

Armour - Praying

Ephesians 6:18-19 ESV

(18) Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

(19) And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

Introduction:

We come now to this last phrase in this series of verse in Ephesians 6.

Now notice that I did not say that we come to the last treatment of the last piece of armour, because we did that last week.

The Apostle Paul starts his discourse by warning us that we must put on all of this armour and if we do so, it enables us to stand against the schemes of the devil.

The implication is that we will have to fight consistently against the schemes of the evil one.

Now, I did not say that we would have to fight constantly; I said that we would have to fight consistently.

Constantly means continually.

Consistently means over and over, without fail, always.

We will always have to be on guard, we will always have to be developing our character.

Our Armor is not something that we wear; it is someone that we are.

Paul is not talking about external adornments but internal disciplines.

Now by and large, we don't like that.

We don't like the thought that our spiritual warfare is an issue of character.

We kind of would like it to be a fridge magnet.

A promise box.

A book we read or a conference we attend.

Maybe we could make it special prayer oil or a song we sing, or maybe we could buy a shofure, put on a Levitical prayer cloth and walk around our home for seven minutes and all our problems magically disappear.

Or here is something a bit radical for us all...maybe we could take personal responsibility for how we are living and the room we are giving the enemy and repent of our sins and cleanse ourselves of our evil way.

I believe that is what Paul is encouraging us to do.

He is saying...Take up your armor, pick it up, make that which is not naturally yours, yours.

So he starts this way by exhorting us to take personal responsibility to work out our salvation...our sanctification in fear and trembling.

He then goes through and list all this attributes that we should be making a part of our daily life.

And then he comes to this final exhortation-

Ephesians 6:18 ESV

(18) Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Praying at all times:

Now there are some who say that now we must pick up an additional piece of armour, a piece of armour known as prayer, and that prayer is a final part of our spiritual armor.

I made a comment last week that made many of you raise your eyebrows and roll your eyes...I said-

I do not believe that speaking in tongues is apart of our Spiritual Armour.

I believe it is a part of our spiritual discipline, but not of the armour Paul talks of here.

Let me be a little bolder here today.....

I do not believe that Paul is telling us that prayer is the final piece of armor that we need.

Paul does not say....*Folks here is our last piece of armor; pick up the spear of God which is praying in the spirit.*

Not at al, he simply says *praying at all times in the spirit, keep alert, (that is be on guard) making petitions and requests for all the saints.*

Do you see that now?

In every other case he follows his own analogy. He points to a piece of armor worn by a soldier, a portion of armor and then makes reference to a body part and then a character trait.

That is not the case here.

William Gurnell in his extensive treatment of the Armour of God makes no mention to this verse 18 by Paul.

Martyn Lloyd Jones, in his commentary on Ephesians, point out this very distinction that I am making reference to today.

So to try and connect prayer with the armour of God in this way is an artificial connection.

So, is there a connection?
I believe so, a very real one.

Praying in the spirit is something that we have to do.

Paul is saying put on these pieces of armour and keep them on or have them ready to use at any time.

And in all and every circumstance be praying, at all times be praying. Pray with *perseverance*, pray when you don't feel like it, pray when it is difficult, when you are tired, when things are going well...always be praying.

And not only pray for yourself, but pray for the saints.

And I personally believe that Paul is encouraging the church at Ephesus to be praying in the Holy Ghost, to be always praying in tongues.

So there are four things that I believe Paul is saying is vital while you are putting on your armour, while you are standing, and while you are engaging the enemy.

1. You are to Pray...at all times to pray.
2. You are to pray in the spirit.
3. You are to be alert and persevere in your prayers.
4. And you are to pray for the saints.

So let's start looking at these four things today by looking at what prayer is.

The topic of Prayer in the Bible:

Pray and prayer is mentioned 154 times in the Old Testament and 84 times in the New Testament.

It is a topic that Jesus taught on specifically and the disciples ask especially to be tutored on.

