

Combat Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-20

June 30, 2024

Our topic for today is prayer, and it's not just about prayer, but about the essential role of prayer and spiritual warfare. I'm following up on last week's sermon on the full armor of God. As I mentioned at the end of our time last week, I wanted to do a focused time on prayer this morning because if we make no progress in our praying, we will make no progress in our fighting, either. Prayer is what brings divine power onto the battlefield.

So we will begin today where we ended last time. I'm going to start by reading all that we covered last week, Ephesians 6:10-20. So if you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians, chapter 6. Find your way to verse 10, and we'll set the context for today's topic, which is about combat prayer, combat praying. Ephesians 6:10-20. Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord

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and in the might of his strength. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

“Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, also receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times with all prayer and petition in the Spirit, and to this end, being on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, as well as on my behalf, that words may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel—for which I am an ambassador in

chains—so that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.”

This passage is referred to as the passage on the “Full Armor of God.” It's appropriately titled that way because we see that term show up a couple of times in the passage. It's also called the *Believer's Armor*. I like that title because it reminds us that this armor belongs to believers and to believers only. It's believers who are covered in the full armor of God. This is how God covers his people. This is how God covers Christians with his own armor, which is the armor of virtues, virtues of truth and righteousness and reconciliation, peace, faith. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God itself. All these things are the armor for the believer and for the believer only.

And I just say that by way of reminder, so that we're, we know who we're talking about and we know who Paul is writing to. He's writing to believers in the Ephesian church. These are people who have acknowledged before a holy and righteous God their sinfulness, their lack of any qualification to come before

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God at all because of their sins. They are those who see that there is an eternal gap between themselves and a holy and righteous God, and that they are under his condemnation, just condemnation, because they've sinned against him. They know that they are not qualified. They know that they do not deserve any favor from God whatsoever. They know that they don't deserve to be a part of his church, don't deserve to be numbered among his people, don't deserve anything from God because of everything that God has already done for them, giving them life, breath, strength, goodness, family, joys, pleasures. All these things they have taken from God. They've not honored God as God or given thanks, and because of that, they are guilty and rightly condemned before a holy, perfect, righteous God.

And so they are left before him, helpless, without any hope in and of themselves, without any hope on this earth except that God has sent his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, very God of very God, as we just confessed this morning in the Nicene Creed, sent his Son Jesus Christ to be the Savior of all who repent and believe, all who acknowledge their sin before a holy and righteous God, all who bow the knee before Jesus Christ. God has seen fit to grant those salvation. He

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opens their eyes to the truth of their standing before him, opens their eyes to their true condition, that they are sinners in need of a, of a righteous Savior in Christ, and they turn and put their faith in Christ. And God is pleased to draw them near, to reconcile them through this Gospel of peace that Paul writes about in this passage.

And when God saves a sinner, and when God reconciles a sinner to himself, it's not part way; it's all the way. It's a full embrace. It's a full invitation to the entire storeroom of heaven, to all the treasures of heaven, to the armory of heaven, to pick and choose, pull all the things that God has for us to be used for our benefit, for our holiness, for our sanctification, for our growth to maturity. There is nothing that explains a church like ours or any individual Christian, true Christian, there is nothing to explain that person, their miraculous salvation and transformation by God through his Spirit and through his Word, nothing explains that except God himself. And so Paul writes to people who have counted themselves not righteous in and of themselves, but righteous in Christ. Paul writes to them and tells them about the panoply of God, the full armor of God that is available to each and every

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Christian. And we must clothe ourselves in that full armor every single day, every single day.

If we take note of Paul's command language in this passage we just read, the imperatives in the text, we see that he begins with two exhortations. "Be strengthened in the Lord," verse 10; and then "put on the full armor of God" in verse 11. The purpose of being strengthened, of putting on the full armor, as we see in verse 11, verse 13, is to resist in the evil day and to stand firm. So as we said last week, as we noted, this means resist temptation, do not give in to sin, do not fall into sin, but continue moving forward in righteous obedience. That's the command.

And this makes perfect sense, doesn't it? For battlefield imagery, for the Christian life, for any endeavor, it makes perfect sense because sin is what undermines everything. Take the most gifted, talented, equipped, trained; take the most accomplished and fruitful life, insert just one little scandal into the mix, and everything comes crumbling down, doesn't it?

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We've seen manifold evidence of this in our time. We know that if a man or a woman fails to attend to his heart or her heart, fails to attend to her thoughts or her tongue, or his habits, fails to do that by constantly weeding and cultivating the garden of the heart, constantly feeding the fruit of the Spirit with the Word of God as Moses warned Israel before entering in to possess the blessings of the Promised Land. He told them, "Be sure your sins will find you out." Nothing is hidden for long in God's economy.

So God has loaded us up, here, as Christian soldiers, giving us resources that we need to resist temptation and to stand firm. He opens up the armory, as it were, shows us his own armor and says, Go ahead, put it on. You'll find it's a perfect fit. And when we do put on his armor, we are covered with divine virtue, which is divine power, which provides comprehensive protection for any attack from the enemy.

There are two exhortations in that armor section, verses 14 and following. There's one in verse 14 and one in verse 17. We're to "stand firm," verse 14, by putting on several pieces of

armor, and the main command, there, to stand, and then three participles follow it: "having girded," "having put on," "having shod." And that's telling us how we're to stand. And then in verse 17, we are to take, in my translation, here, it's receive, but it's translated, take. We're to take the helmet, take the sword. And it's, then there's another participle, there; it's by praying that we enter into the battle. So the main command is take. And then the participles of verse 18, there are two of them, praying and being alert. That is how we go into the battle. That is how we do battle. That's how we engage the enemy, praying and being alert, or you could say praying and being watchful.

Those are not so much weapons that we carry as they are the ways that we use the weapons, being prayerful, being watchful. We're constant, instant, and strategic in our prayerfulness and in our watchfulness. That's how we fight the battle. And those happen to be, those three words, outline points for this morning. The First, we'll start with that first word, which is constant. If you'd like to write this down in your notes, number one: Combat prayer is constant. Combat prayer is constant.

