

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***Effective Missional Prayer***

Ephesians 6:18-24

**Keywords:** Armor of God, Prayer, Satan, Spiritual Warfare, Ephesians 6:10-20

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Prayer is the slender thread that brings us into the very throne room of the Almighty. Yet it is also something easily forgotten or poorly done. But for a maturing church prayer is something that should be a core value that is practiced at all levels. In this sermon we see why Paul saw the utter, eternal importance of prayer

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Read Ephesians 6:18-24.
- B. We come to the end of this important book and it leaves us with a strong statement that sums up so much of what he taught us in Ephesians.
  - 1. The whole of the book is about God's victory over the forces of darkness through Jesus Christ.
  - 2. And now because God is victorious Paul calls Christians to be a people of prayer to God for all their needs and burdens.
  - 3. He also asks that they pray for him to be a faithful and bold witness of God and His glory in Jesus Christ to this world.
- C. This section fits very well into the next series I plan to take us through regarding what it means to be a missional people and a missional church. Paul is showing us here what it looks like to be missional in our praying.
- D. In a way you could make the argument that prayer is like a second weapon.
  - 1. It is how we put on the armor of God we learned about last week. It is how we gain more grace as we need it. It is how we find forgiveness for sins. It is how we learn to lean upon Jesus in our sorrows. It is how we make our needs known.
  - 2. Therefore it is not surprising that this is one of the two greatest struggles for Christians to be consistent at. Satan is no fool and he will work hard to distract the Christian from their two greatest gifts from God for our time in this age.
    - a. The first is prayer.

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- b. And the second is the Word of God.
- E. Today we will consider this weapon of prayer. My argument is that the kind of prayer Paul is telling us to pray is a missional prayer.
  - 1. Missional because it is an outward looking rather than inward looking.
  - 2. Missional because it is Gospel-focused.
  - 3. Missional because decidedly focused upon edification of the Body over the individual.
- F. I want us to see what effective missional prayer looks like.

## **II. Effective Missional Prayer.**

- A. First, missional prayer is a discipline that requires consistency and awareness (18).
  - 1. “. . .at all times . . . be on the alert with all perseverance. . . .” If you haven’t done so yet, you should highlight or circle all of the “alls” for they show the expansiveness of Paul’s expectations in our prayer lives.
  - 2. Consistency.
    - a. Though we can try, there is no legitimate way we can make “at all times” to mean “when I have time.”
    - b. This idea of consistency is not something that just shows up here. A quality of consistency and constancy is found throughout Paul’s letters.
      - (1) In Romans 12:12 we are to be “devoted to prayer.”
      - (2) Colossians 4:2 we are to “devote ourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it. . . .”
      - (3) Paul did not cease giving thanks to God for the Ephesians believers (1:16).
      - (4) He told the Colossian believers that he and his fellow workers did not cease to pray for them.
      - (5) He spoke to the Thessalonian believers about how whether it was day or night he did not shrink from praying earnestly for them (1 Thessalonians 3:10).

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- (6) Paul told Timothy how he constantly remembered him in his prayers (2 Timothy 1:3).
  - (7) Paul even invokes God as his witness that he was unceasing in his praying for the Roman church (Romans 1:9).
  - (8) This is the description of the early church in Acts 2:42 where they were “continually devoting themselves to . . . prayer.”
  - (9) The apostles found out they were too busy and the reason is that prayerlessness was a real factor. In Acts 6:4 they spoke of their need to devote themselves to prayer and the serving of the Word of God.
- c. There are many more instances but these should be sufficient to say that consistency in prayer is when prayer becomes effective.
- d. But it is not merely the exhortation to pray that is part of this idea of consistency. The bible also shows us how to pray.
- (1) I commend to you Don Whitney’s cd’s in the Resource Center on prayer.
  - (2) The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray in Luke 11. What He gave them was an outline, an example of what prayer should look like:

**"Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
And lead us not into temptation."**

**(Luke 11:2-4 ESV)**

- (3) Paul gave us two examples of how he prayed for us in Ephesians 1 and 3.
- (4) When counseling the Philippian believers about anxiety his counsel was to pray and then told them how they ought to pray.
- (5) God gave us the entire book of Psalms which are simply prayer.

