

Standing in the Need of Prayer

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I) Ephesians 6:18-20

II) Introduction

A) *Sing: "Standing in the need of prayer"*

- 1) Do you know this old gospel song?
 - (a) It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer. It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer.
 - (b) Not my mother, not my father but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer. Not my sister, not my brother but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.
 - (c) It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer. It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer.
 - (d) Not the people that are shouting but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer. Not the members I've been doubting but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.
 - (e) It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer. It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer.
 - (f) Not the preacher, not the sinner but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer. Not the deacon, not the teacher but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.
 - (g) It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer. It's me, it's me, O Lord standing in the need of prayer.

III) Prayer

- 1) In a little while, I will give you the opportunity to have someone pray for you. If you are like me, I come to church on Sunday hoping that God will somehow break through my defenses and deal with my pain, fear or anxieties. My prayer for you is that today, you would hear God speak to your heart and not be defensive or embarrassed and respond to the opportunity to have someone pray with you.
- 2) But first I would like to ask that you pray for me this morning. Please pray that I would be obedient to God and communicate clearly what God wants to say to us.
- 3) (Silent prayer) May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

B) *Friend in trouble*

- 1) The voice on the other end of the phone was a familiar voice. My heart was glad when I heard his old familiar speech patterns. He always has a way of making me laugh – making me think – making me feel good.
- 2) This call, however, felt very different. He sounded both angry and depressed at the same time. He was confused by the turn of events in his life and by a few of the things that he said, I could tell that my friend was not thinking straight because he was in too much pain.
- 3) I started out the conversation with a simple, "how ya doin'?" And after the standard evasive reply, "I'm fine," accompanied with a deep sigh, I knew that he was not fine. So I asked, "What's going on?" I didn't even acknowledge that his answer was a pathetic dodge to my question. He got very serious.

- 4) “Everything is falling apart. Work is awful. I don’t know what I’m going to do. My kids literally hate me. They can’t stand being around me and everything I do to try to improve things is met with contempt and sneers. My wife is depressed. Can you blame her? I am loosin’ it and I don’t know what to do.

(a) ***Will you pray for me?”***

- 5) Even though my friend is a mature Christian, I knew that it was hard for him to ask that final question. It is one thing to ask for prayer when you have resources, energy and opportunity ahead of you, and quite another to ask for prayer when you are bankrupt, exhausted and confused about the future.

IV) Apostle Paul’s asks for prayer

A) *Paul’s letter to the Ephesians*

- 1) As Paul closed up his letter to the church in Ephesus he reminded them how they should pray in order to defend themselves against the attacks of the devil by putting on the whole spiritual armor of God.
- 2) After this Paul made his final point by reminding the church with whom he had spent three years building up to maturity in Christ to pray – pray for all the Lord’s people and to also remember to pray for him.

B) *Ephesians 6:18-20*

- 1) **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.**

C) *There are three observations we can make about Paul’s prayer request.*

D) *Observation 1: Paul asked for prayer with HUMILITY.*

- 1) Paul was a confident man. And for good reason, he was probably the smartest author in the New Testament and perhaps, the whole Bible. He was a courageous man, who more than once stood firm in his faith against certain death for the cause of Christ.
- 2) But here in his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul was a humble man. Paul knew that even a confident and courageous person needs to be humble and ask for prayer because everyone needs other people to watch our back and hold up our arms.
- 3) Don’t let pride or the fear of exposure prevent you from asking for prayer. When you humble yourself, share what is really going on in your life and ask for prayer you will know that you are not standing alone in your need.

E) Observation 2: Paul asked for prayer UNSELFISHLY.

- 1) Did you notice what Paul requested the people to pray about? We have to remember that he wrote the letter while he was in prison. This meant that he was lacking every comfort that he had grown up with and every courtesy a man of his stature deserved. I don't know about you but if it was Rick Carlson writing to the Ephesian church prayer chain I probably would have said something like this,
 - (a) *"Please pray for me to get rid of these uncomfortable chains. Pray that I would be given better food, and warmer clothes and even a nice pillow for my head. Pray that God would take me away from this God-forsaken place so that I can resume my ministry."*
- 2) But the Apostle Paul's prayer request was an unselfish appeal for God to use him right where he was, in that God-forsaken place. The most important answer to prayer was not his own comfort. He said,
 - (a) *"Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains."*
- 3) Wow, do you see the difference? Does Paul's prayer request challenge your natural instinct for what you ask people to pray for? It does me.
- 4) If we were to follow Paul's lead of requesting prayer maybe our prayer requests would sound more like this:
 - (a) *Please pray that I would care more about my witness for Christ than people liking me, respecting me or even loving me.*
 - (b) *Please pray that I would care less about my comfort and success and more about the faithfulness of my witness.*
- 5) Unselfish prayer requests put God's Kingdom priorities above our own. You may not like your circumstances any more than Paul liked being in chains. But let your unselfish requests for prayer reflect God's heart.

