

Ephesians 6:18-20

Praying & Speaking

Introduction

After Paul's outline of the spiritual armor he begins to get very practical on how this 'standing firm' looks. The Holy Spirit is not only the source of the inspired scripture, but beyond that He is the one who directs the focus of our prayer life. Continually. The apostle then takes a very practical application of prayer and asks the church in Ephesus to be praying for His own boldness in speech. As Paul often implies: intimacy and the spiritual bond between believers is critical.

Exposition

Ephesians 6:18

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

With all Prayer and Petition, Pray at All Times in the Spirit

If repetition is for emphasis in Jewish writing then we have an important message from Paul here: we need to be praying all the time! Not only does this sentence tell us to pray twice, it also tells us to petition. The general sense of prayer being intimate communication with God about life, liberty and the pursuit of His will. The nature of prayer is that we see a logical imperative: you are intimately intertwined with Him, now be intimate with Him!

Petitioning means to ask for something of our desire with the hope that God would bring that about. Petitioning is often asking that events take place, possessions being acquired or people being taken care of in a certain way. When the believer asks for something of the Lord what attitude should the believer have? Is faith to be had in God that He will give you what you desire, or that He will give you what you need or both? Teachings on petitioning range from wild "name it and claim it" to "God only gives you what He already planned to give you so don't ask." The believer is left studying God's word and wondering why either extreme view is entertained by others at all. When you view petitions in the light of intimacy with God, who is a heavenly, benevolent, agape loving father who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing asking God for His action does not seem ridiculous, but instead part of your relationship. Christ described the Father in Matthew 7:11 as being one who gives to those He loves.

How do we reconcile the 'unanswered' petition? The unanswered petition is still the result of several amazing things: 1) it is an act of intimacy with God 2) it is an act of faith 3) it is trusting in the sufficiency of God to deliver the best of His benevolent love into the lives of those who are being prayed for. Since prayer is over the conditional things of this world the positional concerns are left for rest, and the eternal perspective gives us rest for conditional things.

Praying in the Spirit is one of the most important details of this passage in regards to how we pray. Praying in the Spirit has to do with the state of our focus in our relationship. Carnal believers, choosing not to abide in the Spirit may pray, petition and plead, but their focus and motive are not God's focus and motive. The Holy Spirit will bring matters to mind that will be about God's business, God's will and God's heart. Not only will we be having intimacy with God, but we'll be doing so about things that matter to Him and will bear fruit!

Be on the Alert with All Perseverance and Petition for the Saints

Our intimacy with one another and our intimacy with God get to intersect regularly as we petition the Lord for His benevolence towards other saints and dealing with their needs. As we take a look at the context of this passage the standing firm of the saint in the armor of Christ and the Spirit we recognize the need for a formation that has 100% coverage. To know that you have my back and that I have your back is an incredible encouragement to the daily life of the believer. One suggestion that I would offer is this: don't end a conversation with another believer without either praying then and their (and again later) or at least asking, "How can I be praying for you?" Be alert to keys in conversation and reports of life's events: they're prayer requests in disguise.

Questions for Discussion

Does praying enough, or having enough people pray force God to do what we ask?
 Are there unanswered prayers?
 How can I be praying for you?
 What matters are too small to pray for?

Ephesians 6:19

and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Paul entreats the believers to be praying for him. He knows he will face trials, temptations and abuse in his ministry, but instead his request is that his words matter. Paul desires that utterances (words) be given to him as he abides and that every word he speaks would be invaluable to those who listen. Again we see repetition of a concept to emphasize the point: Paul wants to speak the words of God to those who desperately need to hear the gospel.

Paul's reference to the mystery of the gospel had two parts: 1) the Gentiles were not usually familiar with Jewish doctrine to know that a savior was coming and 2) the Jews were not aware, or would often reject the Messiahship of the gospel. In this circumstance, being chained to the Roman guards, Paul would need to speak to the gentile mind and persuade a person who might be part of a mystery religion or the major Roman cults to expose them to and lead them to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion

Are we still to pray for Paul?

How can we pray about Paul?

Ephesians 6:20

for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

For Which I am an Ambassador in Chains

If chains could bring freedom, Paul knew it. Not for him physically, but for those who had no knowledge of Christ. Paul's bondage as a representative would probably be shocking for a guard who would think that a person in chains had done something more sinister or criminal. We do see that Paul had quite an impact through the Roman guard in Philippians 4:22.

That in Proclaiming it I May Speak Boldly

Paul stated in Romans 1:16 that he was not ashamed of the gospel, but he does state here that he desires to speak boldly. The cost of speaking boldly could have been harsh treatment by the guards, but Paul desired that they be saved and that the message of the gospel be sent out, no matter the messenger, into the world.

Questions for Discussion

Do we speak boldly? Do we proclaim the gospel, lovingly, graciously, but boldly? How do we do that in a world so blatantly offended by the gospel?

Conclusion

This passage follows on Paul's strong writing about being who we are in Christ in a world that is physically and spiritually attacking the message of the gospel, believers, and Christianity in general with a message of being a praying formation. We recognize the need for a bold, passionate proclamation of the gospel in a world that doesn't understand the mystery of the gospel. Paul's writing pushes us to the conclusion that we need to recognize the spiritual warfare that exists, but not be focused on the warfare, but instead on the Lord in intimate fellowship with Him through the implements of the armor and the communion of prayer. In this position of standing firm we can be having the greatest impact due to the gracious work of God through us into the world.