

Eph. 6:18-20 (LD 45, Q116) “The Requirement of Prayer”

For the Children: People often pray because they want things for themselves – money, health, and so on. The most important reason to pray is so that we can give praise and thanks to God, because He deserves it! When we ask for things for ourselves or others, the most important things to ask for are help from the Lord to resist the devil and sin; to serve Him; and to spread the Gospel. Such things are even more important than money, health and freedom. The apostle Paul was willing to give up his freedom for the privilege of telling others about the Lord Jesus. **Questions:** Why does God make prayer so important for us? Why should we be always ready to pray? Why should we pray for boldness in telling others about the Lord Jesus?

Introduction:

First Point: The Command to Pray

- 1) The Command: The central idea in v. 18 is the command, “Pray!” This is part of the section on the spiritual armour (and weapons) God gives His people. We could look at prayer as another weapon or piece of armour (for defense and offence) – along with His Word and Spirit; or, we could say that prayer is involved in the use of every piece of the armour of God. Either way, it is essential.
- 2) At All Times: Because prayer is so essential, the command is that we pray “at all times” – regular and continual. It is vital for spiritual defense and offense, as noted. Q116 adds that it is vital for expressing gratitude and for *being* a Christian.
- 3) All Types of Prayer: Again, because prayer is so essential to the whole Christian life, we are commanded to use all types of prayer. That includes prayers of praise, thanks, confession of sin, along with “petition” (supplication and intercession).
- 4) Why It Is Commanded: We can infer from this several reasons why the Lord requires prayer: because He is worthy of our praise and thanks; to express our dependency upon Him; to promote His cause, His Gospel, Church and Kingdom; for the benefit of others, who also need His help. These reasons take us way beyond prayer out of a mere sense of duty. We pray because we love the Lord, His glory, His Person and works, His church and Kingdom.

Second Point: The Command to Be Alert

- 1) Staying Awake: Soldiers not only need armour and weapons; they also need to be ready to fight. The command to “be alert” means to be wakeful. “Perseverance” adds to this the idea of giving attention to something without distraction. This is a common theme in the Scripture, regarding alertness for danger (Mt. 26:41, Acts 20:31, 1 Cor. 16:13, 1 Pet. 5:8), opportunity to serve the Lord (Col. 4:2) and for Christ’s return (1 Thess. 5:8, Rev. 16:15).
- 2) Alert for Prayer: The command to stay alert is here especially for the purpose of prayer – regarding the above reasons for alertness (danger, service and our certain hope). Therefore “watch and pray” are often put together (Mt. 26:41, Col. 4:2, and our text). We are to be alert also for opportunities to pray for our brethren – “all the saints.”

Third Point: For the Sake of the Gospel

- 1) Clarity and Boldness: The Lord uses means to spread the Gospel. The apostle therefore asks for prayer for his evangelistic labours. He asks the Ephesians to pray for him to be given “utterance” – the right words, with clarity; and “boldness” – literally, “free speech.” By this, he means speech that is courageous, confident, open and unreserved, unashamed and unambiguous. These things are needed on the “battlefield” of Gospel-proclamation.
- 2) As Ambassadors: The apostle is aware that he is an ambassador of the Gospel, called to deliver the King’s message. An ambassador must be free of fear to do so. Paul was an ambassador “in chains” – because his concern to speak the Gospel freely, was more important to him than freedom from prison. Such courage does not come easily. Therefore, we need to pray for one another, that God might grant the help that we need.

Conclusion: