

ALL-PRAYER
Ephesians 6:18
Webnotes

...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. 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. (6:18-20)

Summary of all the ways God has blessed us in Christ:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (1:3)

- chosen before the foundation of the world (1:4)
- predestined for adoption (1:5)
- blessed and lavished with his grace (1:6,8)
- redeemed and forgiven (1:7; 4:32)
- have been shown the mystery of his will (1:9; 3:4-6)
- receivers of an inheritance (1:11)
- sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)
- greatly loved by God (2:4)
- made alive when we were spiritually dead (2:1-6)
- delivered from God's wrath (2:3)
- saved by grace (2:5,8)
- raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places (2:6)
- the workmanship of Christ, created by Him for doing good works (2:10)
- given God's own peace (2:14)
- brought near to God through the blood of Christ (2:13)
- given access to the Father (2:17)
- made citizens of God's kingdom and members of His family (2:19)
- built into God's own temple and the dwelling place of His Spirit (2:20-22)
- given confident access to God (3:12)
- made powerful beyond our imagination (3:20)
- given the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:3)
- individually and uniquely gifted by Christ (4:7)
- given a new self in God's holy likeness (4:24)
- beloved children (5:1)
- offered the fullness of the Holy Spirit (5:18)
- given instructions on how to make all relationships (family, work) what God intends for them to be (5:21-6:9)
- given God's full armor for engaging in warfare with Satan and his demonic forces (6:10-17)

Then, right here at the end of the whole teaching about spiritual armor, he gives one final charge – PRAY!

There is one word that gets repeated four times in v. 18 –

- Praying at all times
- With all prayer and supplication
- With all perseverance
- For all the saints

AT ALL TIMES

So having prescribed times for prayer is not a bad thing, whether it be early morning or while you're driving to work or after the rest of the family has gone to bed, whatever works best for you. Examples of people who had times of prayer:

Jesus:

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. Mark 1:35

Peter and John:

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. Acts 3:1

Daniel:

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. (Dan. 6:10)

But the prescribed times of prayer that you find in Jesus and Daniel and others only served to feed a lifestyle that breathed prayer throughout the hours of each day. Prescribed times of prayer are to serve as a disciplining and training tool to equip you with an attitude and posture of prayer that will go with you throughout the day.

So what Paul is telling us here is that, while God has given us everything we need, he still feels compelled at the very end of his letter to remind us that it all becomes empowered, if you will, it really becomes real for us, it takes full effect on an experiential, day-to-day basis, *only as we pray*. This is why his exhortation to prayer is the final word on everything that he has said thus far. We are to become a people who are "praying at all times".

Other examples:

Moses

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. Exodus 8:30

Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down. Numbers 11:2

And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Numbers 21:7

And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Deut. 9:20

And I prayed to the Lord, 'O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Deut. 9:26

King David

I call to God, and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice...God will hear and answer. Psalm 55:17, 19

Hezekiah

Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord. 2 Kings 20:2

For a majority of the people...had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "May the good Lord pardon everyone." 2 Chronicles 30:18
Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet prayed and cried to heaven. 2 Chronicles 32:20
In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the Lord, and he answered him. 2 Chronicles 32:24

Early church

"devoted themselves to prayer" Acts 2:42

Cornelius

There was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. Acts 2:42

Paul's admonitions:

Be constant in prayer. Romans 12:12

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:6

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 4:1

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Paul to Timothy:

I thank God whom I serve...as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 2 Timothy 1:3

Praying all the time. Taking an attitude and a mentality and a watchfulness and a readiness for prayer with us wherever we go, no matter what time of day it is. There is no time when prayer is not needed. We tend to live our lives as if most of the time we do not need prayer, which would go right along with the self-sufficiency that would say most of the time I do not need the armor of God. No, I need the armor of God *all the time*. The thought of praying at all times seems bothersome and unnecessary. But that's not what it was for the apostle Paul, or David or Hezekiah or Moses or the early church. Praying at all times means moving through the hours and minutes of one's day consciously mindful of having interaction and communication with God.