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We get the idea of constant prayer, as you can see in verse 18, when it says "praying at all times." That means constant prayer, "praying at all times, with all prayer and petition in the Spirit." Four times in verse 18, Paul uses a word for prayer. Two times it's the word *proseuche*, which is a comprehensive word for prayer of all kinds. And two times he uses the word *deesis*, which is the more specific word, which is entreaty or supplication. So praying at all times with all kinds of prayers; so thanksgiving, praise, petition, you might even say imprecation, you know, imprecatory prayers, as well, but then specifically praying entreaties, supplications. We're to be praying at all times, constantly giving thanks, making requests, entreating God, and with specific requests at all times in the Spirit for all the saints. And then verses 19-24, specific saints as well, those specific saints who are on special assignment.

I mentioned last time that Paul, when he came to this topic of prayer, he left the metaphor behind to speak about prayer because it sort of defies metaphor. Prayer is as essential to the Christian's spiritual warfare as communications to the soldier's physical warfare. We talked about prayer being like

battlefield communications, like a field radio or a satcom radio. It's the way we keep in contact with command, or keep in contact with headquarters, or keep in contact with our air support or a medevac or a quick reaction force.

But unlike battlefield communications, which is a two-way communication, prayer is obviously one-way communication. In prayer we speak to God, but God does not speak to us in prayer. Prayer is not listening to the voice of God or listening for that still, small voice or some impression, throwing it out there, laying out a fleece, and seeing what God does to, to show himself to you. Prayer's not like that. It's not anything like that. We hear from God when we read the Word. If you want to know what God says or what God thinks about things, read your Bible. Prayer is us speaking to God, responding to God because he has already spoken to us in Scripture, so we respond in prayer.

Prayer is the means that God has ordained through which he chooses to act. Oftentimes, you can see in a church when many people have the same concerns on their heart, and they come

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together and start talking about it, and then they start taking these, these matters before the God in prayer and pray and show concern before God. It's often the case, God is putting that on the hearts of his people. He's moving them to prayer because he's about to act, and he's about to answer the very things that they are praying for. He involves us in his work as we engage in this ministry of prayer.

God has given prayers as the means by which he involves us in his work, but it's also the means by which he sanctifies us. It's us exercising faith. It's us exercising love for one another. We do one another the greatest kindness when we pray for each other. It is not like, I'd do more for you, but I can't, so I guess all I can do, really, is pray. That's not the attitude. It's, I can pray for you, and that is really all you need as divine resources to help you. And if there are any other needs I can meet which are kind of a lower level, I'll help with that, too. But I'm going to pray. I'm going to pray because God is at work on your behalf.

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Prayer is the vehicle for calling out for God's help. It's the way we express praise and gratitude for God's faithfulness whenever he gives us his help. The two brief points I want to make about the constant nature of combat prayer, in specific, praying as a matter of spiritual warfare, first of all, we need to make sure that we're always ready for prayer. And secondly, so that we can be always praying. That makes sense, right? We need to make sure we're always ready for prayer so that we can always be praying.

So first, be always ready for prayer. Just as the comm guy in a platoon has to make sure, very certain, that his radios are always working before he goes into combat, that they're fully tested, they're ready to use in battle, he's used that equipment before, he's put up antennas before, he knows what he's doing, he knows how to get a signal, he knows how to get comms. So vital. In fact, if a radio man can't get comms as he goes into the field, you know what they do? Abort the mission. It's that vital. That's what they're supposed to do, anyway, no matter what the movies tell you. But the guy, the comm guy has got to make sure that that radio is always ready.

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In the same way, the Christian has to make sure his life is always ready for the purpose of prayer. And to figure out how we're to do that, we simply need to look back at the metaphor that Paul has already provided for us, that we've already worked through. Think about it. To be prepared to pray well, we need to have our armor on. We need to pray with our armor on. It's inseparable. We are to pray while wearing the full armor of God. And we can make this obvious by being explicit and lifting the virtues out of their metaphors. And going back to verse 14, we obey the command to stand firm in the manner that Paul described, our minds girded with truth, all the loose ends tied together with what is true, not what we want, not what feels good, not what everybody's saying, not with the flow of the crowd, not the impulses of my own heart. No, it's truth that ties everything in.

And so if we are equipping ourselves that way, binding ourselves that way, we are going to pray according to the truth, not our own feelings, not our selfish desires, not our ambitions, not our anger, not our resentments, not our bitternesses. If we don't bind ourselves with truth, combat prayer is combat ineffective. Our vitality, these parts, the

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chest and gut parts of our life must be guarded by righteousness like a breastplate.

We live in an obedient, pleasing way before God. That's what we aspire to. That's what we're always pursuing, especially in the secret, hidden places of our lives. Psalm 66:18, the psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." You ever think about that? If your prayers are being heard by God, it's based on whether or not you regard and hold iniquity in your heart. If you don't deal with sin the way you should deal with sin, if you're giving in to unrighteousness in some way, in some habitual way, and you're giving excuse for it, God's not listening to that prayer coming from that kind of a heart. No commitment to righteousness, no effective prayer, either. Your radio's not working.

And then we must be standing firmly on the Gospel, with our sins forgiven, covered in the righteousness of Christ, at peace with God if there is to be effective prayer. If you're somehow taking credit for your own salvation, if you think that you are by your righteousness maintaining your right standing with God,

and you're not covered completely in the righteousness of Christ at all times, and that is the basis of your standing before God, that's going to compromise your prayer life, too.

Faith, in particular verse 16, absolutely critical to being ready to engage in effective praying, because to pray you must have faith. "For he who comes to God must believe that he is," Hebrews 11:6 says, "and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him," which is why the writer says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please him." Or, you might add, Without faith, it is impossible to pray. I'd say there's no other practice in the Christian life that more draws upon your faith than prayer.

