

In light of our spiritual conflict, Paul exhorts believers to pray (Ephesians 6:10–20). As he does elsewhere, he asks prayer for himself and his colleagues with a reminder in the context that the Lord is faithful. He is convinced of the necessity of divine enablement, of the Lord's willingness to provide that, and of believers' mutual responsibility to pray toward that end. And he knows that others participate in his ministry by joining in prayer. With that in mind, he has two specific prayer requests, which are models for our prayer for missionaries and one another.

I. Pray concerning the message, that it be powerfully presented and received (3:1).

1. Generally, this request concerns the messengers as well as the message ("pray concerning us"), since it is their proclamation of it. Additionally, what happened in Thessalonica and in other places (e.g. Acts 13:13–49) illustrate what Paul meant in these requests.
2. The "message" or "word of the Lord" is the gospel message authorized by Jesus and about the Lord Jesus Christ. See Acts 13:14–41. He is the Son of David, the promised Savior, who was rejected by His people who then crucified Him. But He was raised from the dead by God, who through Him offers forgiveness of sin to all who believe.
3. Paul requests that it "may spread rapidly and be honored".
 - a. The meaning of this is illustrated as well in Acts 13:42–49. The word was honored (Acts 13:48), that is, they spoke well of the gospel and obeyed the gospel, in that they believed.
 - b. The gospel "spread rapidly" (2 Thess 3:1), literally, "runs", in two senses: (1) it spread throughout the region (Acts 13:49), and most importantly (2) quickly received a positive response (Acts 13:42–44, 48 ;17:1–4).
 - c. Paul may have Psalm 147:12–20 in mind in which God's "word runs swiftly" (v.15), fulfilling His purposes in the material creation (vv.15–18). The word is advanced to include God's "laws and decrees" for His people from whom He wants a similar, obedient response (vv.19–20a). It concludes with the ultimate response of praise (v.20b).

Here is how you can and should pray for missionaries: that the gospel runs and is glorified, that it be proclaimed with power and received. The Lord is faithful to act and He invites us to join in by praying.

II. Pray concerning the messengers, that they be delivered from those who reject the truth (3:2).

1. The danger was not theoretical or hypothetical.

Within one to two weeks in Antioch, jealous Jews spoke abusively and stirred up persecution (Acts 13:45, 50). The pattern was repeated in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:5, 13). Paul experienced the same in Corinth (Acts 18:6, 12) from where he was writing. At some point in his time there, the Lord appeared in a vision to encourage him not to be afraid, but to continue speaking (Acts 18:9).
2. The danger came – humanly speaking – from "wicked and evil men."
 - a. In conduct and character they were ungodly and intent on hurting others. The immediate danger was from the jealous, fanatical Jews. But earlier and later businessmen who lost profit from the effects of the gospel ministry would stir up trouble (Acts 16:19; 19:25–27). Opponents also stirred up others, "bad characters" (Acts 17:5), to do their dirty work.
 - b. Ultimately, these are those who do not have faith (2 Thess 3:2b), which is the reason for their animosity, just as Jesus had warned (John 15:18–21).
3. So Paul requests deliverance, perhaps even from immediate danger, but with a confidence that the Lord was faithful.
4. Paul's concern was for the spread of the gospel, not personal ease. The immediate context shows this, as well as his pattern elsewhere of putting the gospel ministry above personal ease (e.g. Philippians 1:17–18).

Pray that missionaries and all gospel messengers be delivered from those who reject the truth.

God invites us to join in the gospel ministry by praying with and for the messengers. The Lord is and will be faithful. But He also calls us to pray that the gospel be powerfully presented and received and pray that the messengers be delivered from evil people.

Commit to supporting missionaries in prayer. Pray also for one another as you seek to share the gospel at work, in school, and in your neighborhood. There may be some who oppose you. Pray for open doors, wise words, clarity, and pray that the gospel runs and is honored, and that God delivers His messengers from those who do not believe.