

# Pray for Utterance from above

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- [ 0 : 00 ] For not men do the Lord forgive the grace of His goodness in, and for His words of wonder, and to the sons of men.
- Because the mighty is for us and we sit here.
- By Him in power also cut the arms of my own way.
- Hold for them, stand up there, O friend, to sorrow and rich and bear.
- On high and low in earth, O Lord, a goodness gets drawn near.
- [ 1 : 42 ] And grief is hard to hold His tears from their miseries.
- He sends His word and gives not them from their construction trees.
- O thy hand to the Lord forgive his Lord, his goodness in, and for His words of wonder, and to the sons of men.
- Can we turn again to the passage read in the New Testament Scriptures, Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 6.
- And we can read at verse 18. 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 utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- [ 3 : 49 ] Particularly the words of verse 19 and 20. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, and so on.
- Looking at this chapter, I'm sure the standout verses for every one of us are words that are found in the final section that we have here, where the armour of the Christian is described.
- The well-known Christian book by William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, describes succinctly these words.
- The detailed list of the Christian's armour and its uses, the necessity of that armour, often leads us to underestimate the words that come before and after these words.
- Acting as bookends, if you like, is the necessity that there is for prayer on the part of the believer.
- [ 5 : 21 ] The believer is clearly demanded of the fact that in the world there confronted by many enemies of a variety of descriptions.
- And Paul describes the best way to encounter these enemies and to overcome them. But before anything can be accomplished by the Christian to enable the Christian to deal with and to meet with such enemies, there is this need for prayer.
- If you read verse 10, what do the words of that verse tell us? Finally, finally, my brethren, he says, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.
- It reminds us of two things that a Christian does not have adequate resources in and of himself.

they must look outside of themselves and where they are to look is to the Lord.

[ 6 : 49 ] And if that's not too obvious, it just simply reminds us of a fact that every one of us becomes aware of at some point in our Christian experience.

the Christian lacks that strength and the necessities necessity is for the Christian to apply where strength is found in abundance.

And when we realise what the apostle is emphasising then we realise the wisdom of prayer in the life of the believer.

I'm sure you know and I'm sure you've been taught repeatedly that prayer is the life's breath life breath of the believer. And I think Paul here wants us to remember that.

The place that prayer has in the life of every believer is important for a variety of different reasons. But here what Paul is doing is simply reminding us because of the fact that we are surrounded by enmity and that we are confronting an enemy that we should avail ourselves of the greatest resource that any Christian may possess.

[ 8 : 28 ] so he urges prayer as the believer's duty. And that has to be taken on board because simply I mean we're focusing on these words of the armour and the place that the armour has and how we are to use it.

but we cannot use it if we are not empowered to do so. If we are not enabled to use it to our advantage.

There are many things that we may be aware of in our secular life, in our daily lives that we may possess but without the ability to use these things, the knowledge to use these things to our advantage, then these things will just gather dust and prayer is not one of them.

The power that God endows us with is not something that we can do without or overlook. Charles Hodge, one of the commentators, makes a list of things that Paul prays for or expects us to pray for.

There are six things and he summarizes really the teaching that Paul brings to the attention of the believer as far as prayer is concerned.

[ 10 : 16 ] First of these is the believer is to avail himself of all kinds of prayer. He is to pray on every suitable occasion.

He is to pray in the spirit. He is alert and persevering in the discharge of this duty.

He is to pray for all the saints and finally they are to pray for him. That's a very succinct description of the things that Paul would expect the Christian to be engaged in prayer for.

But this evening just for this service we're focusing on the last of these. And that last is Paul wanting them the church in Ephesus and every recipient of this letter to remember to pray for him and for me.

He says that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in bonds that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

[ 11 : 46 ] So let us look at what he is wanting them to pray for. Pray for himself in order that he may first of all be given utterance that he may be able to open his mouth boldly that he may make known the mystery of the gospel and that he may well that they understand why this is a burden that is there to pray for him as an ambassador in bonds and we can try and understand what that means for him to describe himself as an ambassador in bonds talks that would please go into prayer and