We're speaking to invisible God, not visible man. We're not hearing an audible voice in response. God guides us, directs us by his Spirit, but all that in the moment can be invisible and imperceptible to us. Prayer is a regular exercise in faith. It's believing God. It's trusting in the promises of his Word. It's believing that the warnings of his Word are also true and that he may discipline the disobedient believer.

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We take all those things seriously. If you go through all the other virtues in verses 14-15, the prayer of faith must be bound with truth and fidelity to Scripture, the integrity of the heart. The prayer of faith aims at a life of righteousness because we stand in the shoes of the Gospel of peace, objective peace of reconciliation with God, subjective peace of a clear conscience before God, the tranquility of mind that comes from peace with God. The prayer of faith forces regular confession of sin, doesn't it, keeping short accounts with God, so our sin does not prevent our close communion and intimate fellowship with our God.

Wearing the helmet of salvation gives us confidence and clear headedness in the midst of battle so that we can pray. We want to think in the middle of spiritual warfare and think on the battlefield. That's when you need your mind clearest the most, so that you can think well to execute the strategy, execute the plan, and in need of resources, going back to headquarters and asking for the help that you need. That's why we wear that helmet: to keep our head, our noggin, our grape not squashed in warfare.

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We're only going to be good looking at "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," we're only going to be skillful in the use of the Scripture when we're prayerful. The Holy Spirit is the illuminator of the Word of God. We need his help all the time as interpreters of Scripture. There's no advancing in the knowledge of God, in the knowledge of the truth, in the wise use of the Word of God apart from prayerfulness.

Now if the radio is working, if we have readied ourselves by putting on the full armor of God and wearing this, walking around in it, then everything's ready for prayerfulness. And if the radio is working and it's not going to do much good in the hour of need if you don't pick up the handset when it's time and hit the PTT button, that's a fancy military acronym that means push to talk, PTT, if you don't pick up the handset with a working radio and start calling in air strikes or call for a medevac or call for a QRF, whatever it is you need, if you've got a working radio ready and you don't pick up the handset and push to talk, nothing's going to happen. You must pray. You must pick up the radio and speak.

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So second, we need to be always praying, as Paul says, "at all times and in the Spirit." At all times, in good times and bad times. Oftentimes, you know that we do pray more in bad times than good, right? I mean, think how that would be for you as a friend to another if the only time he comes to you is when he needs to dig into your pocket and get your money because he needs some more money, he's having trouble; the only time he comes and talks to you is when he's having difficulty in his marriage or his relationship. Whatever it is, he's blown it in some way, and the only time you are talked to by this person who calls you a friend is when things are bad.

Thankfully, God is unlike us. He doesn't get hurt feelings; He doesn't end the friendship. He doesn't say, you know what, this friendship seems a little bit one-way? But just be mindful of that, that you come to God in both good times and bad, in foul weather and fair weather, too. Honor him as God for the good things. Give him thanks. Demonstrate how much he means to you by talking to him throughout everything in your life, whether good or bad. Pray to him in favorable seasons and unfavorable seasons. Pray to him in hardship and in ease. Pray to him in comfort and discomfort. Pray to him when you feel

healthy as much as when you feel sick. Pray according to the fruit of the Spirit. Pray in all the virtues that are to clothe the Christian soldier for battle as Paul has unfolded here.

I'm going give you just a few examples of this, and let's kind of wake you up a little bit by having you turn some pages, okay? Let's, we'll, we'll stay close. I won't have you turn too many pages. We'll just go back a few pages in Ephesians, and I just want you to, I just want us to survey together some of Paul's prayer reports in his epistles, starting with Ephesians 1:15. Ephesians 1:15. And I just want you to see that Paul himself is not only ready for prayer with a working radio, but he's always praying, and he likes to talk about how he's always praying. Why? Because he wants to show how spiritual he is as an Apostle for Jesus Christ? No, it's just a flow of his life. Out of that flow of his life, what's natural for him to talk about, it's instructive to us, isn't it? We learn a lot by reading Paul's prayer reports in his epistles.

Look at this one in Ephesians 1:15 to the first half of verse 19. He says, "For this reason, I, too, having heard," of

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the faith in the lo, "of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints," what's that? Evidence, evidence of conversion. "Having heard of these things," your faith, your love, "I do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers." Like, My thankfulness, that's just part of my larger prayer life for you Ephesians. And here's what I'm praying: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of him, so that you, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened. Again, I know you're Christians. I know that you've been regenerated. I know you have eyes to see, ears to hear. I want you to know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches, of hi, of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of the might of his strength."

Like a general in Christ's army, Paul is praying for his fellow soldiers, and he goes to the commander-in-chief, and he thanks God for the troops. And then he makes requests of the commander. He makes requests from headquarters that these troops have spiritual wisdom, that their hearts are enlightened, that

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their, their, hope comes from a place of deep conviction, that they have assurance in God's riches, which is in infinite supply, and they have confidence in the surpassing greatness of God's power that is available to every soldier on the field. Can you see in the context of spiritual warfare why that would be so encouraging, that somebody, a leader, is praying for you like that?

Turn a page or two to the right. Look at Ephesians 3:14, same kind of, same kind of prayer report, here. Ephesians 3:14-19, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, and he would give you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being firmly rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and the length, and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God, strengthened in divine power, rooted and grounded," full assurance of the love of our Commander-in-Chief. It doesn't do me much good to think my President loves me. But

to know my God, who is omniscient, who sees everything, who is in every place because he is omnipresent, because he is the eternal, infinite God, to know that that commander-in-chief loves me personally? You can't knock me down. I'm untouchable. I'm invincible in my commander's army.

Paul prays, verse 14, "For this reason." What reason is that? So that we don't lose heart, whether these Ephesians losing heart at Paul's afflictions or for any other reason. So we don't lose heart when, when, someone, in our, among our number stumbles and falls. So we don't lose heart when, when, when there's, when there's dissension in the ranks. So we don't lose heart when we're attacked by the world. So we don't lose heart. His prayers are so that we don't lose heart. They're to equip us in our battles in this spiritual warfare. They're for our doctrinal understanding. They're for our theological stability, because armed with the truth of Scripture and the doctrines of Scripture and the theology that runs from cover-to-cover of Scripture, when we're armed with those things, we are steadfast, firm, immovable, untouchable.