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- e. So consistency is a key part of effective missional prayer. And the lack of consistency on our part is not the fault of God for He has abundantly given us the tools to pray.
  - f. Finally, we can fall into a trap with these terms like “unceasingly.”
    - (1) Do not be hyper-literal here for Paul is not meaning that all we do is pray. If that were true then he could not sleep, eat, preach or write these letters.
    - (2) It is not speaking of long prayers even. But rather it is speaking of a lifestyle of prayer. It is an understanding of the nearness of God and our need for Him and His strength.
    - (3) It is a life where we lift up to Him our praise and needs at clear and specific times. But it is also where our spirit is always ready to pray.
    - (4) It is learning to think and see all things in reference to the person of God and His glory so that your thoughts are consistently flowing toward Him in some way.
    - (5) Example of this while I preach or counsel.
  - g. But to be consistent means that you and I must be vigilant or aware of what is going on around us and in us.
3. Awareness.
- a. If we go about our lives with our minds undisciplined and wandering then we miss out on opportunities to pray or pray effectively.
  - b. Paul tells us to be on the alert.
    - (1) Jesus told the disciples as He was praying prior to His death, “watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Matthew 26:39).
    - (2) Peter tells us to be “sober and on the alert” for Satan is near (1 Peter 5:8).
  - c. This is to be done with all perseverance.
  - d. You can sense a bit of a military image going on with this and it is not by mistake. This is all flowing from the armor of God imagery.

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- e. We are soldiers and we are engaged in this shadowy battle against the spiritual world and we are called to be on guard and prayer is that defense.
  - f. This is needed because we tend to fall into one of two areas of error: complacency or discouragement.
    - (1) Complacency comes when we have lost sight of the fact we are strangers to this age and we are looking to the new age. We become friends with this age and therefore become conformed to it. We buy the lie that there is no real battle and so we can just take a short nap.
    - (2) Discouragement comes when we lose sight of the Cross and the victory found in it and the empty tomb. When we allow the cares and afflictions of this world to wash over us until we become defined by the hopelessness of this world rather than remembering that we have been transferred out of this kingdom of darkness.
- B. Second, prayer is both upward and outward (prayer and petition . . . petition for all the saints) (18)
- 1. Interesting little quote from Voice of The Martyrs.

The Rev. Eric Foley, the head of Soul-based [sic] Voice of the Martyrs Korea, said that he has spoken with Christians in North Korea who've told him they are not praying for a regime change.

"They don't pray for freedom and money. They pray for more of Christ and to mirror more of Christ in their life," he told Hope 103.2.

International Christian Concern added that in some ways, life for Christians in North Korea, where the practice of religion is against the law, is as bad or worse than many people can imagine it, with believers hunted down, imprisoned and murdered.

Still, as Foley said, Christians in the North are actually praying for Westerners rather than for themselves.

One defector remarked: "You pray for us? We pray for you... You have so much, you put your faith in your money and your freedom. In North Korea we have neither money nor freedom, but we have Christ and we've found He's sufficient."

([www.foxnews.com/world/2016/11/02/christians-in-north-korea-praying-for-westerners-aid-group-claims.html](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/11/02/christians-in-north-korea-praying-for-westerners-aid-group-claims.html))

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2. Effective prayer is one in which we are looking for opportunities to pray for other believers. This is the upward aspect.
  - a. Prayers and petitions/supplications speaks of us interceding and bringing the needs of others to God in prayer.
  - b. It is that awareness that we are in a battle, every believer, and that therefore every believer needs our prayers.
  - c. It is knowing that we are not always strong and our faith can become quite weak at a moments notice and therefore we are alert for that very issue in other people. We help them as we lay them before our God who loves us.
3. So we are looking outward to see who we might pray for or with.
  - a. Who needs our prayers. Who should you be praying for? Just ask yourself this question. Is that person a saint/Christian/believer? Then you should be seeking to pray for them.
  - b. You say that this is beyond your ability. My response is that you can do so if you set your heart to do so. If you have a mind set that is ready to pray. If you are focused outward rather than inward upon yourself, then you will find ample time and opportunity to pray.
4. I do believe that this is a good reason why you should be wise in how and where you gather information in a time such as this where information is flowing at a massive rate.
  - a. How many forums and groups do you need to subscribe to? How many blogs and such do you have flowing into your inbox?
  - b. At some point our enemy can simply use our good intentions against us because we have a fire hose of opportunities flowing toward us.
  - c. Start with your household and move too your CG. From there go to your leaders and teachers in the church. After that move to fellow members.
  - d. Pick a ministry which you will focus on. TLI, Emmanuela, VOM, Operation World. All of these give you ample opportunities to pray.

