

Sermon #88 — Ephesians Sermons

Title: **PRAY FOR ME**

Text: Ephesians 6:18-240

Subject: *Praying for Your Pastor*

Date: Tuesday Evening — December 12, 2017

Readings: *Lindsay Campbell and Merle Hart*

Introduction:

How often have you said o someone, “Pray for me?” How often have you heard that request from a sick friend, a troubled soul, or a heavy heart? How often I have asked you to “pray for me.” That is the title of my message — **PRAY FOR ME**. But what are we asking when we say to someone, “pray for me?” What are our friends asking of us, when they say to us, “Pray for me?” Let me show you the example of one man, the Apostle Paul. As much as possible, I want to use Paul’s words in Ephesians 6:18-24 as my own words. This is my request of you — (Ephesians 6:18-24).

(Ephesians 6:18-24) “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that

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utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, (20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (21) But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: (22) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts. (23) Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

ACTS 20

Let's begin in the 20th chapter of Acts. The Apostle Paul was a devoted, zealous preacher of the gospel. He was determined to seize every opportunity to spread the gospel through the world, using every

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means at his disposal. He travelled incessantly, preached at every opportunity, and wrote feverishly, living every day as if certain he would not have another.

He briefly visited Ephesus on his first missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21). On his third missionary journey, the Apostle returned to Ephesus for three years. By the preaching of the gospel, he was used by God the Holy Ghost to persuade many in that huge pagan city to turn from their idols to the living God, trusting our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 19-20). The church God raised up there was dear to Paul; and Paul was dear to that congregation.

Toward the end of his third missionary journey, Paul stopped by Miletus, and there the elders of the Ephesian congregation came to visit their cherished friend. Just before parting, Paul gave his friends a solemn charge, commending them and the church they served “*to God and the Word of his grace.*” Let’s read it together.

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(Acts 20:17-32) “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. (18) And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, (19) Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: (20) *And* how **I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you**, but have shewed you, and **have taught you publickly, and from house to house**, (21) Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (22) And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: (23) Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. (24) But **none of these things move me**, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course

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with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (25) And now, behold, **I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.** (26) Wherefore **I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.** (27) For **I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.** (28) **Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.** (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall **grievous wolves** enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (32) And **now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the**

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word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

(Acts 20:36-38) “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. (37) And **they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him**, (38) Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

ACTS 21

Then, Paul left for Jerusalem. Finding believers in Syria, Paul tarried there for seven days. There, the brethren, being concerned for Paul, begged him not to proceed to Jerusalem. But he would not be deterred. Then, at Caesarea, a certain prophet named Agabus came to Paul with a message from God, telling him plainly what would happen if he went to

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preach the gospel at Jerusalem. Let's pick up the story in verse 10.

(Acts 21:10-14) “And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. (11) And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. (12) And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. (13) Then Paul answered, **What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.** (14) And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, **The will of the Lord be done.**”

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What a remarkable, self-denying, self-sacrificing man Paul was! What an example he set for all who would walk in his steps! **O Spirit of God, make me such a preacher! Make me such a faithful servant!**

When we get to our text (Ephesians 6), all that had been prophesied in Acts 20 and 21 concerning this man has come to pass. Now, as he comes to the end of his epistle to his dear friends at Ephesus, Paul has one final word, one final request. He says, “Brethren, pray for me.”

He was now in prison at Rome. He knew, as he had told them, that he would never again see his beloved brethren at Ephesus upon the earth. The old soldier knew that he was soon going to be required to lay down his life for the gospel’s sake. **He wrote this epistle**

- to strengthen them and us in the great truths of the gospel,
- to establish us in the love of Christ,
- to unify God’s saints in the bonds of peace,

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- to exhort us to godly conduct,
- and to encourage us in our spiritual warfare.

Now he must conclude his epistle. In doing so, I can only imagine the thoughts that must have rushed through his mind. These would be the last words that these brethren would have from him. What should he say? What would be most beneficial to the church he was leaving behind at Ephesus? What would most effectually secure the church's adherence to the gospel and loyalty to Christ? With those thoughts in mind, the Apostle expressed the great desire of his soul to the brethren at Ephesus in the words of our text (Ephesians 6:18-24).

Proposition: God's true servants labor in the Word for the glory of Christ, for the furtherance of the gospel, and for the edification of the church. Knowing their own weaknesses, their own sin, and their utter inability to do the work God has put in their hands, they need and desire the prayers of

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God's people on their behalf. — This is what your pastor asks of you. — **PRAY FOR ME**.

Divisions: Let me be very specific and tell you exactly what I want you to pray for as you pray for me.

1. Pray for me that I may make known the mystery of the gospel (vv. 19-20).
2. Pray that when I am gone God will graciously send you another pastor who will be faithful to the gospel for the comfort of your hearts (vv. 21-22).
3. Pray that our God, the God of all grace, may continue to heap upon you all the blessings of his goodness and grace in Christ Jesus (vv. 23-24).

REGARDING THE PRESENT

1st — **I ask that you pray for me, regarding the present, that I may make known the mystery of the gospel** (vv. 19-20). I appreciate, more than words

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can express, your concerns for my health and my physical well-being. I appreciate you concern for your pastor when reproach is cast upon him by those who oppose him. But those things are really insignificant. I don't pay too much attention to either. But I am concerned about this. — I want to be found faithful unto death preaching gospel of Christ.

This was the matter of eminent concern to the Apostle Paul. He requested an interest in the prayers of God's saints for this cause, — that he might make known the mystery of the gospel.

