

The Christian Life
Part 7a
Praying Always With All Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit

Eph 6:10-20

- 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
- 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
- 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
- 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
- 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
- 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
- 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
- 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
- 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. KJV

Introduction to Part 7:

Paul brought his little manual on the Christian Life (Eph. 4-6) to an end with the most important and vital issue to the entire set of teachings, the most essential and most ignored of all of his instructions, the necessity of a vigorous, diligent, well-rounded, and far reaching life of prayer for every saint of God.

Vigorous because prayer without passion is mere form and ceremony and such behavior by men has never impressed God in any way. Jesus continually criticized the Pharisees because their religion was show only and not from the heart. James, the half-brother of Jesus and chief elder at the Jerusalem church, informed us that prayer, to be effective, must be filled with passion.

James 5:16 ...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. KJV

When it is done properly, prayer touches on things that provoke profound emotion in the hearts of true believers: one's own sin and failures, the sins and failures of others, the lost condition of loved ones, our absolute inability to change things and our complete dependence upon God, the sad state of Christianity in general, the great needs of the world, and the profound longing of the church for the visit of God in power (Revival/Awakening).

In fact, I believe that emotions are the reasons that many shy away from real prayer. Tears, agony, pain, longing, frustration, weakness, powerlessness, and need are all feelings that are so uncomfortable and strange to many that they become afraid of them, uncomfortable with them, and unwilling to experience them.

But make no mistake. Prayer that is not vigorous, emotional and painful is no prayer at all and certainly not going to be effective in gaining the ear of God for the help and change that we need. (I didn't say "hope and change")

Prayer must also be diligent for the same reason. Occasional prayer is typically not reflective of any sense of real need, and, so, not likely to provide real results. Prayer must be regular, consistent, and, I would say, daily. Not only that but it should be sensible, ordered, and organized. There are issues that require daily attention lest we fall prey to the wiles of the wicked one, the deceptions of our own hearts, and the pressures of the world around us. "Give us *this day our daily bread*" Jesus taught us to pray because there are spiritual issues that are perpetual. Now, some think that this is just too much, too serious, legalistic and severe. But I notice that those same people feed their physical bodies every day, and most of them do it quite well. Those whose doctor has given them daily medication make sure that they take it as prescribed. And those who have jobs show up on time unless deathly ill. It is a matter of priorities and spiritual desire, not legalism.

In addition, prayer must be well-rounded. In our text Paul recommends "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," meaning "all kinds, forms and uses of prayer." We will discuss in the course of these instructions **the various kinds of prayer: worship, imploration, intercession, importunate, imprecation, exploration.** The point is that prayer should not only be about us and our desires, our family and our friends. As Paul points out in our lesson, prayer should concern itself with the needs of others. David often demonstrated that it is even appropriate to challenge God concerning His promises (imprecation) and even pray against our spiritual enemies, longing for Him to suppress their efforts and give us the victory. And, we must use prayer to explore those areas where sin in our own lives as well as the needs of others and the Will of God may be invisible to us.

Finally, prayer should be far-reaching. Paul mentioned prayer for "all saints." The people of God around the world: missionaries and other servants, those who support them, the dangers they face as well as the church at large and the great Redemptive Plan of God... these all should be a regular part of the prayers of God's people.

That being said, let us open the text and learn from it.

I. **The teaching here concerning prayer is not a new topic but an extension of the discussion concerning "The Whole Armor of God."**

Although prayer is not presented as a part of the armor, it is given as essential to its effectiveness. The belt, the breastplate, the greaves and shoes for the legs and feet, even the helmet, all had fasteners, buckles and ties to keep them in place. There is no discussion of them but they are essential. The armor will not stay in place without them.

In a similar fashion, the spiritual armor of the saint cannot *and will not* stay in place apart from prayer. Just as no soldier would begin his day by simply throwing the armor on and not fastening it securely, neither should any Christian think to begin a day without prayer. Communion with God is the mechanism which makes everything work, makes it effective and useful for the day.

And, Paul does not just briefly mention prayer but takes pains to exhort and remind his readers that there is much to prayer, many things, issues and people to pray about, and that one must be faithful and diligent in the pursuit and practice of prayer.