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- C. Third, prayer is to be done "in the Spirit" (18)
1. I already explained what is meant by this last week so let me make only a few comments.
  2. This is not speaking of some special kind of prayer such as praying in tongues. It is praying in line with the Holy Spirit. And that is simply another way of saying that you are praying in line with the Word of God which is the "sword of the Spirit."
  3. Effective missional praying is not an abundance of words. It is not a show of your knowledge. It is not a place to give a list of your wants.
  4. Perhaps you have asked someone to pray for you but they only utter religious sounding phrases such as "just be with them." These do not help.
  5. Pray well, pray in the will of God and therefore have your prayers defined by the Word. Those who belong to a CG will have an opportunity to practice this in-depth.
  6. Jesus said that if you ask Him anything in His name He will do it. That does not make "in Jesus' name" some power magnet. It means that the request is consistent with the person and will of Jesus.
- D. Fourth, prayer is a key means for the gospel's spread (19-20).
1. Finally Paul asks for prayer himself. He is in chains. He is suffering. But notice what he asks them to pray for on his behalf—the spread of the gospel.
  2. This tells me that Paul was like you and I. He too was weak. He too would become timid and fearful.
  3. Paul grasps that God will empower him to both speak the gospel and speak it with boldness if He is asked in prayer.
  4. Our pride too often inhibits our admitting this need for both prayer and boldness.
  5. How and who are you praying for who does not know Christ? How and when are you opening your mouth to actually speak that gospel?
  6. This is where your CG comes into play for as you share a person you desire to share the gospel they can then pray for you exactly as Paul is requesting here.

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7. Paul is of the mind set that evangelism is to happen wherever you are at.
  - a. He is in prison right now. And he is in prison because of preaching the gospel.
  - b. So what does he determine he needs to do and needs prayer to do it? Preach the gospel with boldness.
- E. Fifth, prayer requires knowledge of the circumstances (21-22)
  1. Paul is closing out this letter and in doing so he explains why he sent Tychicus to them.
  2. They needed to know his situation and therefore he needed a faithful person who would rightly describe the situation and the need.
  3. Be that person for others. Be a Tychicus. One who will not merely talk about the obvious issues or only upon worldly concerns; but one who considers carefully a situation and what types of prayers are needed.
  4. Which is more helpful?
    - a. You are in the hospital with an extended stay and your visitor shares to others that you are in pain and that we should pray for relief.
    - b. You are in the same situation and the visitor shares that you are in pain and yet we should give thanks that you are not allowing it to determine your demeanor or words. That you need boldness to speak the gospel. That your hope would be apparent in both your words and deeds as you serve the nurses and doctors.
  5. Paul is not a fool, he understands that we need information to pray well so he sends a man who he knows will be faithful to do so.
- F. Sixth, prayer of benediction (24)
  1. And finally, he closes with a final prayer, a prayer of benediction.
  2. I am training myself to end my contacts with people both saved and unsaved with a simple benediction of “Lord bless.” I find that it opens up conversations but it is also a simple way to extend grace toward a person.
  3. Benedictions are simply blessings pronounced for others. They are found throughout the bible and frequently at the end of an epistle, such as here.



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4. Who doesn't desire the blessing of God to be upon them?

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. Prayer is foundational to maturity in Christ. It shows your theology. It reveals your true neediness for the gospel.
- B. Prayer is how you deploy the Word of God effectively.
- C. Prayer is how you stand strong in the Lord and in His might.
- D. Prayer changes you and it matures you.
- E. So beloved, put on prayer and as you prepare to pray consider using this sermon outline to help you frame your prayers.
- F. Ways to pray:
  1. Use the Lord's Prayer as your outline.
  2. ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)
  3. Journal your prayers.
  4. Partner up with someone else once a week to specifically pray.
  5. Pray while you drive.
  6. Use prayer guides (VOM)
- G. Two good books on prayer:
  1. *The Praying Life* by Paul Miller.
  2. *Help Heavenward* by Octavius Winslow

### **IV. Benediction.**

- A. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6)

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## **Community Group Questions**

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- **As you meet have the CG take a Psalm, a passage from a Gospel and a passage from an Epistle and work together on how they all would inform you on how to pray for all of the prayer requests you take that day. This should take up your whole time if you do it right. Don't let people ramble with their prayer requests so that your time can be a brainstorming time where all of the group works together on how to use the Word to inform our prayers.**
- **CGL you must be diligent to not let only a couple participate. Help everyone to think through how a prayer request about being frustrated with a job that seems to be going no where can relate to a passage like Philippians 1:12-18.**