

The “All’s” of Prayer

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Even when at their best, the best of folks have little words or phrases they constantly lean on when conversing. It may be a popular term or line that everyone in the business world or the work place is using, or it may be a word or phrase that no one else uses. I have a friend who often adds the words “and everything like that” to his statements. A good example is: “We fished in the river most of the day and everything like that.”

One long-time acquaintance of mine ends many of his sentences with the phrase, “and one thing and another.” Using the same statement, he would say, “We fished in the river most of the day and one thing and another.” Another dear friend always hangs the words “and all” on to his comments. Again, using the same statement, he would say it like this: “We fished in the river most of the day and all.”

In the text before us, it appears that the Apostle Paul was also attached to the word “all.” In one form or another, he used it four times in this one verse. In the section that precedes our key text, where a detailed description is given of the Christian’s armor, the word “all” only appears one time (see 6:16). But when the importance of the ministry of prayer in spiritual warfare is set forth, the word is repeated and reemphasized.

Prayer should be offered at “all” times and places! We are confronted immediately with the admonition, “Praying always.” Certainly, the Apostle is not suggesting that we kneel and make verbal petitions twenty-four hours a day. Rather, like Christ’s command, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17), the words “Praying always” speak of a constant attitude of prayer. No matter what the time or location, the silent utterances of our hearts can ascend to the blessed throne of grace.

Prayer should be offered in “all” the energy of the Spirit! The next phrase, “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” underlines this truth. Our prayers are nothing more than religious rhetoric apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But when we pray, as Jude explains, “in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 1:20), in cooperation with and in the energy of the Spirit of God, our prayers are not just words. They are mighty, persuasive, effectual petitions before God.

Prayer should be offered for “all” believers! That is indicated in the statement, “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Yes, the saints in Ephesus needed prayer, but so did the saints in Rome, in Corinth, in Galatia, in Philippi, in Colossae, in Thessalonica, and elsewhere. Praying for others makes our world bigger. Even today, may we experience an enlargement of life and outreach through the ministry of prayer.