

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-23-14 PM NOTES
"DIAGNOSING A SICK PRAYER LIFE" (PART 7)
EPHESIANS 6:10-18

Review:

- I. An Examination of Your Life
 - A. Are You Praying in Right Relationship with God?
 - B. Are You Praying with Clean Hands and a Pure Heart?
 - C. Are You Praying in Right Relationship with Others?
 - D. Are You Praying from an Abiding Life?
- II. An Examination of Your Prayers
 - A. Are You Praying with the Right Motive?
 - B. Are You Praying for and in the Will of God?
 - C. Are You Praying in Jesus' Name?
 - D. Are You Praying in Faith?
 - E. Are You Praying with Intensity?
- III. An Examination of Your Persistence
 - A. Are You Approaching Prayer as Work?
 - B. Are You Praying Through?
 - C. Are You Approaching Prayer as Warfare?

"The Christian is *against* something and something is *against* the Christian. As believers we are the objects of organized assaults by unseen forces, a hierarchy of invisible powers in rebellion against God. Paul identifies sinister opponents as 'principalities,' 'powers,' 'rulers,' and 'spiritual wickedness.'" —Ron Dunn

"In Eden, God decreed enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. Because of this, the law of strife became the law of life for the human race." —Arthur Matthews

"The history of the saints in every age is one of conflict. The pathway the disciple treads as he follows his Lord is one of certain warfare." —Arthur Matthews

"It is time we sought God's definition of a closed door and forget some of our own. When we hear the wolves howling, we think we have to rush for cover, lest we get hurt. Jesus saw things the other way. He said to His disciples, 'I send you as sheep into the midst of wolves.' We are not justified in arguing that a door is closed just because danger is threatening. Paul's reasoning endorses the Savior's remarks. He says, 'Buy up the opportunity *because* the days are evil.'" —Arthur Matthews

1. The Admonishment to Warfare (vv. 10-11)

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) "Let us therefore come **boldly** to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 10:19 (NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, having **boldness** to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Daniel 10:13 (NKJV) "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia."

Jude 1:9 (NKJV) "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"

a. Be Strong in the Lord (v. 10)

Ephesians 6:10 (HCSB) "Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength."

b. Stand Against the Enemy (vv. 11,13-17)

Ephesians 4:27 (NKJV) "nor give place to the devil."

2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV) "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

James 4:7 (NKJV) “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye 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.* (George Duffield, Jr.)

1) The Belt of Truth—**Ephesians 6:14a (ESV)** “Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...”

John 17:17b (ESV) “...your word is truth.”

2) The Breastplate of Righteousness—**Ephesians 6:14b (ESV)** “...having put on the breastplate of Righteousness.”

3) The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace—**Ephesians 6:15 (ESV)** “and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”

4) The Shield of Faith—**Ephesians 6:16 (ESV)** “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.”

2 Corinthians 10:5b (ESV) “...take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

5) The Helmet of Salvation—**Ephesians 6:17a (ESV)** “and take the helmet of salvation...”

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (ESV) “But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

6) The Sword of the Spirit—**Ephesians 6:17b (ESV)** “...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

2. The Adversary in the Warfare (v. 18)

3. The Arena of the Warfare (v. 18)

a. The Frequency of Warfare Prayer (v. 18a)

b. The Power of Warfare Prayer (v. 18b)

Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV) “²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*”

Zechariah 12:10b (NKJV) “...the Spirit of grace and supplication...”

c. The Alertness of Warfare Prayer (v. 18c)

Mark 13:33b (NKJV) “...watch and pray...”

d. The Perseverance of Warfare Prayer (v. 18d)

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV) “¹⁴Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

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C. Are You Approaching Prayer as Warfare?

