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The Christian's Warfare Ephesians 6:10-20 9. Pray at All Times

Soldiers respect and willingly follow their commanding officers who have gone before them in combat. They know these leaders have the experience and have paid the price in the fight. They understand that following those who've been in the conflict will help keep them alive and lead them to victory.

The Apostle Paul was one who had gone before in the spiritual conflict. He faithfully sought to share the good news of the gospel while facing the greatest of opposition and persecution. The believers at the church at Ephesus knew of Paul's faithful ministry. They had seen him face a riot in their own city because of the impact of the gospel message (Acts 19).

So, the Ephesian believers would have listened to Paul and followed his example and teaching about how to fight the spiritual battles, and so should we. We come to the end of Paul's illustration of the Christian's warfare as Paul share the most important factor in our fight – "Pray at all times".

Paul, likely sitting in prison, chained or guarded by Roman soldiers, closes and applies his letter to the church at Ephesus with a vivid illustration – the Roman soldier's armor. In chapters 1-3 he has taught us wonderful gospel truth. He described how without Christ we are lost, separated from God, and dead in sin. He described how through the riches of God's grace Jesus died for us that we might have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our sins. Paul then explained who we are because of our repentance and faith in Christ. We are right with God, children of God, heirs with Christ, seated in the heavenlies. In the rest of his letter Paul describes how we should live in this sinful world because of those marvelous truths. In Ephesians 6 Paul warns us this life will be a spiritual battle, and he shares with us the dramatic illustration of the armor of God:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 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.

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, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

***Put on the gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer.***

Paul begins his description of our spiritual battle with the exhortation, "***Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might***". Paul ends by describing that alone which will make us strong in the Lord's might – prayer. Prayer is not an additional final piece of armor in Paul's illustration. Rather, as the old hymn above tells us, prayer is something we must do in connection with our use of each piece of the armor of God and our engagement in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Paul spends more time here describing prayer than he does with any piece of armor. It is through prayer that we become strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Prayer is part of our ongoing relationship and fellowship with God. It is through prayer we gain understanding of what each piece of armor is, how we put it on, and how we use it in the spiritual battle. We pray as we prepare for the battles we know we are to face by putting on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and our boots of the gospel of peace. We pray as we pick up our shield of faith, put on our helmet

of salvation, and take up the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and enter the fray.

We pray because we know we are in spiritual battle, against a powerful, devious, deceptive enemy. We know we are weak and face certain defeat on our own, so we depend upon God's strength to stand and find victory. A lack of prayer will make us prone to weakness, growing weary in battle and abandoning the fight when it gets tough.

How to Pray in the Battle

In these verses Paul give us a detailed description of how we should pray as we prepare ourselves for the spiritual battle.

The Time for Prayer – “Pray at all times”. If we are aware we are in a spiritual battle zone; if are mindful of our own weakness and dependence upon God, we will be constantly and consistently in prayer. Paul elsewhere taught believers, “continue diligently in prayer (Rom. 12:12); “continue in prayer” (Phil. 4:6); “Prayer without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Jesus Himself challenged us to “Watch and pray always” (Luke 21:36) and that we “At all times should pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1).

The Kinds of Prayer – “With all prayer and petition.” Paul here mentions two types of prayers. In 1 Timothy 2 he mentions four, “entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings”. We do not want to simply be always asking God for things (petitions), We want to include other kinds of prayer as well. Many find the following helpful in seeking to pray effectively:

- A - Adoration
- C - Confession
- T - Thanksgiving
- S - Supplication (Requests)

The Approach to Prayer – “Be on the alert” If we get up each morning remembering there is a war on, we will be alert for the challenges, trials, temptations, and other attacks on our own lives and others. We must be aware of the schemes of the devil We should be conscious of our own areas of weakness and besetting temptations. We need to be aware of the issues be are likely to face. We pray for God's strength to deal with these as they come.

The Endurance of Prayer – “With all perseverance” One of the greatest marks of good soldier is endurance even in the face of great challenges. We will constantly be in the spiritual battle. In order to be victorious, we must then constantly be in prayer. We also pray for our own endurance to be strong, to stand, and to not give up when the battles get tough.

The Objects of Prayer – “For all the saints”. We certainly must be praying for our own spiritual battles. Paul encourages us to make sure we are praying for other believers around us. We know of family and friends who have issues and struggles and need our prayer. We know of brothers and sisters in our church whose issues must be taken to the Lord. Believers in the statehouse surely

need the prayers and support of each other as they deal with challenges of politics and government.

The Power of Prayer – “Pray... in the Spirit” For our prayers to be effective Paul says we are to pray in the Spirit. “In the Spirit” is an important phrase used to describe how we are to live our entire Christian lives. We are to live “in the Spirit” (1 Peter 4:6). We are to “walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). We are to “worship in the Spirit” (Phil. 3:3). Earlier in Ephesians Paul taught we to “be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Our whole lives are to be lived in the power and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is He who will help us understand and put on the Armor of God – the various aspects and truths of the Gospel. It is He who will give us strength to fight and win the battles.

“Praying in the Spirit” first of all means we must be a true follower of Jesus Christ for our prayers to be heard. Paul taught us in Romans that every person who has repented and put their faith in Christ has been given the Holy Spirit to live within them (Rom. 8:9).

“Praying in the Spirit” means we pray under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We pray in harmony with the Holy Spirit. We pray consistently with the mind and will of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who will open our eyes and heart to understand the amazing truths of the gospel. It is the Spirit who will help us apply those truths, to “put on the armor” as we go to battle.

We can learn how we should pray by looking at his own examples of prayer in Ephesians. In this letter he gives us two great examples of “praying in the Spirit”. In Ephesians 1:15-19 and 3:14 Paul shares two great prayers for the Ephesian believers. He prays God would give them knowledge and understanding of Christ. He prayed they would come to understand their hope in Christ and the riches of their inheritance in Him. He prayed they would understand the power of God at work in their lives. He went on to pray they would be strengthened with God's power and would come to grasp the breadth, length, height, and depth of God's love. These are great examples of what it means to “pray in the Spirit” as we pray for ourselves and for others.

Paul has given us a wonderful illustration of how to live the Christian life and how to fight the spiritual battle. Let us take it to heart so that we may indeed

...Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Government Org. Conference Room (2nd Floor E. Wing)
12:00 PM Senate President's Conference Room