Holder■ I don't think this is a selfish desire that he's expressing but it is a desire that should be understood by every believer with regard to the preacher of the gospel that they pray for the preacher of the gospel Paul may and often did have his own situation in mind but he was never anyone who was so self-indulgent that he desired something for himself to exclude others and what he desires here is something that every one of us can understand is a duty that belongs to the Christian church to pray for those who are the preachers of the gospel now I don't want you to think that I am presenting this text to you as someone who is in any way wanting you to think that I am not being prayed for one thing I am confident in is this that from the very first day that I became a Christian and long before then I believe that people prayed for me they prayed for my conversion and then when I was converted and when I was asked to carry out any duty with regard to the cause of Christ whether that was to present or to pray publicly or to act as a Sunday school teacher to become a preacher and preach the gospel the very first sermon I preached

I know I'm confident I can say that I was aware of God's people praying for me I can't say that they all did but I know that I never had any experience of not being prayed for when I was a minister in Graver I was always confident and I was always aware of God's people praying for me in this congregation I can say the same that there are people in this congregation who pray for the ministry of the gospel in this place I'm not saying that I'm always aware of it I'm not saying that there are times when I feel as empty in myself and the thought is that people are not praying

I'm not saying that even it's a proper or a right thinking I was recently reading about a story we have in the book of 2 Kings where Elisha and his servant were surrounded by enemies and Elisha's servant got up in the morning and he saw the hosts of the enemies of Israel surrounding him and you remember how that was dealt with by Elisha he said fear not for they that be with us are more than they that be with them Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about

Elisha I was thinking of that just recently how how oblivious we are at times to the forces the hosts of heaven in array in support of anybody who's engaged in the service of God and discernment is needed to recognize that but I believe that every preacher whoever they are whether they're a Paul an Apollos or a Cava McDonald there are people who are motivated who are moved by the spirit of God to pray and the person being prayed for may not at that moment be aware of it but it is something that is necessary something that is needed something that is being encouraged by the apostle here and the

[ 18 : 23 ] Lord needs to remind his people of his presence and remember the duties that they have to solicit his presence in a meaningful and a powerful way and it is a privilege to be mindful of the servants of God and it is a privilege to be one of them that are remembered and that's one thing that the apostle is telling us here he highly respected Scottish minister Eric Alexander and he heard him preach many occasions and much of what he has to say is worth listening to but he wrote a small booklet on prayer a number of years ago and in that booklet this was his own experience he recorded it concerns me he says that in many evangelical churches which do have prayer meetings that the part of the work least prayed for is the preaching of the word on the

Lord's day and the one who has that responsibility and that was his experience and he's a man who still living as far as I know although long retired and a conservative evangelical preacher who appreciates what it is to be prayed for and to be remembered in prayer and this was his observation whether he was right in saying that but clearly if that is the case people aren't listening to what Paul is encouraging here and he's expecting he's asking for his own benefit but for the benefit of the Christ that he serves that he be ministered to by the prayers of God's people and when we read what he has to say what he's wanting to be prayed for first of all he says that utterance may be given that utterance may be given that I may be able to speak in other words and how many of us including myself in this have gone to a service and the abiding thought is what am I going to get for my soul what has been prepared for me

I'm hungry feed me was there a previous thought before going to the service well I hope every one of you go to a service and you have at least that desire that God's word would minister to your needs you have that understanding that your soul needs food and that you come here tonight to be fed but there's something that comes before that and that is that the minister be given something to feed you with because very often this minister anyway like many other ministers they're running on empty I was speaking to an elder last night and well he was a brother in the Lord in the congregation that I came from and we were speaking about

Colm Matheson the late Colm Matheson and as you know Colm Matheson didn't drive he didn't have a driver's license and very often he had to be driven or he had a co-driver and they were going to a service somewhere on the island and my friend said we drove in silence and he said I could tell that he was lost in his thoughts and we got to close to where we were going and he pulled the car over to us hiding and he said to him what he said am I going to give this people tonight what am I going to give them and he said well I said very glibly the Lord's got plenty the storehouses are full oh he said I know that but it's another thing to take what's in the storehouses out and there is a truth here you see that we need to remember if we're going to be fed that it has to come from the Lord and I've heard it said we pray it down we pray it down so that this is what

Paul is asking for he's wanting utterance he's wanting to be able to speak and not just speak but speak the truth be able to be able to be able it's a very difficult thing to be silent to have nothing to say and you think as long as I've said something then I've accomplished something but the minister can't be happy with just saying something or saying anything it has to be something that is of worth something that is relevant James Montgomery Boyce says about Paul he was a great man an apostle of the

