

# PRAYER

## Ephesians 6.18-20: Prayer completes the soldier for spiritual battle

**Theme:** Do not forget the importance of biblical prayer in our spiritual warfare to fulfill the Great Commission!

**Ephesians 6.18 begins Paul's final words for the Ephesian believers in this Epistle.**

- However, we need to recognize that he's still speaking about the spiritual warfare we all find ourselves in.
- Because in this spiritual warfare... prayer is essential.

**(Eph 6.18-20) Although prayer might not be another “piece of the armour,” the soldier is hardly complete without it.**

- If we hope to stand in the battle (v13-14a), then we need each and every piece of armour (v14-b-17).
- And we are able to standing “having...” (v14) and “taking...” (v16) our armour, but also “praying” (v18).
  - ✓ Notice how the words “having... taking... praying...” all show us *how* to stand against the enemy.
  - ✓ *Praying* must be included with the armor if we ever hope to stand against the devil and advance the cause of Christ (our Mission).

**Notice also that, if we take prayer with the rest of the armour, it is the *seventh* “piece.”**

- (v14-17) We have already seen the first six pieces:
  1. Our loins are girt about with truth.
  2. We have on the breastplate of righteousness.
  3. Our feet are shod with preparation (we prepare ourselves in the gospel—to preach the gospel).
  4. We have the shield of faith.
  5. Our head is protected with the helmet of salvation.
  6. And we have the Sword of the Spirit in our hands: the Scripture, the Bible, the Word of God.
- (v18-20) The seventh element (or “piece” of armour, if you will) is *prayer*.
  - ✓ The number seven (7) in the Bible is often a picture of completion and perfection.
  - ✓ For example: The week has seven days and when we reach the seventh day (Saturday), the week is complete (it is “perfect” in the sense that there is nothing more to add to it for it to be a week).
  - ✓ And so the Bible places prayer *seventh* in the list of things the Christian needs in order to advance the cause of Christ in the midst of the enemy's opposition.
  - ✓ Without prayer, we are not complete (we cannot stand and we cannot hope to advance in battle).
  - ✓ But, by “praying always” (as Paul will teach us in Ephesians 6.18-20), we can—we can stand against the opposition and we can advance the cause of Christ and fulfill our Great Commission.

**So, this morning I would like to talk about three things in Ephesians 6.18-20:**

1. Paul's Description of Biblical Prayer
2. A Defensive Aspect to Biblical Prayer
3. The Ultimate Direction of Biblical Prayer: Forward!

## I. **(Eph 6.18a-b) Paul's Description of Biblical Prayer**

### A. (v18a) **Praying Always: Biblical prayer is open communication with God.**

1. (1Thes 5.17) This is something Paul says more than once: Pray without ceasing!
  - a) This does *not* mean vain, repetitious prayers (like the heathen do; e.g., twiddling beads and mumbling the same words over and over like some magic spell; Mat 6.7).
  - b) This does *not* mean without break (like the IHOP “24-hour Prayer Room”).
2. To pray always (without ceasing) means to always maintain a mental attitude of prayer.
  - a) It is to maintain a continual, personal fellowship with God as you go about your day.
  - b) It is a consciousness of being in God's presence all day long, every day.
  - c) Example: Nehemiah.
    - (1) (Neh 2.1-3) When Nehemiah was confronted with a critical situation...
    - (2) (Neh 2.4) ...he prayed. He prayed to God silently in his mind and in his heart.
3. In Christ we walk with God; He is always with us.
  - a) And because of that, we can communicate with Him always (we can pray without ceasing).
  - b) Biblical prayer is just that: Open (constant, continual) communication with God.

