

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

Brethren, Never Forget the Importance of Prayer!

Ephesians 6:10-20

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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

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I. Introduction.

- A. Today I want us to consider a critical aspect of a church that is maturing—prayer.
 - 1. Prayer is the slender thread that brings us into the very throne room of our Creator and Sustainer.
 - 2. Prayer is where we are able to express our praise and thanksgiving to the infinite riches of God’s grace.
 - 3. Prayer is where we extol and find rest in the reality of God’s utter sovereignty.
 - 4. Prayer is where we show the poorness of our spirit and our incredible need for our Lord.
 - 5. Prayer is where we are able to express our burdens and cares, for we know that God cares for us.
 - 6. Prayer is where we go to our Father, having sinned, and find anew the fulness of grace and forgiveness.
- B. Prayer reveals our true theology, what we really believe and what we really delight in. And that makes prayer dangerous as well.
- C. Paul was passionate about prayer and as a result this passion flows into his writing and life.
 - 1. 56 references in the book of Romans.
 - 2. 42 in 1 Corinthians.

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3. 31 is Ephesians. But when you consider the shortness of this letter you find that it is the most densely packed regarding prayer.
- D. Today I want to renew and encourage each of you to see and embrace the importance of prayer as a church and as a person. I want to have you see the time of prayer in the CG is not a time to dread or avoid, but a time to anticipate and delight.
- E. There are many passages I could go to but Ephesians 6:10-20 will be our focus today.
 1. Read.
 2. There is a tight connection between the call to pray in vss 18-20 with the call to put on the armor of God in vss 10-17.
- F. Preface:
 1. Paul gives them many examples of prayer before coming to this point in his letter where he exhorts them to pray.
 2. He is an example in how he blesses and praises God (Ephesians 1:2, 3, 6, 12, 14).
 3. He is an example on how to pray for others (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21).
 - a. In those two passages there is a clear burden is for them to be vitally concerned over spiritual matters.
 - b. He does not pray for physical peace, health or relief. Not that he would not, but the example he shows over and over is to coat those types of prayers with the things that he prays for. They become a launching point for greater, soul-stretching prayers.
 4. In the second half of this letter we see him use the familiar term “walk” to speak of the conduct that is fitting one who has been forgiven and adopted as God’s children.
 5. This all leads up to 6:10 because the ‘walk’ the Christian is engaged in is one in a hostile world with a great enemy.

How then will you as a Christian effectively and wisely wend your way through this walk? Paul answers it in three specific ways: Through God’s power, God’s protection, and prayer. We will consider the first two with the goal to connect them to the final point—prayer.

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II. Our need for divine power.

- A. If we are to persevere in our walk and faith we need power. But not any power, God's power.
 - 1. We are not merely existing, we are involved in a life and death battle. And if you don't realize this then you are in grave danger.
 - 2. Peter tells us that Satan goes about like a roaring lion.
 - 3. Paul says that our battle is not against mankind but against demonic powers in vs 12.
 - 4. We are contending with the schemes and plans of Satan according to vs 11, therefore the only answer to this reality is God's power.
 - 5. And believe me, this battle will become obvious to you as you grow in your Christian walk. You live out Ephesians 4-6 faithfully and you will quickly find out how against the current you are swimming.
- B. How then do we tap into this power? Vs 10 is simple and direct—we are to “be” strong in the Lord...
 - 1. What is interesting here is that the verb is a passive imperative. In other words, it is a command but it is not something we can do ourselves. It is something that shall be done to us.
 - 2. We must believe that God desires to empower us and that it is in our best interests to put it on.
 - 3. We are fools to think we can stand against Satan and discern his schemes on our own. We set ourselves up for failure. Paul tells the Corinthian believers, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)
- C. So we need to be strong in the Lord, we are commanded to be strong in the Lord, but we can't do it ourselves, so how? We put on/take up the armor of God.

III. Put on the Armor of God.

- A. Understand that this image is not expected to be exhaustive. The idea is that the entirety of our life is to be in God's armor/protection/strength. T
 - 1. here are several prominent themes not present in this list: love, joy, grace to name a few.