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Turn to the next letter, the letter to the Ephesians, or the Philippians, Letter to the Philippians, and look at Philippians just right there in the beginning, Philippians 1:3, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all because of your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." Paul gives thanks in joy for the fellowship of the troops. Anybody who's served in the military, those who had good experiences in the military, but anybody who's had a, served in the military among some kind of a unit where you really got to know those guys and really got to serve and work hard with somebody and suffer with somebody, you know that there's a depth and a bond, there, that is irreplaceable. You, you can't find it really anywhere else in life. There's just something special about being in the ranks of others, others who are soldiers, others, others who are fighting a fight.

So he gives thanks in joy for the fellowship of the troops. That's how he's thinking about these Philippians. They fill his heart with joy. They're joined together with him in common cause. They're partnering together in the common mission of the Gospel itself. Is there any greater cause to fight for? Is there

any greater work to invest in? Is there any greater endeavor in life? There is not. And this informs his prayer life in verse 9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more, in full knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere, without fault, until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

The driving energy of every Christian soldier is love, and the more we have love for one another, like a soldier loving his fellow soldier to his right or to his left, he'll die for that guy to his right or to his left. Will he die for the principles of the war? Will he die for the principles of democracy? Is he, is his head filled with the Constitutional documents as he marches to face an enemy in Afghanistan? No, it is not. What is his mind filled with? This guy to my right, and this guy to my left that I've suffered with, that I love, that I care for. I'll die for that guy.

Driving energy of every Christian soldier is love: love for our commander, love for the army that we're in, love for the church that we belong to, love for our brothers and sisters. And it's not a love that is feeling-oriented only. There are feelings there, but it's a love that's not ignorant, but informed. It's a love that's not gullible, but as Paul says there, discerning. It's a thoughtful love. It's a love that's driven by the mind, from which flow all the affections of the heart, and the will that drives all action and all communication.

Next letter, turn over to the letter to the Colossians. Colossians, chapter 1. Again, Paul's prayer report, Colossians 1:3-8, gratitude for the troops; verses 9-12, prayer for the troops. Look at the gratitude. "We give thanks to God," chapter 1, Colossians, verse 3, "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints." This is really cool because Paul to date had not been to Colossae. He really had heard of this. He's got second-hand knowledge about the Colossian church and how they're doing. He's heard about it from Epaphras.

But he prays like he's met them, like he knows them, because he knows what caliber of people they are because God has made them that way. They're the same, they share the same traits in common with every other soldier that's enlisted into Christ's army because it's the same Spirit that, bry, binds us all together. It's the same Lord Jesus Christ who is our commander-in-chief. He's the head of the church. So he feels like he knows them, and really he does. "So ever since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, the love which you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the Word of truth, the Gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and multiplying, just as it has been doing in you since the day you heard and," unner, "understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, who also informed us of your love in the Spirit."

Paul can identify these Colossians, again whom he had not met yet, as soldiers in the same army. He sees the evidence of regeneration, of salvation in them, evidence of virtues of

faith, love, and hope. He sees the abundant fruitfulness coming out of their lives and out of their church that's affected the region with the Gospel witness. And so, verse 12, for this, or shu, I should say verse 9, "For this reason also," as a comrade-in-arms, "for this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and multiplying in the full knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who's qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

Again, the prayer of this Apostle, this general in the army. He's a foundation stone in the church of Jesus Christ, and as such, he's a model for all spiritual leadership in the church, not only for pastors and elders, but all Christians as well, as they pray for one another. He prays for knowledge, prays for wisdom in the application of knowledge. He plays, he prays for understanding because soldiers in this army are to be

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thoughtful soldiers, not only acquiring knowledge, but also by using knowledge skillfully, wisely, for the obedience of the commander-in-chief. That means your expectations about coming to church is that you're coming here for training.

I like to call that section, Ephesians 4:1-16, the church, the local church, it's the training center for the Christian life. That's what we come here for, is to be trained, not to be entertained. I hope you're entertained a little, but not much. I want your mind to be informed. I want you to be trained in godliness. The goal in gaining and using knowledge is to please our commander-in-chief, to be a useful soldier in his army, to be strong, steadfast, patient.

Some soldiers I've met before, some people I've served with, they're like petulant little children. They're complaining about everything: complaining about the food, complaining about the orders, complaining about waiting. And believe me, in the military you do a lot of waiting. It's called hurry up and wait. Hurry up and get there so we can wait more and then wait for hours. Usually in the blazing sun is how they usually like to

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have you wait on the tarmac, sun beating down on you while you're fully equipped in hundreds of pounds of gear, and you melt and bake; sit there waiting for a plane to show up or something like that. And then you get on the plane, and it's more waiting. You sit there and cook inside of a tube for a while. So believe me, if you're one of those soldiers that jump out of an airplane, you're very motivated by the time you open the door to get out of that plane.

See, there's a, there's a method in the madness. They're training you to have the right attitude. But so many people, so many soldiers, so many sailors, I was in the Navy, so I know sailors, complaining all the time, whining, groaning, moaning. You think, I mean, if, if the enemy hears this stuff, he's, it's, it's just going to encourage him. Stop it! Joyful soldiers, that's what we're to be. Not reluctant to mix it up at all. No! We're ready to get into this fight. We're ready to go get some. Now, we could keep going through the epistles. That's enough for now. I'll leave you to make more discoveries on your own. We need to keep moving. But you should do that. Go through Paul's prayer reports and you're going to see this constant

prayer. Combat prayer is constant, and that's what prepares us for the next point: to be instant in prayer.

Second point, if you write this down, combat prayer is instant. Combat prayer is instant, and you can go back to Ephesians chapter 6. We pick this up in verse 18, where Paul uses that second participle, "being on the alert," or in other translations it's "staying alert" or "keeping alert" or "being watchful." Again, just to remind you, the main command in verse 17 is take. Take, followed by the two participles, "praying" and "being alert" in verse 18. So, "take the helmet of salvation," "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," but then do that by "praying and being alert," verse 18. That's how we head to the battlefield. That's how we engage the enemy.

