



Peace, Love, and Grace

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Ephesians 6:18-24

Clint Pressley

¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

(Pastor prays)

I have run into a difficulty. I don't really know how to end it. Every week for the last year and just about every day of the week, I have had my face in the book of Ephesians. My bible is forever creased and marked, crumpled and stained where Ephesians is. I should be ready to leave it, but I do hate to go. You can feel the end in the way Paul writes. He says in verse 20, I am an ambassador in chains. I serve a King. I have a message from a King, but it's costly. The ancient world Paul lived in is much like the world we live in. When you speak the truth about sin and salvation, it's costly. Some of you are paying for that cost more and more. What used to be tolerated about your Christianity is now being scrutinized by the world that wants more than consideration. The world wants conformity.

And so, like Paul, as a believer, you are an ambassador, but an ambassador in chains. As Paul closes the letter, It's like he rummages back through the last six chapters and gathers up several of the great words of this little epistle. They are all in verses 23-24. *Peace be to the brothers.* Paul knew there would never be lasting peace in his day, and there wouldn't be any in our day either. But peace can rest inside of you. Christ is peace but not the cartoonish kind. He gives you peace with God. God is holy. You are sinful. Christ's life and death on the cross gives peace with God. That peace with God comes in the form of forgiveness. Forgiveness from God means guilt is gone, dirt is gone, shame is gone, and weirdness is gone. That gives you the ability to have peace with other people. Paul says in Romans 12:18, ¹⁸ *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* Hebrews 12:14 says, ¹⁴ *Strive for peace with everyone.* Christ gives peace, wholeness, and healing. And not just peace but love. Real, unconditional, unhindered, selfless love from God. In Christ, you can feel a lot of things, but as a Christian, you should never feel like you are not loved. So, you see peace and love, and you also have faith. That's the ability to believe. It's why we pray for people who are not Christians. Because faith is conversion, and conversion is something only God can do.

And in verse 24, Paul says, ²⁴ *Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.* If you have ever told one lie, said one bad word, or had one cross thought or lustful desire, you deserve condemnation. But being a Christian is God's grace. Mercy and grace are fraternal twins. Mercy is not getting what you deserve; grace is getting what you don't deserve. And all of this comes from our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is sovereign over us. Jesus is made like us. And Christ came to save us.

But above all these things, as he closes out his letter, Paul calls this church to a life of prayer.

A Life of Prayer Starts at the Cross of Jesus.

In verse 14, Paul tells the believer in the fight of his life, to stand. As a believer, you take your stand when you learn to pray. A life without prayer is a car with no gas, a balloon with no air. C.S. Lewis says it's a winter with no Christmas. It's a future with no hope. Spurgeon said, a prayerless church member is a hinderance, he is in a body like a rotting bone or a decaying tooth. Before long, since he doesn't contribute to the benefit of his brethren, he will become a danger and a sorrow to them. Neglect of private prayer is the locust that devours the strength of the church. If we don't pray, our faith will die, and Christianity won't matter.

So how do we pray?

We pray constantly

Verse 18 says, ¹⁸ *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication*. This is similar to what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, *pray without ceasing*. But there is more to what he is saying here than just make sure you pray a lot. This is a crisis prayer. This is a car wreck, cancer-fighting, gut-wrenching prayer. This is an, I am in a situation and I don't know what to do kind of prayer. This is replacing worry with prayer. This is Philippians 4:6-7. ⁶ *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* This is a desperate wife's prayer. This is a broken heart prayer. You've heard it said that they've taken prayer out of school; don't believe it. Look, as long as they are giving exams, Christian students will be praying. How do we pray? We pray at all times. We pray constantly. How else do we pray?

We pray scripturally

Verse 18 says, ¹⁸ *praying at all times in the Spirit*. I say to pray scripturally because in verse 17, Paul tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, the Bible. So, the more Bible you have in your heart, the more direct prayers can be. So, when the situation outstrips what your mind can conceive,

Paul says in Romans 8:26, ²⁶ *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* In those times when we can't articulate a prayer, or form sentences to pray, because your inner man has been fed on God's word and the Spirit of Christ lives in you, your prayers reach the throne of grace. The word of God is your food, and prayers to God are your air to breathe, and if you would live as a Christian, you must have both. We pray constantly. We pray scripturally.

We pray immediately

Oftentimes, in the midst of a terrible situation, after you have done everything to find relief you might say, all we can do now is pray. It's almost an admission of defeat. But in verse 18, Paul says, ¹⁸ *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.* So, Paul lists two kinds of prayer. There are others but I think more than distinguishing the types of prayer, Paul is telling us that prayer is to be urgent and immediate so that it's not a last resort at a first response. In tragedy, I pray to him, and in triumph, I praise him. In sorrow, I seek him, and for my friends, I intercede to him. And when I don't understand, the Spirit intercedes for me with groundings too deep for words. So, we pray constantly. We pray scripturally. Then, we pray immediately.

We pray watchfully

Let's read verse 18 again. ¹⁸ *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance.* We pray with our eyes closed, but this is a call to pray with your eyes open, watching and being aware of your surroundings and temptations. When Nehemiah led Israel to rebuild the wall in the midst of opposition, he said we prayed and watched. In Mark, Jesus told the disciples that the secret to victory over the world is to watch and pray and the secret to victory over our flesh is to watch and pray. Peter went to sleep that terrible night when he should have been watching and praying, and the results were disastrous. So we expand our vision and enlarge our aptitude so that we might pray with endurance, never being caught off guard. Most of our sins are preventable, like we stand guard in

prayer. We must be aware. Most of our sins have small beginnings, but sins and wishes is voracious. Here's what I mean. Looking at the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue may seem like a small center, but that small sin has one desires end and it's disastrous. David's sin with Bathsheba started with a look and ended with a dead child, a murdered friend, and a broken Kingdom. We pray watchfully.

We pray missionally

In verses 19-20, Paul says, *and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Here is the prayer we live, asking God to make us useful for his Kingdom, living life sent by God with the gospel of Jesus. It is the gospel of peace. Christ gives us peace at the cross. It's the gospel of love. Christ displays godly love at the cross. It is the gospel of faith. Christ calls for faith at the cross. It is the gospel of grace period, and the ultimate picture of grace is at the cross. A life of prayer starts at the cross of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)