

Eph 6:19-24 PAUL'S PERSONAL PRAYER

PRELIMS. Paul has explained the importance of realising we, the Church, are in a **war situation** – our enemy is not so much people as **spiritual powers/ideologies/philosophies, etc!** We need to put on armour – we must **stand firm** in truth/righteousness/gospel/salvation/word of God/prayer. Paul is actually still on the **subject of prayer** as he begins his final remarks to the Ephs.

I will always remember a teacher in primary school giving us a Bible lesson. She said **JOY**, Jesus first, Others next, and Yourself last! Well Paul certainly put himself **last** here in his prayer requests. Just think of the **personal difficulties** he was in, the constant crisis in his life regarding suffering and pain and yet he **never asks** to **escape** the consequences of being **faithful** to Christ! His chief concern is to **keep the faith** and to **exalt Jesus Christ** – not his own personal comforts! **APP** Just ask your self how much of **your** prayers are taken up with personal requests for comforts? To make **life easier!**

PAUL'S PERSONAL PLEA

Paul had fears! Can you imagine? Listen to him as he first walked the streets of Corinth “*I came to you in **weakness and fear**, and with **much trembling***”[1Cor2:3] And as he trembled he heard a voice “*Do **not be afraid**...for I am with you...because I have many people in this city*”[Acts 18:10]! What was Paul’s fear? It was that he would **not** preach “*as I **ought to speak***” and declare the full gospel. The gospel has to be declared in a certain way – and he did not think he could do that! He is asking Xn friends for prayer that **words would be “given”** him so that he would open his “*mouth **boldly***”[19]

Paul was **not** a ‘**Macho**’ figure – on the contrary “*his **bodily presence is weak**, and his **speech contemptible***”[2Cor10:10]! That was how they **perceived** Paul! You see, there is a **big difference** between ‘**Macho brashness**’ and ‘**holy boldness**’! Xns are to have holy boldness – but they are not to be brash, or over-confident or have an intimidating or **overpowering personality!**

Peter the Apostle had an **overpowering personality!** He **naturally** had a confident (**over**confident) presence. He could **intimidate** people. One scholar said Peter was ‘eager, impulsive, energetic, self-confident, aggressive, and daring, but also unstable, weak, and cowardly. He was guided more by **quick impulse** than logical reasoning’! Peter said he would never let the Lord down “***Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.***” *Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will **deny** Me three times.” But he spoke **more vehemently**, “If I have to die with You, **I will not deny You!**” [Mar 14:29-31]! **Over-confidence!** Paul had to **rebuke** to Peter!!*

Over-confidence is **not ‘holy boldness’!** Holy boldness is: ‘freedom to make the truth of God known in love without being afraid of what the consequences may be’. It is a ‘freedom’ which we can only get from the Holy Spirit. It’s a gift. Peter actually had the gift. But he did not use it at all times. Some times Peter was self-confident – sometimes he had the spirit of God. Like all gifts – we can **lay aside** ‘holy boldness’ and become brash and impetuous and impatient. It is **freedom** to make the truth known, a spiritual freedom from God.

It is to **speak**, not **shout!** To speak words “*given*” by God Himself! As Paul said elsewhere “*speaking the truth in love*”! It is to **explain in love**, what is the real problem with people – **sin!** But – not just sin per se – no, but rather **their particular sin** – the sin that is either preventing them from coming to Christ in faith and taking Him as their only Saviour – or the sin that is preventing a blessing and preventing full communion with God! Paul was asking for ‘strength’ to tell his congregations what they did **not want to hear** - but what they **needed to hear!** To tell them individually and collectively their own particular sins! “*Cry aloud, spare not... Tell My people **their transgression**, And the house of Jacob **their sins***” [Isa 58:1] **APP** I can preach all day about the errors/sins of those not present, communists, the government, the RCs, the homosexuals, etc, but they are not here to benefit from it! It is **your sins** and **my sins** that need to be **highlighted** – so that we will repent before God. It is easy to be bold when the object of our scorn is not present!

Holy boldness, “*speaking the truth in love*” includes **clarity** and ‘hitting the target’ – in **love**! The target is the **heart/conscience** of the individual offender of God’s law. No matter how loud I may thunder, unless I confront **you** in the congregation with **your** greed, **your** self-centredness, **your** worldliness, **your** idolatry, **your** pride, I am not being biblically bold! Look at Peter on the Day of Pentecost. He preached so that “*they were cut to the heart*” and later on we read “*When they saw the boldness of Peter and John*” [Act 2:37+4:13]

APP We, at Dens Road, need holy boldness to tell those who have not committed themselves to Christ, that He is the only answer to their lives! We need to tell those Xns, who do **not** “*live a life worthy of the calling they have received*” from the Lord, that they must ‘shape up’! If Paul needed prayer for this – so do you/I.

We need to be **more honest** with **one another**. “*Let a righteous man strike me--it is a kindness; let him rebuke me--it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it*” [Psa 141:5] “*rebuke a wise man and he will love you*” [Pro 9:8] “*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear*” [Pro 25:11,12]

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Its amazing how many problems arise in business/government/politics and the church from internal communications! **Lack of communicating** necessary information to one another! How many times have we read and heard of someone saying ‘I never knew, I wasn’t told, I didn’t know’? How many problems have arisen from **leaks** – important information that was **not communicated** – which some people felt **ought** to be communicated? Well, Paul understands that – and he does not want it to happen regarding **his affairs**! He has **nothing to hide**! “*Tychicus...will tell you everything*”! It’s wonderful to be free and **open** to everything – without having to cover anything up!

APP Regrading our **own situation** at Dens Road, and in the APC generally, we need to be much more ‘upfront’ about our **financial**

situation. Many people have no idea how low our funds are and that minister's salaries are not paid on time and many 'projects' are kept back out of lack of funds! We would like to do more but no funds.

There was nothing in Paul's **personal** life which he wanted to hide! "*so that you also may know **how** I am and **what** I am **doing***" [21]! And, just in case any of you have any suspicions Paul was sending Tychicus "*for this very purpose, that you may know how we are*"! He "*will tell you **everything***" [21]

Paul was sending Tychicus **because** Tychicus was a "*beloved brother and faithful minister*" and they could trust him. Tychicus was from Asia Minor, perhaps Eph itself, so he was probably known to them! **Wisdom** and **tact** are needed, even in a **small** congregation, to reveal and conceal the various matters that need to be made public - so that no **suspensions** are aroused. Therefore Tychicus was a suitable person to send with the accurate reports of what was happening to Paul who was in prison! **Rumours** and **doubts** had arisen – **why did God allow** the world's best evangelist to be imprisoned?

That is why he wrote Phils "*Now I want you to know, brothers, that **what has happened to me** has really served to **advance the gospel**, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that **my imprisonment is for Christ**. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord **by my imprisonment** are much **more bold** to speak the word **without fear***" [Phil 1:12-14]! This is what Paul asks for himself now!

Of course Paul was also informing them of what he was doing, to **encourage** them "*that he may **encourage** your hearts*" [22b]. He was letting them know he was **still preaching** the gospel in **prison**! The weekly ministry should be for **encouragement** to the congregation.

This request of Paul, is the **main request** the Church in the UK should have at this time. We are entering a phase in our history when the Church needs to be **bold** and **speak out** against the **prejudice against Christianity today**! We have God on our side and we have nothing to fear if we are **faithful** to Him.