

## **"With All Prayer ..."**

*"... and supplications, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains that I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:18-20).*

This long appeal for Ephesians' prayer for others, himself, as well as their own selves, is Paul's final, concluding remarks attached to his appeal for Ephesians to put on *"the whole armor of God"* (Eph. 6:11, 17). It is certain he understood the value of prayer and often resorted to it. Ananias was sent to him with the instructions, *"behold, he prayeth"* (Acts 9:11). God's command that he leave Jerusalem came while he was in the temple praying (Acts 22:17). In his epistles he often records prayers he uttered for those to whom he wrote and in this letter he implied both his prayers and manner in praying when he wrote, *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father ..."* (Eph. 3:14). To Paul, prayers were a blessing and privilege which often sustained him through many trying and difficult experiences.

Prayer is appropriate for almost all occasions of life for we are to pray *"at all seasons in the Spirit."* From the above citation in which Paul called upon Ephesians to pray, he has ...

Urged that the armor Christians must wear to prepare themselves for the warfare with Satan is incomplete without prayer. A praying person often is a reflecting person: reflecting on his own weaknesses and the strength of his adversary and asking the Lord's interventions to give him the strength he needs to ward off all Satan's attacks. He realizes that God is able to give His children strength to overcome.

Urged that it is in prayer that we *"watch."* Jesus coupled *"watching"* and *"praying"* together in his command to His disciples: *"watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"* (Mt. 26:41). We are commanded to *"continue steadfastly in prayers, watching therein with thanksgiving"* (Col. 4:2).

Urged that our watching in prayer must be with perseverance. Perseverance means *"keep on keeping on"* and Jesus emphasized the need for perseverance in prayer in His parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). In that prayer a widow petitioned a judge that he *"avenge me of mine adversary"* (Lk. 18:3). The nature of this judge was that ordinarily he would have paid scant attention to the widow's request for he *"feared not God, and regarded*

*not man*" (Lk. 18:2). But, although the earlier petitions of the widow went unheeded by the judge, her perseverance by constant appeals to him moved him to fill her request -- not because he had a desire to see "justice done" but to be rid of a persistent plaintiff. Our God is not unjust as that judge; He does respond to our cries and is concerned about our needs. "*Casting all your anxieties upon him, for he careth for you*" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Urged the Ephesians join with their prayers, supplications, and requests. Paul reminded the Ephesians they should make intercessions for all the saints -- and he especially desired that they intercede to God for him. Isn't it interesting to note some of the things he did not ask they ask God to give to him? He did not ask that He punish those responsible for his being in prison. He did not request that they ask for his release from prison (although that would not have been inappropriate); his appeal was that they petition God that he might open his mouth to make known with boldness the gospel, as he ought to have spoken. Paul never forgot that the gospel is God's power for salvation and that just as he later urged Timothy to "*preach the word,*" he would himself heed that late advice by speaking the mystery of the gospel boldly and as widely as his prison confinement would allow (6:19). May we have the same appreciation of the word and the same persistence in preaching it!

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