

PP This is War!-Prayer

Part 8-Ephesians 6:18-20 (p. 979 pew Bible)

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The devil has limited strategies, and the names the bible gives him reveals many of them

'devil' means both slanderer and divider

Jesus called him **'Beelezebub'**, a name that means the Lord of the flies, which was a pagan idol that was supposed to protect from swarms of flies, but the Jews understood it as the god of filth and impurity

He also has the name **'Belial'**, a false god that diverted people from worshiping Jehovah

He is called the **'evil one'**, the Greek word for absolute corruption, as well as the **'angel of the bottomless pit'**

Paul titles him the **'tempter'** while Jesus referred to him as the **'prince of this world'**

He is the **'father of lies'** and the **'accuser of the brethren'**

His names show his strategies and he works without stop to steal, kill and destroy

And that is where Paul takes us as we conclude our study on the armor of God

We have been taught by Paul the 6 pieces of our Spiritual Armor

PP The Belt of truth is the confidence that God's Word is supreme, true and good

PP The Breastplate of Righteousness is the firm belief that we are right with God through Christ

PP The Shoes for your feet give us unshakeable confidence that Christ will care for us in any and all circumstances

PP The Shield of Faith allows us to stand against the enemy's attacks knowing that no weapon formed against us will prevail because of the power of God

PP The Helmet of Salvation is the firm conviction that the God Who saved us, and Who is sanctifying us, will doubtless one glorify us for eternity

PP The Sword of the Spirit is the greatest weapon possible as by its truth, the lies of the devil are shattered

Can I ask for a moment, are you struggling with your boss, or the employees under you?

Are you in turmoil over your children, young or old?

Are you angry with your parents, tired of them telling you what to do?

Are you failing in the area of purity, or anger and bitterness?

Are you being overcome by drinking, or drugs, or other addictions?

Notice that the armor of God teaching follows chapters 4-6 which deals with all I just mentioned

These struggles play out in the physical world, but their roots are in the **'heavenly places'** (6:12)

How do we develop the ability to see into the heavenly places and stand against our enemy?

The answer is we must learn to be **"praying at all times in the Spirit"** Ephesians 6:18a

PP 1-Prayer opens our eyes to the spiritual war that rages all around us

You are perhaps familiar with the story in 1 Kings 6, where Elisha, the prophet of God awoke to find that the Syrian army had surrounded the city he was in to capture him

Elisha's servant, terrified, asked him what they were going to do

Elisha prayed, first specifically for his servant

PP **"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."**

Then Elisha prayed and said, 'O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.' So the

LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 Kings 6:15-17

Prayer opens the eyes to the spiritual world that is playing out in the physical world
 You may not see chariots of fire all around you, but your spiritual eyes of faith will be opened
 and you will know that God is at work and your heart will be stilled of fear
 You see, prayer works like the radio that every military unit has, to receive warnings from
 headquarters as well as to ask for support
 It's like binoculars that enable you to see the enemy massing and moving against you and others
 Like radar that shows incoming fiery darts and attacks, and gives you time to get the anti-
 ballistic shield of faith in place
 Over 100 years ago, Charles Elliot wrote the words to this hymn:

*Christian, seek not yet repose, Cast thy dreams of ease away; Thou art in the midst of
 foes; Watch and pray. Principalities and power, Mustering their unseen array, Wait for
 thy unguarded hours; Watch and pray. Watch as if on that alone Hung the issue of the
 day, Pray that help may be sent down; Watch and pray.*

So we are to be **'praying at all times'**, echoing **1 Thessalonians 5:17**, **"pray without ceasing"**
 But in Ephesians, Paul intentionally used a Greek word for **'times'**, which is **Kairos**
PP Notice Paul didn't use another Greek word for time, *kronos*, which refers to *general time*
 You might say to someone, *Let's get together and do lunch some time*: no specific time in mind
 Many have understood Paul to say here that we must learn to pray all the time, through the day
 But Paul didn't use *Kronos*, he used **PP Kairos**, a very distinct moment in time
Let's meet tomorrow at 12:30 for lunch, specifically point in time
 Look back at **Ephesians 6:13**, where we will have an **'evil day'** when all hell will break loose
 on your marriage, your family, your work, your health, your faith, your beliefs
 There will be specific and severe attacks from our enemy, so be praying at all times, get that
 early warning system up so that you will not **PP "be surprised at the fiery trial when it
 comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."**

1 Peter 4:12

We saw this with Jesus, Who prayed without ceasing, and said, **PP "Simon, Simon, behold,
 Satan demanded (intensely asked) to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I
 have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again,
 strengthen your brothers."** **Luke 22:31-32**

Peter was a believer, justified, declared righteous, and Satan had lost his authority, and could do
 nothing against him without first seeking permission
 Jesus said to him, My Father has given Satan permission, but I have prayed for you so that in the
 time of his attack, the devil will not be successful in destroying your faith
 Jesus saw the attack coming, prayed specifically that Peter's faith would not fail in that moment
 Unfortunately, not even two hours later, Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying,
 and hours later denied knowing Christ, abandoned Him and fled into the darkness
 It wasn't long before Jesus came and restored Peter and his faith endured the rest of his life

Prayer opens our spiritual eyes to heavenly places, where all of Satan's strategies are planned
 The Syrian king asked, who keeps telling Israel of our attacks, and the answer was Elisha
 The devil asks who keeps telling that Christian of his strategies, and the answer is the Holy Spirit
 And He does so as God's children are **'praying at all times'**

PP 2-Prayer moves God to act

“To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:18b-20

The Apostle Paul, the greatest theologian in the New Testament, asked people to pray for him, specifically for boldness to declare the gospel, twice!

