

Say Your Prayers, Man! – *Ephesians 6:18*

Introduction – “*Faith is ever the mother of prayer*” – Calvin. In these verses we see the truth of Calvin’s pithy statement. Having put on the whole armor of God, Paul calls the Christian to prayer. Having put on Christ (by grace alone through faith alone), we are called to partake with God in holy warfare. And that warfare is the work of prayer. This is the primary way in which we individually and corporately reign with Christ (2:6). We join with Him by means of the Holy Spirit, in the counsels of the Trinity, telling the Father what needs to be done.

All (kinds) of Prayer and Supplication – Loosely, we could distinguish prayers and supplications into general praying and specific requests. Paul prays generally for the Ephesians (1:15ff) and requests specifically for himself (6:19f). But his point is that, considering almost every human relational activity listed in Ephesians 4-5, and the spiritual battle that is behind all strife (6:12), every situation you find yourself in requires prayer. Prayer for you, prayer for the others; general prayers and specific requests – and all kinds of them.

Praying Always (i.e. “Praying in Every Opportunity”) – The phrase has similar words that translated Eph 5:16a, “*redeeming the time*” which we saw could be understood, “*take advantage of every opportunity*.” The motif of the armor of God remains and so we learn that in every situation the attack is imminent (we are at war), the enemy’s schemes are cunning, and God’s power and insight are needed (and so consider imitating 1:15-22). See every prayer as an opportunity; and every circumstance as ripe for prayer. Pray “*for all the saints*” and so every brother or sister we know can be impacted by our prayers. Consider again how Paul prayed generally for all the saints in 3:14ff and how we can let that shape our prayers for everyone we know.

Praying in the Spirit – This is not about losing control and falling into some ecstatic frenzy. Having been sealed by means of the Spirit (1:13), both Jew and Gentile have been promised that their access to the Father is in the power of the Spirit (2:18). Filled with the Spirit, we are to find ourselves singing the songs of the Spirit in prayer (5:18-19). Our prayers are offered in the armor of God (which is to say, in Christ, or in His name) and by the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells believers (Rom 8:15-16, Gal 4:6), giving strength in weakness and interceding on behalf of the saints (Rom 8:26-27). Our prayers are carried by the breath of God in us; in some sense we are joining the prayers of the Spirit as we pray.

Being Watchful to This End – “This end” is referring to the spiritual battle that we are in (again, 6:12). “Being watchful” is a charge to be vigilant like a soldier who knows the next attack is just around the corner. But it is also a charge to, wearing that armor, stand in unshakeable faith that an answer is coming. Micah says, “*I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me*” (Micah 7:7).

With All Perseverance and Supplication – Paul charges the soldiers to keep shooting, more supplications, more specifics, more pleading. “*Perseverance*” could be translated, “*obstinate persistence*” and we are reminded of the stubborn persistence Jesus calls us to in our prayers (right after teaching the Lord’s prayer) in Luke 11:5-13. This is Christ’s catechism on prayer: keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking – stand, stand, stand. We are to learn what it means to strive and labor fervently and wrestle in prayer (Rom 15:30, Col 4:12, Eph 6:12). That section in Luke ends with the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and while there was a historical application of this for the apostles and the church (Acts 1:8), there is more. The Nicene Creed teaches us that the Holy Spirit is “the Lord and Giver of Life.” All of life and health and every good come to us from the Father through the Spirit. The ministry of Christ comes through the Spirit. Every good gift, every expansion of the kingdom, every personal need met, every bit of grace in every trial, comes from and through the Holy Spirit. And what does Jesus promise in Luke 11:13?

The Hard Work of Prayer – Paul likens prayer to the activities on a battlefield. Prayer is hard because prayer is work. Prayer is hard because we get lazy, tired, and sorrowful in our trials. Years ago in our study in Luke, I noted how many times Jesus went away to pray and noted that if the Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we. In the Garden of Gethsemane we see Jesus praying “*as He was accustomed*,” and the disciples “*sleeping from sorrow*,” as we are accustomed. Study Luke 22:39-46 and you will notice that Jesus rose from that prayer time strengthened by an angel and ready to serve His Father at all costs.

How many commands have we received in Ephesians 4-5? How much do we need to be strengthened by the angels, the messengers, of what God has already done and promised from Ephesians 1-3? How many saints around you need those prayers on their behalf?

Q. Why is prayer necessary for Christians? A. Because it is the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us, and because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with hearty sighing unceasingly beg them of Him and thank Him for them (Heidelberg Catechism, Q 116). But more than that, know this: God is pleased and glorified when we come to Him needy, dependent, and with faith that He is the One who can and gladly will supply all our needs.

“*Faith is ever the mother of prayer*” – Having believed, so pray.