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Main Idea: At the close of this Epistle, a request of prayer is made followed with a call to faithfulness and encouragement. These were Paul's passionate instructions to his churches: know who you are in Christ, pray, and be faithful. We are to be alive and active in the Holy Spirit, allow Him to use us and keep the unity and faithfulness of our churches intact and vigorous. In so doing, we are to be attentive to pray--really pray for each other--having each one's best interests in our mindset. We are to pray specifically for each one's needs and that their God given-opportunities and Divine-appointments open up. We are to pray that we can be our best for God's glory because of His empowerment and of each other's encouragement and support. In this way, we can be all that we can be and more; we can endure spiritual warfare and overcome, make known the Gospel, not be in fear, and build a fruitful and faithful church. When we are tighter, we can accomplish great things. When we are fighting or distracted with bad or meaningless things, we do nothing. Remember, God sent His Son, and He sends us His grace, peace and love. What more do we need? So, let us respond and act as we are made, empowered, and called to be!

Contexts and Background:

Paul concludes his letter to walk in love by Christ's redemption and forgiveness, to the churches in Ephesus and surrounding regions. He wants to remind us of the basics. We need to know who we are by knowing Who He is. This was a church that was new as an outpost in a world of darkness, of sin and dysfunction. This was a church that was totally new as an organism with the call of stewardship of the heart, mind, and soul. They need to know what it is all about--a community established by grace with power for the transformation of the soul and relationships. They were in turmoil, and if we do not listen to Paul's inspired guidance, we will also fumble. So, let's listen to God's Word to be faithful servants in our Lord. Know that God sends us His peace. He loves you, so love Him, know who we are in Christ, receive His encouragement and empowerment. We are to pray for the endurance of our leaders and our challenges.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Pray / supplication in the Spirit.* Inspired prayers with passion and conviction, the essential tool for knowing God and growing in Him is to pray for others. Here, this refers to more of a "militant prayer," as in urgent and vigorous--not weak or superficial. Prayer is our dependence on Christ and our platform for His power. In context, it is our urgent defense and main offensive weapon in spiritual warfare--like a Roman soldier standing together in battle formation with interlocking shields and pikes pointed outward advancing in unison (Jer. 33:3; Matt. 9:35-38; Luke 4:1-13; 11:1-4; John 14:12-14; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 1:15-23; 6:18-20; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25).
- *Prayers and requests.* We are to consider others' needs and bring them before God, too. "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." This is the most neglected, yet most important weapon we have! This is militant prayer, not just on our behalf, but for one another (Eph. 1:15-23).
- *Be alert.* Also set in a military language, as a sentinel, to be on watch. Meaning to be attentive and discerning like a soldier looking for the enemy. God wants us to be ready to fight a "spiritual" fight, as we are more than conquerors (Mark 14:38; Rom. 8:37).
- *Keep on praying.* A Roman soldier was vulnerable alone; their training made them rely on one another. Christians must also be aware, as we are not to be engaged alone. Praying for each other's is essential.

- *Lord's people / all saints.* God is in the midst of and within His people, He is personal and knowable. A call to look out and look after each other, to give no preference to others, because there are no inferior or superior or favorite people in the Kingdom of God, just those with different calls, abilities and opportunities! Kindness is the proof of authenticity (Gen. 41:38; Num. 27:18; 35:34; Dan. 4:8, 18; 5:11, 14; Rom. 2:1-4; 12:9-21; Eph. 4:32; Col. 1:26; 2:12; 3:4, 12-16; 1 Pet. 1:11; 1 John 3:16-23)!
- *Pray also for me.* This is an example of a prayer request. We are called to pray, not just selfish prayers, but for the ones that matter. We are to identify ourselves with God's interests, not seek that He identifies with ours. As Christians, we are all ministers to one another as we jointly trust and rely on Christ and serve one another. Christianity is a community; we are all mutually dependent upon one another and must act accordingly with goodness to one another (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 4:16; James 1:27).
- *Mystery of the gospel.* Meaning unknowable, esoteric knowledge; but, in Christ, we can know Him intimately. Indicates that Christ is the Lord God Almighty, who is the Messiah. God deigned to become incarnate to redeem us as well as to make this information available to us so we could know Him; He revealed Himself to us. This also means that which is extremely valuable, not what is unattainable or concealed. It refers to seeking hidden knowledge, which for a Christian, is in front of us and in plain view; it is fully and freely given to us by Christ. The only ones from whom it is hidden are those who do not know Christ. And the mystery, as in not being able to understand, is God's true--Truth because they do not know Christ or have His Holy Spirit (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17; John 1:18; 1 Cor. 1:21-25; Col. 1:9,26; 2:1-5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:2-3).
- *Ambassador in chains.* An ambassador represented a kingdom or official and was supposed to be protected from harm while in a hostile country, even in prison. Paul only sees Christ as His ultimate King and he as the representative no matter what the hostility. We have been transformed! Now, we are ambassadors and demonstrators of God's transforming power to those around us! God did not save us to be self-centered; rather to be His representatives wherever we are and whenever we go (2 Cor. 5:20).
- *Fearlessly / boldly.* To be courageous, bold and forthright with our words to an enemy. Our help and confidence comes from God and His Word. Our willingness to venture out to speak the truth, and do, regardless of the barriers or fears we may encounter without fear of the consequences or results, because, we realize that God is in control. He is there within, and beside us, and He will take care of us. This comes from the confidence we have in Christ--who He is, and what He can do. This attitude directly affects how we respond to any given situation. When we have confidence in our Lord, we can venture beyond our limits, abilities, and comfort zones to engage in the simple things in life--from talking to a stranger in a kind, encouraging way, or sharing the Gospel with a friend to the big stretches, such as, going overseas to a strange and foreign land as a missionary (Gen. 6; 1 Kings 18; Psalm 121; Prov. 28:1; Isa. 7:9; Dan. 3,6; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; 7:16; Eph. 6:13-14; Heb. 13:6).
- *Tychicus.* The person carrying the letter to be an encourager to the church. There was no post office. The only way to deliver the news is from someone you trust. He was from the west coast of Asia Minor and worked with Paul. He carried other letters from Paul to churches such as Colosse and Philemon around 60-62 A.D. He was a trusted coworker and envoy. This is also a key fact to show that Paul wrote this letter (Acts 19; Col. 4:7-8).
- *Faithful servant / minister in the Lord.* The result of our gratitude for being in a special spiritual union with Christ as Savior and Lord. Obeying is faithfulness! Being faithful is not about education, position, intelligence, or skill; rather, it is taking what Christ gives and *doing*. It is replicating, increasing, and using it for the benefit of others, as well as for our growth and His glory. You can also be Christ's faithful servant, and help further the Kingdom and glorify Christ! Because His great love is in you, His wonders can be displayed through your life (1 Cor. 4:2; Col. 1:1-8; Eph. 1:3).
- *Encourage you.* Meaning to call to one's side, as to cheer, reassure, strengthen, comfort, and warn another person. This means taking mere encouragement and putting into action. Not just

