

Prayer Warriors who Advance the Gospel (Ephesians 6:18-20)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on January 13, 2013

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Take your swords and turn to Eph. 6. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was one of the greatest expository preachers of the 20th century (or any century), and I have several volumes of his sermons on Ephesians. The first 6 volumes have about 25 sermons or so each, covering a chapter or so each; volume 6 is on Eph 5:18-6:9. But when the Dr. came to Ephesians 6:10-20, it took him more than a year to preach through this section, 2 more volumes, over 700 pages on 10 verses.

Even preachers who cover much bigger sections in Ephesians, like Kent Hughes (who averaged 5-10 verses or more per sermon), as he came to the armor of God in our spiritual warfare, he slowed it down to one verse at a time, recognizing the depth and density of divine truth in this section of Ephesians. A Puritan William Gurnall preached through this section, and published it in a book in 1655 of 261 chapters! If each is a sermon he preached 5+ years through just these 10 verses? He called his book a 'little present' to his people. I have the abridged 3-volume "short" edition that is still over 1,000 pages. What's the short title? *The Christian in Complete Armour*.

[The Original longer title?] *The saints' war against the Devil, wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people, in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief design he hath against the saints; a magazine opened, from whence the Christian is furnished with spiritual arms for the battle, helped on with his armour, and taught the use of his weapon; together with the happy issue of the whole war.*

I guess my sermon titles are short. I've preached a lot less than 261 sermons on Ephesians 6:10-20, but I think it's been well worth our time to spend at least one message on each part of the full armor of God, last 2 weeks on v. 17, today we'll cover 3 verses Lord-willing. Gurnall did 200 pages on v. 18, I'm trying to do v. 18-20 today; just know there is more that can be said and studied beyond today, and I hope you will study this passage and apply it well beyond today.

This whole chapter is so powerful and practical for our day-to-day life, that we could spend the rest of our days studying, meditating on, and applying its truths and still not exhaust these subjects (I'm not going to be able to exhaust today's subject in only 50 minutes). Our fight against our sin is a lifelong struggle, so this study needs to have a long and lasting impact on our lives for years, not just on the few Sundays I preached on these few verses, but all our days.

Ephesians 6:18: *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

TITLE: Prayer Warriors Who Advance the Gospel

Outline:

1. Why Prayer Warriors are Needed
2. How to Pray for Your Fellow Soldiers

First, Why Prayer Warriors are Needed

Verses 18-20 are the conclusion of a warfare section that began in v. 10, where Paul has used military and soldier terminology in this context that's about spiritual warfare.

This spiritual warfare is NOT

- TV ghost hunters or Ghostbuster-style exorcisms of movies
- It's also not to be based on fiction novels or some people's experience or by interviews with demon possessed people
- It's not thinking Satan is everywhere (he's not, he's only in one place at a time) or that demons cause everything bad that happens (God is in sovereign control of all, even them)
- Not talking to Satan directly, trying to rebuke or bind him
- Not storming gates of hell, it's standing your ground, v. 14
- Not an excuse for your sin; Scripture holds you responsible
- Not to be underestimated. It's not optional, not avoidable.

Spiritual warfare is something fought in our mundane everyday life

- The devil can have an opportunity when sinful thoughts take root because of what another person did or said (Eph 4:26-27)
- Eph 2:2 calls it a spirit working in the sons of disobedience
- This warfare happens in your family, in your workplace, in grocery stores, in your mind or heart, according to Eph 2:3
- It happens on the way to church (demons in the backseat?)
- While we're in church is a great time of spiritual warfare when the demonic world wants to distract people from truly worshipping or hearing or applying the Word (Mark 4:15)
- Fiery darts of judging, even lust, can hit during communion
- Or it can be when you're driving down a freeway and then someone cuts you off, temptations to anger, sinful speech
- Or when you're having a hard day and losing your patience
- It can be doubts instead of the assurance of salvation, 6:17

Eph 6:18 is a continuation, not a new section. The main command of this section is in v. 14 "stand," repeated 3x in verses 11-14. End of v. 11, "stand," end of v. 13, "stand," and start of v. 14, "Stand." As you stand, be fully armed, v. 11-17, and be a prayer warrior, v. 18, because you can't do v. 11-17 in your own strength, see v. 10.

Stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone. The arm of flesh may fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own. Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer...¹

Prayer is not another piece of armor, it's how we put on each piece. This context is like a military leader addressing his armies, and as the gospel minister Paul tells them to stand 3x, I think of Britain Prime Minister Winston Churchill in WW2 after the Blitz:

*'Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never -- in nothing, great or small, large or petty -- never give in...Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.'*²

Paul says the same in the spiritual realm-never give in, never yield. Earlier Churchill had prepared Britain: 'I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization...fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us...or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free...if we fail...all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science [evolution or eugenics?]. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that...men will...say, 'This was their finest hour.'³

Paul also calls on the church militant to its finest hour: don't let yourself be broken, but brace yourselves, bear yourselves against the enemy. Be prepared and in prayer to stand firm against the fury and might of the same dark sinister enemy that was behind Hitler and Darwin, perverted science, and a Nazi holocaust that had to be stopped. Satan's spiritual "axis of evil" must be resisted as well.

A little later on this side of the Atlantic, the day after the day that would live in infamy, Japan's attack of the U.S. on Dec. 7th, 1941, America's leader also called on our armies to resist and stand firm. 'As commander in chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us. ... Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger...[Roosevelt concluded] we will gain the inevitable triumph--so help us God.'⁴

The ultimate triumph is inevitable for soldiers in the Lord's army, but we need the help of God, which is what prayer acknowledges. In Ephesians 6 we have a greater Leader calling us to battle, giving a rousing speech to soldiers for warfare, our Warrior-King Jesus.

Spiritually we need to also take all measures for our defense and remember the character of the onslaught against us, the hostility, our danger, and that we can only triumph with the help of God. It is critical for troops to be in contact with their superior so they can call for reinforcements. Prayer here is a walkie-talkie for warfare. I hear God speak in v. 17, His Word, and I then speak to God in v. 18 (God's Spirit helps in prayer if I'm too weak to speak, Rom. 8:26).

In ancient war, you can picture enemy armies charging a battlefield and a soldier's temptation in light of the enemy from v. 12 is to run or retreat. But you must be as brave as Braveheart, as we saw last week. You must stand, hold your position, hold, don't break ranks, hold, don't get nervous that the enemy is rushing at you, hold! You have a long strong defensive weapon you can pull up at the very last moment to stop that advancing army, the Word of God. It can be hard to stand in battle as the enemy comes, but the armies of Scotland were able to stand against their advancing enemies by the strength of William Wallace rallying, rousing them to stand firm, to hold up their defensive weapon as their leader held up his sword.

Ephesians 6:14 tells us to stand, and at last in v. 17 we take up "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,*" and we pray, v. 18.

John Piper points out that 'swords are used for killing. And that is what we are to do "by the Spirit" in Romans 8:13 [which says "*by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,*" i.e., my sinful deeds]. Kill the deeds of the body by the Spirit, that is by ... the "word of God" in your mind and heart, that is, by taking the Sword of the Spirit which is the deadly sword for sin-killing.⁵

Jesus used spiritual language for how sin must be radically cut out and cast from us like a sword might cut off a hand (Matthew 5:30). Sin must be mortified, or as Paul says in another place, "crucified... with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). In one sense, my sin is already stabbed or pinned 'to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, oh my soul.⁶ But in another sense I must keep striking it down, keep crucifying, mortifying, hacking sin down with a gospel machete. The sword of the Spirit of Eph 6:17, when combined with prayer in the Spirit, v. 18, is a mighty weapon against sin or Satan.

