

## *Ephesians 6:18-24*

**18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.**

To continue the metaphor...in warfare, communication with the command post is essential. Even a well-equipped army will suffer without it. We must be in regular communication with our commanding officer. This is certainly a part of our spiritual armor.

George Duffield, Jr., in the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza of the familiar hymn wrote,  
Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone;  
The arm of flesh will fail you, You dare not trust your own.  
Put on the gospel armor, **each piece put on with prayer**;  
Where duty calls, or danger, be never wanting there.

We are to ***“pray in the Spirit...”*** Some would point to “praying in tongues,” but that is not what Paul is referring to. Not everyone has that gift, but all are to pray in the Spirit. It is prayer that is in harmony with the prompting of the Holy Spirit and under the Spirit’s control. It is prayer, as John Calvin said, *coram Deo* – in the presence of God.

This is part of the ministry of the Spirit as Paul indicates in Romans 8:26-27  
*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.*

**\*\*27.** How have you experienced this “prayer ministry” of the Holy Spirit?

Praying in the Spirit could also mean relinquishing our own will for God’s will and checking our motives, as James says (4:3) *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

**\*\*28.** What are some times that we particularly need to pray with the Spirit’s help?

We are to pray ***“at all times.”*** There is no place we can’t pray! To pray at all times also means to pray, even if we don’t feel like it. (This is one of the “wiles of the devil” to stop us from praying.)

God does hear our prayers, and he does answer, in one of four ways:

1. “Yes. I thought you’d never ask!”
2. “Yes, and here’s more.”

3. “No, not yet. The time is not right. Wait.”
4. “No, I have something better in mind for you.”
5. “No, I love you too much; that is not what is best for you.”

One prayer that we can always pray with the confidence that God will answer in the affirmative: when we pray for His presence in our struggles. “*I will never leave you, nor forsake you*” is God’s promise found in Deuteronomy (31:6, 8), Joshua (1:5), 1 Chronicles (28:20) and Hebrews (13:5).

\*\*29. When do you find it most difficult to pray? When is it easiest?

Regular prayer during ordinary or “easy” times prepares us to better pray when the going is difficult.

**“...keep alert”**

Staying alert is another characteristic of a good soldier.

This is what Peter said, too....*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...* (1 Peter 5:8-9a)

Jesus also said, *Be on guard! Be alert ! You do not know when that time will come* (Mark 13:33); and, *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation* (Mark 14:38).

\*\*30. How can we be sure that we are alert as it relates to spiritual warfare? Pray that you would be alert to those subtle things that would creep into your life which would tend to draw you away from your Lord.

**“...and always persevere”**

Not just today...not just in difficult times...but always!

The Greek word here, *proskarteresis*, implies a resolute determination to see something through to its conclusion.

After the evacuation of Dunkirk, Winston Churchill rallied Britain with one of his most memorable speeches: “We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender!”

One of my favorite poems is “Don’t Quit” by John Greenleaf Whittier (though sometimes attributed to Edgar Guest). In case you’ve never heard it:

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,  
When the road you’re trudging seems all up hill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.  
Life is strange with its twists and turns  
As every one of us sometimes learns  
And many a failure comes about  
When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don’t give up though the pace seems slow—  
You may succeed with another blow.  
Success is failure turned inside out—  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell just how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so far;  
So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit—  
It’s when things seem worst that you must not quit.

We are also to practice “*supplication for all the saints.*”  
Pray for each other as fellow soldiers, that we all might stand firm.

If someone comes to your mind – for whatever reason – pray for them.

Here is another significant poem by E. Middleton:

I cannot tell why there should come to me  
A thought of someone miles and miles away,  
In swift insistence on the memory,  
Unless there be a need that I should pray.  
    Too hurried oft are we to spare a thought  
    For days together for some friend away;  
    Perhaps God does it for us, and we ought  
    To read His signal as a call to pray.  
Perhaps just then, my friend has fiercer fight;  
Some overwhelming sorrow or decay  
Of courage, darkness, some lost sense of right,  
And so, in case my friend needs prayer, I pray.

Friend, do the same for me, if I unsought,  
Intrude upon you on some crowded day;  
Give me a moment's prayer in passing thought;  
Be very sure I need it, therefore pray.

\*\*31. Have you ever had someone come to your mind “out of the blue” and you found out later that they needed prayer?

