

***The Christian Life***  
***Part 7b***  
***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 7b:**

In the last message we began to look at the statements that Paul used to end this little manual on the Christian life. Beginning with the exhortation to Christian Unity in 4:1, Paul recorded important and concise instructions as to how believers in Jesus Christ are to conduct their lives for the honor and glory of God. He brought the instructions down to an elaborate word picture in which he likened the daily spiritual preparation of a believer to a Roman soldier carefully lacing on the different element of his armor. Now, Paul is ending these instructions as he ends the letter itself with close admonitions concerning the importance of prayer.

We looked at the statement, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” and pointed out various kinds of prayer available to the child of God: worship, imploration, intercession, and importunity. Today we want to add two more types of prayer to the list, Imprecation and Exploration.

I. **There is 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.

It is not that we hate those people and desire for them to be killed and cast into Hell. However, the damage that some do is so ungodly and so profound that believers sometimes find themselves petitioning the Lord to stop the damage whatever He needs to do to make that happen.

God has often heard the cries of His people and taken men down from their thrones or changed their hearts. Pharaoh He utterly crushed under the Plagues and Nebuchadnezzar had his heart and mind changed by God's intervention. Truly God's people never truly know what God might do when they pray.

I. **Finally, we have the most searching and difficult of all of the kinds of prayer, Exploratory Prayer.**

In this kind of prayer we 'explore' the possibilities and the causes of unanswered prayer as well as new and previously unknown issues of prayer.

A. David, in his prayers, explored the reasons for the timing and the delays in God's answers to prayer.

Ps 6:2-3

- 2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
- 3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? KJV

Ps 13:1-2

- 1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
- 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? KJV

And many other examples we could give. These kinds of prayer are completely appropriate in the face of suffering and a long delay in the answer of God. These seek not only an answer to the original request but also an answer as to the delay. These are prayers of importunity that we spoke of in the last message, pressing God for an answer and an explanation.

- A. David also explored the reasons in himself for the lack of answer to his prayers.

Ps 139:23-14

- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
- 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV

This prayer should not be entered into lightly or frivolously with God. It is the exact task and role of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and lead us in all righteousness. When we ask such questions of God we are certain to get an answer and we must be ready to follow the tender leadings of the Spirit else we fall under discipline for being false and for trifling with God over serious matters.

- A. Exploratory prayer searches out the path of repentance once sin is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Ps 5:8

- 8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face KJV

Ps 25:5

- 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. KJV

Ps 27:11

- 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. KJV

A. Then, it searches out what further duties might be our responsibility.

Is there more that I should be doing? And the answer is always 'yes.'

What is it?

Where do I start?

How do I carry it forward?

I. **Then, not only must all of these prayers be executed, there must be a diligent faithfulness in them.**

Eph 6:18-19

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, KJV

What is it to pray 'in the Spirit'? First of all, I must say that I wish that I knew better than I do what this is, but that is not to say that I know nothing of it.

To pray 'in the Spirit' is to pray in true communion with God.

To pray in true communion with God is to be, so much as one has the knowledge and ability, in harmony with Him on all levels. That means that one is not harboring any unconfessed or unforsaken sins. It means that one has no grudges or offenses against others that he has not forgiven freely and absolutely. It means that he has not offended or grieved anyone sinfully without seeking reconciliation and forgiveness. It means that one is, so far as he is able and aware, in obedience to the Will of God and is not resisting the leadership of the Holy Spirit concerning any matter.

Here is the reality. We cannot pray effectively for others while our own life is a grief to the Holy Spirit. If we are ever going to make any difference in this poor broken world in which we live for the honor and glory of God we must ourselves get to the place of truly being right with Him.

Once in this place, Paul admonishes us to 'watch thereunto with all perseverance.' This is not an issue of getting disturbed in a service and 'rededicating' our lives but then forgetting about it as soon as we walk out the door. This is a concerted and determined effort to truly serve God, to lift others up in prayer in such a way as to make a real difference, and then determinedly persist in those efforts. This is a enormous task.

When I give contemplation to passages of scripture like this I become ashamed of my weak and pathetic efforts at prayer as well as disgusted by my lack of diligence and perseverance.

Last week a missionary sent me a request for prayer because he was going into a Muslim stronghold to meet with a Christian missionary who is doing a work there. He knew that it was an area of conflict and was dangerous. So, I prayed. I mentioned it to the Wednesday night group and we mentioned his name to the Lord for protection. Then, on Friday, I got a full report. He was carried far deeper into the area than he intended and was introduced to one of the commanders of the guerilla forces. By God's grace he was spared any harm and returned back to his home safely. But, when I thought about the situation I realized that my sense of urgency for him was far less than it should have been.

Just about every day I look at your name on my prayer list and lift up a petition to God for your needs. But when I reflect on my efforts in prayer as compared to the needs in your lives I am ashamed that I sometimes put less effort into the prayer than I should. There are times that I feel that I should repent of my prayers because they are so weak and ineffective. I wonder how I can ever lead you to pray as Paul is teaching here when I have learned so little myself.

I know that I am called to pray 'in the spirit' for you watching that I be diligent to persevere in those prayers. May God forgive me for my failed efforts.

So, on the one hand, it is difficult for me to 'fuss' at you about prayer and yet, on the other hand, it is absolutely essential that you and I learn to pray 'in the Spirit' for the saints and sinner that we know and know of. It is essential to their welfare and to ours that we persevere diligently in the efforts. And, it is absolutely necessary that we get to the 'same page' as the Holy Spirit of God in this thing.

Furthermore, Paul knew that the spread of the gospel rested to a great degree on the prayers of those already converted.

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,

One might argue with Paul and say, "now, Paul, you are an apostle and God has called and empowered you to preach the gospel to the Gentiles." We might say, "you know that God is going to enable you to preach with power wherever and whenever you preach." We might also remind him, "God is Sovereign and will always accomplish what He desires when His Word is proclaimed." I am completely convinced that should anyone have spoken to him in this way that the old crippled and nearly blind apostle would have turned and with tears in his eyes said, "I can do nothing unless God enables me and He enables me the most when His people pray earnestly for me."

**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.