There is no doubt in my mind that if we could do the research and pinpoint the single greatest failing of the Christians of the Western World, we would find that it is the absence of the right kind of prayer and the absence of any kind of real and proper diligence in it.

Oh, we could point to a thousand failings and ten thousand weaknesses of Christianity in our time but there is not a single one of them that is not somehow linked to the fact that there is simply very little prayer of the kind that our forefathers practiced going on.

I. “Praying always” means keeping a conversation going with God all the time.

“Live in a state of communion with God,” he seems to say, not “quit your job, your family and your church and devote all of you time to prayer.”

If we stay with the ‘soldier’ motif we recognize that soldiers, except in unusual and extreme circumstances, stay in constant contact with their superiors.

Literally, Paul says “praying in every season.” The word “season” means period of time, circumstance, situation, opportunity. It means to not let changing fortunes deter us from prayer.

There is one thing that Satan knows about every saint who undertakes to pray. If he can alter their circumstances enough, throw enough at them, stir the waters and create a storm, he can usually cause them to stop praying and start dealing with the circumstance. Paul knew that as well and urged his readers to develop a pattern and habit of communion with God that would continue no matter what the devil stirred up.

Satan causes untold damage when he manages to distract the saint from praying. First of all, he breaks the communion with God. He isolates the saint away from his strength and his help. He no longer has to deal with the possible answers to the saint’s prayer in the lives of others, and he breaks down the support that the saint was lending to other saints by means of prayer. In other words, he is able to create exactly the world in which you and I are living.

If we are ever to become faithful witnesses for Christ in this broken and dying world, it will only be after we have learned to pray faithfully, regularly and constantly, worshiping God from the heart, drawing from Him such things as we need, and leaning our shoulder into the advancement of His kingdom both in the lives of individuals and in the lives of His churches.

Prayer must be constant, continual, faithful, passionate, and diligent.

I. Prayer must be worship.

He who does not begin his prayer with worship has already forgotten the relationship between the one praying and the One to Whom he is praying. God is not an order-taker, a waiter, and He is not the servant of the man. He is the Lord God of Eternity, the Almighty, the One before Whom Moses trembled. He dwells in Light to which no man can approach except God Himself provide the way.

It is true that He inclines His ear to the prayers of His saints but it is also true that He insists that His saints take note of His Majesty and worship Him for it. This is not because God is an ego-maniac but because man is. If he does not frequently, constantly, remind himself of who he is and Who God is, he will in his mind get the roles reversed and start behaving as if man is the one who is in charge.

It was for this specific purpose that Jesus said, “when you pray, pray like this, Our Father Who is in heaven, Holy is Your name....”

The private, or corporal, or Sargent who steps out the door on any morning operating in his own mind as if he is the Commander in Chief is not going to function very well in his assigned tasks. Likewise the child of God who continually begins his day by not consciously bowing the knee to the One Who is High and Lifted up is going to continually fail at being a bond-servant of his King.

I. Prayer should be Imploration.

By that I mean that there is a very real place for petitioning God concerning our own needs. Jesus told us in John 15 that we can do absolutely nothing apart from Him.

John 15:5

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. KJV

In fact, He told us that those who continually live as if they need nothing from Him are doomed to failure and possible even eternal destruction.

John 15:6

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. KJV

But He promised us that He would honor the imploring prayer of the faithful saint.

John 15:7

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. KJV

Everything hinges on prayer and the only way that we can abide faithful in prayer is if the Lord provides for us what we need to be faithful. “Give us this day our daily bread,” Jesus taught us to pray, seeking the sustenance from God that is the only fuel that will keep us going spiritually.

We must implore God for our spiritual needs. The people we need to protect us in life; soldiers, policemen, firefighters, emergency workers, and doctors all need to keep themselves healthy otherwise they are no use to us when we need their services. In a similar manner all those who need our spiritual labor of prayer need for us to remain spiritually healthy. We only remain spiritually healthy as we seek and receive the nourishment of God on a daily basis.

