

# Christian Warfare

## Prayer The Ultimate Weapon

Ephesians 6:18

18 With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,  
(Ephesians 6:18 (NASB))

For the past several weeks we have been carefully studying through God's instructions about how we are to go about all the many matters of our daily life, while at the same time defending ourselves against a constant onslaught of attacks that come at us from out of the darkness of the "heavenly realms". We likened our circumstance to that of the returning exiled Israelites who while diligently working to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem with one hand, also held a weapon in the other.

And that comparison is a very appropriate one because these days in which we live truly are "evil days" and our enemies from within this "present darkness" are ever on the attack against us. In Ephesians 5, verses 15 and 16 we read

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV))

And in Ephesians 6, verse 13 we read,

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:13 (ESV))

These words give us a simple truth. The days in which we now live are filled with all manner of evil. But I do fear that most of the people of our day do not really accept these words as being real and true. It seems that even those who profess to be strong believers in Christ and who profess to fully trust these scriptures as being pure and holy truth go about their daily lives as if this "evil" is nothing more than just bad behavior on the part of men. And yes, the "evil" does usually manifest itself within the hearts and the behaviors of men, but the hiding place from which that "evil" launches its attacks is within that other realm, a realm that we can't see, hear, or feel. And because we can't see or hear or feel its presence, the "evil" can attack without warning and have us in fits of despair before we have time to raise our defenses. And that is why always having this special armor of God covering over us at all times is so very, very necessary. But may I remind us that even with the armor to cover us, the "evil" forces of satan still remain on the attack, looking for any opening within our armor, and those openings take place far too often.

Thankfully, God is an ever-watchful and protective Father. He knows our weaknesses and He knows our circumstances. And he is ever “at the ready” to step in to give us all the additional help and protection that we might need.

May we again look quickly at each piece of this special armor, beginning in verse 14?

14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.  
(Ephesians 6:14-17 (NASB))

This armor, when rightly used, really can provide us with most all of the help and protection that we might ever need. But again, the enemy that we are engaging each day really is so very clever; and he is powerful, able to plot and deceive and manipulate. And for that reason, we need to know that when we find ourselves being overrun by those enemies from the evil realm, we can call out to God and help will quickly come. And as verse 18 reminds us, our manner of “calling” out to God is “prayer”, simple “prayer”.

And note carefully there in verse 18 that God never wants you and me to ever really “hang up the line”, not even for a minute.

18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication  
(Ephesians 6:18 (ESV))

I am reminded of the instructions that a 911 operator will give to a person who has called for help. The operator immediately instructs the caller to “stay on the line” until help arrives. And so it is also with God our Father! He wants you and me to keep the “lines” of prayer continually open and flowing.

Note these words carefully, without actually ending His previous sentence about putting on the whole armor, God immediately instructs us to

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And note the urgency within these words. Yes, we have put on all of the garments of the armor of God, and with the “sword of the Spirit” in hand we are advancing through the many engagements of our day, but all the while we are also to be constantly and

persistently praying. With every step and every breath, we are to ever and always be living in a mindset of ongoing prayer.

May I ask you . . . do you do that? Do you live in a constant “mindset of prayer”? I confess that I do not. I really do want to, and I wish I would, but I don’t. Yes, I do pray often and all through the day. I pray about big things and I pray about small things. But then also, as I busy myself and get engrossed in a project, I find that my mind begins to run on “autopilot”, not thinking much at all about the Lord. Yes, much of what I am doing might turn out reasonably well done, but in the process, I will have gone for long periods of time not even once thinking about the Lord or asking Him for His help.

When I say such things as this to my Christian friends, I will often get an excuse back from them, saying, “Oh, don’t be so hard on yourself, you’re just being normal”. And that may be true, but may I say, “I don’t like that kind of normal”. “Normal” is me operating under my own wits and power. And that has not proven to work well for me. Besides that, what about this verse here that actually commands me to be in a continual mindset of prayer?

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And we are told the same in other places in the scriptures.

17 pray without ceasing, (1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV))

May I say to you that just because a loving brother commiserates with you and me about our failures to pray, and assures us that he has the same failures, our guilt and our failure is not excused! The real solution to our failures is for us to be intentional as we spend time with the Lord, letting Him explain to us how to obey this command.

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One more thought about our “keeping a continually open line” with the Lord . . . let’s say that as I got up this morning and began putting on the armor of God, I was cleverly distracted by the evil one, perhaps by a telephone call or by the rain storm taking place outside, or by the siren of an ambulance passing by outside, or by something else. But the result was, I did not spend enough time with a particular part of the armor. The devil, knowing that I have left part of my armor undone, by lunch time, is flinging all sorts of flaming darts at me. And those darts are getting through the armor. That is when “keeping an open prayer line” with the Lord is ever so important and needful. All I will need to do is cry out to Him and He will send the help I need.

Folks this command is that practical and that needful. If we will simply practice this promise, God will be faithful to rush to our aid.

Then note also these next words that God has placed within this command, that we must pray “in the Spirit”!

