

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE, PT. 4; EPH. 6:18-24 (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE BRING OUR LOOK AT PAUL'S DISCUSSION OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE, ~ and our study of Ephesians, ~ to a close with an examination of 6:18-24.

▶▶ In **verses 18-22**, ~ Paul moves away from the strong spiritual armor that God has given believers ~ and exhorts us to engage in prayer, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and tells the Ephesian church that he's sending a mission's report, ~ which as we'll see ties in with prayer.

▶▶ Then in **verses 23-24**, ~ which we'll just look at very briefly in closing, ~ Paul ends letter.

PRAYER IS CRUCIAL TO BELIEVERS HOLDING OUR POSITION AGAINST "THE spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

▶▶ And there are four clues in Paul's discussion of spiritual warfare that show this.

▷▷ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ Paul gives prayer more attention than the pieces of the armor.

▷▷ 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ As a way to emphasize prayer, ~ Paul mentions it last and does not link it to a physical weapon, ~ such as a spear.

▷▷ 3<sup>rd</sup>, ~ He uses the word "all" four times. ~ Repetition emphasizes crucial nature.

↪↪ Verse 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."

▷▷ 4<sup>th</sup>, ~ Paul immediately asks for specific prayer for himself.

▶▶ So prayer seems to be central in our fight against . . . .

▷▷ And these clues showing the centrality of prayer indicate that Paul is sending us a variation of the three loud and clear messages he sent us in **verses 10b and 11a**.

↪↪ Need . . . .

↪↪ Utmost importance . . . . ~

↪↪ Absolutely seriously . . . . ¶¶ 1/8

LET'S BEGIN LOOKING AT THE DETAILS ABOUT PRAYER IN RELATION TO SP. WARFARE.

IN VERSE 18a, ~ PAUL TEACHES US WHEN TO PRAY.

"AT ALL TIMES."

▶▶ The phrase "praying at all times" does not mean "always saying prayers."

▷▷ The phrase can also be translated "at every opportunity."

↪↪ IOW, ~ prayer in the believer's life is not just an option for occasional emergencies.

→→ "praying at every opportunity" means that prayer is to become a habit for us.

▶▶ Prayer is to become a routine part of our daily lives ~ because in this life our fight against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" is never ending.

▷▷ So prayer for the believer can never be a sporadic thing.

↪↪ Paul was a model of this.

→→ E.g., ~ in Col. 1:9, he told the Colossian church, ~ "And so, ~ from the day we heard, ~ we have not ceased to pray for you."

▶▶ Furthermore, ~ prayer is to become a habit for us ~ because we do not know when we will come under attack from "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

▷▷ Satan does not notify us in advance of his schedule for attacking us . . . .

▷▷ In a different context, ~ in Matt. 24:43, ~ Jesus said, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into."

▷▷ So prayer needs to be habit for us my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ because we have no clue when we'll be attacked.

▶▶ If we are to hold our position against Satan and the rest of "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places," ~ then, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in addition to putting on the full armor that God has given us, ~ prayer must become a routine part of our daily lives. ¶¶ 2/8

*AFTER INSTRUCTING US WHEN TO PRAY. ~~ NEXT, ~ IN VERSE 18b PAUL teaches us how to pray.*

PAUL MAKES THREE POINTS HERE IN TEACHING US HOW TO PRAY.

▶▶ Paul's first point in teaching us how to pray is that we are to pray "in the Spirit."

▷▷ Now, ~ this is not talking about speaking in tongues.

▷▷ To pray "in the Spirit" refers to God the Holy Spirit's work of prompting, ~ guiding, ~ and directing us to pray for specific things.

▷▷ Paul is calling us to cultivate a sensitivity to what the Spirit may be prompting us to pray for and how we should pray about it.

▷▷ Prayer is more than just vocalizing a laundry list of needs to the Lord.

↳↳ It involves asking the Lord how we should pray, ~ and then acting on the promptings and impressions the Holy Spirit places on our minds and hearts.

▶▶ Paul's second point in teaching us how to pray is that we are to pray "with all prayer and supplication." ~~ I.e., ~ "with all kinds of prayers and requests."

