



LESSON 7

PRAYER – HOLY TIME (The Great Mystery)

Paul repeats the word “all” four times in that verse. Taken together, these make up four different points regarding prayer.

Ephesians 6:18: *“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.”*

1. THE VARIETY OF PRAYER (FIRST “ALL”)

The first “all” speaks of the types of prayer: “With all prayer and petition.” “Prayer” here is a general word pertaining to its many forms and character. For example, you can pray publicly or privately, verbally or silently. You can pray those deliberately planned prayers, or you can pray those spontaneous prayers that just flow out of your heart. You can request something from God, or you can give Him thanks for what He has given. You can be kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down, or even driving. (If driving please don’t close your eyes!) There are many ways to pray because God has designed prayer to go along with every kind of emotion and every kind of experience. We have a variety of forms of prayer to fit every situation and circumstance.

The second word Paul uses describes a particular type of prayer – “petition” (KJV, “Supplication”). That is best defined as a specific request. How often we generalize, “God, bless the missionaries. God, bless the church.” Those are not specifics; they are generalities. Supplication must be specific.

2. THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER (SECOND “ALL”)

The second “all” indicates the frequency of prayer: “pray at all times.” When should we pray? Someone says, “I think it’s in the morning.” Another insists, “I like to do it at night.” Really? When do you breathe? Would you say, “Oh, I take a few gasps of air in the morning” or “I get my air at night”? How ridiculous! We must be praying always and always praying. The Greek construction speaks of praying on every occasion.

The frequency of prayers was a common theme in the Apostle Paul’s writings. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). “Devote yourselves to prayer” (Colossians 4:2). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul not only talked about the importance of prayer – he lived it. Paul was constantly praying for someone.

How is it possible to be always praying? First, we have to define our terms. To “pray at all times” means that we are God-conscious – that we see everything that happens with reference to God. That is, we live in constant awareness of His presence. Let me illustrate. You get up in the morning

and look out on a beautiful day with a beautiful sky. What is your first thought? Perhaps it is, Thank You, Lord, for this great day You have made. That is praying at all times. Then you go outside see your neighbour who is struggling in life. So, you pray, God, save my neighbour! You get into your car and drive down a street and see the news headlines. You think, God, what is this world coming to? God, help me reach those people who are lost and sick. Once again you are praying at all times.

Praying constantly is not just reciting some formula prayer thirty-five times a day. It has nothing to do with prayer beads, repetitious prayers or chants, or any kind of structured, ritual praying. Pray without ceasing means seeing things from God's viewpoint. When we see a hurt, we ask God to heal it; when we notice a problem, we turn to God for a solution. Unceasing prayer means seeing a Christian brother who has a need and praying for him, or seeing a man in trouble and asking God to deliver him. It is communing with God about what you know is wrong in the world or praising Him for what's right.

3. THE INDIRECT OBJECT OF PRAYER (THIRD "ALL").

Paul also mentions the indirect object of our prayers – "all the saints." What compels us to pray for each other? For one thing, as members of the body of Christ we are all engaged in a common battle.

Ephesians 6:12: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

Often, we believers think of ourselves as separate entities. So many times, we get the idea that we exist independent of everyone else. Of course, we don't. Just as the human body cannot move forward unless all the members move, neither can the body of Christ move forward. God designed unity. When one part of the physical body is hurt or sick, all the other parts come to its aid. If my eye is injured, my eyelid directly protects it; but indirectly the rest of my body also functions to send healing to my eye.

I'm certain we would see great things happen in our community if we really prayed for each other. Even though we enjoy an exalted position in relation to Christ, we still have a desperate need for the prayers of other believers. Likewise, we need to be constantly asking God to work in specific ways for specific saints. Prayer sends a message to sinister forces that we look to God for victory.

4. THE WILL OF GOD THE OBJECT OF PRAYER (FOURTH "ALL").

Paul follows the "alls" set forth in Ephesians 6:18 with a precise command in verses 19, 20:

Ephesians 6:19-20: *"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, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I out to speak."*

As you learn to pray as Paul instructs, you will find yourself becoming God conscious and selfless and as you humble yourself, spend time with the Holy Spirit, and pray under His supervision, you will find your life being moulded into the very image of Jesus Christ and that is what prayer is all about.

Prayer moulds character.