One of the fundamental things missing in most Christian’s prayer life is a “warfare paradigm”. Your paradigm is the lens through which you see life. The word “paradigm” is very similar to one’s worldview. Your paradigm determines how you perceive reality. A wartime paradigm is a worldview that understands that we have an enemy who seeks to destroy and divert us from our God given tasks. When opposition comes, a person with a wartime paradigm isn’t surprised; he expects it. Let me be very clear that the paradigm presented in the Bible is a wartime paradigm. The problem is that most Christians are shocked when their obedience to God puts them in the middle of a battle. One preacher said, “It you are not running head-on into the devil every day, it is because you are going the same way he is.” I believe that is true. The surrendered Christian life is not a spectator sport viewed from a safe distance. It is warfare and there are wounds and there are casualties. Ron Dunn said it well: “The Christian is *against* something and something is *against* the Christian. As believers we are the objects of organized assaults by unseen forces, a hierarchy of invisible powers in rebellion against God. Paul identifies sinister opponents as ‘principalities’, ‘powers’, ‘rulers’, and ‘spiritual wickedness.’” I have a little devotional book on spiritual warfare entitled, *Born for Battle* by Arthur Matthews. I have read it 8 times over the years. Allow me to give you a few short quotes from this book. “In Eden, God decreed enmity between the serpent’s seed and the seed of the woman. Because of this, the law of strife became the law of life for the human race” [Page 11]. “The history of the saints in every age is one of conflict. The pathway the disciple treads as he follows his Lord is one of certain warfare” [Page 13]. Here is a great quote on missions in dangerous places: “It is time we sought God’s definition of a closed door and forget some of our own. When we hear the wolves howling, we think we have to rush for cover, lest we get hurt. Jesus saw things the other way. He said to His disciples, ‘I send you as sheep into the midst of wolves.’ We are not justified in arguing that a door is closed just because danger is threatening. Paul’s reasoning endorses the Savior’s remarks. He says, ‘Buy up the opportunity *because* the days are evil” [Page 127].

One of the reasons that most prayer lives are so sick is that they see prayer only as a way of getting things from God to make their life here more comfortable instead of a weapon in a cosmic war with real casualties. In Ephesians 6:10-18 the word “against” is used 6 times! The word “wrestle” in verse 12 in New Testament times referred to a contest that was waged until the death of one of the combatants. In the “milder” matches, the loser’s eyes were gouged out. In this deadly battle, we often forget that “This is

war!” We lay down our sword, take off our armor and the enemy catches us by surprise and we fall. This is real war and there are real casualties.

In order to answer the question, “Are you approaching prayer as warfare?” we must look at the primary passage (not the only passage) that deals with warfare for a follower of Christ.

1. The Admonishment to Warfare (V10-11)

One of the things that we will see when we get to verse 18 is that this whole passage is carried out through prayer. The warfare takes place primarily in prayer. The armor is put on by prayer. We stand against the enemy through prayer. The warfare is prayer! If we miss this element of prayer, we miss most of what prayer is really all about and we will stop when opposition comes. This explains why Satan marshals all of his forces to keep us from praying according to the way laid out in this passage. I am so thankful for the admonition in **Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)** “Let us therefore come **boldly** to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We don’t come slinking into the presence of God. **Hebrews 10:19 (NKJV)** “Therefore, brethren, having **boldness** to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus”. We must battle, but we have the right to boldly come into the holy of holies, into the throne room of God because of the blood of Christ. Neither Satan nor all the devils of hell can keep us from the throne of grace and the holy of holies where the manifest presence of God dwells. But this fact does not mean that war is not involved. Even the angels who do God’s bidding face warfare as they carry out God’s plan. We see that in **Daniel 10:13 (NKJV)** an angel speaks saying, “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia [obviously Satan or one of his demons] withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes [archangel], came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.” We see the battle with the holy angels in **Jude 1:9 (NKJV)** “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil...” We will not escape warfare. We are compared to soldiers in several places, and a soldier’s job is to fight the enemy. Quit whining when you seem to face obstacles and attempts to get you to turn away. Expect it!

There are two things that we focus on in this warfare that we have been called to.

a. Be Strong in the Lord (V10)

Notice that Paul admonishes us to be strong, but don’t make the horrible costly mistake of trying to be strong in your own strength. Notice that our strength is in the Lord and in the power of His might. This admonition requires that we must humble ourselves and confess that apart from the enabling grace of God, the strength of the Lord, we will fall. Satan and his demons laugh at our strength, but they quake at the strength of the Lord. **Ephesians 6:10 (HCSB)** “Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength.” It is through prayer that we go to the Lord for strength – His strength for the battle.

b. Stand Against the Enemy (V11, 13-17)