F) Observation 3: Paul asked for prayer with INTEGRITY.

- 1) Integrity for building material means there are no cracks, defects or deformities that compromise its use.

G) Titanic

- 1) For decades we were led to believe that the Titanic sunk because of a huge gash in the side of the hull when in 1912 the giant ship scraped against an iceberg.
- 2) Using modern scientific technologies, divers and scientists have scanned through 2 1/2 miles of water, and muck on the sea floor, and made a startling finding. What was thought to be a broad gash in the side of the ship was six relatively narrow slits across the six watertight holds. All that was needed to sink the unsinkable ship was a breach in the integrity of the design.
 - (a) *It doesn't take a big hole in your character to send you to the bottom of life. Seemingly insignificant compromises in your integrity can keep you from completing your journey well.*
- 3) Paul did not exaggerate the desperate nature of his situation. Nor did he hide the truth from the people he was asking to pray for him.
- 4) Integrity is the courage to be vulnerable and honest without being manipulative. Ask for prayer of others with integrity.

- 5) Seek prayer in humility, unselfishness and integrity.

v) WHY

A) Let me tell you why you should ask people to pray for you.

- 1) Ask others to pray because **the Bible tells you to ask.**
- 2) Ask others to pray because **praying increases your faith and their faith.**
- 3) Ask others to pray because **praying blesses you and blesses others.**
- 4) Ask others to pray because **praying engages the spiritual gifts of others.**

(a) Nobody has every spiritual gift except Jesus. When other people pray for you, their gifts of discernment, wisdom, faith, helps, and other gifts that you may not possess can be used by God on your behalf.

- 5) Ask others to pray because **praying together establishes accountability.**
- 6) Ask others to pray because **praying builds up the Body of Christ.**
(a) Your issues, problems, concerns, heartaches and fears are not yours alone. They are the issues, problems, concerns, heartaches and fears of the whole body of Christ.
- 7) Ask others to pray because **the prayers of a righteous person accomplishes much.**

B) Why is it that we don't ask people to pray for us?

- 1) I know for myself that it has very little to do with the fear of what God thinks of me and everything to do with the fear about what other people will think.

C) You may be here this morning, "Standing in the need of prayer" but let me tell you, you do not stand alone.

- 1) You are part of the Body of Christ. You should never be isolated and never alone in your need for prayer. As followers of Jesus, we are to care for each other and pray for each other. When we do, we will be known by how much we love each other.

vi) Conclusion

A) Praying for my friend

- 1) I prayed out loud for my friend over the phone. Even though we were over a thousand miles away, it felt like I had my hand on his shoulder. I sensed the Spirit of God praying through me – not with fancy words but with the joining of our hearts.
- 2) In praying for my friend, I was able to stand with him against the oppression he was feeling.
- 3) I felt his pain and he felt my peace and confidence in Christ.
- 4) I committed myself to not only stand with him in the midst of his current crisis but to stand with him as long as God laid him on my heart.

B) What do you need someone to pray about this morning?

- 1) You don't have to stand alone in your concern, worry or need, you know.
- 2) I want to invite you to do a very courageous thing. It's simply this, come forward and ask for prayer. Here are 2 reasons why you should come and ask for prayer.

- (a) **You want to become a follower of Jesus.** You sense God talking to you and you know that you need to respond to him. This is a reason to come.
- (b) **There is an issue in your life, your marriage, or family that you want prayer for.** You want to lay before God the burdens of your heart with someone else standing with you in prayer. This is a reason to come.
- 3) I'd like to invite the worship team and Prayer Companions to take their places. The worship team is going to come and sing a couple songs as we close the service. The Prayer Companions will be in place to pray with you.
- 4) Come and say what is on your heart. Feel the support and care of a brother or sister in Christ standing with you in your need.
- 5) Let me remind you again, your requests are confidential. And even if you can't share what is on your heart, at least let someone pray with you. Come.

VII) Prayer

- 1) Lord Jesus, we need other people praying for us. Forgive us when we are afraid to ask for prayer or too proud, too embarrassed or too shy. Help us to love each other as you loved your disciples. Help us to demonstrate that love by carrying the burdens of our brothers and sisters in Christ to you. We thank you that you hear our prayers and that in the name of Jesus prayer is answered.
- 2) Hear our prayer, Lord Jesus, Lord of life be near us. Amen

VIII) Benediction

- 1) Be the body of Christ. Care for each other, pray for each other and love each other as Jesus loves you in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.