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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 30 December 1934

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Ephesians 6 v 18

Praying always with all prayer and  
supplication in the Spirit and watching  
thereunto with all perseverance and supplication  
for all saints

This is a continuation of the morning subject - prayer.

Prayer was appointed to convey  
The blessings God designs to give  
Long as they live should Christians pray  
For only while they pray they live

It is the beginning of spiritual life, and spiritual life on earth ends with this. Hart says of the saints - "They enter heaven with prayer". So did the dying thief; so do all the saints more or less distinctly, for while they live they need God. Need is written in our nature, but pride in our nature will not own it. "We are lords", is the language of fallen nature, "we will come no more unto Thee". To be delivered from that sin is a great blessing.

Prayer embraces the whole life of a child of God, because his life is one of constant need. We should not pray if we had no need. The Spirit helps the people whom He has quickened to pray according to this word, a divine precept, a holy commandment, laying on all the people of God an obligation of obedience. "Praying always". This is a part of the armour of God. "Take unto you the whole armour of God - which is described in these verses - that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand", or to overcome. "Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness." Truth will bind and keep you steady and firm, and this you are to have as a girdle to gird

your loins. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness". The righteousness given to you and put on by faith will enable you to withstand all the fiery darts of the devil. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace". The children of Israel, during their 40 years wandering in the wilderness, had no swollen feet, no worn out shoes. God took care of them and that was typical of the gospel. The shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, these will enable you to walk before and with God; you can walk in trouble with these shoes on. Yes, God can make you happy even if you have sorrow that you cannot mention, that you cannot speak about to anyone. It is a great thing to have peace with God, when you have trial in your circumstances. "Above all, taking the shield of faith", which hangs about, cleaves to, and follows after, God; that, when you object it to fiery darts, will turn these darts; that, when you meet temptation, will enable you to cleave to God, to hold fast your profession. "Above all" because of the great importance of it. "Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked". "And take the helmet of salvation", which will cover and protect you; "and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God". It is a great favour for anyone to hold by faith the inspired Word of God, being a complete Word, nothing to be added to it, nothing taken from it. May we, as a church and congregation, hold fast by the Word of God. Perhaps one form of trial that is coming on the nation and all the nations of the world may be this - what is your attitude to the Scripture? What do you believe of it? What do you think of it? What has it been made to you? Of old, women received their dead raised to life again; others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. The torture there, was a torture that was put to a poor saint of God that, if he would abjure Christ, if he would curse Christ, then he should live. And when faith held Him, they had to suffer, they suffered martyrdom.

Then the text - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The sentence continues "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."

I confined my remarks on prayer this morning to our personal cases and I would continue that for a few minutes. By praying concerning providence. Providence has to do with all of us; God's dealing with us outwardly in our circumstances is providence and we have to move or to stand still, or to go to the right or to the left. Providence is a surrounding thing, encompassing a saint and all things connected with him. Providence is God's way of bringing His people to the throne of grace often. Providence empties, then fills. It may empty you of some precious thing, that you may be filled with what is more precious; some precious object here, that you may be filled with grace, which is better than the whole world, though hard to believe. We should be very careful about our steps. O take heed to providence; beware of making paths for yourselves; watch the hand of God. You may find some single step taken by you, ordered by divine providence, which will affect your every step after. I go back to my own youth; I go back in my memory to a spot and to my intention to go to the right, when a sudden impulse came upon me (I knew not what it was but it came upon me) to turn to the left instead. On that movement everything in my life from then to this day depended. Watch God's providence. "Show me" said the Psalmist, and may you pray the same, "the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee". God will make Himself necessary to you, if you belong to Him, and you will find that, as you fear His Name and pray, He will guide with His eye. O the blessing of being guided by the Lord; watch His hand. Men who do not watch the operation of His hand shall be destroyed. Praying always then with respect to providence, that God may deal kindly, graciously with you; that what seems evil, may be turned unto good; that what seems like a stroke to kill you, will be turned into a Father's rod, only to correct you. Pray concerning your movements; do not move carelessly, thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, for, depend upon it, if you do walk so, as you sow you will reap.

