

*The Prayer Warrior*  
Ephesians 6:18-20  
Reading: Philippians 1:12-21

Bethany Baptist Church  
December 17, 2017

...pray...

*Ephesus* was an important city in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire.

Located on the eastern coast of the *Aegean Sea*, it was noted for its *commercial*, *political* and *educational influence*.

But perhaps it was **best** known for the *Temple of Artemis (Diana)*, which was one of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*.

The worship of *Diana* fueled a *lively* trade for the manufacture of her *images* & a *sleazy* trade for her cult prostitution.

If you were a *Christian* in *Ephesus*, there were times your church must have seemed like an *outpost* behind *enemy lines*!

Do *you* ever feel that way...?

**Join me in Ephesians 6:10-20 (esp. the *closing commands* in 18-20).**

I've continued to read from **v.10** because as Paul concludes his letter w/ this vital section on *spiritual warfare* ...

... he concludes his *strategy* for spiritual warfare with *instructions* on *prayer*.

The point is that *prayer* is a non-optional part of *spiritual warfare*.

Think of Paul's illustration this way: no matter how well *dug-in* your outpost is, if you aren't *communicating* w/ **HQ** (*orders, intel, reinforcements, resupply, air-support*), your position can still be *over-run*!

This morning Paul's gives these final instructions to a *strong church* in *dark world*:

**Three ways to turn your *prayer closet* into a *spiritual command center*:**

1. **"*Armor up*" on your knees (18).**
2. ***Pray hard* for your church (18).**
3. ***Put the pros* on your list (19-20).**

***Armor up on your knees (18).***

1. Paul has just issued his spiritual *call to arms* with a string of commands: ***put on & take up*** (both references to the *full armor of God*) & then ***stand firm*** (exhorting you to *hold your ground* against the attacks of the *Evil One*).
  - a. Now the apostle connects *spiritual combat* to your ***prayer life***.
  - b. In fact, **vv. 14-20** form the last of Paul's *really long sentences* in Ephesians, joining the call to "*armor up*" & the call to *prayer* into **one** extended strategy.
  - c. **I.e.**, you ***gird on your belt & buckle on your breastplate & lace on your combat boots & take up your shield & grab your helmet & sword ... through prayer.***
  - d. Paul organizes his prayer orders (18) with **two actions expressions**: "*praying at all times*" & "*being on the alert.*"
  - e. Paul's point is that spiritual warfare requires *superior air support* so when the *enemy of your soul* draws near, your *prayer calls in God!*
2. **First**, ...*through all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit.*
  - a. When you exam **vs.18** carefully, you can't miss Paul's repeated, emphatic use of the word ***all***. You need a *comprehensive prayer strategy*.
  - b. You need *all types* of prayer. Paul uses **two overlapping** prayer terms.
    - i. *Prayer* – (Gr.) **προσευχη**. This word is all over your **NT** and it's the simple idea of all kinds of prayer.
      1. This is a *simple idea*, but *critical*. Spiritual warfare requires an *arsenal* of prayer: ***every configuration & caliber!***
    - ii. Incl. (here) *petition* – **δεησις**. "*Petitions*" are prayers that *ask*.
      1. When *Satan* puts you in his *sights* there is a *lot* to ask for (**e.g.**): *strength & wisdom & perseverance* → ***help!***

- c. You need to pray at *all times*! ... Christian, **when** do you pray?
  - i. In *church*, before *meals*, immediately after *disasters*?
  - ii. But your **NT** instructs you to pray *at all times*.
    - 1. *Day* or night, *quiet* or frenzy, when enemy seems *far* & when he is uncomfortably near.
    - 2. And remember, beloved, *action* & *prayer* are **not opposites**, they are *allies*...
    - 3. When the Evil One attacks, **grab** the *helmet* of salvation (assurance) and **grab** the *sword* of the Spirit (targeted truths), but don't forget to **open** the *comm* lines (**pray!**).
- d. And speaking of *allies*, every Christian has a *mighty ally* in *prayer*! Paul says to *pray ... in the Spirit*.
  - i. We've learned a lot about the Holy Spirit as we've studied Ephesians! He *seals us* in Christ, He *unifies us* as the church, He *indwells us* never to leave us, He must *fill/control* us to *walk* in faithfulness & now the Spirit *supports* us in *praying*.
  - ii. **Rm 8** - Paul recognized that sometimes our prayers are *off-target*, almost *duds*!
    - 1. Effective prayer requires an understanding of *God's will*, and sometimes *God's will* just isn't *clear* to us.
    - 2. But when that happens, the Holy Spirit helps us pray effectively: *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He [God] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

3. Let's chase those **two** *prayer tactics* a little further...

a. What does it mean to pray at *all times*?