If we're in constant prayer, praying at all times in the Spirit, we are prepared to be instant in prayer as well. You say, What's, instant, mean? Well, I'm using the word, instant, as an adjective, here. According to an older usage, instant means to be immediate, to be present, to be at hand, because to be effective in battle when the attack comes, you must respond

immediately with the call for help. It doesn't do any good for the attack to come, to see that there's an overwhelming number of enemy troops coming at you, and to be fumbling around.

Where's that radio? Where's that handset? What? No, you need to have it at hand. You need to be ready. You need to be dialed in. You need to be in comm, in, in, comms at all times so that you can be instant when the need arises.

Same thing in prayer. When the attack comes, a prayer must be immediately at hand, an ever-present resource as we turn to. It's not one of those prayers that when trouble comes, you say, Okay, I've heard this before. God, I know it's been a long time since we talked. I know it was the last time I got into trouble that we talked, so kind of overlook that, but I really need your help now. Christians are those who are on familiar terms with the One who's at the other end of the line. Praying at all times, we're instant in prayer. Prayer, then, is immediately available at a moment's notice. We turn to it readily, instantly, because we know the true effect of bringing that resource into the battlefield.

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So we're to be "praying at all times with all prayer and petition in the Spirit." And to this end, that is the context of spiritual warfare, enemy assaults, sneak attacks to get us to fall into temptation, fall into sin, the goal for us is to resist in the evil day and to stand firm. So "to this end, being on the alert," Paul says, "to this end, with all perseverance and petition," not just for yourself, "for all the saints." The word for "being on the alert," literally, it means to stay awake, it means to be awake, stay awake, be alert while you're awake. Stay on the lookout. It's kind of like a guard standing duty at his guard post. He's to stay awake, but not just stay awake daydreaming. He's to stay awake being alert, with his eyes peeled for enemy activity. He's watchful.

This is the mentality that Jesus refers his Apostles to in Matthew 26 verse 41. If you'd like to turn over to Matthew 26, we'll be right back in Ephesians 6, but, so hold a place there and then go to Matthew 26, and we'll start at verse 38. But in Matthew 26:41, there's a word that's used for, watchful. It's a different word, same concept, different word. But in Matthew 26, we'll start in verse 38. Jesus is just hours away from being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Here in the Garden of

Gethsemane, he separates from most of the disciples except for his closest men, that inner circle of Peter, James, and John. He pulls them away for the purpose of fighting in prayer with him. They're in an exclusive company, aren't they? They're marked out for special privilege. They're a four-man unit to go and make comms with headquarters for the purpose of a spiritual battle.

And when Jesus gets to the spot for prayer, he tells his close friends what's on his mind, verse 38, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." Guys, this is grave, this is serious. Remain here. Keep watch with me. In other words, Be watchful, men; the enemy is at hand. He's upon us. Stand guard with me. Jesus is fully awake. He's completely aware. He's alert. He's instant in prayer. All of his senses are pinging. He starts pleading for the Father's help to go fight the battle that he was about to enter. He's our example, isn't he? That's how we're instant in prayer, praying as he did, whether it's in the wilderness resisting the temptations of the devil, or he's in the garden facing untold depths of anxiety.

What about the disciples? What are they doing while he goes over there and prays? Sleeping. Sleeping. They didn't get it, did they? They had no idea of the battle that was about to break forth in the spiritual realms. No idea. Do we blame them? Would we do better? Let's just say it that way. No, we would not do better. They walked for three years with Jesus. They didn't do better. We wouldn't do better. But do we blame them? Well, we have to. Why? Because he commanded them, stay awake, keep watch, pray with me. Did they disobey a direct order from their commander-in-chief? They did. They had no idea what was going on around them.

Verse 40, Jesus rebukes them. He comes to the disciples, finds them sleeping, says to Peter, "So you men could not keep watch with me for one hour?" Then he says, leaves that indiscretion, that failure behind, and he says to them, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing." I mean, I know you all, all you guys are warriors. All you guys have lion hearts. All you guys are in this with me. I know, I know the Spirit is willing, but as you've just demonstrated, the flesh is pretty weak, isn't it?

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The flesh will be your undoing. The flesh is going to compromise you every time. Pay attention to that Puritan pastor-theologian John Owen. He wrote an entire treatise on that one verse, Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Many have been helped by his treatise called *On the Mortification of Sin in the Believer's Life*. I'll attempt to just summarize the principles, here, and illustrate what it means to be instant in prayer through this discipline of watchfulness in prayer.

Let me run this through Paul's war metaphor. Imagine it's you, whoever you are. You're no longer at your job, at your desk, in your home, and you're no longer doing any of those things. You're patrolling through a forested area in bad-guy country because you're a member of a small unit on a special mission, a squad-sized unit, only eight of you there, totally surrounded by hostile forces, and all of them looking for you, intent to hunt you down and kill you or even better, capture you alive, take you back to somewhere dark, and torture you and then kill you, maybe make a video in the process. You've been moving all night; now it's time to stop before day breaks, before the light comes. You spread out a bit, set a perimeter, get

yourselves dug in. Your squad's all going to take shifts, half of you getting rest and the other half standing watch.

Halfway through your watch, you spot movement through the trees. You look more intently, and you verify you see enemy troops out there. You don't know their number, but they're beyond your perimeter, and the danger seems to be lurking out there and moving maybe even closer to you. So what do you do? Multiple choice question for you. What do you do? Do you—choice number A—rush the enemy, rushing at the soldier that you saw, screaming like a wild man, firing full auto with your gun, chucking grenades until that guy lies dead on the ground? Is that your option? If you watch Hollywood movies, you would choose that option, and you would be wrong.