▷▷ The idea here seems to be to use a variety of prayer to fit whatever circumstances in which we find ourselves.

▷▷ Think about it, ~ the various situations we encounter in daily life demand variety in prayer

↳↳ Think of the variety of prayers appropriate to life's unfolding circumstances: ~ confession, ~ thanksgiving, ~ praise, ~ intercession, ~ personal requests, ~ ¶¶

→→ instantaneous cries of the heart to God, ~ spoken or unspoken, ~ short or long.

▷▷ Nehemiah serves as an illustration here.

↳↳ [Neh. 1:5-11a](#) records a long prayer that Nehemiah prayed.

↳↳ But in [Neh. 2:4-5a](#), ~ his prayer was a short, ~ instantaneous cry of the heart to God.

→→ Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king . . . . ¶¶ 3/8

▶▶ Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> point in [verse 18b](#) in teaching us how to pray is that we are to "keep alert with all perseverance."

▷▷ The verb for "keep alert" means basically "lie awake, ~ pass sleepless nights."

↪↪ Now obviously, ~ Paul does not mean for us to literally "lie awake, ~ pass sleepless nights."

→→ Although it probably wouldn't hurt us one bit if we did spend some sleepless nights in prayer.

↪↪ It should be taken here in a spiritual sense.

→→ It is to never go to sleep spiritually. ~ It is to be always watchful and attentive to prayer.

▷▷ Coupled with keeping alert is perseverance in prayer. ~ "keep alert with all perseverance," ~ Paul says.

↪↪ The word for "perseverance" simply means "to stick to it and not quit." ~ Stick to prayer and don't quit praying Paul is saying.

↪↪ In [Lk. 18:1](#), ~ Luke writes, ~ "And he [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."

→→ I.e., ~ that we ought always to pray and not become discouraged or give up.

▷▷ The message is loud and clear.

↪↪ Stay alert, ~ and stick to prayer and don't become discouraged or quit.

↪↪ Why? ~ Because "the spiritual forces of evil" never give up.

→→ They are tireless, ~ persistent, ~ and resourceful.

↪↪ We see this in Satan's response to God in [Job 1:7](#).

→→ The LORD said to Satan, ~ "From where have you come?" ~ Satan answered the LORD and said, ~ "From going to and fro on the earth, ~ and from walking up and down on it."

↪↪ And Peter points this out in [1 Pet. 5:8](#). ~ "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." ↴ ↴ 4/8

**AFTER TEACHING US WHEN AND HOW TO PRAY, ~ PAUL THEN TEACHES US, ~ IN verse 18c, ~ who to pray for.**

WE ARE TO PRAY "FOR ALL THE SAINTS," ~ I.E., ~ FOR ALL BELIEVERS, ~ PAUL SAYS.

▶▶ Why? ~ Because all believers are in this fight together. ~ All of us need prayer.

↪↪ After Peter warns us to be sober-minded and watchful because Satan is constantly seeking to destroy us, ~ he says in 1 Pet. 5:9, ~ ¶¶

→→ "Resist him, ~ firm in your faith, ~ knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

▶▶ Our natural tendency is to focus mostly or totally on our own concerns. ~ Paul turns us away from that thinking by telling us to remember our fellow believers in our prayers.

▷▷ In Phil. 2:4, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, ~ but also to the interests of others."

▶▶ Another tendency we have is to limit most of our praying to prayers for people in crisis, ~ e.g., ~ with health problems or in the midst of other kinds of difficulties.

▷▷ While that is important, ~ there is much intercessory prayer that needs to take place "for all the saints" before the crises hit.

▶▶ We know that "the spiritual forces of evil" are constantly looking to destroy us. ~ So we must be proactive in our prayers for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▶▶ We must constantly pray for those who fight alongside us in this battle against "the spiritual forces of evil."

▷▷ Epaphras, ~ who most likely founded the church at Colossae, ~ serves as a model for us in praying for fellow believers.

↪↪ In Col. 4:12a, ~ Paul tells the church at Colossae, ~ "Epaphras, ~ who is one of you, ~ a servant of Christ Jesus, ~ greets you, ~ always struggling on your behalf in his prayers."