This would also include praying for your church and its leadership. You might use the church calendar as a prayer list. Pray that the pastor(s) would be able to devote sufficient time to prayer and study. In Acts 6, deacons were chosen to the apostles could give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

**<sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.**

We may think of Paul as the greatest of the Apostles, but that is not how he viewed himself. Back in Ephesians 3:8, he wrote,  
*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*  
Not only does this speak of Paul's humility, but also his desire for the prayers of God's people to meet his assigned task.

In several places in his letters, Paul asks for prayer, and specifically on his proclamation of the Gospel. This was not the only letter that contained such a request. In 2 Thessalonians 3:1 we read, *Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored.* And in Colossians 4:3...*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.*

\*\*32. Have you ever witnessed the efficacy of this kind of prayer?

This is one area we should especially pray for pastors.

**“...that a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel...**

Remember that Paul was writing this letter while imprisoned in Rome. And yet, he does not ask for prayer for his release, but for his proclamation of the Gospel! (Which, according to Philippians 1:12-14, he was able to do, even while in prison.)

This also tells us some important things about the nature of a good sermon:

**(1) It is given by God.** It is “not merely words as sounds, but words that will penetrate; not mere eloquence, or accuracy of vocabulary, but words that issued from his lips in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Sinclair Ferguson) As Paul himself wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5... *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.*

And in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5... *our Gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.*

**(2) It should be proclaimed boldly.** Eight times in the book of Acts the apostles are described as speaking the message with boldness. Those who were formerly mild-mannered were transformed by the Holy Spirit. There can be no hesitancy or equivocation in speaking the Word of God.

**(3) It should be focused on the mystery of the Gospel.** In the Greek world, the word mystery referred primary to that which was known by the initiated. But the mystery of the Gospel is something that God has revealed so that everyone can know. The Gnostics wanted to keep part of the Gospel a secret and claimed that they knew things others did not. Consequently, John assured his readers, *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.* (1 John 2:20, NASB)

C.H. Spurgeon was once asked, “What is the secret of your ministry?” His answer: “My people pray for me.”

\*\*33. In what circumstances do you need to pray for boldness? What is boldness? What is it not?

**<sup>21</sup> So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts.**

As we see throughout his letters, personal relationships were very important to Paul. Remember that the apostle had spent three years in Ephesus, so he had undoubtedly developed many close relationships...as obviously he had with Tychicus.

Another thing we see here that is also in other letters, they were frequently hand delivered by those who ministered with Paul.

What do we know about Tychicus? He was from Asia (Acts 20:4), maybe even from Ephesus. He was going to deliver not only this letter, but also the letter to the Colossians.

Tychicus also accompanied Onesimus, the converted slave, back to Colossae (see the Letter to Philemon, which Tychicus also probably carried). Obviously, he was a man that Paul greatly trusted. At the end of Paul's life, Tychicus stood with Paul in his imprisonment until Paul sent him again to Ephesus (perhaps with the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy) in the hope that Timothy would be able to come and see him one last time.

It is possible that Tychicus was the scribe for the letter to the Ephesians, and may well have been the first minister to expound this letter to a congregation, "*to encourage their hearts.*" This was the main purpose of Paul's letter, and the ministry of Tychicus.

"Paul was prepared to send out the best men he knew to help others, and did not keep them jealously for himself. There is a lesson here for the whole church." (Sinclair Ferguson)

\*\*34. In what ways could we be like Tychicus?

**<sup>23</sup> Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul began the letter (Ephesians 1:2-3) with a word of praise to the glory of God...*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Now he ends with a benediction that summarizes the blessings that we have in Christ that has been the theme of the whole letter.

It is a three-fold blessing:

(1) ***Peace...to the whole community.***

This is from the Hebrew idea of "shalom", which is not just the absence of conflict, but a desire for wholeness and well-being. It is a part of our reconciliation with God through Christ, and thus, reconciliation with others.

(2) ***...love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Love and faith not only come from God, but have been demonstrated by God.

As Paul wrote in Romans 5:8 *This is how we know what love is, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

(3) ***Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.***

This is a blessing for the whole church. Without God's grace we are without hope (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we receive God's love (as Paul talked about in Ephesians 3:17b-21), we respond with our love for God and others. As John wrote, *We love because [God] first loved us* (1 John 4:20). The sad thing is that through the years, it would be appear

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that the church in Ephesus, or at least many in it, had experienced the waning of that love. In the first of the seven letters in Revelation (to Ephesus), Jesus says, *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first...* (Revelation 2:4-5a)

\*\*35. How might one be apt to “forsake their first love” for Christ?

✱ ✱ As we conclude the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, I would encourage you to re-read the entire letter.

What has stood out to you most in this letter, and in our study?