Now in the next place, pray for the ministry. The Apostle brings it in here - and for me an ambassador of Christ. The ministry today, I need not tell you, yet I cannot avoid speaking of it, is in a very low condition. I do not want to under-rate God's kindness. He has kept us here; with the close of the year, you know I complete 52 years service among you, and God has granted some mercies, some proofs of His kindness. How much longer I shall be spared is with Him. Today, even in the midst of sorrow unutterable, He has made me hope in Himself, and under a feeling sense of His kindness, I could not help asking Him this morning to take me quickly home. Yet I think also I can honestly say that if He has a purpose of use in keeping me here, I have a willingness to stay, but it would be better for me to die than to live. Pray for the ministry. How you come here from time to time, how our absent friends come here from time to time, God knows. Do you ever thank Him for His omniscience, that He knows your heart, and when you come, He knows why you are coming, what you come for, what your desires are. Pray for the ministry and not for this only but for all ministers who are sent to preach the everlasting gospel. He knows them, where they are, how they are labouring, how they are sorrowing because of the little done, if anything, by their preaching. I remember my dear friend Mr. Ashdown saying to me once - there is much preaching but very little is done. Painfully true, painfully. How few, as far as we know, as far as here we know, are born again, quickened by the Word of God. How few are converted; how few are brought into gospel liberty; how few join the visible church of Christ. Still may the Lord help you to pray for the ministry, to pray that the pulpit may be kept clean.

I am concerned about the future for you and mention you in prayer before God that when He takes me away He will send you another Pastor who will be more faithful and gracious and useful than I have been.

Pray next for the church of God. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. The Apostle says here "for all saints" wherever they are. Some of you have felt union to the saints of old, whose

lives are here recorded, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the prophets and apostles, and the saints in those days who feared the Lord and spake often one to another. Follow that; pray for the church of Christ, pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Prosperity is promised to those who do so. "They shall prosper who love thee". What a blessing it is that there is a church of God on earth. The church is the salt of the earth, the light of the world. May the Lord continue His holy gospel, yea, and grant a revival of it in the hearts of His people. "Wilt Thou not revive us again, that we may rejoice in Thee." Pray for grace to hold on. You would not doubt if you thought about it, that, in that continuing in prayer of the Apostles and the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brethren, that we had this morning for a text, their difficulties and persecutions would be before them. Christ had told them that in the world they should have tribulation and it would be before them, and perhaps one of the brethren would say - Lord keep us faithful, make us faithful unto death. One would ask that the whole armour of God might be taken by them, that they might stand and withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Pray that we may be kept faithful. "Because" Christ says to a church "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell therein". Whatever faith we have we shall need it. Whatever following of God we may be indulged with we shall need. Whatever prayer we put up, however many tears we let drop, God records and the tears He puts into His bottle. "Praying always with all prayer". It is a grand thing to be a praying man, a praying woman; it is the work of the Holy Ghost.

And we are to pray also for the success of the gospel. In one Psalm, a Psalm concerning Christ, it is said "Prayer shall be made for Him continually" that is prayer shall be made for the success and spread of the everlasting gospel. What success it had in Apostolic days; what churches were formed and built up. And after those days the church of God had much trouble. Many heresies arose, wicked men in the church, men entering deceitfully, by craft, troubled the church of God and she has

ever been troubled since by ungracious people. Arius came, the arch-enemy of the Son of God at that day. He called Christ God but He was a created God. God raised up that wonderful man Athanasius who withstood the heretic and God took the matter in hand and, as you know by reading, the moment of his triumph was the moment of his death. When he was to be received by the Emperor's commandment, God laid His hand on him and he died. Pray to be stedfast in the truth, having your loins girt about with truth. You may find often that your experience is darkened by temptation and yielding to temptation and by the power of indwelling sin, but as you are tried and have the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and the breast-plate of righteousness, you will stand and withstand in the evil day having done all; all your temptations resisted, all your persecutions sanctified, you will find this is the end - having done all, endured all, suffered all, you have overcome. As the word is - having done all, to stand, or to overcome.

Then again the Scriptures inform us, rather commend us. what to do in respect of kings and all in authority. The Lord's people should not be indifferent to these external matters because they are revealed and set forth in the Scripture. Says Paul to Timothy - "I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority" (1 Timothy 2 verses 1 and 2) Remember that, at that time, as far as history shows to us, there was no Christian king existing, only heathen men, and yet the Spirit says pray for all men and for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. God's will is that there should be authority, kings, princes, nobles; that is the Scripture, that is the order of God in Scripture and it lays on the church an obligation to pray for these men, these in authority, and this is the end that we poor Christians, then persecuted and in trouble, that we may lead in God's kind providence a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This sets before us our duty as citizens. Says Paul to the Romans there is no power but that which God gives; authority