saying to someone to do well, but helping them do it. Paul's passion was to make Christ known, especially to those who did not, and wanted Christians to understand and implement this (Acts 19:33; Rom. 1:13; 7:1-4; 11:25; 12:1; 1 Cor. 2:16; 11:2; Col. 2:2; 4:8; 1 Thess. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6).

- *Peace to...* We can experience peace, contentment here and now, even in struggle, because Christ went to the Cross on our behalf. We can endure, be strong and hold out no matter what, a fortitude of faith that does not look away from our Lord. How do we do this? Know that as Christians, we walk in the power and presence of our Lord. We do not walk alone (Rom. 16:20; Col. 2:15).
- *Peace.* This means God-given tranquility, which comes from the surrendering and yielding of ourselves to our Lord. When Christ is in control, we have peace because He is the source of ultimate peace! This is achieved when we allow tranquility from our harmonious relationship with Christ to be our attitude, control, and composure (Isa. 26:3; Matt. 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; 12:18; Gal. 5:19-23; Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7).
- *Grace to all who love our Lord.* God's covenant is for those who love Him, this promise is carried on by the work of Jesus Christ. We are made sufficient for the task because He empowers us. We are accepted by Christ alone; no entity in the universe has better qualifications than our Lord Jesus Christ (Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; Dan. 9:4; John 14:6; Rom. 3:23; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 1:1-23; 2:8; Col. 2:16, 18, 20-23)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Because His great love is in you... Paul knew Christ and His forgiveness; thus, his passion was to make Christ known, especially to those who did not have the resources or backing. The key? Be motivated by faith and gratitude. When we have the grasp of God's redemption and His kindness and love, a response must ooze from the pores of our soul. This is the solution to a great Christian life, for a family and a church, the willingness to live a life as one who has encountered Christ and play it forward as an encourager those around us!

To get this simple solution, we have to know God and His precepts for us, and we do this through reading the Word, paying attention to the Holy Spirit and our Lord's example, and putting them into practice with our faith. This means we imitate His love and character into our relationships walking in His love and allowing it to spill upon others.

Church Leadership Tip: As Church leaders, we serve our Lord and minister to His people. It is not about us! We must remember that as leaders we are ambassadors of Christ. We are to proceed in any endeavor with the Fruits of the Spirit with love primary. We must have the proper motives before we can lead effectively!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What have you done with the love that Christ has shown you?
2. Finish this sentence: Because His great love is in you_____.
3. How can this Epistle encourage you? What did you learn?
4. What does it mean to you that our help and confidence comes from God and His Word? How does this help your willingness to venture in faith or out to speak the truth?
5. Are your eyes upon Christ as Lord? Do you have hurts or ideas, trends or personal agendas that are in His way?
6. How can you better to identify yourselves with God's interests, not seek that He identifies with yours?
7. How is prayer our dependence on Christ and our platform for His Power? Do you have any examples?
8. Paul's passion was to make Christ known, what is your passion?
9. It takes the power of the Spirit to keep us motivated, especially in the common places of life!
10. How can you best identify with God's interests in others?
11. What can you do better to follow Jesus so you can better reflect His light, and thus be His ambassador of light to the world?
12. What does your church need to do to keep the unity and faithfulness of its people intact and growing?