We don't ask for what we have, we ask for what we lack, and the mighty Paul needed boldness, so he asked the Christians at Ephesus to pray that God would supply it

He is in prison, under guard, and you wonder, did God give what they asked for Paul?

PP ***“it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Philippians 1:13-14***

There is great power when we pray for each other in our spiritual battles

And we are about to see how this occurs in prayer by turning to Daniel 10 (p. 748 pew bible)

As you turn to Daniel 10, I'll provide the backdrop for you

God's people had been defeated, taken into bondage to Babylon and Jerusalem was destroyed

For 70 years, as God had foretold, they were exiles there, but there came a day when Babylon

itself was conquered, and the ruler now was Cyrus of Persia, also called Darius the Mede

In the first year after conquering Babylon, he permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and

50,000 of them do, only to find it a desolate city, surrounded by powerful enemies

What was joyful celebration of restoring the Temple, turned quickly to work-halting despair

They rebuilt the altar in the Temple of God, but for 15 years they halted because of opposition

It was a deeply discouraging time for God's people, and now-aged Daniel, still in Babylon, was

greatly troubled over it, and he began to pray and fast for his people in Jerusalem

Christian, expect great trouble after great victory

Expect to be attacked after salvation, after baptism, after a wedding, after victory over sin

It happened with Elijah, David, Paul, Moses, and we see it happen regularly today!

The enemy will respond when God moves in powerful triumph in our lives

Daniel 9:1-19, Daniel is praying to God for Israel, for ***‘the holy hill of God’***, for Jerusalem

He is confession his sin, and his people's sins, for he knows, **PP** ***“If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Psalm 66:18***

And suddenly, verse 21, he was visited by the angel Gabriel who explained God's Word

PP ***“O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding. At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved.” 9:22-23***

From the first word Daniel prayed, God sent Gabriel to help, and he came in ***‘swift flight’ 9:21***

There are times when we pray and God's response comes swiftly, beautiful when it happens

But other times, it seems like our prayer isn't even heard, and we're about to see sometimes why

Two years has passed when **Daniel 10** opens, and Daniel is around 85 years old when he had

heard of ***‘a great conflict’*** that had fallen on Jews that had returned

The opposition was so fierce that they halted the restoring work, and fallen into despair

Daniel mourned and observed a partial fast, praying for 3 weeks for his people in Jerusalem
At the end of 3 weeks of this, while standing on the river bank, he saw and heard a being so gloriously great that he faceplanted in a faint, **verse 9**

I believe that was Christ he saw, but another being helps him get to his feet, and spoke to him

PP ***“Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.”*** Daniel 10:12-14

As in chapter 9, the moment Daniel began to pray, God heard and sent help

This time, God’s help was opposed and delayed, for the *‘prince of the kingdom of Persia’*, the demonic ruler of the most powerful nation on earth set up a barricade

In the future, the *‘prince of Greece’ (10:20)* would come, empowering Alexander the Great

Do you wonder at Alexander’s military success, or Stalin’s, Hitler’s, or the power and influence of many godless organizations today?

PP ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”*** Ephesians 6:12

Friends, there are powerful demons assigned over regions, countries, institutions, companies

There is some form of hierarchy, levels of authority and power with their ranks

There are lesser and greater demons and they work to oppose God and His church

Their aim is to keep people in darkness, to frustrate the gospel, prevent the reign of Jesus Christ

This is why our first campus was started in downtown Easton, our next planned for the Slate Belt

This is why we took an extraordinary step of faith and started Restoring Hope Ministry in

Dungu, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Can your eyes see, in the Congo’s death of millions, the powers that are at work?

Every work of God is opposed, and there are strong rulers, authorities and powers over darkness

The battle is not easy, for even this powerful, angelic being was not able to break through until

‘Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help’ 10:13

Below our physical world, is a battle raging in the heavenly places and prayer opens our eyes to it, as well as moves God to do something about it

It was the prayer of Daniel that moved God to send this being to him, and what was he praying for?

He was praying for Jerusalem, and what did God do?

He answered by ending the Jewish people leaders and strength and power to rebuild the Temple, the city and the walls

He sent Zerrubabel, Haggai, Ezra, Nehemiah and turned the wrath of the Persian kings onto the heads of the enemies

Some of you might wonder, why pray?

If God knows everything and if God is sovereign and will ultimately perform His will, why bother praying?

Does it really make a difference?

PP *“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself...You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.” 2 Corinthians 1:8, 11*

God could do everything without us, but He has chosen to do it through us, by our prayers
Prayer moves Him to act!

Christian, how about you whose husband has hardened his heart against the Lord?

How about you parent, whose child has hardened her heart against the Lord?

How about the one who gets pulled into HR on charges of misconduct because of your faith?

You cried out to the Lord, and still the battle rages on, nothing seems to change

You pray for one week, two weeks, 5, 10, 20 years, yet still no change

Will you still persevere?

Will you ask other believers to pray for you?

Do you believe that God has heard these prayers from the very first word?

Do you understand that sometimes powerful beings can oppose for a time?

Do you trust that **PP** *“greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4*

PP *“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” James 5:16*

Put on your armor Christian, and pray!

PP *“Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees.” William Cowper*

Amen?

Pray