I. Prayer must be Intercession.

In Intercessory prayer, the saint places himself between God and the one with the need and cries out to God for that need. In our text Paul places the issues of the saints in other places and his own need for assistance in the preaching of the gospel as the issues for intercession. In other places the needs of the lost, the sick, the foolish, and the backslidden are also raised.

George Mueller placed himself between God and the needs of the orphans of England and prevailed upon the Lord to meet the needs of thousands of them. We wonder sometimes why lost people that we know remained unmoved by the gospel message even though they know quite well what God requires of them. If they could only see their need. If only they could be stirred to cry out to God and seek His face. If only the things they know could become real faith in their lives, they might be saved. But they go on unmoved, uncaring, and unbelieving. The power of God does not stir their souls.

We believe that God is Sovereign and does what He wills in heaven and earth. But I truly wonder what we might see in the life of any lost person if every believer who knew them was regularly interceding for them, crying out to God in regular and earnest prayer on their behalf. What would the Will of God show itself to be then?

Moses placed himself between God and Israel and on several occasions turned away the wrath of God from them. I hear some people talking and it is almost as if they want God to visit our country in judgment. I don't. I want our culture to turn back to God. I am not Moses and my faith is far smaller than his but I am willing to put myself in that place and cry out to God for an Awakening. If I could get 100 to join me, or 500, or 1000, I wonder how things might be different.

We must intercede for the saints, for those who proclaim the gospel, for those who hear the gospel, and for our leaders so that the church might be undisturbed in her mission on earth. So say the scriptures.

I. There is also a call for Importunity in prayer.

In importunate prayer, the praying one becomes aggressive, persistent and urgent with God concerning a need. Now on the one hand it might seem that such prayer would be disrespectful and not worshipful, that it would be rejected by God and the prayer would be of no value. But Jesus taught us otherwise, that God actually desires for His people to be so moved at times that they will press Him urgently for an answer to their prayers.

Luke 18:1-8

- 1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
- 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
- 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
- 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
- 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
- 6 And the Lord said, *Hear what the unjust judge saith.*
- 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
- 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? KJV

“Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” “Hear what the unjust judge saith.” If the needs are real, then they are also urgent.

As an example, how would you react if you took a badly injured child into an emergency room and no one seemed to have a sense of the urgency of the need? People were moving in slow motion, going on breaks, visiting with one another, laughing and talking while your child lay in your arms bleeding and suffering.

Likewise, I wonder how it seems to God sometimes when we present great needs to Him but we have no sense of urgency about us. Our emotions are not moved at all by the grave danger of the lost, the massive needs of the missionaries, the sad state of our churches, or the great need for Revival. Shall He answer casual prayers? Thankfully, sometimes He does but to what shall we lay the charge of the sad condition of the world in which we live but to the passionless prayers of the people of God?

Our Lord would have us be importunate over the great needs that we see.

I. Then, we have a kind of prayer that many shy away from, Imprecatory prayer, the petition for judgment to fall upon certain wicked people.

Sometimes the damage that wicked people do to the saints of God is so profound and so severe that the proper thing for the saints to do is pray that God would stop them either by changing their hearts or by bringing His judgment upon them.

This is a kind of prayer that we should not often use. We should only resort to it in the most extreme of circumstances, but even the gentle and loving apostle John found himself in situations in which this was the only appropriate response.

3 John 9-10

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. KJV

Paul did as well.

2 Tim 4:14

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: KJV

We are at a time in our history, I believe, when the people of God need to begin to ask the Lord to judge powerfully and openly those who are pushing wicked and godless agendas upon us and upon our children.

I. In Conclusion, I have laid before you the ‘glue’ that holds the armor together and makes it function as it is designed.

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Pray. Pray diligently. Pray fervently. Use all of the different kinds of prayer in the arsenal of the saints. Persevere and be attentive to the duty of prayer. Pray daily, urgently, and passionately that God might infuse us with the Bread of Heaven that we might “stand, and having done all, stand.” Pray for the lost and those who preach the gospel. Pray for the physically sick and the spiritually sick. Pray for the church at large. Pray for our leaders that God would grant them wisdom and keep them from evil. Pray for Revival.