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, almost immediately after he receives his armor in the Palace Beautiful, Christian encounters Apollyon [one of the names for Satan in Revelation] in the Valley of Humiliation; Apollyon tempts him with accusations and despair, but Christian is saved in the battle by using the sword of the Spirit, making thrusts with it as he quotes Scripture. ['Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword, and caught it, saying, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise*, Mic. 7:8; and with that gave him a deadly thrust ... again, saying, *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us*. Rom. 8:37.' Later in the book John Bunyan also spoke of] "All-prayer" (Eph. 6:18) as a weapon in itself, which helps him against the illusions of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, which "care nothing" for his sword; [it seems that] Bunyan identifies the sword only with Scripture, and regards prayer as yet another weapon."⁷

Listen to these phrases from 2 Corinthians 6 "*in the Holy Spirit ... in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left.*" (v. 6-7). We might say the sword is in the right, but prayer is the other one on the left.

A few centuries before William Wallace in history, the knights of Charlemagne were defeated in the Pyrenees. James M. Boice tells the story: 'Roland, the commander of Charlemagne's rear guard, could have called for help from the main body of the army merely by sounding his great horn Oliphant. But he would not do it. Pride held him back. Because he failed to call upon his secret resource, Roland's troops were massacred. Likewise, many Christians can trace the secret of a defeated life to prayerlessness.'⁸

Turn back a few pages to Colossians 4, for a positive picture of a prayer warrior who prayed for reinforcements for fellow soldiers.

I want to read Col. 4:12 in the NIV because it uses the same word "wrestle" some use in Eph 6:12 ('wrestle not with flesh and blood')

Col 4:12 (NIV) *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm* [ESV "struggling in prayer for you"]

...

It's not a flesh and blood struggle, to stand firm, it's a spiritual one. It's a struggle to pray. Temptations to distraction will frequently bombard us when we try to pray (I admit prayer is a struggle for me, and much of that is me, but part of it is spiritual warfare, too).

It's convicting and challenging to me to read of Epaphras and his labors in earnest prayer for others to stand firm, his "wrestling in prayer," like Jacob in the OT who "wrestled with" and "struggled with God and ... prevailed" (Gen 32:24, 28 NKJV, see also v. 30).

Hosea 12:4 says Jacob '*wrestled ... and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor.*' (NASB). I wish I could say that is true of me. I need to learn from Epaphras, and so do many of you; all of us do. We need to struggle through, wrestle, laboring earnestly (NASB) for others in our prayers so they can stand firm in their struggles.

Look at Colossians 2:1 what Paul says also: "*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf ...*"

Jerry Bridges writes that Paul 'means, "I agonize in the ministry of prayer." ... intense fighting. Paul wasn't just praying about those in the hospital and the unemployed. He was in the heat of the battle. In Colossians 4:12, Paul commends Epaphras for the same kind of struggling: "... [always agonizing, always waging war] in prayer for you" Epaphras had his eye on the battle. He wanted these people to grow up in Christ and stand firm in the will of God. He wasn't just concerned about their logistical or felt needs. He was concerned about the spiritual ... And he waged war in prayer. Are you in the battle? Have you agonized in prayer lately? Or are you still preoccupied with the material things of your life ...?"⁹

That question takes us from Why Prayer Warriors are Needed to ...

How To Pray for Your Fellow Soldiers (Eph 6:18)

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,¹⁹ and pray on my behalf ...

I think the ESV captures the transition from v. 17-18 better than the NASB and NIV, because it makes it part of the same sentence, with a comma, and translates it as a participle ('praying') not imperative (command 'pray'). In the Greek grammar, the imperative is in v. 17 ("take") while v. 18 is a participle (in English, typically a word ending with "ing"). So I might say "take your Bibles (imperative), and begin reading (participle) in v. 17." Paul says "*take...the sword of the Spirit* (imperative) ... *praying at all times in the Spirit ...*"

This is not a one-time command to "pray," it's a continual "*praying at all times*" (or "on all occasions" in NIV, or "always" in NKJV). The word *all* helps us outline v. 18 to see how to pray

- *through all* types of prayer
- *at all* times
- *with all* perseverance
- *for all* the saints (I'm following the word order of NASB)

Paul gives several applications for how to pray for fellow soldiers:

1. Be praying through all types of prayer

The NASB footnote for the first phrase in v. 18 says literally *with all is through all*. The NIV has a different word order, not word-for-word, middle of v. 18 "...with all kinds of prayer and requests"

Whether your translation has the word 'requests' or 'supplications' or 'petitions,' the important thing to notice here is that prayer is not *just* requests or asking God for things, it includes "*all prayer*" or "*all kinds of prayer*." If our prayer life is mostly requests, petitions, and we're not incorporating all other types of prayer, our prayer life will be weak, and so will our spiritual life, and we will lose battles. What are some of the types of prayer?