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2. As we put on/take up the armor of God we then enter into the strength of the Lord, we walk in His power and might.
 3. Note in vss 11-13 that in doing so you now are able stand against the devil's schemes. The obvious implication is that if you do not do this, then you will not withstand his plan, methods and attacks. Simple as that.
- B. To stand against Satan you must have put on the belt of truth.
1. To wrap your loins in truth is to understand it as a belt that would gather out of the way the garments in time of battle and hold the weapon.
 2. Truth is first here likely because it is truth that best reveals the schemes of Satan, the father of lies.
 3. Truth defines everything, it brings clarity to everything. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth in John 14 and again in chapter 16 where we find that He guides us in truth.
 4. Truth stands against that which is false, it cannot tolerate it and only truth withstands falsehood.
- C. To stand against Satan you must have put on the breastplate of righteousness.
1. The breastplate covers your vitals and keeps you safe. So too does righteousness.
 2. First in justification–imputation.
 3. Second in sanctification–holiness.
 4. Without the righteousness that comes through Jesus we are not merely victims of Satan, we actually walk according to his ways and his passions.
 5. Without growing in righteousness we do not learn to put away those things that are not fitting for a child of God.
- D. To stand against Satan you must put on your feet the gospel of peace.
1. The gospel/good news of God faithfulness through Jesus Christ is the means by which we become justified.
 2. The gospel is where we take our stand against the god of this age.
 3. It is in the gospel that all Christians take their stand in unity.
 4. This gospel is one of peace.

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- a. It first causes us to be at peace with God, we who once were enemies are now made children of God.
 - b. Secondly it brings us into the presence of God's peace in the midst of trouble.
 - c. At the center of this is Jesus—Ephesians 2:14-18.
5. Those who receive this gospel are called by Jesus to be peacemakers in Matthew 5:9.
- E. To stand against Satan you must take up the shield of faith.
1. It is by faith that God is pleased with us. Faith takes hold of the gospel promises and holds them tight. Faith reminds us that we truly are forgiven and have peace with God.
 2. Faith is what we are to walk in, not merely by sight. It is with faith that we see that Satan's power is destroyed in Jesus and soon he shall be crushed.
 3. Faith extinguishes every lie hurled at us by Satan. Everything Satan does to you is designed to weaken your faith in the faithfulness of God.
 - a. Satan works in you to doubt, to fear, and to deny. But with faith there is nothing Satan can achieve.
 - b. Satan seeks to make you think that other things shall bring you the joy you desire. He whispers that God is not enough, this was the lie in the beginning and he continues to whisper it to this day.
 4. Faith take the other aspects of armor and pulls them tight to you, enshrouding you in safety and steadfastness.
- F. To stand against Satan you must put on the helmet of salvation.
1. Salvation from what? From the wrath of God. God in his rich mercy made us alive in Jesus.
 2. We take up our salvation. We keep in close to our mind and soul for in it is the grand work of God in us.
 3. Salvation is portrayed in three ways in the bible. That which is past, that which is present and that which is to come.
 4. Ever and always must we keep these three aspects close to mind. Oh how our enemy shall cause us to doubt but when we go back to the promise of

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God that all who call upon the name of Jesus shall be saved, we find hope and steadfastness.

- G. To stand against Satan you must wield the sword of the Spirit.
1. And as you hold up the shield of faith, in your other hand you take hold of the sword of the Spirit.
 2. This is defined for us and the Word of God.
 3. This sword is not some large one, it is like a long dagger that is used to parry and then skillfully slip between parts of the enemy's armor.
 4. It is the Word of God that carries the reality of the rest of the armor. It is the Word of God that tells us what is true and what is false.
 5. We were made alive by the word of truth. The Word of God is what brought us to conviction of our sin and through it God opened our eyes to the need for Jesus.
 6. The Word of God is how we grow with respect to our salvation. Man shall not live by bread alone but by all that proceeds from the mouth of God.
 7. It was the Word of God that Jesus used to counter the lies of Satan when he was being tested in the wilderness.
 8. It is your weapon, and it is infinitely powerful for it is the Spirit's weapon.

IV. Prayer in light of the power of God.

- A. Paul now moves from the armor of God to prayer, but they are not separate issues, they seamlessly flow one into the other.
- B. Prayer is not another aspect of the armor of God, rather it is what should saturate every aspect of the armor. This is obvious when you note the "alls" in vs 18.
- C. Every part listed by Paul can be connected to prayer in the bible.
1. We are to be strong in the power of God, David prayed it this way in Psalm 119.28 My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word.
 2. We are to withstand the attacks of Satan, Jesus said in his instruction on how to pray, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

