

Eagerness

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Introduction

I recognize that I suffer from a disadvantage tonight. Without attempting to compete with Santa on this Christmas eve, or keep you here until Christmas morning, during the next few minutes, let us consider the concept of eagerness.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "eager" as "having or showing keen interest, intense desire, or impatient expectancy" (cf. the adverb, eagerly, and the noun, eagerness).

What about Biblical usage? The concept of eagerness is communicated by a Greek word family composed of the noun, *prothumia*, the adjective, *prothumōs*, and the adverb, *prothumōs*.

The noun, signifying the concept of "eagerness," refers to an "exceptional interest in being of service, *willingness, readiness, goodwill*." The adjective describes one who is "eager to be of service, *ready, willing, eager, of the spirit*." The adverb "pertains to being eager to be of service, *willingly, eagerly, freely*."

Collectively, these words have a spiritual focus, and communicate an eagerness for praying, learning, helping, preaching, and (with maturity) leading.

The Noun Prothumia

The Greek noun *prothumia* (προθυμία), derived from *prothumōs* (willing, ready), refers to the concept of "eagerness" (Thomas 4288).

BDAG define it as an "exceptional interest in being of service, *willingness, readiness, goodwill*."

This word occurs 5x in the NT (Acts 17:11; 2 Cor 8:11, 12, 19; 9:2), where it is translated "eagerness" (1x) and "readiness" (4x).

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great ***eagerness**, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the ***readiness** to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability (2 Cor. 8:11).

For if the ***readiness** is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have (2 Cor. 8:12).

and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our ***readiness**," (2 Cor. 8:19).

for I know your ***readiness**, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them (2 Cor. 9:2).

The Adjective *Prothumōs*

The related adjective *prothumōs* (προθυμῶς), a compound of *pro* (before) and *thumos* (passion), describes one who is "willing, ready" (Thomas 4289).

BDAG say it "pertains to being eager to be of service, *ready, willing, eager*, of the spirit."

This word occurs three times in the NT (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38; Rom. 1:15), where it is rendered "willing" (2x) or "eager" (1x) in the NASB.

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is ***willing**, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41).

Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is ***willing**, but the flesh is weak (Mark 14:38).

So, for my part, I am ***eager** to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome (Rom. 1:15).

The Adverb *Prothumōs*

The adverb *prothumōs* (προθυμῶς), derived from *prothumōs* (willing, ready), refers to action that is performed "eagerly" (Thomas 4290).

BDAG say it "pertains to being eager to be of service, *willingly, eagerly, freely*, [as] opposed [to] ἑαυτοῦ (1 Pet. 5:2), the contrast indicating that officials are to be eager to meet the needs of others rather than seek gain for themselves."

This word occurs once in the NT (1 Pet. 5:2), where it is rendered "eagerness" in the NASB.

*shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with ***eagerness** (1 Peter 5:2).*

For Praying

Like Peter, James, and John, faithful disciples should evidence a willingness for praying (Matt. 26:36-46, esp. v. 41; cf. Mark 14:37-40).

*Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is ***willing**, but the flesh is weak." He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" (Matt. 26:36-46).*

*And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is ***willing**, but the flesh is weak." Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him (Mark 14:37-40).*

For Learning

Like the Bereans, prospective believers show an eagerness for learning (Acts 17:10-15, esp. v. 11)

*The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great ***eagerness**, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left (Acts 17:10-15).*

For Helping

Like the Corinthians, faithful churches reflect a readiness for helping (2 Cor. 8:7-24, esp. vs. 11, 12, 19; 9:1-5, esp. vs. 2).

*But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the ***readiness** to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. For if the ***readiness** is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality— at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; as it is written, "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little had no lack." (2 Cor. 8:7-15).*

*But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our ***readiness**, taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in*

you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you (2 Cor. 8:16-24).

*For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; for I know your ***readiness**, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness (2 Cor. 9:1-5).*

For Preaching

Like Paul, faithful evangelists should manifest an eagerness for preaching (Rom. 1:8-15, esp. v. 15).

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am ***eager** to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome (Rom. 1:8-15).*

For Leading

Like the apostle Peter, faithful elders are motivated by an eagerness for leadership (1 Pet. 5:1-4, esp. v. 2).

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with ***eagerness**; nor yet as*

lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Conclusion

Are you eager and excited this evening? Is your heart filled with a desire to pray? Are your hands eager to help? Is your mind eager to learn? Is your spirit possessed by a desire to preach? Are you willing to selflessly serve the needs of others?

Sources

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