Text: Ephesians 6:18–24
Truth: Ministry requires prayer and partners.
Date/Location: Sunday PM, May 11, 2025 at FBC

Introduction

The relation of prayer to the armor of God it is the manner in which we should daily put on the whole armor of God. Paul is still thinking about the way in which believers can hold their ground and not fall when Satan attacks. Prayer is not a last resort when all other resources have run dry. It is just as important as God's armor (vv.10–17). *Doing God's will, whether it is resisting the Devil or proclaiming the Gospel, requires prayerful dependence on Him.*

Paul gives five key characteristics of prayer to help guide us to pray appropriately: pray constantly, pray in dependence upon the Spirit, be alert/attentive in prayer, be devoted to prayer ("with all perseverance"), pray for all believers. All these principles are right there in the text (vv.18–20).

If the topic of spiritual warfare in the prior verses and Paul's request for himself in the following verses are any indication of how we should pray for other believers, the content of our prayers revolve around their spiritual needs and God's program.

Didn't Jesus teach us to pray in this manner in Matthew 6?

> 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:
> Our Father in heaven,
> Hallowed be Your name.
> 10 Your kingdom come.
> Your will be done
> On earth as *it is* in heaven.
> 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
> 12 And forgive us our debts,
> As we forgive our debtors.
> 13 And do not lead us into temptation,
> But deliver us from the evil one.
> For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
> Amen.

After Paul's instructions to pray for all the saints, he makes a personal request concerning His ministry work. Let's review this some more.

I. Gospel Ministry Requires Prayer, vv.19–20

A. Paul asks for prayer especially when the success of His gospel witness was under threat by outside circumstances. This is not the only time Paul has requested believers pray for him (2 Thess 3:1–2; cf. Col 4:1–3). All throughout his ministry Paul was asking believers to pray on his behalf. It's encouraging as ministers of the gospel to know that there are other believers who are praying for you. Of all people, Paul was the most likely to become discouraged in his ministry. The persecution, shipwrecks, imprisonments could have easily discouraged to the point of throwing in the towel. He was mocked, stoned, and thrown off town for his preaching.

B. I suppose even Paul felt discouraged, inadequate, and intimated at times in his ministry. He needed God's help and protection. He needed God's people to pray for him to be bold in his gospel preaching. Paul probably had in mind the proclamation of the gospel when he stood to give a defense for why he was imprisoned (3:1; Acts 28:16, 20).

C. He asks that "that utterance may be given" almost in the sense that God would put words in his mouth. Paul was well-educated, intelligent, good at reasoning, persuasive, knowledge in the OT and the Gospel. He was prepared. The idea is that he would not be nervous or worried, but speak the gospel freely, boldly, clearly.

D. Paul is in chains when he writes on account of his preaching the "mystery of the Gospel." Why? Because the Jews hated the "mystery" aspect of the Gospel which had to do with the inclusion of the Gentiles and Jews into one body, the Church. They could not stand this idea and had Paul thrown in jail. If you were in Paul's position, what do you think you would have requested prayer for? Maybe release, justice, help, a lawyer?

E. Paul chooses to focus on his service as an *ambassador*. An ambassador represents an another and speaks on their behalf. Normally, ambassadors have privileges and "diplomatic

immunity." Then they can effectively bring the message they are commissioned to bring. But Paul was not treated in the same way an ambassador of some earthly king would have been treated.

F. If Paul were to be a faithful ambassador of Christ, He would need the boldness to speak freely of Christ whom He represented with honesty, forthrightness, and confidence (2 Cor 5:20). It's challenging enough to be bold to family members and neighbors, imagine standing before rulers and kings. Do you believe God could help you to do what Paul was able to do by God's help?

G. For Paul, preaching the gospel boldly (and at all, for that matter) was not a matter of choice but obligation. Paul says in v.20b "that in it [his chains] I may speak boldly, as I *ought* to speak." Paul had been commissioned directly by Christ to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Eph 3:8; Acts 22:17–23). The message itself deserves to be presented freely and clearly. We're not apostles, but we have been given THE commission to make disciples which requires sharing the Gospel like Paul did. Do you have a sense of "oughtness" like Paul to preach the gospel boldly?