Our Lord is often recorded as retiring to the hills to engage in this practice of praying.

He seemed to find it essential to everything that He did and in fact taught His men that instead of losing heart, becoming discouraged they should pray instead:

Luke 18:1 ESV

(1) And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

This statement by Jesus tells me that it is possible for us to lose heart as His followers.

That being discouraged, wanting to give up, wanting to climb out of the ring is a very real possibility for us.

That we maybe clothed in our armor, we maybe have our shield and our helmet and our sword....but if we are discouraged, if we do not persevere then the battle is over for us.

And having done all to stand....stand firm is how Paul starts this entire discussion off for us.

And he ends it by saying...pray!

Don't give in, persevere and pray, this is the key.

The issue of Prayer:

In Luke 11 we find the disciples in a position that I know I have faced myself and I am sure some of you have as well...namely...stuck in a trying to work out what prayer is.

The early disciples of Jesus felt exactly the same.

Luke 11:1 ESV

(1) Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

They heard that John's disciples did it.

They saw that Jesus would go off and do it.

Pharisees did it. It was part of the religious practices of the day and every day life at the temple.

So they were surrounded with the concept of prayer, they just didn't know how to apply it to themselves.

You will also notice here that the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray.

They had been with Him for a significant amount of time.

They longed for this intimacy with God the Father that he had, but they struggled.

So prayer seems to be something that we should not just be interested in, but something that we should be able to do.

Why would they struggle?

Here was Jesus Himself and yet they felt they couldn't do it.

I believe they struggled because of the religious system of the day.

I believe they struggled because they saw what Jesus did and what the Pharisees did and there was such a contrast that they couldn't get their head around it.

Jesus talked about His heavenly Father with such intimacy and yet here were the Pharisees they talked with such self-center pomp and ceremony, such a self-righteous attitude.

Friend,

How much of your spiritual life have you been desperate for an answer and unable to find one?

You look around on the spiritual horizon and you see these so called spiritual giants, huge looming untouchable figures.

You try doing things the way they say that they do them.

You try imitating them.

You try putting their suggestion and practices in place.

And yet all the time you are left with a sense of hopelessness and lack of intimacy with God.

This was the same challenge faced by the disciples when they came to Christ and said....what is prayer?

And here we are....Paul has just finished this discussion on Spiritual Warfare and he is now urging us to pray and maybe you are sitting there wondering to yourself...what is prayer?

Or saying to you self, *I am doomed I don't know how to pray!!?*

Let's see if we can help each other out by the end of today.

What is Prayer?

So what is this thing called prayer that Paul is talking about?

Matthew 6:6 ESV

(6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The word pray here is made of two words, one means to draw near or draw close, and the other to wish.

So this means that prayer is drawing close to someone and talking to them about those things that you desire and hope for. Those things that you yearn for.

In this case it is a retirement, a withdrawing to discuss an important and intimate pressing and urgent intimate matter.

There is no wailing here – but intimacy.

There maybe tears, but that would only be born out of intimate discussion, it is not a prerequisite.

Here is different verse often quoted in Matt 26.

The KJV translates the word as prayer, but a better translation is appeal.

Matthew 26:53 ESV

(53) Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

You can see that it is talking about a different form of conversation, based upon a different need.

Jesus is saying...

Could I not ask heaven?

Could I not appeal to God and on the basis of my relationship, on the basis of my intimacy and call down twelve legions of angels from heaven?

This is a statement about the power of His intimate relationship, It is about a level of intimacy.

Here is another verse that is often used by people when talking about prayer:

John 14:16 ESV

(16) And I will ask (KJV pray) the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,

The Greek meaning here is to: request; to ask, it can also be translated beg.

People say, "See here, Jesus had to CRRRRYYY out to GOD. He had to INTERCEEEEDDDDD for the Holy Ghost to come!" What is implied is that only the wailers and the whiners have the ear and the Heart of Our Lord. They like to paint the picture that we should beg to God, cry out, lament, throw ourselves around on the floor.

