

Praying in the Spirit

The Armour of God Series

God's Armour (Eph 6:10-20)

Ephesians 6:18 *...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...*

While Paul does not have a metaphor to visually depict prayer as part of the armour of God, he does complete his teaching on the armour with the essential presence of prayer as part of the armour. This is reinforced by the fact that Paul exhorts prayer in verse 18 as the ending statement concerning the Sword of the Spirit in verse 17. They are within the same sentence and therefore, should not be separated.

Prayer can, therefore, be visualised as the nervous system which links the entire armour on the believer with all the interlocking connectors, interactions, and all the differing communications uploading to God. Without prayer the armour is ineffective. No matter how skilful the believer thinks they have been in applying the armour and going out to do battle with the enemy, they may be sure that without prayer defeat is inevitable.



Prayer is a dialogue with God. This is a discussion of life that continues throughout life. Prayer is fellowship with God, a communion with God which opens the believer's life and heart so that they realise they have exposed themselves to God and are dependent upon His merciful resources.

It's true that God knows what we are going to pray before we begin, but we don't. We need to experience the process of faith in praying, and in believing that God is listening and will respond to our prayers. We need to hear ourselves confessing sin and foolishness, to hear ourselves agreeing with God's Word over wrong attitudes and behaviours. We need to hear ourselves seeking greater sanctification and Christlikeness.

Prayer is the adhesive that unites each piece of the armour to become a natural clothing for the believer as they walk and talk with God throughout life. Prayer helps make sense of the application of the armour as it relates to the events of your lives. Prayer clarifies and exposes the motives and intentions of the one putting on the armour of God. Therefore, prayer should not be a theoretical exercise but real as it spreads out your life before God.

What is "Praying in the Spirit?"

Once again, the context of Ephesians chapter 6 is important to our understanding of what Paul means by the phrase "*praying in the Spirit.*" As Paul's instruction for prayer forms the final clause in the sentence of verse 18, which speaks about the Sword of the Spirit, prayer is best understood as the final piece, or the final

extension, in the Armour of God. Therefore prayer operates best when flowing out of our understanding and application of the Sword of the Spirit, the Bible.

For the armoured believer, prayer abandons individuality, pride, and self-sufficiency towards God and seeks a God honouring application of the armour. Therefore, prayer speaks out the believer's dependence upon God in the same way we are dependant upon every other piece of armour.

In 1 John 5:14 John explains, *this is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us*. The fact is, often we pray NOT according to God's will, but according to our will. Therefore, praying in the Spirit speaks of praying in alignment with the will and purposes of God. This forms a significant part of the Spirit filled, or Spirit controlled Christian life. This is how we pray under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit as we grow in our understanding of God's purposes and will through God's Word.

The distinction between *prayer and supplication* that Paul makes is subtle, yet important. The words *with all prayer* refer to the various forms of prayer which include, but are not limited to public prayer, private prayer, internalised prayer, and prayer expressed through music and singing (hymns, spiritual songs etc.) *Supplication* is slightly different in that supplications are detailed and persevering with strong and persistent pleadings.

The undercarriage of prayer is the belief that *...God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*

(Philippians 4:19). We are often so caught up in the self-centredness of our prayers that we overlook the fact that the Lord is presently providing our daily needs, and that is answered prayer.

Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 26:41 are applicable, *watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation*. We are to pray in a life watching manner that gives us realistic insights into our spiritual lives that prevent us from giving in to temptation. Therefore, we are to be alert, awake to sin's trickery, and interacting with God through prayer. Watching and praying is the dual mechanism God offers us so we are able to stand firm. Similarly, Paul reasons this out in Colossians 4:2, *continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving*.

Spirit filled prayer is "other" inclusive. That is, prayer is more focused on others than self. Beginning with worship and thanksgiving to God, then thanksgiving and requests for other people.

- 1 Timothy 2:1 *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.*
- Matthew 5:44 *...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...*
- Luke 6:28 *...bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

Prayer partners with God as He mercifully interacts with someone else in a different location. Prayer units together people who are

apart in a common cause through Christ. Even those who inflict pain upon the believer are to be talked about with the Lord and blessing should be sought for them bringing them to repentance and salvation.

Conclusion

Prayer has always been one of believers' primary activities as witnessed through the 1st generation believers spoken of in Act 2:42, *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

- ✓ Prayer is a believers' first priority as we engage through various kinds of communication with God for the purpose of glorifying Him, giving expression to His character, and speaking well of Him with thanksgiving.
- ✓ Therefore, praying in the Spirit becomes an all-occasions dialogue of worship, thanks, and requests that reflects the complexity of our lives being intertwined with God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Spirit filled prayer is ONLY able to exist when we are walking a Spirit filled life in realisation and surrender to what the Holy Spirit is doing in and through us.
- ✓ Prayer is about God first and foremost. It aligns us with and synchronises us with God's will both before we make requests and as we are making requests.

- ✓ Prayer puts self in the back seat as it promotes the Lord's will and His glory before we make personal requests on behalf of others.
- ✓ Prayer interacts in other's lives in ways we could not do otherwise, seeking eternal benefits and not present blessings only.