### B. (v18b) **All Prayer and Supplication: Biblical prayer is communication with God about anything and everything.**

1. We are to pray always with all *prayer* and *supplication*.
  - a) Prayer: [def] A general term referring to our talking to God with reverence, but personally.
  - b) Supplication: [def] Requests and petitions—speaking to God about our needs and our wants.
2. Biblical prayer, then, is open communication with God (daily, continually) about anything.
  - a) We are to pray always with “all prayer”—all types of conversations with the Lord.
  - b) You can (and should) talk to God about anything and everything. You walk with Him, therefore you should talk with Him.
  - c) (John 15.13-15) In Christ, God calls us *friends*, and we can enjoy that close friendship...
    - (1) Firstly, Christ paid *all* our sin debt and so God is no longer our enemy. We are reconciled.
    - (2) And, secondly, when we walk in obedience to the Lord, we have no break in our friendship and fellowship with Him (i.e., we don't have to go through that “Fatherly discipline”).
    - (3) And so we can talk to God about anything (“all prayer”), just as we would with a friend, because in Christ, God calls us His friends (especially when we walk in obedience).
3. Biblical prayer is always open communication with God about any request we may have.
  - a) We are to pray always with all supplication (ask anything you want).
  - b) Now, obviously, we are to pray and ask “*in the Spirit*”:
    - (1) That means that we are to strive to pray according to how the Spirit leads us (not our flesh); we are to pray for what the Spirit would desire, not what we might desire.
    - (2) How does the Spirit lead us—how do we know what to pray for?
      - (a) (John 14.26) The Holy Spirit was sent to *teach us* all things that God has said (Word).
      - (b) (1Cor 2.13) The Spirit of God teaches us the words of God.
    - (3) (1Jn 5.14-15) And so, even though we *can* ask for anything, we *should* be striving to align our supplications with God's will as revealed in God's Word.

- c) And always try to keep this in mind when asking something of God:
  - (1) (Jam 4.2-3) Sometimes we don't see answers to our prayers simply because we are not asking, but then sometimes it's because aren't praying according to God's will.
  - (2) Sometimes we have to wait... Sometimes God says, “No”...
  - (3) And sometimes the answers to our prayers do not depend solely upon the Lord (like our prayers for the salvation of loved ones; God desires their salvation, but they may not).
- 4. Biblical prayer is daily, continual communication with God about anything and everything.

**C. Biblical prayer is also *importunate* prayer.**

- 1. Before we go on to the next point, I think it's important to point out one more aspect to what it means to “pray always.”
- 2. (Luke 11.1-13, esp. v8) Jesus Christ Himself told us that we need to be asking God for things in prayer with *importunity*.
- 3. (Luke 18.1-8) He also told us that we should be praying and asking *continually*.
- 4. Importunity: [def] An urgent persistence, to the point of being annoying.
  - a) It is press someone urgently, continually, constantly, persistently.
  - b) In the common vernacular we would say, “Bugging the snot out of someone.”
- 5. If you are praying a biblical prayer, keep praying that biblical prayer until God answers.
  - a) Pray urgently. Pray constantly. Be persistent to the point of being obnoxious.
  - b) Keep “bugging the snot out of God” until He answers you. That's what He wants.
- 6. Biblical prayer is daily, *importunate* communication with God about anything and everything.

**II. (Eph 6.18c) A Defensive Aspect to Biblical Prayer**

**A. Prayer helps us to “open our eyes” and be watchful in our daily spiritual battles.**

- 1. (v11-12) We do have very real enemies around us all day long, each and every day.
- 2. And if we are not constant and consistent in prayer, we won't be watchful of their attacks.

**B. And should be watchful in prayer for *all* saints (not just the ones we like).**

- 1. One of the best remedies for a bitter spirit toward a brother or sister who has offended you is to pray for them (for their *blessing and welfare*, not for God bring vengeance upon his/her head!).
- 2. Usually the offense came because the brother or sister fell in battle (like Peter, remember? “Get thee behind me Satan”). So watch in prayer for all saints, even those you don't like.
- 3. But even though prayer has a defensive aspect (watch!), we can't stop there...

**III. (Eph 6.19-20) The Ultimate Direction of Biblical Prayer: Forward!**

**A. First, notice two words: “*And... that...*”**

- 1. Paul says, “*And for me...*”: In addition to praying for everyone else, Paul wants prayer, too.
- 2. Paul says, “*...that...*”: He asks specifically for a very *focused* prayer request.
  - a) (v18) This is what we should be focusing on in our prayers for *all* the saints.
  - b) (v19) And this is what we should be focusing on (like Paul) in our prayers for *ourselves*.
  - c) The prayer request that follows has *priority* for every one of us (it should be our *focus*).