Transition: Not only do gospel ministers need prayer, but as we look at Paul's final closing words in vv.21–24 we find that…

II. Gospel Ministry Needs Partners, vv.21–24

A. Partnership in gospel ministry fosters mutual care and concern. Paul cared for his partners in the ministry, many of whom he either directly or indirectly led to the Lord. He cared deeply for the believers in Ephesus, and he knew that they shared mutual care and concern for him. Paul had originally ministered to them, but now they were a ministry to him through their prayers.

B. Perhaps you have felt that mutual care and concern over the years with missionaries whom we support. I know many missionaries think about their supporting churches, pray for them, and enjoy hearing from them. We've gotten wonderful responses from missionaries when we send them Christmas cards.

C. The Ephesian church certainly thought affectionately of Paul: "But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing,

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you" (v.21)

D. Remember that Paul is writing from prison in Rome and sending the letter to Ephesus. He cannot take it there himself, so Tychicus would be the carrier of the letter to the church. He would also give a report to them on Paul's circumstances, his condition, ministry opportunities, needs, etc.

E. Paul's hope is that in sending Tychicus to report on Paul their hearts would be comforted. The letter Tychicus had plenty of doctrine, exhortation, and instruction for the believers. Tychicus's presence would allow them to learn more about Paul's circumstances that he chose not to include in the letter.

F. Do you find your hearts comforted by the reports from our missionaries? Or is your heart disconnected from the ministry of the gospel and those who carry the message forward? Paul had a way of connecting with the people. He truly cared for them and that built relationships that were deeper than just an acquaintance. I think Paul would call the Ephesian believers partners in his ministry. He encouraged them and they encouraged him.

G. Tychicus, our letter carrier, was a great help to Paul as well. He is described as "my beloved brother" and "faithful minister in the Lord." The Gr. word διάκονος translated as minister is the word "servant." It's the word use to describe the office of Deacon. Tychicus wasn't a deacon, at least that we know of, but he certainly was a faithful servant of the Lord in serving Paul. Tychicus was involved in a variety of Paul's ministry endeavors.

Acts 20:4 – he was a traveling companion with Paul in the ministry.

Col 4:7-8 – he was going to tell the church at Colosse the same things that he was going to convey at Ephesus, along with bringing them a letter too.

2 Tim 4:12 - Tychicus was again with Paul at some point before the end of his life and he was sent again to Ephesus to deliver 2

Timothy and relieve Timothy so he could go to see Paul (2 Tim. 4:9).

Titus 3:12 - Either Artemas or Tychicus was going to convey the letter from Paul to Titus, and Titus was to go to see Paul.

H. Tychicus's service to the Lord advanced the spread of God's word in the form of letters. He also served as somewhat of a "furlough replacement" to relieve Timothy from his duties in Ephesus to go to Paul. We need Tychicus's who will go anywhere and do anything.

Conclusion

In the final two verses (vv.22–23) blesses the believers in Ephesus. His prayer-wish is that the saints will know God's peace, experience God's love from the knowledge that comes through faith. Though all of these come from God and the Son, indeed, the peace and love of God should exist between God's children.

One final prayer wish is for God's grace might be with "who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible *love."* True believers love the Lord. True believers love one another. But what does it mean to have "incorruptible love" (NASB) or to love "with sincerity" (NKJV)? Most other places where Paul uses the term it is in reference to immortality, the resurrected body which will not decay. Here, it modifies our "love" for our Lord, which should be unending, ceaseless, never dying, as opposed to a love that vanishes, flickers out. Theologically we know that true believers will persevere in the faith and love, but perhaps our love for Jesus needs a little fanning.

I hope our study of Ephesians has fueled your love for our Lord as we learned of God's redemptive plan that He ordained from eternity past, which he then accomplished in Christ Jesus. His provision of new life, freedom from sin, and the Spirit to help us follow the instructions written down for us in Ephesians. Like a parent who ensures their child has all they need, God has done so for those who love Him.

JDL