

• **Everything to be done in prayer**

Next Paul has something to say about prayer, but he does not use a piece of armour as an illustration of prayer. It would have been easy for him to say, 'And have with you the spear of prayer'; the Roman soldier always carried a spear and it would have made a nice illustration! But Paul does not do that because prayer is not just a piece of armour alongside other pieces of armour. Everything is to be done with prayer!

'And pray in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication at all times. To this end keep alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints ^{¶1}, and for me, that when I open my mouth utterance may be given to me, to make known boldly the mystery of the gospel ^{¶2}, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak' ^{¶3}.

¶1 6:18

¶2 6:19

¶3 6:20

Six points about prayer

Six points about prayer arise here.

(i) In the Spirit

(i) Prayer is to be 'in the Spirit'. The Holy Spirit prompts prayer and leads us in prayer. We may use a prayer-list or have some guidelines – as we should – but the Holy Spirit is to be the one who is in control as we pray. We follow the way He leads us. When we begin to pray the first thing we do is remind ourselves that we are in the presence of God, and ask for the help of God's Holy Spirit.

(ii) At all times

(ii) Paul says we must pray 'at all times'. Prayer is supremely vital. It will be of no value for us to try to be strong in the Lord and put on His armour if we do not pray. Without prayer we soon faint and fall.

(iii) Different types

(iii) There are different types of prayer. 'Prayer' is a general term for worship and talking to God. 'Supplication' means casting ourselves on God's mercy. 'Petition' is making requests for ourselves and for others. Paul asks us to pray with 'all prayer' – with every kind of prayer. There is secret prayer; there is church prayer. There is praying with one's mind switched on; there is praying in tongues where the mind is less used. There are 'groanings that cannot be uttered'.

(iv) Perseverance and watchfulness

(iv) Prayer requires perseverance and watchfulness. This is the supreme secret of the Christian life: to persevere in prayer. How easily we give up! We need to programme ourselves. Draw up a time-table. Fix a certain time of the day when you resolve you will get away from other people and pray. It may be before anyone else is awake. It might be long after midnight.

(v) For all the saints

(v) We should pray for 'all the saints', Christians known to us far and wide. We are not to use prayer entirely for selfish reasons and purposes. It is a great test of our spirituality – how much do we pray for others? Jesus is our intercessor in heaven. He prays for us all the time. We should be like Jesus. We too should be secret intercessors.

(vi) For gospel preachers - boldness

(vi) A special theme of prayer is to be the preaching of the gospel. God's preachers need the boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit more than anything else. Paul was in prison but he did not ask that they should pray for his release. There was

boldness

something far more important than that. He wants boldness to be given to him by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is a ‘mystery’. It is something that people do not understand unless the Holy Spirit is at work. Paul is in prison, suffering because of his previous preaching of the gospel. But he just wants more spiritual power to go on preaching. When the Spirit comes down upon us He gives us boldness. It is the supreme mark of the Spirit’s being at work in our lives and Paul wants this boldness more than anything else. He pleads with them to pray for this blessing for him.

Final words

• **Communication is vital**

• **To stay rejoicing is vital**

• **Paul’s greeting – looking forward to our final reward**

Paul brings his letter now to an end. He likes to give greetings and communications. *‘Now in order that you may know my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything’* ^{¶1}. A vital part of Christian fellowship is communication. Rumours and misunderstandings come in unless people are informed. Paul takes the trouble to let his friends know what is happening to him. Also Paul wants them to be encouraged. *‘I am sending him to you for this very purpose that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts’* ^{¶2}. To stay rejoicing is a vital part of the Christian life. Pastors have to keep their people rejoicing. Paul was in prison but he did not let his friends get discouraged about him.

Greetings are important in life. Paul adds: *‘Peace be to the brothers and sisters, and love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’* ^{¶1}. Paul feels for his friends as brothers and sisters. He wants them to know the peacefulness and the love of God in their hearts. They on their side will need to exercise faith. *‘Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ – grace with immortality’* ^{¶2}. The spiritual item we need more than anything is God’s grace – His kindly help when we need it and when we think we don’t. The last words are best translated ‘grace with immortality’ ^{¶3}. It is an unusual phrase, but it is Paul’s way of speaking of our final reward. When we are raised in glory we shall be clothed with ‘immortality’, the glory of the resurrection body. It is our final reward; we start living for it even now.

¶1 6:21

¶2 6:22

¶1 6:23

¶2 6:24

¶3 6:24



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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