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3. The belt of truth is prayed this way by Jesus, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. (John 17:17)
 4. The breastplate of righteousness—compare that with the prayer of Paul: And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)
 5. In relation to the gospel consider Paul's prayer in Romans 10 on behalf of his fellow Jews who were rejecting Jesus. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."
 6. What of peace? "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)
 7. The shield of faith? "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." (James 5:14-15)
- D. We are called to pray in the Spirit (18).
1. This is tightly connected to the word of the Spirit in vs 17.
 2. In fact I would argue that this praying in the Spirit is not some charismatic moment of ecstasy but rather a biblically saturated and informed prayer.
 3. The Holy Spirit brings us to the Word and then we pray that very Spirit-moved Word back to the Lord.
 4. Prayer stops being merely a list of requests and it becomes a contemplation and declaration of truth.
 5. Note how the work of the Holy Spirit is embedded into the message of the letter to Ephesus:
 - a. This is the Spirit who has been active in sealing believers (1:13-14)

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- b. He is building them as a household of God (2:22).
 - c. He has revealed truth to them (3:5).
 - d. This Spirit of prayer strengthens them with power (3:16).
 - e. Has brought us into true unity (4:3).
 - f. He fills them (5:18).
 - g. This Spirit whose sword of power and penetration is the Word (6:17).
 - h. And it through the Holy Spirit that prayer will be fulfilled (v. 18).
- E. This connection of prayer with the armor of God is also seen in the last part of vs 18.
- 1. In the midst of the prayer we are to be alert on behalf of all the saints.
 - 2. We must always remember we are not alone in the battle, brothers and sisters around the world are in the battle too.
 - 3. Paul tells them to be ready and eager to be praying for all who are in the battle. What are you praying for? All that the Word of God tells us. You pray that they would take up the armor of God. You pray that they will fight the good fight. You pray they will walk in the power of the Spirit. You pray that they will be steadfast and unmovable. You pray that their hearts will be overflowing in thanksgiving and hope.
 - 4. Oh beloved, once you have the bible open before you and then you pray for those in your life, you will find infinite paths of prayer opening up before you.
- F. There is also a close connection between prayer and power in this passage.
- 1. In vss 10-13 he speaks of the power of God that we are to take up. That is one bookend.
 - 2. On the other end he speaks of the necessity to pray for all the saints.
 - 3. And in between he speaks of the armor.
 - 4. Compare this with his prayer in 1:15-23 (God's power is the climax of the prayer).
 - 5. Then 3:14-21 he begins his prayer seeking God's power in the believers.

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6. Markus Barth says it this way, “Nothing less is suggested than that the life and strife of the saints be one great prayer to God. . . .” (Barth, Ephesians 778)
7. In fact notice what Paul is asking them to pray for on his behalf (19).
 - a. Without using the word ‘power’ that is exactly what he is seeking.
 - b. He desired while in chains to have the power of boldness. The power of proclaiming the gospel. A divine power that brings that bold certainty that what he is saying is true.

V. Conclusion.

- A. Paul does not see victory in merely the various parts of the armor of God.
- B. Paul sees victory in tapping into the power of God by prayer, prayer that is vitally connected to God’s armor in its entirety.
- C. Look one last time at vs 18 and the “alls”.
 1. All prayers means that there are all sorts of prayers we utter.
 - a. They may be words of praise or cries for help. Prayers of needs and prayers of thanksgiving.
 - b. They can be long or short, but they are to be prayers consistent with the Holy Spirit.
 2. All seasons/time of prayer.
 - a. This is another way of saying pray without ceasing.
 - b. What part of your life do you not needed covered in prayer? Are you foolish enough to think that there is some part of your life that the armor of God is not needed?
 - c. Paul perceives prayer as something that is to permeate our entire life.
 3. Prayer is to be done with all perseverance and petition.
 - a. This speaks of both alertness and steadfastness.
 - b. You are looking for reasons to pray and you are staying to the task of praying.

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4. Prayer is not for you as much as it is for others.
 - a. You can and should pray for yourself.
 - b. But make sure you turn them to the rest of the saints.
 - c. Last week when we saw briefly this passage I asked you how many had prayed for me in the manner of vs 19. I ask you again, how many before coming here lifted me up in prayer?
 - d. How often are your prayers Word-saturated prayers on behalf of the suffering Church?
 - e. This is the grand glory of prayer, bringing and displaying the true unity of the Spirit by bringing the needs of the saints to their Father.
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Community Group Questions

- When you go to prayer this meeting pray with eyes that are open, looking on a passage from the bible. Choose a Psalm or an Epistle. Pick a few verses and then let them define for each person how they will pray.
- Before doing the above, make it a group task to practice this. Take a simple prayer request such as for healing and think through how that prayer would look in light of 1 Corinthians 10:12-14. Make sure it is a group project.
- After you work through the above project talk about how the people saw how their prayers could be richer and deeper than merely asking God to heal the person. **This is important to do to help them see the need to saturate their prayers in and by the Word.**