I just don't find this interpretation of this scripture to fit. Now, as we look at this reference, hold this thought in your mind- Did not Jesus say, I only ever do what I see my Father in heaven do? So everything we see modeled by Jesus is what HE believed heaven required of Him.

How did He know what to do?

Every miracle, every act of deliverance, every rebuke was preceded by a time of intimate communication.

Let's look at when Jesus interceded for someone to be raised from the dead.

First of all we have an intimate conversation between Christ and His heavenly Father.

A conversation that was designed to be heard by everyone standing around.

John 11:41-42 ESV

(41) So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

(42) I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

Now what does this prayer show you?

Intimacy

Familiarity

Trust

Friendship

Companionship

A realization that He was on display

These are the things that preceded the miracle...then comes the public command

John 11:43 ESV

(43) When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

The prayer is the verbal or outward manifestation of a private discourse, of an intimate relationship.

He was praying a public prayer for the benefit of those around Him?

It is the same with the pray we call the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is a model of intimate communication.
It is NOT a formula.

I repeat NOT a formula.

I have heard people destroy this pray by saying...these are the elements it must have,
These are the things it must cover,
You have to go through it in this format.

These things are antithesis to what Jesus was doing in this illustration.

I firmly believe that this prayer is an intimate example of how Christ prayed.

I believe that this prayer is permission to be real with God, not religious.

Not showy, not formulistic like the Pharisees.

*Matthew 6:9-13 ESV
(9) Pray then like this:*

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

Look at the elements of this prayer,
It is a prayer about

- My worship of God.
- God's work and God's kingdom.
- Provision for my family.
- My sinful state and the sinful state of others.
- And a plea for God to help me grow as a Christian and not fall prey to the ways of the world.

What prayer does:

Prayer breed's intimacy.

You become intimate to whom you pray.

For whom you pray.

With whom you pray.

About which you pray.

That is why I believe Paul says we should pray for all the saints.

If all we ever pray about is what we need and what we desire or what we dream about, then we are very selfish and very needy.

But if we are praying for others-

For your pastors and leaders.

For others in your church.

For others around the world.

Then our hearts are knit and moved by the plight of the world and the needs of the church.

Not just what we are facing and needing.

Thoughts on Prayer:

Four things prayer is not:

- Prayer is not volume, it is intention.
- Prayer is not effective based upon length of time, but attitude of heart.
- Prayer is not something you do, but a relationship you desire to have.
- Prayer is not all about me and my needs, but about the establishment of the kingdom of His righteousness.

The things Prayer is....

1. Prayer is meant to be a 'do able delight', not a 'dreadful dirge'.
2. Prayer is a deliberate dialogue with God.
3. Prayer is intimate communication.
4. Prayer is a private two way communication.
5. Prayer is a conversation about common things.
6. Prayer is not scheduled intimacy although it can be.
7. Prayer is a private thing you share with someone close to you.
8. Prayer is fervent debate.
9. Prayer is an earnest and passionate discussion of your personal needs, dreams, future and fears with someone you love and who loves you.
10. Prayer is a discussion of my weakness with someone who is already aware of them and is waiting and willing and able to help me with them as soon as I am willing to discuss them.

Praying in the Spirit:

So what does it mean when Paul tells us we should be *praying in the Spirit*?

“Pray in” the Spirit can have several different meanings. It can mean “by means of,” “with the help of,” “in the sphere of,” and “in connection to.”

Praying in the Spirit does not only refer to the words we are saying but also to how we are praying.

Praying in the Spirit is praying according to the Spirit’s leading.

It is praying for things that the Spirit leads us to pray for.

To me this also speaks of the need for a heavenly prayer language.

Now we have dealt extensively with the Baptism of The Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues in our Wednesday night services over the last couple of months.

Praying in the Spirit is mentioned in difference places in scripture by statement or implication.

We have read what it says in Eph 6:18

It is also mentioned in *1 Corinthians 14:15 ESV-*

(15) What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

Also in Romans 8 it tells us how the Holy Ghost helps us to pray when we don't know what to pray.