But let's think about that. Let's, let's "what-if" this option just a little bit. What if that guy you saw isn't alone? In hostile territory, that has to be assumed, doesn't it? You've just managed by your rush at the enemy, you just managed to alert all the enemy troops that are hunting for you for miles around because you've been firing your weapon on full auto and

throwing grenades. You knucklehead. Now everybody knows where you are. What if he or his buddies kill you? Or worse, what if they shoot you, then take you captive? It's not about you anymore, is it? It's about your whole squad. Now they're waking up in this whole chaos. You're gone. They hear noise, shooting, you yelling like a banshee. They don't know what's going on.

Okay, that option didn't work. Let's try something else, option B. Do you leave your comrades behind because half of them are getting some much-needed rest? It's been a long night. They're tired. You wouldn't want to wake them. So you sneak outside the wire. You stalk, your prey like a ninja, come up from behind him and silently take him out. That sounds good, too, very Hollywood, a different kind of Hollywood. Let's "what-if" this second bad option. You're never as stealthy as you think you are, ever. What if you make noise and compromise your position? More to the point, you've left the strength, the protection of your squad behind. You're isolated outside your own perimeter, and now you're even more surrounded by the enemies that are out there. This is bad. Two bad options.

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I could go on with bad options. I won't do that. I'll point you to the one option I'm trying to drive you to, letter C. I've whittled down the options. You see the enemy out there. You see movement. You know there's troops. You know you're being hunted. What to do? Get on your squad radios, get everybody awake, alert your buddies. Depending on the enemy's strength and numbers, the best option might be to get your radio man to call for a gun run or an air strike, bring in one of those awesome Apache helicopters or one of those AC130 gunships and just light up the whole forest. Just turn the forest into a desert. Just knock down all the trees.

I know that's not "green" of me to say that, but we could put those trees to good use in some way, printing paper, whatever. Make sure you obliterate that enemy by using superior firepower, which is only a phone call away. Why take a chance? Listen, if you've done something like that, you've done your job as a watchman. You have done your duty as a guard. You've stayed awake. You've been alert. You've saved your entire squad. And what's better, you fought smarter, not harder. You let the big guns do the work. You neutralize the threat without even having to fire a shot.

You see the analogy to prayer, don't you? And this is John Owen's point, which is unpacking Jesus' point: the need for watchfulness to fight against the enemy's temptations. Jesus doesn't say, Watch, and when you see temptation, go and dabble with it. He doesn't say, watch, and when you see temptation, go take a walk or do something active. Maybe those things are good to do. What does he say? He says, "Watch and pray that you don't enter into temptation."

That's your action because the point is to resist in the evil day. It's to stand firm, not to enter into temptation, which in and of itself is sin. Just to enter into the temptation is sin. And that leads to even more sinning. It leads to falling. It leads to compromise. And once you're compromised, guess what? Your entire squad's compromised, your place on the line is compromised, and there's a hole for the enemy to drive a truck through.

So when you see the enemy, when the conscience fires to warn you about a temptation that's enticing your soul, whether

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it's a particular lust, whether it's a sense that you have been slighted in some way, whether it's a perceived offense against you, whether it's an occasion for bitterness, whether it's a bit of juicy gossip, just a tidbit, whether it's the temptation to slight somebody's character, whatever it is, if you're standing watch as Jesus told his disciples to stand watch, as Paul exhorts us to do, you're awake, you're alert, you're looking out for just such an attack. It doesn't take you by surprise. Nothing can take you by surprise because you're always watching. You've been waiting for this.

Now that it's come, you entertain no illusions of your own ability to fight a temptation in your own strength. But you know Someone who does. So you get on your radio, also known as prayer, call for help, and you rain down the power of divine omnipotence on the head of your tempter, send him lurking into the bushes. You ask God to obliterate that temptation and every thought of that temptation that you know you're too weak to face. You ask him to fight your battle for you. It's in prayer that you raise the shield of faith "with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one," not just a high percentage. All. You'll watch his fiery darts fall to the

ground harmlessly as you praise God for his mighty, almighty power. And then you're back to your post to keep watching, being prayerful because you love watching the enemy get obliterated.

Paul writes, "...to this end, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints." And then he's quick to add in verse 19, Oh, and don't forget to pray for me, too. Beloved, I'll just say this, make a brief comment, and move on to the next point. Don't forget to pray for your leaders. Don't forget to pray for your pastors, your elders. I've been under authority as well, and I know how tempting it can be to criticize your leaders, take up offenses against your leaders, gossip about their weaknesses, amplify all their shortcomings and faults.

It's really easy to criticize leaders, which is why Paul says in a number of places in Scripture, but I like this one in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, he says, "We request of you, brethren." I love how soft he is with that language. He didn't say, I implore you, I exhort you, I command you, I demand. He says, "We request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor

among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”

There's no better way to foster an attitude of loving appreciation for your leaders than to pray for them, that God would uphold them by his power, that he would protect them from enemy attacks. The fiery darts of temptation hit your leaders, too, and sometimes the enemy is on full auto with fiery darts at your leaders, firing darts of temptation, distraction, discouragement. Don't give any aid to Satan. Don't help his ongoing efforts to take down Christian leaders. Oppose him, loving your leaders through prayer. It was Spurgeon who said, “No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me.” I hope that's your thought, too, and I know for so many of you, that is. So encouraging.

Now, being on the alert is not only about a negative watchfulness; it's also about a positive watchfulness as well. There's an advancement aspect to staying alert and being prayerful. So here's a third point, number three, combat prayer

is not only constant and instant; it's also strategic. Strategic. Believe me, I spent some time thinking about how I can make, strategic, into a word that ends with, ant, so it would just beautifully kind of sync up with the other two points, but I couldn't do that. So combat prayer is strategic. That's the way it is.

Now taking everything we've surveyed so far, let's carry all that into verses 19 and 20, being fully protected, verses 14 and following, taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit into battle, praying constantly, instant in prayer because we're watching for enemy attacks, we also watch for opportunity. Be praying and watching, as it says as well, "on my behalf," Paul says, "that words may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel for which I'm an ambassador in chains, so that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak."