**B. We should be praying for the Mission: Making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ through the preaching of the gospel to the lost.**

1. (v18a) We should be praying about this always with all kinds of prayer and supplication.
2. (v18b) We should be watchful in this area because here is where the enemy will focus his attacks.
3. (v18c) We should persevere in this area in our constant communication with God:
  - a) We should ask for this with importunity!
  - b) We should be pressing the Lord about this constantly, urgently, persistently.
4. (John 20.21 cf. Luke 19.10 & 1Tim 1.15) Our Life's Mission is the same as the Lord's: To seek out sinners and save them from the wrath to come.
  - a) Everything else we do as Christians serves to accomplish this Mission.
  - b) Example: We should be raising our children in a way that they know that as adults they should be investing (time, talent, treasure) in the Mission of evangelism.
  - c) Example: We edify the saints in order to prepare them for the work of the ministry—the of the Mission (making disciples through evangelism).
5. Our prayer should always have a definite, specific focus: ***Forward!***
  - a) We should pray always (in every need, in every situation) for the advancing of the cause of Christ—the Mission.
  - b) And just how is the cause of Christ advanced? How do we fulfill the Mission? Preaching.
6. We should be praying about opening out mouths, speaking, and making known the gospel.
  - a) (Col 4.2-4) We should pray for open doors (opportunities) to speak to lost people about Christ.
  - b) But we also need to pray specifically about speaking to them.
    - (1) (1Thes 2.16) If we do not speak to the lost (witness to them; communicate the gospel message to them), then cannot be saved.
    - (2) And that brings us to the focal point of Paul's prayer request...

**C. We should be praying for boldness.**

1. We need to pray always and with importunity (!) that God would grant us boldness in our witness to the lost.
2. (Rom 1.16) The greatest hindrance to the progress of the gospel in the world is... us.
  - a) Without boldness, we won't speak. We'll keep our mouths shut.
  - b) And if we do not speak (if we do not witness), we have failed in the Mission.
3. (1Cor 2.1-5) And don't think Paul was (or anyone else is) immune to the fear and nervousness that comes with speaking to the lost about the gospel.
  - a) We are in a very real spiritual battle and the very “front lines” of that battle is evangelism.
  - b) And that is precisely why we must pray for boldness...
4. Boldness in witnessing is not natural; it only comes through a work of the Holy Spirit.
  - a) (Acts 4.31) Speaking the Word of God with boldness is a direct result of the working of the Spirit of God in believers.
  - b) (Acts 4.29) That is why we must pray always, with importunity, that God would grant us boldness! It only comes from God, and it is necessary to fulfill our Life's Mission.
  - c) (Acts 1.8) The power of the Holy Spirit that makes us witnesses is boldness to speak to them.
    - Boldness in evangelism is not a work of the flesh; it is a supernatural work of the Spirit.

- d) Every soldier is scared and nervous before stepping into combat (it's normal/natural).
- (1) It's not wrong to be scared and nervous about speaking to the lost about the gospel.
    - (a) And, just like with the military, training will help.
    - (b) But, because ours is a *spiritual* battle, we need the work of God's *Spirit* to get the victory over our fleshly, natural weakness (of being scared... ashamed of the gospel).
  - (2) We need the power of the Spirit to witness (Acts 1.8)—we need boldness (Acts 4.31)!
  - (3) And to that specific end, we should pray always (Acts 4.29) with all prayer and supplication for all saints and for ourselves.
  - (4) And we should ask with importunity! We should be praying about this urgently, persistently, and continually... bugging God until He answers!

**Conclusion:**

**We have been given six pieces of armour to stand against the enemy and advance the cause of Christ.**

- But, we are not complete and ready for battle until we add a seventh: Prayer.
- Biblical prayer is open communication with God all day long: We should talk to Him (about anything and everything) as we walk with Him in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Biblical prayer has a defensive aspect to it: It opens our eyes and makes us *watchful*.
- But, most of all, prayer is essential to advance the cause of Christ: Only through prayer can we obtain the power to fulfill the Great Commission.
  - ✓ The power comes by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8).
  - ✓ The power is manifest specifically in *boldness* in speaking to the lost about the gospel (Acts 4.31).
  - ✓ And so we should pray daily, specifically, and with importunity (Acts 4.29)...
    1. (Col 4.2-4) For open doors of opportunity to witness.
    2. (Eph 6.18-20) For boldness to speak the gospel as we ought to (and after all Christ has done for us, we *ought* to speak with *boldness!*).

**(Eph 6.10) That's what this spiritual war is about: Being strong in the Lord and the *power* of His might...**

- (Acts 1.8) The power of His might is given to us so that we might witness to the lost.
- (Acts 4.31) The power of His might to witness is manifest in boldness—speaking to the lost about the gospel with boldness (overcoming our fear, nervousness, and shame).

***We have not because we ask not... So, let's ask... and keep asking until God grants us boldness to witness!***