PRAISE is the first and foremost type of prayer in chapter 1:

³ *Blessed be* [or "Praise be to"] *the God and Father of our Lord ...*
... ⁶ *to the praise of the glory of His grace ...* [also end of v. 12, 14]

INTERCESSION (prayer for others) is another type of prayer:

¹⁷ *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.* ¹⁸ *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* ¹⁹ *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.*

SINGING can be a type of prayer, when it's truly 'to the Lord'

Look at Eph 5:19. Paul speaks of "*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord ...*"

ADORATION of God, His attributes is another type (3:14-21)

CONFESSION is implied in 4:32, taught by Jesus in Matt 6:12

THANKSGIVING is another type in Eph 5:20, 1:16, etc.

SUPPLICATION is another type in Eph 6:18 (A.C.T.S. acronym)

We need a well-rounded prayer life, an all-encompassing prayer life, not just petitions, as v. 18 says "with all prayer and petition."

The first way to pray for fellow soldiers is *in all types of prayer ...*

2. Be praying "at all times in the Spirit" (as v. 18 also says)

Verse 17 just mentioned "the sword of the Spirit," and then Paul says we're to be praying "at all times in the Spirit." The Word and prayer are always to be joined, and when you compare what Paul describes as being "filled with the Spirit" in Eph 5 and being "filled with the Word" in Colossians 3, it's the same results, same order, showing that we cannot (or should not) separate the Spirit and the Word and we cannot (or should not) separate either from prayer.

The Spirit is the one who gives us access to the Father in prayer, if you look back at chapter 2, verse 18: *for through Him we both have our **access in one Spirit to the Father ...**²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God **in the Spirit.***

One of the ways we know the Spirit is within us is we confess our sins, because a chief ministry of the Holy Spirit is conviction of sin

The fruit of the Spirit in us is *love* (which results in our adoration), *joy* (which produces prayers of praise), *peace* (that should prompt prayers of thanksgiving), *patience* (which is manifested in waiting upon the Lord in prayer, another type of prayer in the psalms), etc.

Be praying in all types of prayer (#1), at all times in the Spirit (#2),

3. "With all perseverance" and alertness

Eph 6:18 says "*be on the alert*" or "*to that end, keep alert with all perseverance.*" There is a purpose to our prayer and there is also a perseverance we need in it, "*with all perseverance*" it says, we're to always keep on praying. Another translation of alert is "watchful."

Men who are soldiers need to be alert to stand firm and be strong and good soldiers. Paul issues a bugle call in 1 Cor. 16:13 with this word *Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong*

Soldiers need to be alert to stand strong, not slouching or snoozing. 1 Thessalonians 5:6 says '*let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober ...* [v. 8 adds] *having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation*' [cf. Eph 6:14, 17]. The soldier's alertness and the soldier's spiritual armor must be put on with prayer, and that's how Paul completes that chapter '*pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks...pray for us*' (17-18, 25)

If you struggle with persevering in prayer, as confess I do, if to "pray without ceasing" seems impossible, just read the next verse "in everything give thanks." Cultivating a continually thankful heart in the context of the command is a help to obey the command as you seek to be thankful in everything. It doesn't mean you never cease from closing your eyes and folding your hands, but Paul is saying we are to continually be thankful to the Lord, day and night.

The parallel passage in Colossians 4 says:² *Devote yourselves to prayer, **keeping alert** in it with an attitude of thanksgiving ...*

Alertness or watchfulness includes an attitude of thanksgiving, watching for things to give thanks to God for in prayer. Be alert as a soldier in constant walkie-talkie communication with his superior about what's going on in the fight and thanking him for his support.