As I said last week, our participation through prayer is what turns each of us into force multipliers in spiritual warfare. From the least to the greatest, from the youngest to

the oldest, from the simplest thinker to the most complex and intelligent, calling on God is how every single saint gets into the fight. Earlier in the letter, in Ephesians 5:15 and following, Paul calls attention, you can turn there if you'd like to, Ephesians 5:15 and following, Paul calls attention to the time and the occasion and the moment. He says, "Therefore, look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise," and here's why you want to be wise: You're "redeeming the time because the days are evil." Another way to translate, redeeming the time, is to take advantage of every opportunity, "because the days are evil." On account of this, don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Over in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 and following, Paul gives a similar exhortation, similar wording. You can turn there if you like and read it for yourself. It's so interesting because this is the other text in the New Testament epistles where Paul uses this armor of God imagery. 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 4, "You, brothers, are not in darkness, that that day would overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of the day." That is to say, You're awake, you're alert, you're watchful. So "You are sons of the light, sons of the day. We are

not of night nor of darkness. So then, let us not sleep as others do, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night. Those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day," here it is, "let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation."

And we could keep on reading, but let's stop there to draw attention to the point, that in both, in Ephesians 5 and 1 Thessalonians 5, Christians are to be those who are fully awake, alert people, those who are always paying attention to their surroundings, to their environment, to the social context even, the cultural context, political context. Know the world you live in. Know the struggles and the travails of the people around you. Be aware. Read the room, as they say.

We know we live in a battleground, and when we know that, it sets our expectations about life, that things are bound to be hard because warfare is not easy. We're going to take some casualties. We're going to take some shots. Unwise, foolish people are those who live for pleasure, those who are here to

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entertain themselves and distract themselves to death, those who expect everything around them to conform to them and their needs and their desires, who want to spin the world around their demands.

Wise Christians, they don't set expectations like that about the world. They know it's fallen. They know the people around them are fallen. Even the saints in the church are redeemed sinners: capital S, capital I, capital N, capital N, capital E, capital R, capital S. If you've ever been sinned against by a Christian, it hurts, but yeah, but it shouldn't surprise you. Wise Christians are awake, alert, sober-minded, watchful, so we can be effective in praying. Wise Christians know their Bibles. They understand the will of the Lord. They're actively looking to make the best use of time and redeem every single opportunity.

And Paul doesn't want us to guess about how we can pray most effectively for him, and by extension for all those who serve the churches of Jesus Christ in leadership. He asks the church to pray that God will give him words, meaning here

utterance, speech. Whenever he opens his mouth, he wants the language and the manner of expression to be God-giving, given. And that is what every true pastor wants. It's what every preacher wants. He wants his mouth to be a conduit of divine truth, and not only in content, but also in intention of the text, in mood, in its tenor, in its love, in its tone.

Most of all, Paul prays that he opens his mouth in boldness, "so that in proclaiming the mystery of the Gospel, I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." The Gospel, the announcement of the grace of God for sinners, who will reconcile to himself in Christ all who bow the knee to Jesus as Lord over all, that's a message that's only fitting to speak about with boldness, freely, with joy, without any equivocation, without any drawing back, but with deep conviction, full-throated Gospel proclamation, and Paul's praying for that.

You think of anybody on this earth, apart from the Lord Jesus himself, who was bold. I can think of John the Baptist. I can think of Elijah on Mount Carmel, and I can think of the Apostle Paul. They're in my top three. Why would he be praying

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this? Paul reminds them, I'm, "I'm an ambassador in chains." The last thing we expect our ambassadors serving overseas to have to do is to be in chains, to be put into a prison cell. I mean, that would be the height of offense, wouldn't it? The height of offense is for one of our ambassadors overseas to be diminished in any way, to be insulted, to be treated shabbily, let alone to be hunted down, captured like an animal, and thrown into a cage. But that's Paul. I am an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am an ambassador of the King of all the earth. And what's up with this? I'm in chains.

And he anticipates standing before the Emperor of the Roman Empire, who at this time in history, by the way, is Emperor Nero. Caesar is Nero, not one of our presidents. Nero, who had no problem taking from the rich and everybody else in society to fund his escapades, his immorality, his sin, his vileness, his capriciousness, his violence. Think about using the vehicles of government to turn that as a weapon against your enemies, your political enemies. The Caesars had no problem with that at all. No qualms, before such a reprehensible, power-hungry leader; capricious, vile, violent, a bold proclamation of a higher Lord than Caesar. That's what Paul's about to preach.

We understand the reason for his request, here. Not everyone wants pastors to preach the Gospel boldly, freely, with deep conviction. As we're all fully aware, the times that Paul predicted in 2 Timothy 4:3, those times are upon us. Those are the times we live in. He said, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their desires." I always find it interesting, he doesn't necessarily say false teachers, just teachers, "in accordance with their desires." Could be false teachers, could be professing Christian teachers who are a lot softer on the ears, softer on the demands.

We've got a world of that around us. The Internet has provided unprecedented access to ear-tickling teachers, allowing people to "accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires." And all those teachers out there create unreasonable standards of comparison. When people sit here and listen to their pastor, and then they go online and listen to everybody they like to listen to, they start comparing. You

can't help but do that. It stirs up rebellion in the heart,
discontent in the pew.

Listen, the only way for faithful churches to resist the incoming tide of those who 2 Timothy 4:4 says "will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths," the only way for faithful churches to resist this tide, which is very powerful around us, is to pray. It's not to preach angrier sermons. It's not to scold everybody for going on the Internet. I go on the Internet, okay? I go on the Internet. The other pastors go on the Internet. The elders go on the Internet. We love good Internet preaching, teaching, podcasts. We love to listen to that. We are careful about our diet. We're careful about how much we take in. We're careful that we don't listen so much that we stop being readers.

