does not hear us. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.” (Jas 4:3) When a true believer prays amiss, God does hear and does answer us. But he answers by not giving us what we ask; that is great mercy from God.

Other times, God does not immediately give us what we pray for because he is proving our faith; he will have us take our rightful place in the dust. The Canaanite woman’s daughter was vexed so she came to Christ. “But he answered her not a word.” Finally, he answered, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” She never gave up because she was praying in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance. “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” (Mt 15:25-28)

Other times God waits to take away our strength, to make us entirely dependent upon Christ and that is how he makes us prevail and blesses us. Christ came and wrestled with Jacob. The trial is Christ wrestling us to make us dependent upon his strength alone. But Jacob was wrestling back in Jacob’s strength. So Christ increased the trial by putting Jacob’s thigh out of joint. To Jacob it appeared matters were getting worse not better. But by waiting, by increasing the trial, by taking away all Jacob’s strength, it made Jacob do the only thing he could do: lay hold on Christ and cry fervently, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!” That is how Christ made Jacob prevail in prayer! And he does the same for us.

Do not ever forget! Prayer is not the means of us changing God; prayer is God’s means of changing us. So “pray always, watching unto Christ with all perseverance.”

Other times, God has his secret purposes for not answering right away. But God always hears his elect. For all these reasons we ought to always pray, watching unto Christ, with all perseverance:

Luke 18: 1: [Christ] spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2: Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4: And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5: Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6: And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7: And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8: I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Lu 18:1-8)

FOR WHAT DO WE PRAY?

Lastly, for what does Paul encourage us to pray? First, “supplication for all saints.” (Eph 6: 18)

That is a good name for our brethren: ‘saints’! Every believer is a saint, sanctified by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father sanctified—set apart—his people in Christ in divine election before the world was made—(Jude 1: 1) We are “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once...For by one offering, he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb 10, 14) And we are sanctified

“through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thess 2: 13-14)

Every believer is a saint. We are to make supplications to God for all saints because all the needs of every saint shall be supplied by God by Christ Jesus. “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Php 4:19) So every saint is to make supplications to God for every other saint. It does not mean we are not to make personal supplication; we ask God to supply our personal needs. But here, Paul exhorts us to ask God to supply the needs of our brethren. Brethren, we should multiply our supplications for our brethren so as not to make the mercy-seat a place for spiritual selfishness. Paul prayed always for his brethren, “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” (Php 1: 4)

Notice, it is “for all saints”: sick and well, young and old, male and female, here and in every place. I am so thankful for the brethren who are making supplication for my dad—and mom. I am convinced that believers really do make supplication for all saints. It’s comforting to let your brethren know you are praying for them. The apostles do so in the epistles. But something needs to be said in our day. The modern day market place to be seen of men is online. Religious folks use these cutesy, irreverent catch-phrases and broadcast that they are praying for everything under the sun. If someone stumps their toe; somebody says, “I’m sending one up for you!” It is more common to hear than “Thank you” or “you’re welcome.” But I wonder has it just become a thing to say; how many have uttered the first word in prayer to God. I would rather you pray for me, and not tell me, than tell me and not pray for me.

So first, supplication for all saints, and secondly for those who preach the gospel, “And for me.” (Eph 6: 19) Paul frequently requested that believers pray for him and for all who preach the gospel. But notice this. His concern is not so much for self as it is for the furtherance of the gospel and the glory of Christ, “That utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6: 19)

We should pray for the personal care of Christ’s ambassadors. But our chief concern should be that God give his preachers power to speak the Word of God in spirit and in truth. We pray for God to enable his preachers to preach Christ and him crucified, to preach Christ the GodMan, Christ our High Priest, the Lamb of God, the Propitiation, Christ the Wisdom and Power of God. We pray that God will enable his preachers to preach God’s absolute sovereignty in Christ and man’s total depravity and need of Christ. We pray God give grace to preach the grace of God in Christ: electing, redeeming, regenerating, preserving, resurrecting, glorifying grace—that salvation is of the Lord.

Also, we ask that God might open new doors wherever he is pleased to do so for the preaching of Christ.

Then we ask that the Spirit of God will make the word preached, effectual in the hearts of his people: giving spiritual life, saving faith, and true repentance from dead works. We ask that God might grow his people in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and that God might make the gospel of Christ more important to his people than our everyday bread. We know it shall, but we ask that his word accomplish the thing whereunto he sends it.

Lastly, we ask that he might add to his church daily such as should be saved, that Christ might return soon.

Amen!