You need a soldier mentality to be an effective prayer warrior, and this language "be alert" is often used in spiritual warfare contexts.

1 Peter 5:7 says you're to be "*casting all your cares on Him, because He cares for you*" and then the next verse says in spiritual warfare terms "*be alert, because [of] your adversary the devil...*"

You need to be alert like a deer watching out for a hunter or for a prowling mountain lion seeking prey to devour. We've all seen deer and how alert they are to what's going on, watchful, looking for anything that might signal danger, ears up, listening, attuned to all around them. Peter says we're to be that way spiritually, watchful, alert to, attuned to the devil's lion-like prowling devouring desires.

Peter may be remembering an event in his life. Peter had been told that Jesus would be betrayed that night that they had Passover with Jesus in the upper room in Mark 14:16-18, and in v. 29: *Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not."* ³⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times."* ³¹ *But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* *And they all were saying the same thing also.* ³² *They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed."* ³³ *He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.* ³⁴ *And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." ...*

[But as Jesus prays and then comes back, we read in v. 37 one of the most convicting questions to me from the Lord Jesus] *And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"* ³⁸ *"Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* ³⁹ *Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words.* ⁴⁰ *And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.* ⁴¹ *And He came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? ..."*

Those words from v. 38 "watch and pray" echoed in Peter's ears for a long time after that night, and he uses that same word in 1 Peter 5 as he tells them to pray while being "watchful" or "alert / awake."

Jesus said in Lk 21:36 'Watch ... and pray always...' (NKJV), "keep on the alert at all times that you may have strength ..." (NASB). In that context, being alert or watchful has to do with knowing the signs of the times to know how to pray (v. 29-33), being alert or watchful of our own hearts, guarding our hearts against being weighed down with sins and the cares of this world (v. 34). The men's quartet has sung a song before based on "watch and pray"

Christian do not seek repose, cast your dreams of ease away;
 you are in the midst of foes, watch and pray.
 Wicked forces evil powers gathered in unseen array,
 they wait for your unguarded hours, watch and pray.
 Put your heavenly armor on, wear it always night and day.
 To defeat the evil one, watch and pray, Jesus said to watch and pray.
 Hear, above all hear your Lord, love Him, serve Him and obey.
 Treasure in your heart His word, watch and pray.
 Watch as if on that alone hung the issue of the day.
 Pray that victory shall be won. Watch and pray.¹⁰

Eph 6:18 says we're to pray *in all types* of prayer (#1), *at all times* (#2), by alertness or watchfulness *with all perseverance* (#3), and...

#4. For all the saints

Ephesians 6:18b "... *be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,* ¹⁹ *and pray on my behalf ...*"

A guard, soldier, or watchman can't fall asleep at his post. The Lord calls us to be watchful to guard our own hearts and also to be aware of and alert to the needs of fellow soldiers we pray for. Even Paul, the great soldier of the Lord, needed people to pray for him.

In this context, it's a continual prayer in light of continual battles spiritually, and we seek to continually bring the need for help to our Commander. And in this context it's especially for our fellow soldiers. This praying "in the Spirit" is especially for the spiritual, not just the physical. Jesus *did* teach His disciples it was ok to ask God for daily bread (a physical need), but the focus of the rest of that prayer is spiritual, and the advancement of God's kingdom to come more, and God's will to be done, prayers for God to forgive us, and to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil.

The emphasis of biblical prayers is primarily spiritual, and though it's ok to pray for the physical, even in that, prayer should include and intercede for the spiritual aspects of God's will to be done and His kingdom purposes. One pastor joked the only way to be prayed for in his church is to lose your job or end up in the hospital. It's ok to pray for those things, but biblical prayer goes beyond a sick list.

If you want to grow in this area, an application I would encourage you to do this week is to pray for someone in your life or on your heart the very things Paul prays in Eph 1:15-20 or Eph 3:14-21 or other examples of how he prayed for believers (Col. 1, Phil. 1, etc). Pray for that sick or jobless person the prayers of Eph 1 or 3:14-21.