So I don't want to be going on an angry screed against Internet preaching and stuff like that. I just want to tell you that the way you resist this tide is not by, by becoming legalistic in any way; it is to become more intent on prayer. Pray that God would help us, protect us, protect our leaders,

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protect our members, protect our unity, protect our harmony,
fill us with gratitude, fill us with joy, joy in Christ, joy in
our salvation.

What are we to pray for in that same passage where Paul's
giving that warning, 2 Timothy, chapter 4? What are we to pray
for? That pastors and teachers would fear God and obey Paul's
command, that solemn charge he laid on the conscience of
Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word. Be ready," or the word
translated in the old English is, be instant, "in season and out
of season." "Preach the word, being instant in season and out of
season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and
instruction." Pray that for your leaders. Pray that for your,
for the pastors that you love, that you know from your past.
Pray that for faithful pastors that we're connected with because
they're all under attack, especially in these evil times.

Beloved, I know for a fact there are many in this church,
many outside the church who are doing exactly that. They're
praying. They're praying, praying fervently as good soldiers in
spiritual warfare against all the enemy's designs to stifle the

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truth, to discourage, distract, divide this church. They're praying for other churches in the same way as well. We're all in this together.

You want to know how to apply this sermon? Because you can, and you must, put this into practice for the rest of your life as a Christian who's engaged in spiritual warfare. You've been enlisted into the army. You can't get out of it. It's a lifelong enlistment. You don't want to get out of it. Truth is benefits are awesome.

Here's how you apply it. All you have to do is take the outline points from this sermon and turn them into points of application. And let me just tell you, by the way, that's how you apply every sermon that we preach. I don't make outline points just for you to follow the thought, have little hooks to hang your thoughts on and know where we are and be organized. But it's also so you can have that little summation of the point beyond it, so you can turn that into an application point. That's your job. It's to learn how to apply the sermon that you

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listen to every Sunday, to apply that in wisdom, apply this in prayer. Let's do that together.

First, pray constantly. Here's how you apply it. Pray constantly. Pray habitually. Pray as an ongoing habit of mind and of practice of daily life. I like what William Gurnall said; he wrote this: "What bread and salt are to our table, that's what prayer is to the Christian in all his undertakings, enjoyments, and temptations. Whatever our meal is, bread and salt are set on the board." This is a time he's writing before all of our concern about cabor, carbohydrates and high cholesterol and all the stuff I really don't care about. I like bread and salt on my table, too.

Keep reading. "Whatever our meal is, bread and salt are set on the board; and whatever our condition is, prayer must not be forgot. As we dip all our morsels into salt and eat them with bread, so we are to eat every grace, season every enjoyment, mingle every duty, and oppose every temptation with prayer." Be always ready for prayer. Be always praying. Put on the full

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armor of God every single day and then by praying every day, throughout the day, about everything at all times in the Spirit.

Your closest, most intimate companion, even if you are a married person, your closest companion is the Spirit of God indwelling you, the Lord Jesus Christ who is over you and with you, who said, "I will never leave you or forsake you" and your God, whom he represents and brings to you and you to him, you're in his presence at all times. Enjoy the fellowship of the triune God that you have. And pray. Pray constantly.

If you need help building a pattern for prayer, just like we did today, just go through the prayers in Scripture. Start with the Lord's Prayer. That is such a framework for a healthy prayer life. Start there, stay there until you kind of get the sense and pray like that, Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4. And then, as just as we did, learn from Paul's prayer reports and his epistles how to pray. Pray through those things for yourself.

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Second application point: Pray instantly. Pray instantly, immediately, at the very first sign of enemy activity, at the very first sign of opportunity. Pray because you're watchful, because you're alert and aware. You're praying for yourself. You're praying for your brothers and sisters as comrades-in-arms in the same fight. You're praying for your pastors, elders, shepherds, that we all resist in the evil day and stand firm. And you're praying for opportunity as well, open doors.

William Gurnall says, "If a Christian is careless in praying, then he is weak in hearing, loose in his walking, and he shall find that he miscarries in all his enterprises, he's ensnared in all his enjoyments, he's baffled with every temptation, and discomposed at every affliction that meets him. And the reason of all this is because our strength both to do and to suffer comes from God." Christian, be instant in prayer. We have to pray, pray constantly, pray instantly, watchful at all times for any sign of, weakness, weakness, but also every opportunity.

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So third, pray strategically. Nothing is more strategic in advancing the cause of God and his kingdom than the proclamation of God's mighty Word. You want to be strategic; you want to be effective; you want to make a true mark in this world with your life? You cannot do better than unleashing the almighty power of God by praying that his Gospel goes forward freely, with deep conviction, with all boldness, without hindrance, without equivocation, without softening the hard edges. It's full force. Pray for the pastors of this church, pastors of other faithful churches as well. And by doing so, we will resist in the evil day and stand firm together. Bow with me for a word of prayer.

Our God, it is our desire to do what this passage calls us to do. It's our call to arms to put on the full armor of God and then to be prayerful soldiers, marching into the battle, taking the field, and expecting that you are always present, always there to help us in every time of need. Whether we're under attack or whether we're seeing opportunity, we just pray that you would give us strength, encouragement, joy, gratitude.

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It's just the, the privilege that we have of being numbered in your army, of calling our commander-in-chief, friend and Savior, of calling you, the infinite, immortal, eternal God, our Father, and calling the Holy Spirit our, our truth teacher, our guide, the illuminator of the truth, and our Comforter. We know that the Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ pray for us at all times, bringing our requests to you before the throne of grace, and we pray that you would involve us as a church in that ministry as well, that we'd be used by you in this army to good effect. Pray that your will would be done in each and every life here in our church as a, as a body.

We pray for other faithful churches around the country as well, men whom we admire, esteem, respect, follow. We pray that you would strengthen them. So many names I don't want to mention now, but they're on my mind, Lord. And I know there are, are people in this congregation who regard other teachers as well. And we just pray that you would lift them up, strengthen and protect them. Don't let them fall into scandal. There's been so much of that. We ask that you protect all of us. Help us as a mighty army to go forward, taking hill after hill, advancing the

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cause of the Gospel, that your name, God, would be glorified in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.