given to men is for the good of the community. Take hold of this dear friends; vital religion should make us better citizens, should affect our hearts with respect to men in authority, and would bring us to conform our lives thereto. We are Christ's freed men in the gospel, but we are bondmen according to the Scripture to all who are in authority. It is not a matter of indifference; God lays it on us as an obligation that we should walk in these holy Scriptures.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit". Here is a singular qualification of this exhortation. Not all chattering, not read prayers, prepared, printed, and mumbled over by myriads without any heart, without any knowledge of God, without any felt spiritual need; not that, but supplication in the Spirit, which is the same as Jude sets before us and I named this morning - Praying in the Holy Ghost. Now there are times when the child of God prays, and feels that he has no heart, no power, no will, no earnestness; when he does not make, cannot make, full confession; when, even on his knees, he is running about, running into his garden, or to his business, or to some engagement; a miserable thing. We shall have done with it when we are dead and in heaven, but while we are here it is a sad experience. You shut your door, but you cannot shut out your thoughts, you cannot collect and bind them in. You are just poor people with scattering, dreadful scattering; sometimes horrible temptations. You feel shocked at your own wickedness, perhaps that you, while bending your knees before Jehovah, have dreadful thoughts. Some of you may know it and I name it; I know it painfully. I have suffered all my life more or less from this wandering and gadding. The Lord helps us to pray and supplicate in the Spirit. When He works He binds your heart; He keeps out evil; He gives you power; He gives you spirit; He gives you power to confess your sins; He enables you to pursue after Christ. If you are under desertion you are crying O that I could find Him, O that I could come to His seat. If you are under temptation then the cry is - keep me from yielding; keep me from sinning. If you are perplexed you may be enabled to say in faith - Lord, Thou knowest how to deliver me out of this temptation.

In everything make mention of Christ, for His sake. Mention His name, plead His merit, beg of God for His sake to honour the gospel, to honour the love, to honour the grace of Christ in your heart. Not only this, but watching; was it received? Did you feel, some of you know what I mean, did you feel that your prayer entered into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth? Says Paul, now watch. When you felt your prayer entered then you also felt a hope of an answer did not you? O you thought, surely God will answer me. You believed He would. You got a deliverance, or an answer in your hand, the hand of your faith, before anything came from God. Then you get tried. I have known that; I have confessed that to friends, that I have been heard and I was sure deliverance was coming. You need to be watchful; you will forget sometimes all about it, then you will be reminded of it by the Lord. You will have to watch. What will He do, how will He come? Will He grant a distinct answer, will He give me what I ask for? You have to watch His hand, His dealing. Watch the Scripture; does He speak to you by it? Watch His providence; is it tending toward an answer? Watching thereunto, against all discouragements, with all perseverance. How often you may be discouraged; Christ never is. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged". But where is the believer who has not, at times, been discouraged in regard of prayer? Is prayer being answered? "With all perseverance". Press the case; remember the man whose importunity got what friendship could not get. God give us importunity. "Put Me in remembrance" says the Lord. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". Perseverance is by faith. Think of Jehoshaphat; nations had come against him. A prophet prophesied good to him and he went out according to divine commandment. Now he said, believe in the Lord; said to his people, the army, believe in the Lord, so shall ye be established. And when they were going to war he set singers to go before them. How many of us have ever set singers or sung in our hearts deliverance when we have gone out to war?

"And supplication for all saints". We are accused of being narrow; our narrowness goes to the end of the earth, where saints are, and God knows them. We are wide as the Word of God in this.



To His disciples He gave this commandment - Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. That is to be done; the Bible is doing it here and there, and He will have His ministers go and do it in His own manner and in His own time.

"For all saints". Well, what a wonder it is to be a saint. You think about it; you say, those of you particularly who have grace, you say - we are sinners. Solemnly and sadly true, we are, and we shall remain sinners as long as we live. We shall not remain under the power, the dominion of sin, if we are called by grace, but we shall be sinners. And this word, this beautiful name, saints, is very much discounted today because of abuse of it; every professor is regarded as a saint. Here the Apostle speaks of men called to be saints; called to be holy brethren; and for these, the divine commandment is that we should pray. "Pray with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Have you got friends in trouble, friends with burdens too heavy for them to carry?; pray for them. Friends, who were once in your reckoning spiritually minded, perhaps showing much carnality now; pray for them. "For all saints" in their conditions, their difficult conditions and positions and temptations and evils.

Well we are closing this year, this is our last service. How much of the year upon which we shall enter next Tuesday we shall see, we know not, and what we shall endure, what we shall receive, what we shall suffer, what we shall rejoice in happily, we know not. We ought to be thankful for ignorance of tomorrow. We know not what a day may bring forth. Bless God for ignorance of the future. But that does not mean no prayer for the future. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". We are afflicted as a people; bereaved and much afflicted. These empty pews trouble me; they ought not to, but they do. You know how we have been afflicted for years; saints going from Galilee to heaven, wonderful. O the number I have buried who have gone to heaven. How many more I may see depart, I know not. I would fain serve you a little longer if it be the Lord's will, but you know I am an old man and I am living, as Tiptaft would say, on borrowed days. The Lord may soon say you have had enough, come and rest in

the bosom of God. It will be a glad day to me, and when a saint dies it is a glad day to me. Who would wish one back from that holy, happy place, where sin no more defiles, where God unveils His blissful face, and looks and loves and smiles. Brethren I pray for you, I cannot forget you. The Lord help you to remember me.

AMEN.