

“We Pray for You...Pray for Us”:
Praying With Paul, Part 3
Sermon Notes

➤ **No Christian graduates the biblical school of prayer without being mastered by the prayers of Paul**

**For example, in 2 Thessalonians, the message is crystal clear: we must pray for one another...so:*

1. Your pastors are praying for you (1:11-12)

2. Please pray for your pastors (3:1-2)

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of August 22nd - 28th

Getting Started

1. In last week's study guide, we began an exploration of Paul's wisdom on prayer that *didn't* make it into our sermon series. As we've previously noted, Paul mentions prayer some 45 times across his 13 letters.¹ Footnote #2 below contains a sampling. As theologian Gary Millar observes:

“For Paul the gospel shapes the prayers of the church...*everything Paul prays for* has already been achieved for us, and is held out to us in the gospel...The most prominent feature of the Pauline material on prayer, whether Paul's own appeals for prayer or injunctions to pray, is the almost universal focus on prayers for the gospel to take root in people's lives through his ministry and the ministry of the church.”²

So we have to ask the question: do *you* pray this way? Do you hear *others* praying this way? Why is this sort of praying so rare today? If not this overarching concern of Paul, sorts of realities tend to dominate our prayers in the church? Why?

Digging Deeper

2. Since the beginning of this preaching series, we've said that anything worth talking about is worth praying about. It's also true that anything worth *thinking* about is worth praying about (2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Thessalonian 5:17). Into what areas of your thought life might you be well-served to consciously invite the Lord that you haven't yet? Explain.

Open Your Bible to Ephesians 1:17-23...

3. Ephesians chapter one contains one of the most towering prayers in Holy Scripture. Read through it carefully as a group, noting the central petition (v.17) as well as the result of that petition (vv.18-23). In brief, what is Paul praying for them (v.17)? What does he expect will occur in the lives of the Ephesian believers as a result (vv.18-23)? Which specific truths included in this prayer are most striking to you? How come?
4. In Ephesians 6:10-17, we come to Paul's famous "armor of God" passage. Note the connection between the armor (vv.10-17) and prayer (vv.18-20). Though perhaps a bit overstated, Oswald Chambers' worthy observation here is:

“The armour is for the battle of prayer. “Take up the whole armour of God. . . . Stand therefore, . . .” and then pray. The armour is not to fight in, but to shield

¹ Romans 1:10; 8:26; 10:1; 12:12; 15:30-32; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 1:11; 9:14; 13:9; Ephesians 1:17-23; 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:9-12; 4:2-4, 12; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 5:17, 25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1, 8; 4:5; and Philemon 6.

² J. Gary Millar, *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, IL. 2016. pp.201, 215.

us while we pray. Prayer is the battle.”³

Has it ever occurred to you that each of these pieces of body armor (the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit) in vv.14-17 are fitted prior to prayer – or for the purposes of prayer? Once ‘suited up’, what are Paul’s specific prayer directions and requests for the church in vv.18-20? Are these emphases a regular part of your life of prayer? Why or why not?

5. A favorite Scripture memory verse for many believers is Philippians 4:6-7 (and for good reason). It’s here that Paul provides one biblical pathway that undermines anxiety, worry, and fear in the Christian life. Walk carefully through these two verses. Verse 6 describes our part in prayerfully battling anxiety (what is it)? Verse 7 outlines what we can expect from the Lord in return (what is that)? When you experience anxiety, do you turn to these verses? If so, do you have any stories or specific examples you could share with the group from your own life that might encourage them? Please share if so.
6. We’ve pondered 1 Thessalonians 5:17 already, but let’s take another look. The immediate context of Paul’s command to “pray without ceasing” also contains a summons to “rejoice always” (v.16) and “give thanks in all circumstances” (v.18). In other words, we are called to cultivate all three of these realities as steady-state experiences in our walk with the Lord. They must work together or he wouldn’t have placed these exhortations so closely to one another in his letter. So what do they have to do with one another? Which one(s) do you find most challenging? Which one(s) do you find most inviting? Why?
7. Finally, in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul draws our attention to praying for our government leaders. For what are we specifically to pray (v.2b)? While at first blush it almost looks as if Paul’s merely praying for the government to get off our backs, it’s clear that he’s got a very particular purpose in mind (vv.4-7). What is it? How ought this to inform the way we pray for our government leaders (v.2b) as well as the reason we’re praying it (vv.3-7)?

³ <https://www.firstcause.org/quotes-a-c/battle> . Accessed 8/20/21 @ 9:15am.