

Message 25:

Praying through the Battles

6.4.23

Ephesians Series

Synopsis:

How do we faithfully stand when the enemy seems relentless? The Apostle Paul told believers to pray at all times and to pray in the Spirit. Modern believers must heed Paul's direction.

Ephesians 6:18-20

¹⁸Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. ²⁰For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.

Introduction:

A. Paul teaches prayer in the context of Spiritual warfare.

1. Without prayer, the armor of God just lies that.
2. It is in prayer that we exercise the power of Jesus in our world.
3. Apart from prayer, we will not be "strong in the Lord" or able to resist the enemy.

B. It is in prayer that we exercise faith, and truth, and righteousness, and the Gospel of peace.

1. If we do not pray, how can we be Christians?
2. We can be moral people; we can be trustworthy; we can even have an appearance of goodness.

3. But because Prayer is the manner in which we commune with God, how can there be "prayer-less" Christians?

- a. We will have times when we do not pray as we should.
- b. We will have times when our prayers do not seem to matter much.
- c. But how can it be possible for a Christian's walk with the Lord not to involve prayer?

1. Pray at all times.

A. The danger of prayer is that we are too familiar.

1. We should be amazed and shocked when we realize that Christian prayer is the intentional communication of created man with the eternal God.

2. This only applies to Christian's praying.

- a. Other religions and even non-religions pray and meditate.
- b. But when Christians pray, there is communion with God, and this is startling.

3. To have access to God at all times and for all reasons is the rare privilege of Christians.

B. Perhaps it would be helpful for us as Americans to stop and reflect upon this a moment.

1. Have we culturally appropriated prayer in a way that inoculates our culture to prayer's beauty, wonder, and significance?

2. When we pray, we are having conversation and fellowship with God.

C. Because God is "Omni...", we are invited to pray at all times.

1. God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Eternal.

a. He is all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing, and has no beginning or end.

b. All elements that we are not.

2. The Apostle tells us to take advantage of this because we need what we are not.

a. We are not all-powerful and need God's power.

b. We are not all-present, needing God to be both where we are and where we are not.

c. We are not all-knowing and need His wisdom, insight, knowledge, and discernment.

d. Finally, we are not eternal; we have definite beginnings and ordained ends.

D. In the midst of this spiritual warfare we call life, we MUST pray at all times.

1. On our own, we do not have what it takes to stand, resist, or endure.

2. We must pray.

3. And because we never know when the attacks will come, we must pray at all times.

2. Pray in the Spirit.

A. There is a right way to pray.

1. Why is this distinction important?

2. I remind you that all religions pray.

a. Muslims pray faithfully multiple times a day.

b. The surrounding temples of Ephesus were busy with acts that looked and sounded like prayer.

3. Christian prayer is different because of God's role in prayer.

a. It isn't about the words you use.

b. You don't have to be eloquent, loud, or use KJV or Hebrew.

B. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

1. Romans 8:26–27 (CSB) gives us insight here:

²⁶In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

2. This kind of prayer does not originate in our imagination but in the mind of God.

a. A few years ago, the Houston Astros were found guilty of stealing the signs of other teams.

b. Not only did the Astros have a great season, they won the World Series.

c. It's much easier to hit a pitch when you know what's coming.

C. The Apostle Paul says we can PRAY according to the mind of the Spirit and the WILL of GOD.

1. We are invited to pray according to God's will, and yet we do not take advantage.

2. Why not?

a. Because we are freaked out about spiritual praying.

b. What does it sound like?

c. Paul says it sounds like groanings and a language we do not understand.

3. I get why we feel this way.

a. First of all, the spiritual realm scares most of us.

b. Second, many of us were taught that spiritual prayer and praying in tongues is wrong, confusing, or not for you.

c. So, over the years, we have developed an aversion to anything that comes close to praying in the Spirit.

d. Here is how I understand it:

1. If you offered me the most amazing Wagyu burger, cooked to perfection, with cheese and bacon, and that burger was a \$100 burger, but if you put mustard on it, I'm going to pass.

2. Why? Because you added an ingredient that I do not want.

4. If I could offer you the kind of prayer that the Apostle Paul is talking about, without it being too spiritual or involving tongues, you would bite.

a. But **most of us have an aversion to speaking in tongues.**

b. But listen to what Paul told to the church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 14:14–15 (CSB)

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing praise with the spirit, and I will also sing praise with my understanding.

D. Paul distinguishes between praying with his natural tongue and praying in the spirit.

1. Paul distinguishes between singing with our mind, our understanding, and with the Spirit.

2. This is not an either/or situation but a both/and.

3. Here is my recommendation:

a. This afternoon or tonight before bed, get alone for a few minutes, just you and the Holy Spirit.

b. And tell yourself and the Spirit, "I want all God has for me."

c. And then give yourself room and time to pray with both your mind and your Spirit.

E. Although this seems unnecessary and "extra", Paul says we are to pray this way WITH EVERY PRAYER AND REQUEST.

3. Pray in the Spirit with every prayer and request

A. Most of us triage our prayers.

1. We assume that because our resources are limited, we need to share only the most important prayer requests with God.

2. We don't want to "bother" Him.

3. We are scared that we come across as the main character in the old video by Rex Stevens: "It's me again, Margaret."

4. We don't want to waste our "one miracle" on something frivolous.

B. Many of us do not pray in the Spirit with every prayer and request because we project our weaknesses upon God.

1. Not only do we stumble over praying "in the Spirit," but we also struggle with "every prayer and request."

2. This should be good news:

a. We should be thankful that we can bring everything to God in prayer.

b. But too many of us feel like we are bothering God when we do what He invited us to do.

3. We think we are being thoughtful, considerate, mature, and responsible by not bringing everything to God in prayer when in reality, we are being disobedient.

a. 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

b. Is there anything that “all” and “every” excludes?

c. And when we pray in the Spirit, we can be assured we are praying in the perfect will of God.

Close: Prayer

A. This morning, I want to lead all of us in prayer for both small requests and large.

1. Have you ever avoided praying about something because you thought it was too small for God to care about? Today, let's take a moment to bring even those small things before God in prayer and trust that He is capable of handling them.

2. Let's also bring those BIG, insurmountable requests to God as well.

B. And if you have never prayed in the Spirit, why don't you practice?

1. Let's all be open to what God wants to say and do in and through us.

2. Prayer.