John MacArthur:

To pray at all times is to live in continual God consciousness, where everything we see and experience becomes a kind of prayer, lived in deep awareness of and surrender to our heavenly Father. To obey this exhortation means that, when we are tempted, we hold the temptation before God and ask for His help. When we experience something good and beautiful, we immediately thank the Lord for it. When we see evil around us, we pray that God will make it right and be willing to be used of Him to that end. When we meet someone who does not know Christ, we pray for God to pray that person to Himself and to use us to be a faithful witness. When we encounter trouble, we turn to God as our Deliverer. In other words, our life becomes a continually ascending prayer, a perpetual communing with our heavenly Father. To pray at all times is to constantly set our minds "on things that are above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). (John MacArthur, Ephesians, p. 380)

Another key phrase here – “praying at all times **in the Spirit**”. This isn’t talking about speaking in tongues when you pray or being knocked to the ground or any other type of dramatic manifestation. It means to pray in a manner that is consistent with the Spirit of Christ, to pray in the name of Christ, to pray in harmony with God’s will. It means to pray with complete reliance on the Holy Spirit because of our weakness in knowing how we ought to pray –

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

ALL PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

In other words, with all kinds of prayers and all types of supplications and petitions. As you go through the scriptures, you discover all kinds of prayers:

- **Confession** of sin
- **Provision** of food
- **Conception**
- **Protection** for enemies
- Intercession for others who had sinned – “I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.” Isaiah 6
- **Healing**
- **Desperation** – “O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!” Psalm 22
- **Consolation** - My eyes long for your promise; I ask, “When will you comfort me?” Psalm 119:82
- **Direction**
- **Success** - O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” Neh. 1:11
- **Anger** toward unrighteousness and wickedness – “If only you would slay the wicked, o God...Do I not hate those who hate you, o Lord, and abhor those who rise up against you. I have nothing but hatred for them.” Psalm 139
- **Confusion** – “why do the wicked prosper”?
- **Humbling** – “create in me a clean heart, o God”
- **Reflection and Meditation** – O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar...
- **Hope** – “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Ps. 27
- **Celebration** when the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt
- **Praise and Exaltation** – The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Luke 2:20
- **Thanksgiving** – Give thanks to the God of gods for his steadfast love endures forever. Ps. 136
- **Dedication**
- **Assurance** – O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me...But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. Psalm 3
- **Endurance** – My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! Psalm 119:28

ALL PERSEVERANCE

“To that end, keep alert with all perseverance”

Here’s the warfare imagery coming back into play. Keep alert. Be on the watch.

Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Keep alert, attentive, vigilant. And he says that we are to do this with all perseverance. So we’re to put on the armor of God and be praying at all times with alertness and with perseverance. Why? Because all of life is war. John Piper says, “You will not know what prayer is for until you know that life is war.”

*Probably the number one reason why prayer malfunctions in the hands of believers is that we try to turn a wartime walkie-talkie into a domestic intercom. Until you know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for. Prayer is for the accomplishment of a wartime mission. It is as though the field commander (Jesus) called in the troops, gave them a crucial mission (go and bear fruit), handed each of them a personal transmitter coded to the frequency of the General’s headquarters, and said, “Comrades, the general has a mission for you. He aims to see it accomplished. And to that end he has authorized me to give each of you personal access to him through these transmitters. If you stay true to his mission and seek his victory first, he will always be as close as your transmitter, to give tactical advice and to send air cover when you need it.” But what have millions of Christians done? We have stopped believing that we are in a war. No urgency, no watching, no vigilance. No strategic planning. Just easy peace and prosperity. And what did we do with the walkie talkie? We tried to rig it up as an intercom in our houses and cabins and boats and cars – not to call in fire power for conflict with a mortal enemy, but to ask for more comforts in the den. (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, p. 46)*

Where does intensity for God and for the things of God and for godliness and holiness and for the salvation of the lost and for the glory of Christ come from? The Bible would tell us that spiritual intensity comes when the Holy Spirit breathes into us the life and the heart of Christ himself, and that happens through prayer, when we pray for the church to be cleansed and purified and emboldened, when we pray for God to give us hearts that would seek after righteousness and hearts that would be touched by the needs all around us and hearts that would be burdened for lost people. It’s for these kinds of things that we need to personally experience the power of God in our prayers and to be devoted to such persevering prayer as Paul calls for here.

Next week we’ll look at the last “all” – praying for all the saints, and how Paul asked very specifically for prayer for himself.