

“Prayer for One Another”
Ephesians 1:15-19a
(Preached at Trinity, January 12, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, Paul is writing this letter to Christians. He refers to them in **Verse 1** as the faithful saints. They are God's elect people chosen before the foundation of the world.
2. In **Verse 3** Paul announced the glorious spiritual blessings God has planned for His elect people and then spends the next 11 verses writing about these blessings. I pointed out that **Verses 3-14** are one single sentence in the Greek. He speaks of election and adoption. He speaks of redemption and forgiveness of sin. He speaks of Divine illumination and of our glorious inheritance and of the Holy Spirit who is the down payment of our inheritance.
4. Now having concluded his discussion of these wonderful spiritual blessings he turns his attention back to the saints who possess them.
Ephesians 1:15-16 NAU - " For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers"
5. When Paul heard of the outward expression of faith and love his heart was filled with gratitude to God which drove him to prayer which is the essence of the remainder of the chapter.
 - A. This gratitude was characteristic of Paul. We find the expression “give thanks” 26 times in the writings of Paul. Paul says he is thankful for their faith and their love and continually lifted up his voice to God on their behalf.
Ephesians 1:16 NAU - "do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers"
 - B. This morning I want us to consider the importance of prayer among God's people. God has purposed that we would pray for one another. I've pointed out many times that one of the great weaknesses of the modern church is a hyper-individualism. Too often our prayer life has a focus primarily upon ourselves and our families. We don't realize how closely connected we are with one another and we don't realize how dependent we are upon the strengths of one another. This is particularly true in the context of the local church.
 - C. And we must never forget how dependent we are upon God to build His church. Paul is praying that God would give His people a spirit of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
6. May God bless us as we consider this important topic.

- I. First of all, the Bible emphasizes prayer as one of the important labors of those God calls to minister to His people. This was Paul's duty as an apostle.
- A. In the OT we often find God's leaders giving themselves to intercession.
1. Abraham interceded for the saints in Sodom
Genesis 18:23-25 NAU - "Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep *it* away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"
 2. Moses continually interceded on behalf of Israel
Exodus 32:31-32 NAU - "Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. ³² "But now, if You will, forgive their sin - and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"
- B. We find it as the model of the Apostles
1. The division and complaint among the widows in Acts 6
Acts 6:1-4 NAU - "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of *food*. ² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁴ "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
 2. Paul continually demonstrated this in his own ministry. He is telling the Christians in Ephesus, "I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers"
 Luke records Paul's departure from Ephesus:
Acts 20:29-30 NAS - "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."
Acts 20:36 NAS - "And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all."
- C. Your pastors have a duty to pray for you. You also have a duty to pray for them.
1. Here in Chapter 1 Paul assures them that he is praying for them.
 2. Again, we find Paul praying for them in **Chapter 3**
Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU - "I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"

3. But in **Chapter 6** Paul encourages *them* to pray for *him*.
Ephesians 6:19 NAU - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,"
4. Paul continually pleaded for the brethren to pray for him
Romans 15:30-32 NAU - "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; ³² so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company."
 - a. He addresses this to the "Brethren." Paul recognizes that prayer is the limited domain of Christians. None others can pray effectually.
 - b. He urges them to "strive" with him
The word for "strive together" is from συναγωνίζομαι – compound word: "Agonize together"
5. Paul knew that the Gospel must be watered by prayer
Colossians 4:2-4 NAU - "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; ³ praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴ that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak."
2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NAU - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; ² and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
6. I desperately need your prayers. Preaching is a supernatural work. Salvation is a mighty work of God. I need the "unction" of the Holy Spirit.

II. You must pray for one another. In the Book of Ephesians we find three reasons why we must pray for one another.

- A. First, we must pray for one another because we are a part of one another. Paul brings this out over and over in Ephesians.
 1. We share together in the grace of Christ
Ephesians 2:5-7 NAU - "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
 2. Jews and Gentiles are now one
Ephesians 2:14 NAU - "For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,"
 3. We share in the same Gospel blessings
Ephesians 4:4-6 NAU - "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

4. We are being built up together as the body of Christ
Ephesians 4:12-16 NAU - "to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
 5. Prayer for one another is at the heart of our covenant unity at Trinity
 Trinity Covenant - "I further promise, therefore, to watch over my brothers and sisters in Christ in brother love, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish them as occasion may require; to recognize my brother's and sister's liberty of conscience and not judge them in a thing not commanded by God; to remember them in prayer . . ."
- B. Second, we must pray for one another because of our continual need of having our understanding increased
1. Biblical ignorance is one of the chief causes of division and weakness in the Church of Christ. Doctrinal understanding was at the heart of the unity of the early church.
Acts 2:42 KJV - "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They were united in doctrine, the sacraments, and prayer
 2. Notice Paul's prayer here
Ephesians 1:17-18 NAU - "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened*"
 - a. Our knowledge of God comes by revelation
 This revelation comes through His Word. But the Holy Spirit must open our eyes of understanding. We saw this in **Verses 8-9**
 - b. London Baptist Confession, Chapter 1,
Paragraph 5:
 "Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."
Paragraph 6:
 "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word"

3. In **Chapter 3** Paul prays that they might fully understanding the infinite love of Christ that is beyond understanding that they might be filled with the fullness of God
Ephesians 3:19 NAU - "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
 4. The thought of these things must drive us to pray for ourselves and for one another that the Holy Spirit would continue to teach us. We need His grace to make the preaching effectual.
 5. We must never forget the glorious work of the Holy Spirit within us. We must not forget that He is a person with whom we should desire fellowship.
 6. What do we lose as a congregation by our prayerlessness?
- C. Third we must pray for one another because of the terrible war in which we are engaged. We are in the midst of terrible spiritual warfare
1. Paul commands them to arm themselves against the devices of Satan
Ephesians 6:11 NAU - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
 2. After admonishing these Christians to put on the whole armor of God and the shield of faith with the sword of the Spirit they were commanded to pray.
Ephesians 6:18 NAU - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,"
 3. Satan is described as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour
He is described as a murderer, a liar and deceiver.
We are commanded to resist him.
 4. But we must never forget that we are not in the battle alone
1 Peter 5:8-9 NAU - "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."
 5. We share a common battle with a common foe. We must equip ourselves with the mighty weapon of prayer.

Conclusion:

1. We must make prayer a priority
Luther: As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”
2. Years ago I shared with you the words of E.M. Bounds regarding the prayer lives of past saints. It is highly convicting.
“Charles Simeon devoted four hours each morning to prayer. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. It is said that John Fletcher stained the walls with the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. Said he, “I would not rise from my seat without lifting my heart to God.” Martin Luther said. “If I fail to spend three hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day.” Joseph Alleine arose at four o’clock for his business of praying until eight. Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. David Brainerd, the mighty missionary to the Indians, said, “I love to be alone in my cottage where I can spend much time in prayer.” Adoniram Judson said, “Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two hours every day, not merely to devotional exercise, but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God ... to be resolute in His cause. Make all practical sacrifices to maintain it.”
3. We must not cease to pray for one another and never forget that our prayers are not without effect.
James 5:16 NAS - "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
4. It is one thing to tell someone you care about them but will you hold their name before God when no one is around?
5. May we strive to be a praying church. May each of us find great comfort to know that we are praying for one another.