↪↪ The word for "struggling" was used to describe athletes as they gave themselves fully to their sports.

↪↪ Epaphras constantly gave himself fully to praying for the Colossian believers. ~ No sporadic or surface praying here. ~ Serves as model for us. ¶¶ 5/8

*IN VERSES 19-22, ~ PAUL FINISHES HIS DISCUSSION ON PRAYER BY ASKING FOR prayer for himself, ~ and tells the church at Ephesus he was sending a mission's report.*

WE LEARN TWO VALUABLE LESSONS ABOUT PRAYER HERE.

▶▶1<sup>st</sup>, ~ Paul was both a missionary and a spiritual leader.

▷▷We must not forget to pray for missionaries and our spiritual leaders.

▷▷Since we do not hear from missionaries all the time, ~ it might be easy to forget to pray for them.

▷▷Also, ~ we may think that since our spiritual leaders are spiritually strong and mature, ~ they might not need prayer.

↪↪But Paul dispels that notion.

→→No one could accuse Paul of being spiritually weak or immature, ~ and yet even he asked for prayer.

↪↪It doesn't matter how spiritually strong or mature our spiritual leaders are, ~ they need prayer just like every other believer.

▶▶The 2<sup>nd</sup> valuable lesson we learn about prayer in [verses 19-22](#) is that we need to pray specifically for people.

▷▷Notice in Paul's request for prayer in [verses 19-20](#) that he has a specific prayer request. ~~ He didn't just say pray for me.

↪↪"and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

▷▷Also, ~ notice in [verses 21-22](#) that Paul was sending Tychicus to them to give them a full report of how he was doing.

↪↪This would give the believers even more specific things to pray for.

▷▷We must learn to pray specifically. ~~ Not these prayers like, ~ "O Lord bless so-and so." ~~ Or, ~ "O Lord be with so-and-so."

↪↪But we don't always know what our brothers and sisters need specifically. ↯↯ 6/8

↪↪ That's why it's so important to open our lives up to each other and share our burdens and needs, ~ etc., ~ so we can pray specifically for each other.

→→ It's a tactic of the enemy to convince us one way or another to not ask for prayer . . . .

↪↪ If we fall for it, ~ then he can work on us alone and destroy us.

↪↪ I believe the enemy trembles when believers are praying for one another.

→→ So let's not hesitate to ask for prayer.

↪↪ But there's another way to know what specific things to pray for.

→→ Scripture will always give us something specific to pray for other believers.

→→ Paul's exhortation to Timothy in [1 Tim. 6:11b](#) serves as an example.

↪↪ We can pray that the Lord will help our fellow believers, ~ and actually ourselves as well, ~ to "[Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.](#)"

▷▷ So to help us pray for each other specifically, ~ let's share our burdens and needs, ~ etc. with one another ~ and search our Bibles for specific things to pray for.

↪↪ Then we'll never be at a loss about how to pray for our fellow believers.

***AS WE BEGIN TO WIND DOWN AND CLOSE THE BOOK ON EPHESIANS, ~ LET'S SUM UP Paul's discussion of spiritual warfare.***

**BELIEVERS ARE SOLDIERS, ~ ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE, ~ AGAINST SPIRITUAL enemies, ~ whose objective is to destroy us.**

▶▶ But there is no need for us to be afraid or to throw our hands up in surrender.

▶▶ We can hold our position against "[the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places](#)" by putting on every piece of the strong spiritual armor that God has given us ~ [77](#)

▷▷ and by making specific prayer for each other a routine part of our daily lives.

▶▶ And we can be greatly encouraged, ~ because the sovereign, ~ all-powerful Creator of the universe is on our side in this fight ~ and works in us and through us and for us. [7/8](#)

## CONCLUSION.

THEN PAUL CLOSES HIS LETTER WITH A BENEDICTION.

▶▶ We'll finish our study of Ephesians by simply reading it. ~~ And keep in mind how Wayne exhorted us from these verses in the sharing time last week. ~~ verses 23-24.

▷▷ <sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ~~ ↓↓

↳↳ <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible."

LET'S PRAY . . . . 8/8