May I ask you . . . “Do you know what God means when He instructs us to ‘pray in the Spirit’”? I confess to you that I am not altogether clear about the full meaning of those words. I have studied and pondered them on many occasions over the years, and I believe that I have some understanding of them, but I am not at all satisfied with the little I have learned.

I have shared with you that because my Mother worshipped in a Pentecostal Holiness church, I have gained certain affinities toward their doctrinal beliefs. And “praying in the Spirit” has a very special meaning within the Pentecostal worship experience. Some of our Charismatic brethren have interpreted the scriptures to say that they can pray in an “unknown tongue”, a tongue known only to the Holy Spirit. And they do! But, they are quick to say that this “prayer in the Spirit” is not the same as the “gift” of speaking in tongues, which would usually be accompanied by an interpreter. Instead, they believe “prayer in the Spirit” to be a very special form of private conversation between them and the Lord.

I have never experienced that sort of “praying in the Spirit” and so I can’t relate to it, but I do know that I must obey this command from God and “pray in the Spirit”. And so, I have accepted the understanding that is more common to our mainline church traditions, and that is “praying in the Spirit is to pray in the power of the Spirit, by the leading of the Spirit, and according to His will”. And while we may not even fully understand those conditions, if we will simply surrender our prayer to the Holy Spirit, He will guide our thoughts and our words. Romans 8:26 tells us,

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” (Romans 8:26)

I heard a preacher once say, “The Holy Spirit fixes our prayers while they are on the way up!”

And may I add that while I may never pray in an “unknown tongue”, I know that my prayer should still be very intimate and very experiential.

Why is that so? Why is it important that my prayers be “intimate and experiential”? It is because God is “our loving Father” and we are His dear sons and daughters; and He wants us to have and to enjoy a very intimate and personal relationship with Him. That truth is very clearly and plainly expressed to us in such verses as Romans 8:14-17.

Listen!

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14-17 (ESV))

Our relationship with God is a very intimate and loving Father and son relationship, and yes, as we engage in the difficult spiritual warfare of our day, our “Abba, Father” wants to keep us well and safe. So then, as we add to the “full armor of God” our

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Our prayers add a dimension that is sure to bring protection and good favor that we could not otherwise hope for.

Consider what I am saying! Most all people have “hope” of some kind or another. You hear it voiced every day, your friend or co-worker saying such things as, “I hope that my son is OK, I haven’t heard from him in months now.” Or “I hope that I don’t get laid-off at the factory, I really need the money.” But what is the basis for their hope? Unfortunately for many of them, their hope is in some imaginary form of destiny or fate or some other similar sort of vague source.

But as we know, the prayer that is spoken about here is a direct plea to a person, God Himself. And God is the all-powerful source who actually can give help. In Psalm 119:67 we are assured that,

“God is good and He does good!” (Psalm 119:67)

And yes, God can and often does answer some of the prayers prayed by unbelievers, but that is most often because of special circumstances known only to Him. But the prayers spoken about here in our scripture passage are prayers from His own beloved children, His sons and His daughters. And He has promised to hear and answer those prayers every time, not always exactly as we might wish Him to answer them, but always in the very best way.

Folks, I don't know if you have reached a point in your Christian growth that you are able to truly believe and embrace these things. I confess to you that I am barely within that threshold. But may I say that I really, really want to step on through and begin trusting God, my Father, as a beloved son ought to trust Him. He is "trustworthy" and I am His son and I ought to fully trust Him.

One more consideration before we close . . . here in this passage, God adds that our prayers are not only to be for ourselves and for our personal circumstances; but we are also to pray for all the saints. Listen!

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When you and I first trusted Christ as our Savior and Lord, something else very special also took place in those beginning moments. In that first moment when the Holy Spirit was breathed into our souls, we became an integral part of the very special "family of God". As the "Bride of Christ", we became part of the "body of Christ", a family member of God with brothers and sisters who enjoy the same blessings that we enjoy; but who also suffer attacks from the evil one, just as we do. They hurt, they doubt, they get downcast and disheartened, even sometimes in despair. Why? Most likely because just like you and me they forgot to put on the "full armor of God" that day, and satan and his demonic buddies immediately commenced their insidious attacks; and just like with you and me, those attacks are usually being carried out by the unkind and harsh behavior of the people and the so-called friends in their lives.

What are we to do? First, we are to do just as God instructs here in these words,

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We are to give up our attitude of "everything is about me", and we are to always be "on the alert" to notice the sufferings of fellow saints. And then we are to pray, persistently and specifically, asking God to intervene on behalf of our suffering friend.

And often, God will answer by sending us to give that person a kind word of encouragement. But one quick warning, we should be careful not to commiserate with our friend or try to "fix" them; we must let God take care of those kinds of things. Our response is to continue in prayer and to follow God's lead. Perhaps it will be to help that suffering saint with a part of their armor that they have left standing open to attack. We won't know, but God will.

So then, as we continue throughout this day and every day, we must never underestimate the wiles of the devil, but must faithfully “put on” the whole armor of God, and along with that armor, be ever diligent and constant in prayer, seeking God’s blessing and favor both for ourselves and for our fellow saints.

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