[ 24 : 45 ] Lord Jesus Christ yet he believed his work would be ineffective unless Christians prayed for him do you believe that the apostle needed the Lord's people to be engaged in prayer so that his ministry would be an effective ministry he wanted God to give him words and not just for the sake of having words but having words that were suitable words that were useful words that were relevant words that were appropriate as a preacher my greatest fear is that I may be speaking to 10 of you to 20 of you to 30 of you numerically it doesn't matter

I could at the same time as I'm addressing a body of people and nobody nobody is hearing these words they're not for anybody in particular they're not designed for anybody in particular what I'm trying to say is that when God gives his word and his word is given by you as his word it never falls to the ground without accomplishing what he purposes for it and that's my desire that whatever is preached is for somebody if not everybody I can't determine who this word is for I can't discern at times who this word is for

I've said it often sometimes preparing a sermon I've had somebody in mind somebody comes before my mind as I've been preparing it and nine times out of ten if not always that person who has come before my mind in preparing it isn't given in the service now I have to say that I'm not preparing a sermon for that person it's just that as I prepare that that person comes before me I don't understand it how that can happen I don't understand the significance of it but what I'm wanting to impress upon you and that Paul was wanting to impress upon his readers and his hearers was that he be given utterance meaning that his words would be words given to him from the

Lord for somebody for somebody whatever it meant whether it was a word of comfort a word of consolation a word of rebuke a word of challenge whatever it is that we need is what we want to hear the first book that was given as a Christian was a book full of anecdotes by C.H.

Spurgeon that's the title Feathers for Arrows now the title of the book just says when the preacher preaches he strings his bow and he fires let loose with his arrow with the intent that that arrow strike home whatever it is meant to accomplish whether it is meant to wound or to kill or to do something it is the Lord's work he wants it to do go right to the heart and your prayer my prayer should be that God would do that direct a word to the heart of a needy soul whatever that need may be to soothe to disturb to encourage to enliven every service you attend should be preceded by a prayer to

[ 29 : 20 ] God that whoever the preacher may be that this would be an accompaniment his word coming and filling the mouth of the preacher Paul says that he may preach with boldness that I may open my mouth boldly then he says again that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak I'm not really sure whether he's returning to the same thing there or whether his mind is on his own unique circumstances which would mean that it might not be easy for him and some would probably imagine that if Paul was in prison as implied by the words of our text that it would not be easy for him to speak in that situation but what he wants is boldness anyway boldness to declare

God's word you and I may have an understanding about what we want to hear what we want to hear but very often what we want to hear and what we need to hear are quite different it's not the same sometimes we need to hear something and it may not appeal to us it may not be what would inspire confidence in the preacher because we think and it's a difficult art preaching it's a very fine line between being so hard that you're hardening your hearer or being so soft that you're making no impression at all on your hearer you've got the law and you've got the gospel too much law and you're hardening your people too much gospel and they're not taking responsibility for their actions and to the word you've got to preach the whole counsel of God you remember what Paul was saying and he was preaching at this time in Acts chapter 20 he was preaching to the elders in

Ephesus he was saying when they were come to him he said unto him you know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in weight of the Jews and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ and now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that the bonds and afflictions abide me but none of these things move me neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the

Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God and so on wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men in other words his preaching was a preaching that was fully orb'd they heard what they needed to hear and he spared no one because he was doing no one any favours by not preaching the truth the whole truth nothing but he had a clear conscience and he wanted it to remain so preacher cannot use God's word to serve himself but to serve the Lord this is what he says that he may but that ye may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel and there's another dimension to the need for prayer that

I may make known the mystery of the gospel now that word is used by Paul occasionally he speaks of the mystery of the gospel I think at the heart of what he has to say really is that there are truths that the gospel contains that only God can disclose there are truths that were eternal but when Christ came and the fulfilling of God's promise regarding his coming came to fruition his ministry was to declare all that involved so there is a mystery of the gospel which Paul's responsibility is to reveal to preach and to tell and to expound God's words so that men and women may see more clearly the

[ 35 : 10 ] Christ of God in his full glory and he needs the help of God for him to do that he needs God's assistance he needs God's light there are many preachers and this is their testimony that they have stood in God's house in the pulpit and they have prepared well to preach the gospel but sometimes the spirit of God intervenes and he fills their mouth with a truth that they did not fully understand perhaps or that they did not fully grasp until that moment that life came from on high and they were able not only to expound it but to apply it most effectively with the help of