It's also instructive to see how Paul asked others to pray for him in Eph 6:19: *and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰ *for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Paul is in chains in prison, on unjust charges, awaiting his trial and possible execution, and what is Paul's one and only prayer request?

- It's NOT "pray that I would get out of here and this trial"
- He says basically "pray that out of here, that out of my mouth the gospel will come out with boldness."
- Paul does not say "pray for the salvation of these guards"
- He says "pray that I would speak about salvation to them"

See, Paul was more fully armed than the Roman soldier guarding him. His captor was a captive audience to Paul. Paul had put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer, and whichever soldier's turn it was to guard Paul heard the gospel. Maybe he talked about how each piece of the armor is an analogy for the gospel? Maybe some soldiers dreaded being chained to the Apostle Paul when their shift came? What we do know is Christ was made known by Paul through imprisonment to the whole Praetorian guard (Phil 1:13), some even in Caesar's house (4:22). Every time his prison door opened was another gospel opening.

This leads to our 5th final way to pray in all gospel opportunities

(Review how to pray for others: *through all types, at all times, with all perseverance, for all the saints, #5 in all gospel opportunities*)

Many professing Christians today say things like, "well the way I witness the gospel is by just how I live my life, that's my witness." Some even use a quote by Francis of Assisi with the idea that it's not necessary to use words to preach the gospel. Paul says, "no, we need to open our mouths and speak the gospel with words as well." And we need to pray for each other and ask for prayer for boldness

This is Paul's only prayer request in Ephesians, and in Col. 4, v. 3, he asks them to be '*praying ... for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ ...*' ⁴ ***that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.***'

In 2 Thess 3:1 he asks them to pray for him that "*the Word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified ...*" (2 Thess 3:1). That's a great way to ask people to pray for your request, whatever it is, that this will cause God to be glorified and His gospel to spread. If you are in the hospital, ask people to pray for you for opportunities for the gospel and that you might speak it courageously and clearly

If you're going to be traveling on a plane, don't just ask for "travel mercies," ask that God would allow you in your travel to share the mercies of Christ because you're a travelling ambassador for Christ

It's not unspiritual to ask people to pray for you, just make sure you ask them to pray in spiritual ways, not just for physical things. And better than just "please pray for the salvation of so-and-so," ask "pray for me as I'll be seeing so-and-so next week and I need boldness and clarity as hopefully I can explain the gospel." If this is an area weakness. Pray for it. Pray by all types of prayer, at all times, with all perseverance, for all of us, in all gospel opportunity

As we look to Christ in prayer, as we recognize our flesh is weak and we sometimes fall asleep when we should be praying or don't open our mouth at times we should be speaking the gospel, keep in mind that even when Peter, James, and John slept, Jesus prayed for them. The Lord in heaven never slumbers nor sleeps and Jesus is right now at the right hand of the Father where "*He always lives to make intercession for us*" (Heb 7:25). He prays for the weak (v. 28). He is the "Great High Priest whose name is love who ever lives and pleads for me."¹¹

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son.
 ... To keep your armor bright, attend with constant care,
 Still walking in your Captain's sight, and **watching unto prayer.**
 ... Your guides and brethren bear for ever on your mind;
 Extend the arms of mighty prayer, ingrasping all mankind.
 ... Still let the Spirit cry in all His soldiers, "Come!"
 Till Christ the Lord descends from high and takes the conquerors home.¹²

¹ George Duffield, "Stand Up for Jesus," 1858.

⁵ John Piper, "How To Kill Sin, Part 2," preached February 17, 2002, at Bethlehem Baptist Church (available at www.desiringgod.org).

⁶ Hymn by Horatio Spafford, "It is well with my soul," 1873.

⁷ David L. Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Eerdmans, 1992).

⁸ James M. Boice, *Ephesians*, p. 260.

⁹ Jerry Bridges, "Engaging the Unseen Foe," in *Discipleship Journal, Issue 19* (January/February, NavPress, 1984).

¹⁰ "Watch and Pray," Walt Harrah (Seedsower Music, 1999).

¹¹ "Before the Throne of God Above."

¹² Charles Wesley, "Soldiers of Christ, Arise," 1739.