(Ephesians 6:19-20) “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, (20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

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All other matters were secondary to this. Paul did not ask the saints to pray for his imprisonment, his physical infirmities, or his reproach.

- He did not ask that he might be freed from his bonds.
- Paul was willing to endure anything so that he might preach the gospel (Acts 21:11-13).

Paul desired that prayer might be made for him to preach the gospel with boldness.

- Even in prison, Paul considered himself to be an ambassador. He was sent of God with a message to declare.
- He wanted a door of utterance that he might have opportunity to preach.
- He wanted boldness (blunt assertiveness) to preach the gospel regardless of personal cost.

This is the one thing I desire of you. — Pray that I may preach the gospel, that I may “make known the mystery of the gospel.” — These three things I hold to be of highest importance.

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1. **I want to know the gospel** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:1-3).

(1 Corinthians 15:1-4) “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; (2) By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. (3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, **how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**; (4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

(Romans 1:1-6) “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (2) (Which he had **promised** afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) (3) **Concerning his Son** Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according

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to the flesh; (4) And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (5) **By whom we have received grace** and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: (6) Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.”

(Romans 1:16-18) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God** unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (18) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”

- It is the gospel of God.
- It is the gospel promised in the Scriptures.
- It is the gospel concerning God’s Son.

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2. **I want to be saved by the gospel.**
3. **I want to preach the gospel** (1 Corinthians 9:16).
I want God to give me a door of utterance, and I want to preach with bold simplicity.
 - We must not be bound by ambition.
 - We must not be bound by human pride.
 - We must not be bound by men.
 - We must not be bound by customs and traditions.

Someone may say, why are these things so important to you? It is important for just this reason: — Most people today have never heard the gospel!

1. **Today's gospel emphasizes what the sinner does for God, rather than what God does for the sinner.** Salvation is what God does for you, not what you do for him.
 - He planned it.

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- He accomplished it.
 - He applies it.
 - He perfects it.
2. **Today's gospel** emphasizes heaven and hell, rather than the real issues of Christ and sin.
 3. **Today's gospel** is a message to the head, not to the heart.
 4. **Today's gospel** calls on men to stand up and be counted. The gospel of God calls on men to bow down and worship.

I want to make known to men everywhere the mystery of the gospel, that is the mystery of God's salvation through a Substitute.

So, I ask this one thing of you. I ask nothing more.

Pray for me.

- God has sent me into this world with a message. I am an ambassador of God.
- Pray that I may have a door of utterance.
- Pray that I may be bold (blunt, forceful, assertive, dogmatic) in preaching.

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- Pray that I may preach the gospel.
- Pray that every time I preach God will give me his message to deliver.

REGARDING THE FUTURE

2nd — This second thing is a matter of great, constantly increasing concern to me, and it should be to you. — **When I am gone, when my work is done, it is my earnest prayer for you that God will graciously send you another pastor, another preacher, who will be faithful to the gospel for the comfort of your hearts** (vv. 21-22).

(Ephesians 6:21-22) “But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: (22) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.”

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Paul's self-denial was remarkable. He had great personal needs. But his concern was for the church he was leaving behind. Therefore, he sent Tychicus to minister to his beloved brethren.

If a man is a true pastor, his chief concern is for the church of Christ and the ministry of the gospel. Paul sent Tychicus with the highest possible recommendation.

- He was a beloved brother.
- He was a faithful minister.
- He came to comfort the saints.

(Isaiah 40:1-2) “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. (2) Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.”

You will notice that there was **no hint of jealousy** between these men. **What tender concern** this local church had for the man by whom God had taught

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them the gospel! What tender concern Paul had for this congregation!

When my work is done, I pray that God will give you a beloved brother and a faithful pastor to fill this pulpit. These two things characterize any God called pastor:

- He is a brother of a tender, loving heart.
- He is faithful to God, to the gospel, to the souls of men, and to his calling.

Those who are called of God to this holy work have noble desires which motivate them.

- They seek the glory of God.
- They declare unto men the mystery of God.
- They seek to comfort the saints of God.

YOUR BLESSEDNESS

3rd — I have one other desire for you that is expressed in my text. — **I want you to know and enjoy all the blessings of God in Christ** (vv. 23-24).

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I pray that our God, the God of all grace, may continue to heap upon you all the blessings of his goodness and grace in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 6:23-24) “Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

I want you to enjoy peace.

- May God assure your hearts of peace in Christ.
- May God govern your hearts with peace.
- May God give you peace with one another. That peace is always intimately connected with your attitude toward those who labor in the gospel for your souls (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in

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love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.”

I want you to be filled with love.

- May God grant to you a fuller knowledge and assurance of his love in Christ.
- May God cause you to love Christ.
- May God cause you to love the gospel.
- May God cause you to love one another.
- I pray that God will establish in your hearts this divine character of love. Without it there is no true, saving faith.

I want you to grow in faith and confident assurance, “the full assurance of faith.” May it please our God to grant to you his constant, free, unmerited grace in Christ.

- Grace brings faith.
- Faith brings love.
- Love brings peace.
- And all come to us from God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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APPLICATION

Brethren, pray for me.

- That I may have a door of utterance to preach.
- That I may be faithful to seek the glory of Christ.
- That I may be faithful to preach the gospel.
- That I may finish my course with honor to the glory of Christ (2 Timothy 4:1-18).

(2 Timothy 4:1-18) “I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) **Preach the word**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (5) But **watch thou** in all things, endure

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afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (6) For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (9) Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: (10) For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. (11) Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. (12) And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. (13) The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but* especially the parchments. (14) Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: (15) Of whom be

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thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. (16) At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. (17) **Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me**, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. (18) And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Amen.