God's spirit and nothing else and this is Paul's prayer that this would be the truth that would be accomplished in his experience sometimes a preacher is able to gain liberty in preaching a word that cannot be explained in any other way it's not by reason of intellectual argument or prowess or or whatever God opens the mind of the individual who's standing over his word that he enables the light of his own countenance to be lifted up upon him then they see truth in a way that they would not have otherwise been able to we need more of these moments as congregations and as preachers we should be praying for them we should be praying for them we don't often

I never say it I never I have never really experienced it much I know that I've spoken at times and said things I had no intention of saying but I've heard of ministers who were climbing the pulpit steps and they had prepared a text and they were going to expound that on that text and just every step of the way to the pulpit the sermon was taken from them and they had to preach something else maybe that was true in a past generation more so than this one I've heard people say that's poor preparation because if you prepare you preach what you prepared and you don't surrender it to anyone but past generation were certainly open to the leading of God's spirit so that when they felt that God was taking from them what they had prepared and giving them something else then they were happy to conclude that it was something else that

God meant them to preach it didn't mean that they had liberty in doing so but they were open to the leading of God the final thing we have here is that he was an ambassador an ambassador in bonds now I think there's two possible meanings or possibly more I'm not sure two possible meanings the first meaning is Paul is an ambassador for Christ we understand that and Paul preaches he doesn't preach the gospel of Paul he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ notice meanderings or meditations or whatever it is he proclaims the gospel as Christ has given it to him to proclaim and as such he is speaking the truth that

Christ has given him to proclaim and as an ambassador in bonds it could well reflect the fact that he was in chains that he was he was physically deprived of his freedom by enemies but the second possibility is last evening I was preaching in Kragor and the text that I was preaching of was from 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 16 for necessity is laid upon me he avoves me if I preach not the gospel and combining the two Paul was committed to preaching the gospel that was what his life was about he had no other choice you read that chapter for yourself it talks about about

[ 40 : 44 ] Paul's role as a tent maker and how he was self supporting and how he had many enemies who were trying to subvert his ministry in different ways but one of his arguments was that when he preached the gospel it wasn't in order to receive a remuneration it wasn't because he was going to get paid because why would you pay somebody to do something that he was obligated to do anyway Christ had given him the gospel to preach and that was what he had to do so why were you going to give something to someone who was going to do something anyway you know if you employ somebody to build you a house or to repair your car that's fair enough you pay them because they're doing something that they wouldn't normally be doing but if you're going to prepare a meal and you're going to sit at that meal with them they'll say to you well there was enough to go round any of the meal was ready and there was ample fear you might understand why would they say that you'll have to pay for this privilege of sitting with them but maybe that's a poor illustration

Paul was representing the king of kings he was speaking the words of truth that he gave to him he was in bondage to that king that was his calling that was his very life was me if I preach not the gospel he said committed to proclaim this message this is his life he must do it but he still says pray for me that I may be given liberty to do this if this is my life why would you neglect your responsibility of prayer and deprive me of this opportunity or prevent me by your not praying from being allowed to preach the gospel as fully and as freely as

I want to do it in Christ's name that comes into it we all have a duty to pray for one another that is part of this passage we have a duty to carry one of others burdens in all the areas of life that is spoken of this is but one a very important one and we need it we need it we need it today to have the word of God that is being preached wherever that God would accompany it with blessing that it would have free course that it would be allowed to penetrate hearts that are hardened and to touch lives that are so enmeshed in this world and its ways that the word of

God finds it so difficult to make inroads into it your privilege my privilege is to pray to God that he may bless his word in that way let us pray Lord help us to be engaged in the prayer activity that is envisaged by your servant the apostle we bless you for for his engaging way of persevering with his calling even in the face of much opposition we pray that you would encourage your servants wherever they are found in this world some may find it difficult to preach and to have the opportunity to proclaim Christ but we pray that even as we think of our own situation here that we may extend our prayers to include all kinds of different situations where the preaching of the gospel is involved guide us in the truth to that end and forgive sin

Amen Our closing psalm is in Gaelic and we are going to sing some verses from Psalm 33 Psalm 33 and we're going to sing verse 18 two verses verse 18 including the baby changing the tree where he NATO NATO NATO NATO

[ 46 : 36 ] NATO NATO Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 49 : 06 ] Thank you.

Thank you.