

“Fighting Through Prayer”
Ephesians 6:18-20
Sermon Series: “The Fight Of Your Life”

Introduction:

- Petra story and song
- Bodybuilder/African Chief (TE)
- Typed material
- The fight behind the fight and how it relates to prayer

Prayer occupies a huge place in the book of Ephesians. By way of comparison, the book of Romans has 433 verses with 56 verses dedicated to prayer. The book of Ephesians, much shorter than Romans, has 155 verses and 31 verses on prayer or our prayers. Why does Paul focus on prayer so much in this letter?

Clinton Arnold provides a simple, straightforward reason: “Prayer is the essence of spiritual warfare and the most important means by which believers are strengthened by God.” There is a grammatical connection between verses 14 and 18: “stand...praying.” The command in verse 14 is to stand. Putting on each piece of the armor explains how we stand in warfare. That is, we are to stand by putting on the armor. However, when we get to verse 18, we learn that we stand by putting on the armor, and we stand by praying. But there is more to it than that. Prayer is not a seventh piece of the armor but the means by which each piece is effectively employed. No doubt, Paul mentions prayer last for the sake of emphasis. The passage that begins with “be strong in the Lord” (v. 10) ends with “praying always with all prayer and supplication” (v. 18). Prayer is the critical component of our warfare, saturating each piece of our armor. Joel Beeke explains: “Prayer is critical because every piece of Christian armor is useless without it. Prayer is like oil. Just as every part of an engine is useless without oil, so every part of Christian warfare is vain without prayer....

We can only appropriate the armor through prayer. The armor of God does not consist of literal pieces we can put on; rather, it consists of spiritual truths that the Christian appropriates through prayer. Prayer

imparts effectiveness to the armor and employs God's strength, enabling us to stand. Arnold notes, "Paul is presenting prayer as foundational for the deployment of all the other weapons."

Main Idea: The fight against our spiritual enemy is waged through prayer.

Characteristics of Prayer:

1. We are to pray continually.

Verse 18 tells us to pray "always." This means "on every occasion" or "at all seasons" (Wuest). How do we do this? It can happen by starting the day in prayer and then abiding in Jesus, which means to stay in fellowship with Him. At any moment then, we can also call on the Lord in prayer.

In 1982, the Today show in New York City scheduled an interview with Reverend Billy Graham. When he arrived at the studio, one of the program's producers informed Graham's assistant that a private room had been set aside for the reverend for prayer before the broadcast. The assistant thanked the producer for the thoughtful gesture, but told him that Mr. Graham would not need the room. The producer was a bit shocked that a world-famous Christian leader would not wish to pray before being interviewed on live national television.

Graham's assistant responded, "Mr. Graham started praying when he got up this morning, he prayed while eating breakfast, he prayed on the way over in the car, and he'll probably be praying all the way through the interview."

2. We are to pray with varied types of prayer.

- Faith
- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

3. We are to pray with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Wuest says, “In the sphere of the Spirit (that is directed and empowered by the Spirit).”

Romans 8:14-15, 26-27

-Highlights the importance of being filled with the Spirit (**praying during Mollie’s surgery**)

4. We are to pray vigilantly.

“Watchful” means to be "sleepless, keep awake, to be attentive, vigilant.”

-Andy Griffith video

-Robin and I falling asleep during prayer

5. We are to pray with perseverance.

We are to continue on in prayer without giving up. Perseverance means “to give constant attention to a thing, to give unremitting care to a thing” (Wuest).

-Montvue praying for Junior Owens for so long

6. We are to pray for other Christians.

7. We are to pray for the proclamation of the gospel.

Spurgeon states: “The sinew of the minister’s strength under God is the supplication of his church. We can do anything and everything if we have a praying people around us. But when our dear friends and fellow helpers cease to pray the Holy Ghost hastens to depart and “Ichabod” is written on the place of assembly... What can we do without your prayers? They link us with the omnipotence of God. Like the lightning rod, they pierce the clouds and bring down the might and mysterious power from on high... The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleasers and lovers of souls and by his grace we will shake all London from end to end.”

In an interview with Matt Woodley, Leighton Ford, Billy Graham’s brother-in-law said in response to the following question, “**How did Billy feel, experience, talk about, or deal with spiritual opposition?**”

I'm sure there was demonic resistance to what he was doing, especially in his role as a preacher?"

“He was very aware of that” [then talked about spiritual safeguards they had in place].

“There was also, before he went to a city for a crusade, a huge emphasis on prayer, especially in those early days. The churches would be called to pray. There would be prayer meetings held, sometimes all night prayer meetings. I remember going to some of those in London and New York where the churches would give themselves in prayer. So when he was preaching, he would know that there had been great prayer because this was a spiritual battle, and that he specifically was being prayed for.

I remember particularly in Atlanta, Georgia, there was a crusade that was led by a local businessman, a friend of ours Tom Cousins, who had asked Billy to come because he wanted this to draw the churches of Atlanta together. We were at Tom's house the weekend before the crusade started, and Billy said to Tom, “Now, Tom, you've done a grand job organizing this crusade, the best I've ever seen almost in any city, but I want you to know that the devil is going to be at work and you need to keep praying.” Tom told me later that he kind of thought, He believes in the devil? Because Tom was not at that time very biblically aware. He believes in the devil? And he kind of poo-pooed it. But during that crusade, if anything could go wrong it did go wrong. The buses that were to bring the people to the meetings, went on strike. The sound system had great problems in the stadium. After the crusade was over, Tom was asked by his pastor, “What did this crusade mean to you?” And Tom said, “I've come to believe in the devil.” He said, “A lot of people come to believe in Christ through these crusades, I saw that the devil was at work.” So the prayer that Billy thought was necessary was so important.

I also remember very vividly before that 1957 New York Crusade, the team went off to a retreat just north of New York City, and there was a Sunday morning worship service. One of the associate evangelists gave

a message and told a story about someone who drew a circle on the floor and knelt down on that floor and said, “God, start a revival and start it in that circle,” and that's how he kind of ended his little message that morning. And this associate said to the Billy Graham team, I want us to pray that prayer, let's get in the circle and say, “God, start it in that circle.” The first person up there was Billy. And not as a show, but he was just on his knees and on his face before God, and so there was that deep sense it was a spiritual struggle. And knowing that if God took his hand off, the anointing would be gone.

I don't think I can say how important it was that he would say the first three things in preparing for an evangelistic crusade are: One—pray. Two—pray. Three—pray. He genuinely believed that.”

Conclusion: If you are not a Christian, call on the name of Jesus and ask Him to save you. If you are, get down on your knees and fight like a man or woman.

- Prayer Guides
- Call to Prayer
- Share the Gospel