

Intro: After Paul gives his great instruction pertaining to the armor of God and immediately pertaining to praying for all the saints at all times with all perseverance, he turns his request to prayer for himself. Note that there is no presumption in this godly man, no opinion too high of himself that he was doing alright. I mean, he was chained up for the gospel of Christ! His struggle was an honorable one to him, yet he asked for help from the Lord and from the prayers of his brothers and sisters. Only, Paul did not ask for comfort from the bonds upon his legs, nor for sustenance from his prison rations. No, this prisoner of the greatest War asked for only two things: the message of the gospel to fill his mouth, and the courage to speak it clearly. In these two simple requests we find the heartbeat of Christ's teaching prayer, "Father, may Your name be renowned with honor. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done..." The hub of our requests at the wheel of prayer is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, boldly heralded as the way of eternal life and joyfully received by those who trust in Christ to the praise of the glory of His grace.

1. We All Need the Lord's Strength to Praise Him

- a. Paul asks that speech would be given to him
 - i. This speech would be the opening of his mouth
 - ii. This speech would be boldness to speak
 1. **Romans 10:14-15** But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"
- b. This speech is making known the mystery of the gospel
 - i. **Romans 16:25-27** Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith - ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.
 - ii. **Galatians 3:2** Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
 - iii. **Titus 1:1-3** Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;
- c. We preach so that others believe, but it is Christ that gathers His sheep
 - i. **Matthew 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
 - ii. **John 10:16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
 - iii. **John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
 - iv. Therefore, we ask Him to open our mouths to proclaim boldly

2. We Need His Strength Because We Speak for Christ in Every Circumstance

- a. "in chains" – Paul writes from prison
 - i. "You never really find out what's inside a man until he's bumped and you see what spills out." - Dr. Carl Lindquist
 - ii. Do you feel like you're chained down? Shackled to a godless situation where you cannot see how God can be glorified? This is where faith gets hard, but strive to trust Jesus.

John Newton's letter to a woman grieving her sister's imminent death ...

"I wish you may be enabled to leave her, and yourself, and all your concerns, in his hands. He has a sovereign right to do with us as he pleases...[but] to those who seek him, his sovereignty is exercised in a way of grace. All shall work together for good: everything is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he withholds....Yield to his prescriptions, and fight against every thought that would represent it as desirable to be permitted to choose for yourself." (Letters of Newton, Letter XXXV)

- iii. In the midst of great persecution, we must keep our eyes upon Jesus, the One who sent us with the Spirit, is with us until the end of the age, and is working out all things for good according to the Father's will.
- b. Trust Christ enough to persevere in your prayers
 - i. Luke 5:4-11
 - ii. Did you ever notice that it was just as they were giving up that Jesus asked them to cast their nets in the same place they had just pulled them up?
 - iii. They trusted in Him, even haltingly and slightly sarcastically, and He was faithful
 - iv. Even when you don't see the answers that you praying for cast after cast after cast, trust Him when He says to pray and ask for them. It is not the single stroke by which the stone cutter's hammer splits the rock in two. It is the hundred previous strokes that prepare its way.
- c. Ambassador – one who goes to fulfill the mission of the One who sent him
 - i. 2 Cor 5:20 – ambassadors "on Christ's behalf" - God making His appeal *through us*
 - ii. Even though imprisoned, Paul knows that He still acts and particularly speaks on behalf of Christ
- d. Our ambassadors, the preachers of the Gospel, desperately need our prayers because they are weak, too!
 - i. We have a tendency to trust our intellect and our gifts to effect transformation of hearts, don't we?
 - ii. The reality of transformation is that the Holy Spirit of God is the Changer and the Worker of all good.
 - 1. If we believe this, we ought to be praying for the strength to proclaim and asking for God's Holy Spirit to work in His power!
 - 2. Never forget to pray and ask for the Holy Spirit's presence among His people for the GLORY OF CHRIST
 - iii. Pray for your pastors, elders, teachers, missionaries, that we would be given the message of Christ and the courage to proclaim it boldly. Why?

3. It is Necessary to Proclaim the Gospel

- a. "ought to" is literally: "it is necessary for me to speak"
 - i. "mystery of the gospel"
 - ii. Mystery in biblical terms is not something that is *discovered*, but rather a truth that is *revealed by God*

- iii. It is necessary for this truth to be revealed through the preaching of the gospel, because it cannot be discovered by reason or experience...it must be heard and believed
- b. The faith of the elect is contingent upon the proclamation of the Gospel
 - i. Paul knows that it is necessary for him to proclaim the Gospel boldly and freely
 - ii. Even Paul asks for prayer to speak boldly and accurately the message of the gospel
 - 1. **2 Timothy 2:8-10** Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.
 - iii. Our responsibility as witnesses to Christ is not to convince people of the truth of the Gospel, but rather simply to proclaim it faithfully!
- c. Prayer presupposes that God is powerful to complete His purposes
 - i. Eph 3:20 – ‘He is able to do far beyond *all that we ask* or think...’
 - ii. Luke 1:37 – “nothing is impossible with God” (even birth in old age)
 - iii. Any prayer that places limits on the ability and wisdom of God falls short of scriptural prayer.
 - 1. We have hope for anyone and any situation, so we pray to proclaim boldly
 - 2. God can bring about His purposes through any situation (see Joseph...and Jesus!), so we pray to proclaim boldly
 - 3. God knows better than us what is truly best, so we pray to proclaim boldly

Conclusion: “The Gospel of Christ has:

Transformed communities
 Rebuilt societies
 Toppled tyrannies
 Liberated captives
 Inspired reformers
 Established justice
 Restored dignity
 Fathered integrity
 Promoted purity
 Renewed marriages
 United families
 Reconciled enemies
 Stimulated enquiry
 Awakened creativity
 Brought...
 Liberation to the afflicted
 Peace to the anxious
 Hope to the despairing
 Comfort to the dying
 Love to the lonely
 Forgiveness to the guilty
 And salvation to the lost”