- i. It *can't* mean that you *stay locked in your prayer closet* all day.
- ii. After all, there is a *whole lot of action* in Paul's text.
- iii. *Praying at all times* means being *aware* that prayer has its place in every circumstance & then being *sensitive* to the *needs & times* to pray.
- iv. The Jewish exile *Nehemiah*, the cup-bearer, was suddenly & unexpectedly offered help in restoring *Jerusalem* by King *Artaxerxes*!
- v. Who saw ***that*** coming & who ***knew*** how long that *offer* would stand!?! So we read in **Neh.2:4**: *Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I **prayed** to the God of heaven. I said to the king, "...send me to Judah!"*
- vi. In those *split seconds* between Artaxerxes' *unanticipated offer* & *stepping up* to the throne & *opening* his mouth, *Nehemiah's* mind & heart *ran to the prayer room*! *Pray at all times*!

b. What do you pray **for**? You can tell a lot about a man/women's *spiritual maturity* by their *prayer patterns*...

- i. When you *pray*, do you only pray about *temporal needs*?
- ii. "*Here I am, God, and here's what I need.*" Beloved, God is ***not*** an **ATM**...!
- iii. Paul writes (18) ***all*** *prayer & petitions*. A helpful prayer guide is outlined in the acronym **ACTS** (*Our ACTS of prayer*): ***Adoration*** (praising God for *Who* He is & *what* He's done) & ***Confession*** (dealing w/ your sin) & ***Thanksgiving*** (for His spiritual & temporal blessings) & (yes) ***Supplications*** (prayer requests for loved ones & ourselves).

***Armor up ...armor up & pray! If you put on your armor but neglect to pray, it just won't be enough!***

**And as you *pray*, pray hard for your *church*.**

1. The apostle's ***second*** comprehensive prayer instruction (18b) is ***being on the alert w/ all perseverance & petition for all the saints***.
2. The apostle Peter wrote in his ***first*** letter (5:8): ***Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, but resist him, firm in your faith.***
  - a. And elsewhere Peter wrote (1 Pt 4:7) – ***Be of sound judgment & sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.***
  - b. The point is that *holding* your position against Satan's schemes requires that you ***not fall asleep at your post*** or even *relax your guard*.
  - c. *Prayer & watchfulness* are reciprocal concepts! They go hand-in-hand because *alertness* calls us to prayer ***&*** *prayer* keeps us *alert* to danger.
3. *Prayer & petitioning* requires *perseverance*, which implies *intense & sustained* effort. That's because prayer is *hard work*!
  - a. Sometimes it's *hard work* because the answer seems ***so long in coming***.
    - i. But in Jesus' parable of the "*persistent widow & the judge*," that lady kept *asking* until she got her *answer*!
  - b. Sometimes *prayer is hard* simply because we are *weak*.
    - i. We read in **Mt 26** that while praying in *Gethsemane*, *Jesus came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

4. Paul writes here that we make our *prayers & petitions* for the benefit of ***all the saints***.
  - a. Ephesians is a letter about *life in the church*, and *spiritual warfare* means *holding our position* and **not** *breaking formation*.
    - i. Romans soldier's fought in *tactical **formations*** (e.g. organized into those legendary Roman *cohorts* →: *legions*).
  - b. And as an *officer* must guide & watch over his *platoon*, the church's *leaders* must pray for the *flock*.
    - i. **1 Sam 12:23** – The prophet Samuel testifies of his *obligation* to *pray* for Israel & *lead* them (Samuel): “*Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should **sin** against the LORD by **ceasing to pray for you**; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.*” → If I'm not praying for you I'm *sinning*!
  - c. The church's *people* must pray for *one another*.
    - i. In **James** you read: *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and **pray for one another** so that you may be healed. The effective **prayer** of a righteous man can accomplish much.*
    - ii. Of course, that includes praying for your *leaders* (Hb 13:7): ***Remember*** *those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you...*
  - d. Paul's prayer point is clearly this, on the *spiritual battlefield*, when someone is *under fire* or even *down*, and *air support* is needed, *call it in*: ***no brother or sister left behind!***

5. *Be on the alert...for all the saints.* Do you **know** *all the saints* here in the worship center w/ you this morning? Do you **know** their individual *blessings & needs*?

