

## OUR SECRET WEAPON: THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF PRAYING

### Ephesians 6:18-20

It is not enough to simply put on the armor of God. For the armor to be effective we need to be in close contact with our Heavenly Father through prayer. A life of dependence on God is essential in our warfare. It is how we are strong in the Lord.

#### 1. PRAYING AT ALL TIMES

- Praying is not an additional piece of God's armor, but the essential needed to put on all of God's armor. *"We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war...our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the Kingdom of Christ advances in the world."* – John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*.
- We are to pray at all times. We are to pray when we are content, when we are thankful, when we are struggling, and in the daily course of life. Prayer is talking to God and being continually aware of our relationship with Him as our Father through faith in Jesus. We are to pray for big and little things because our Father cares for us. We don't need to try to get God's attention, we already have it – Matthew 6:7,8.
- We are to pray "in the Spirit" meaning prompted and guided by Him. Just as the sword is of the Spirit, so prayer is linked with the Spirit – Jude 20. *"Praying in the Spirit is the outflow and outworking of a relationship with God, which is itself rooted and grounded in His Word"* – Iain Duguid. We have access to God in the Spirit, by the blood of Jesus, to the very presence of the Father – Ephesians 2:18. We need both the Word and prayer in dependence on God. If we are to pray in the Spirit we are to live under the control of the Holy Spirit – Ephesians 5:18. *"The Spirit stands by the side of believers to prompt them to pray, to direct them whom to pray for and how to pray, as well as to energize them in praying for themselves and others."* – Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*.

#### 2. PRAYING ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS

- We are to pray with all kinds of prayer including requests and intercessions as well as thanks. One way to pray is ACTS=Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Look at the prayers of the Bible for guidance in praying – Ephesians 1:16-20; 3:14-19. Jesus' prayer in John 17 was for Jesus to be glorified, for Jesus' disciples to be protected and united, that they would be sanctified by Truth, and finally that we would be with Him and see His glory.
- *"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight; Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright; And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."* – William Cowper, 1779.

#### 3. PRAYING WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE

- We are to pray continually and not give up – Luke 11:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Praying continually means ongoing dependence on God, an awareness of living life continually in His

presence. This also means staying alert and awake because we are on duty – Matthew 26:40,41; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

- We don't pray alone. Other soldiers pray with us and for us. Christ prays with us and for us – Romans 8:34. The Holy Spirit prays for us – Romans 8:26,27. The Holy Spirit prays for us according to the Will of God – 1 John 5:14. What seems to be unanswered prayer may be God redirecting us, transforming us, or teaching us dependence. God hears our prayers in Christ, but in His sovereignty may say "yes, no, wait, or I have something else planned". *"That doesn't mean you can't pray to be healed, or for a job, or for a spouse...but it does impact profoundly how you respond when God doesn't seem to answer your prayers. The problem is not your lack of faith or with God's lack of power; it is that God has chosen a different path of growth and sanctification for your life right now. It is a call to trust, in weakness and brokenness, in the God who is your strength and fullness...You never walk the pathway alone."* – Iain Duguid, *The Whole Armor of God*. – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Illustration: Parents reserve the right to take away even favorite toys if it is in the children's best interest.

#### **4. PRAYING FOR ALL THE CHURCH**

- We are to pray for all the believers around us who are standing against the enemy. We are an army together who desperately needs the power of God. Don't just pray for those across the sea, but those right around the corner. Pray for the soldier beside you.
- Praying for others includes the advance of the gospel through other people. Evangelism needs prayer. Paul asked for prayer for himself as an ambassador of the gospel – 2 Corinthians 5:20. Even though Paul was in chains, he still wanted to proclaim the gospel clearly – Colossians 4:2-4. Paul is not as concerned with his personal freedom as he is concerned with gospel freedom. He wants to speak freely about the gospel. Paul says he must speak and he wants to speak boldly, unashamedly with confidence in Christ. We are to do the same! We need clarity and courage. Let us be clear on the message of Christ. Let us be courageous to speak the truth in Christ even when it is not popular. *"What concerns Paul most, however, is not that his wrist be unchained, but that his mouth be opened in testimony; not that he may be set free, but that the gospel may be spread freely and without hindrance. It is for this, then, that he prays and asks the Ephesians to pray too. Against such prayer the principalities and powers are helpless."* – John Stott.

Concluding applications:

- Do you realize your absolute dependence on God and His power?
- Is prayer a normal part of your daily life and your relationship with God?
- How are you praying for others?
- Do you pray for boldness and opportunities for sharing Christ? At Christmas time?