The word “stand” is a key word in this passage. It was a military word that meant to hold a critical position in an attack. It is translated “stand your ground” in one translation” (TCNT). There is a resolve involved in warfare. It is a resolve to stand your ground won by Christ in His strength. The fact that it is in His strength does not mean that resolve is not required on our part. When we fail to stand, we are doing what **Ephesians 4:27 (NKJV)** calls giving “...place to the devil.” The NIV calls that giving a “foothold to the devil”. This standing is not a Sunday School party. It is a literal and a real battle! Even though we fight in the Lord’s strength, there are wounds. There are even casualties. It calls for endurance on our part. **2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV)** “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

One reason that we need the power of the Lord to stand is that the enemy is sly. Ephesians 6:11 speaks of the “wiles” of the devil. The Greek word is the word that we get “strategy” from. It speaks of the devil’s methods. His method always involves lies and deceit.

Before we look at the specifics, let me say a few more things about this spiritual warfare. **James 4:7 (NKJV)** “Therefore submit to God [we must place ourselves completely under God’s authority]. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The Greek word for “resist” is very close in meaning to the word translated “stand”. It involves a resolute decision to not run or waver in the battle. Let me share with you something that has perplexed me over the years. There are some people who are involved in life controlling sins such as drugs, alcohol, pornography, greed, bitterness against someone who has wronged

them, etc. They claim to be Christians. They hear Scriptural truth about deliverance in Christ – reckoning themselves dead to sin, accepting by faith their identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection – and then appropriating the fullness of the Holy Spirit they forgive the person that wronged them, they are set free from addictions and begin to walk in the freedom that is theirs in Christ. If they slip, they immediately repent and begin to once again walk with God. Others who also profess to be saved have the same life controlling sin and hear the same Scriptures and say all the right things, but they never change. Their addictions, the bitterness, the “victim mentality” keeps coming back and controls them once again. I’ve known some who are in their 9th or 10th round of this sin cycle and seem to be no closer to a solution. What is the difference? I feel sure that the most common difference in the two outcomes is that many of those who never walk in victory have never been saved. However, that is not the only reason. I believe that the difference is that the first group that begins to walk in victory have come to the realization that this life is war! They have completely submitted themselves to God, resolutely resisted the devil, and made a firm “whatever it costs” resolve to resist the devil. They are constantly aware that they are in a battle and they have resolved in the Lord’s strength to stand, submit, and resist!

For the next few minutes, I want to look at the armor we put on to stand against the devil. In just about 4 weeks we are going to begin a several month study of the book of Ephesians (verse by verse) and at that time we will go more in depth on the armor. In this message, we will settle for a quick summary of this enablement to stand against the strategies or the wiles of the Devil. Remember that the way we put this armor on is through prayer. FYI, we sing about how the armor is put on:

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye 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.*

Let’s look at the specific armor that the Lord has given us:

1) The Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14a (ESV) “Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...” The soldier’s belt held everything together (the sword, the breastplate, and the tunic). It is truth that holds everything together. Jesus said in **John 17:17b (ESV)** “...your word is truth.” With the symbolism of the sword we will see the truth of God’s word as an offensive weapon. Here, truth is a defensive weapon. We are to be so saturated with the truth that Satan’s lies are immediately detected. The Word acts in our mind as a lie detector. When we hear false doctrine, alarms go off.

2) The Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14b (ESV) “...having put on the breastplate of righteousness”. For a believer, we are righteous before a holy God in Christ’s imputed righteousness. **1 Corinthians 1:30b (ESV)** “...you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us ... righteousness...” When we rest in the righteousness of Christ that is ours by faith, the arrows of accusation about our sins that are under the blood of Christ cannot penetrate through the breastplate. Bringing up your past is one of Satan’s main tactics.

3) The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

Ephesians 6:15 (ESV) “and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.” If you have never been in the military, you may not be aware of the importance of a soldier’s shoes or boots. I have read that historically, more soldiers have been immobilized by foot problems than have gone down by bullets. Paul compares the soldier’s boots to “the gospel [good news] of peace”. I think that it refers to both kinds of peace that a Christian can experience in Christ. First, it is the peace with God that is ours in Christ. In a sense the shoes would be the assurance that the barrier that separated you from God and put enmity between you and God has been removed. If Satan can get a believer to doubt their salvation, he has destroyed their effectiveness in the battle. The second kind of peace is the

peace of God. This is that fruit of the Spirit that allows us to rest in the sovereignty and goodness of God even when there is turmoil all around us.