- a. That *isn't* easy, but I can suggest a few *prayer weapons* for you...
- b. The church's *prayer list* is updated weekly for Wednesday's prayer service.
  - i. You should try coming to one of those Wed. *prayer meetings*!
  - ii. And you can also find that list in the *foyer* on *Sunday*.
  - iii. I've put one in your *pew* this morning!
- c. The *church's directory* is published every winter by our *Ladies Fellowship*.
  - i. Sometimes I use its *pictures* or *directory of families* to pray for you in a systematic way.
  - ii. (OBTW, the ladies are working on the **2018** edition ***right now!***)

***Pray hard, beloved – so that no brother or sister is left behind!***



**And while you are praying for *one another*, don't neglect to put the *pros* on your *pray list*.**

1. *Green Beret, Army Rangers, Navy Seals, AirForce Tac Teams, Marine Corp MARSOC.* Every branch of the military has its *special forces*. In the **NT Church**, they were called *Apostles of Christ Jesus*.
  - a. Paul identified himself as one of these *elite, hand-picked soldiers of the cross* in Eph 1:1 – *Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the will of God*.
  - b. The apostles *taught & labored & led* as representatives of Christ. The *started & strengthened* the church & *developed* the **NT**.
  - c. And as Paul *dictates* this **NT** letter to the *Ephesians*, the apostle is **under arrest in chains in Rome** for the cause of Christ.
  - d. ... Even *special forces* need *spiritual backup*!
2. **Read vv.19-20.** Bible teachers say that this *prayer request* is Paul's example of *praying for **all** the saints* (18). He's *one of those saints* needing prayer!
  - a. The apostle's prayer request has **two** basic parts:
    - b. **v.19** – ***making known** the mystery of the gospel*
    - c. **v.20** – *making it known **boldly***
3. *Please pray on my behalf ... to make known ... & to make known clearly.*
  - a. There are several expressions of *communication* in Paul's request: *utterance, opening my mouth, making known (2X), ambassador ( → spokesman)*. I.e. Paul is concerned about his *effective communication*.

- b. Paul is not speaking *generally* about evangelism, he is speaking specifically about his impending trial. Christ has ordained that Paul should appear before Caesar and proclaim the mystery of the gospel.
  - a. **Acts 9:15-16** (Jesus, very beginning of Paul's story) – "[Paul] *is a chosen instrument of Mine, to **bear My name** before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.*"
  - b. *That day was near* and the apostle Paul wanted to *open* his mouth & *defend* the Gospel clearly!
- c. Paul says, specifically, that his defense before Caesar is the message of the "*mystery of the gospel.*"
  - a. In Ephesians, the *mystery of the gospel* is the revelation that Jesus is the Savior of *both Jew & Gentile*.
    - 1. That He died *for* our sins, *in* our place. We are called to place all our trust in *Christ alone*. The offer is for *all*.
    - 2. The result is a new person, the *Christian* & also a new people, *the Church*. No matter your *background*.
    - 3. So the mystery is that the gospel is now *graciously* offered to *all* through *faith* in *One*, Jesus Christ (2:8-9).
  - b. And Paul, *though chained*, is the *ambassador* of the *King of kings & Lord of lords*, appointed to Rome to *speak clearly* the *mystery & promises* of the Gospel.

4. The **second** part of Paul's request (**20**), *please pray on my behalf...to speak boldly* (*boldly* appears in both vv. 19 & 20).

- a. **Boldness** (& *clarity*) are the *responsibility* of the gospel ambassador.
- b. We are still speaking of *spiritual warfare* – do you suppose Satan was *tempting* Paul to *soft-pedal* his message...? And *dropping* a *smokescreen* across the *battlefield*...?
- c. Paul mission was *under fire* from the Evil One. The apostle wanted *reinforcements* & *re-supply* – he wanted the Ephesians to *call in support*!

5. Put yourself in Paul's *sandals*: your *chains* bind you, your *accusers* despise you, your *judge* is one of history's most storied *megalomaniacs* (Emperor Nero)! ... What would **you** *pray for*!?! ... Paul asked for the *grace* to be *faithful* to his mission. And how did God answer the *prayers of the saints*?

- a. Turn w/me to **Ph 1:12-14**. *Philippians* is another of Paul's "*Prison Letters*," written about the same time as *Ephesians*.
- b. **Read...** *The Emperor thought he was chaining Paul to his guards, but instead he was chaining his guards to the gospel!* ☺ ...pause...
- c. So what is the *lesson* in Paul's example? ... It's a *powerful picture* of *prayer* & *priority*!
  - a. Paul's *priority* wasn't his difficult circumstances...
  - b. Remember that **this** *life* is not **all** *of life*, and that God is *not* some cosmic **ATM**.
  - c. Consider what *really matters*, and then ...

d. ***Armor up... & pray.***

***Pray about everything! Petition on behalf of everyone!***

***And esp. pray to make your stand for Christ: clearly, boldly & faithfully.***

In fact...let's **pray** right now!