
Pray At All Times

Today we turn to the issue of prayer in spiritual warfare. After discussing the six pieces of armor that God has provided for our warfare against the devil, Paul now, in verses 18-20, describes how our whole life is to be suffused with godly prayer.

Ephesians 6:18-20

... **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, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Prayer is not a seventh weapon, but is to accompany the use of all the other six pieces of armor. As the hymn writer says, "Put on the Gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer." We do not mechanically put on our pieces of armor, but we put them on and use them in constant conversational dependence upon God.

But how can we pray effectively in spiritual warfare? Paul gives us four clear guidelines:

I. Our prayers must be fervent (vs. 18b)

Paul instructs us to pray all kinds of prayer—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession. We see some of Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and 3:14-20. We see the variety of prayers in the prayer the Lord gave us in the Lord's Prayer. We especially offer petitions to the Lord; we ask Him to protect us, rather than trying to carry on a conversation with the evil one ourselves.

II. Our prayers must be spiritual (vs. 18a)

Paul tells us always to pray in the Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, resulting in constant thanksgiving to God for all things; in other words, our prayers are the overflow of the Spirit's presence in our lives. We also can see in Romans 8: 26-27 the role of the Spirit in our prayer life: "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. 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."

III. Our prayers must be communal (vs. 18c)

We are to watch each other with all perseverance and we are to pray for all of the saints. Our spiritual warfare prayers are necessarily communal and relational. We must be spending time with each other so that we know how to pray for each other and hold each other accountable.

IV. Our prayers must be missional (vv. 19-20)

It is interesting to note that when Paul is writing to the Ephesians, he is bound hand and foot in prison chains and is suffering massive discomfort and inconvenience; yet, he still prays for the words to speak and the boldness with which to speak them that he may proclaim the mystery of the Gospel to those around him. We, too, must carefully focus our intercessory prayers so that they are primarily Kingdom-centered. We know that God answered Paul's prayers as we look at Acts 28:30-31: "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance." Paul also records in Philippians 1 that he had led some of the imperial guards to faith in Jesus Christ. Our concern, as well, must be for the Kingdom and not just for our comfort and convenience. This is spiritual warfare prayer at its best.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the role of prayer in spiritual warfare?
2. What can we learn from the Apostle Paul about praying fervently, “with all prayer and supplication?”
3. What does Paul mean by “praying in the Spirit?”
4. What are some practical ways that we can pray communally, keeping “alert with all perseverance” and “making supplication for all the saints?”

5. **Going Deeper**

1. What changes do you need to make in your life in order to have a healthy prayer life?
2. Tell a godly friend about the changes you want to make, and ask him/her to hold you accountable and to pray for you in your endeavor.