There are times when we are frozen, unsure, overwhelmed, praying in the spirit helps us.

Romans 8:26-27 ESV

(26) Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

(27) And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Here is another verse-

1 Corinthians 14:4 ESV

(4) The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself,

To build up means to edify, to erect, to construct, and to restore a building

Jude 1:20 ESV

(20) But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

Building yourself up here means to finish building the structure on the foundations already laid.

Constantly increasing.

So praying in the spirit,
Praying lead by the spirit,
Praying in the tongues of the spirit,
Enables us to persevere in the face of an enemy that is hell bend on destroying us.

And I believe that is what Paul is encouraging us with at the end of this discourse on spiritual warfare.

He starts by telling us to stand and ends by tell us to pray.

And in the middle of it he has showed us how we are equipped as we grow as Christians.

He tells us to be ready to fight at the front end and he tells us to be ready to preserve at the back end, and in the middle he tells us that the difference between victory or defeat will be our character.

Praying for the saints:

Then there is a change towards the end of Paul's letter.

It is as if he says....do you realize that this is not a private war?

Do you understand that this is not something that only you are going through?

To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

I can not tell you how many times pastorally that I sit with people and they talk to me, then they are amazed if I say something like, *yes I know of other people who have gone through this.*

*1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV
(13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.*

You are surrounded by people who need the same prayers prayed for them as you need prayed for you.

Paul here is encouraging the church in Ephesus to not be selfish with their spiritual life.

Not be selfish in the times of prayer.

Not be selfish with there words of encouragement.

That is one of the reasons church is so important.

God wants to speak to us as a body.

He wants to the address the issues that many of us are facing.

Church is not only about what you can get out of it, but what you can give.

You come to church to receive, absolutely; my job is to feed the sheep.

Your job is to encourage each other.

Every week we gather you have an opportunity to come prayed up and prepared to speak a word of encouragement.

To pray a pray of intercession with a brother or a sister about their life and circumstances.

We must stop thinking of ourselves only in terms of being individuals.

But we must start to see ourselves as a body with responsibilities beyond ourselves.

We tend to be individualistic in regards to our needs and our spiritual conflicts.

The Apostle tells us here to intercede for the needs of all the saints.

If you are always thinking about your needs, your problems, your challenges remember that Paul said-

Romans 14:7 ESV

(7) For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

John Donne put it this way

No man is an Island unto himself.

Lloyd-Jones says:

Prayer is the sovereign remedy for many of the ills and diseases of the soul that tend to defeat us all.

It is the sovereign remedy for introspection, for morbidity and a morbid self-concern.

Self is the last enemy; it is self that causes most of our troubles.

We sit thinking of ourselves, turning in on ourselves in pity and spend our time commiserating ourselves.

One of the best ways to get rid of such a condition is to pray for (and serve) other people.

In having to give attention to a bigger problem (people) forget their own personal and somewhat petty problems.

We become intimate with God when we pray; we start to love that which God loves when we pray.

We love His church.

We love each other.

We love the lost.

That is the glory of the Lords prayer.

It starts with God,

Then moves to His Kingdom,

The deals with our families,

And then deals with our sin.

3/4's of it is about something other than me...that is a good ratio to have.

Conclusion:

Let me conclude where Paul concludes-

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(19) And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,

And also for me...that words maybe given to me...opening my mouth boldly.....to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

Church, can I as your pastor humble ask for your prayers?

I covet your prayers.

I can not tell you how it lifts my heart when people tell me that they were praying for Beccy and the kids.

That they were praying for there pastoral team or for myself.

As Paul asked, I also for you to pray for us.

That God would always enable me to proclaim truth as it is written not how it is interpreted.

That I would continue to be bold in my leading and pastoring of you.

That I would never shrink back from addressing sin, evil or foolishness either in the street or in the pews.

That I would always have the strength to lead and the courage to confront.