4) The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16 (ESV) “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one”. The flaming darts or arrows of the evil one are the lies that come into our minds from the enemy. The Bible tells us that Satan can implant thoughts into our mind that sound like they originate with us. We are to extinguish them with faith in the truth of God’s word. In other words we believe what God says about us rather than what the accuser says about us. That is why we are told in **2 Corinthians 10:5b (ESV)** “...take every thought captive to obey Christ”.

5) The Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17a (ESV) “and take the helmet of salvation...” What part of salvation does the helmet of salvation illustrate? I think that it is referring to that part of salvation that is yet future – when we will be saved from the very presence of sin. We can get weary in the constant warfare that we face, but we rest in the fact that one day we will be taken home and the battle will be over. We read in **1 Thessalonians 5:8 (ESV)** But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on... for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

6) The Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17b (ESV) “...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. This is the only offensive weapon we have been given and it is enough! Just as Jesus when He was tempted in the wilderness quoted from the book of Deuteronomy to answer every accusation of the evil one, even so we come against the enemy of our souls with specific passages of the Word of God.

2. The Adversary in the Warfare (V11b-12)

Our adversary is Satan and an innumerable host of demon spirits that followed Satan in his rebellion against God that is recorded in Isaiah 14:12-15. In verse 12, the ones we wrestle against are various demon subordinates to Satan who like him are not flesh and blood. Verse 12 describes various layers and rankings of demon spirits that are organized by Satan like an army with him as the commander in chief. These are our adversaries. These are the created but fallen spiritual beings that we war against.

3. The Arena of the Warfare (V18)

After informing us that we are in a battle that will not cease until we go to be with the Lord, and then describing exactly who the real enemy is and the armor He has given us for the battle, Paul tells us where the bulk of the battle takes place – it takes place in prayer. The warfare is primarily prayer. Prayer does not just get us ready for the warfare; prayer is the warfare.

The two words for prayer in verse 18 (prayer and supplication) give us two emphases of prayer. The word translated “prayer” refers to general requests. The word supplication is more specific. Prayer (as it is used here) would be a request like, “Lord will you give us souls to be saved every Sunday”. Supplication would be, “Lord would you save Susie’s husband who says that he is coming to church today.”

a. The Frequency of Warfare Prayer (V18a)

“Praying always” refers to living in an atmosphere of prayer. It means we are carrying on an ongoing conversation with the Lord. As thoughts start flooding our minds, we pray, “Lord, that thought was not from you because it contradicts Your Word. I now lift up the shield of faith and take this thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” We hear a person say something about a passage in Scripture and we pray, “Lord, that doesn’t sound right; enable me to understand the real meaning of it.” If warfare is constant, prayer needs to be constant. It may be as simple as, “Oh Lord help me”.

b. The Power of Warfare Prayer (V18b)

That is not speaking of a private prayer language or praying in some kind of trance. It is prayer that is guided and energized by the Holy Spirit. Satan and his demons tremble at Spirit led, Spirit energized prayers. Praying in the Spirit is also praying in accordance with the Spirit inspired Word of God. When we are praying in the Spirit, He guides us into what to pray for that will be in the will of God. **Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)** “²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot

be uttered. ²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” The Holy Spirit is called in **Zechariah 12:10b (NKJV)** “...the Spirit of grace and supplication...” To pray with power, we join our petitions with His.

c. The Alertness of Warfare Prayer (V18c)

“Watchful” means being alert; it literally means “lying sleepless”. Jesus told His disciples in **Mark 13:33b (NKJV)** “... watch and pray...” The power of warfare praying comes in praying in the Spirit.

d. The Perseverance of Warfare Praying (V18d)

We have talked about perseverance earlier in this series. Don’t quit even when it seems dry and seems that God is not there. Sometimes that is a test of your faith. Persevere when you don’t see immediate results. Persevere when you feel the attacks intensifying. Never give up.

CONCLUSION

Let me make it practical. Put on your armor daily. Go through the pieces of the armor. This is how you practice warfare praying for your family and friends. Dress you children with the armor every day. Pray this way for your spouse. You can pray in faith that God will hear because when you are praying God’s word in its context and correct interpretation, you are praying in the will of God and as we read in **1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)** “¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Don’t give up in the warfare! The warfare is primarily carried out through prayer.