

(Ephesians) Fit for the Fight

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon highlights the indispensable role of prayer in equipping Christians for spiritual warfare and achieving victory in their faith.

Duration: 58:34

Scripture: Ephesians 6:13

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in making disciples and experiencing spiritual prosperity. He shares a personal experience of relying on prayer while doing outreach in Hungary and witnessing the Lord's provision. The speaker also highlights the need for perseverance in prayer and not being distracted by meaningless things. He concludes by sharing a thought-provoking comment from a non-Christian about the world's priorities during a time of potential conflict.

Transcript

Let's pray. Lord, tonight as we come once again to the subject of spiritual warfare, we pray that you would give us insight and understanding. Teach us, Lord, that we can walk in victory in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 6. And we come this evening to the final study in our series that we've been doing on the subject of spiritual warfare. And so we'll be talking tonight about the vitally important topic of prayer.

So let's read from chapter 6, verse 13 on through verse 19. Paul says, therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for the saints and for me, that utterance may be given to me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. So we've been studying the subject of spiritual warfare, and we've looked at a lot of different facets of the whole issue of spiritual warfare. We've looked at the reality of the warfare sometimes, even though we're in the midst of it, we are oblivious to it.

And so we've tried to, you know, just bring that to light, that there is a spiritual battle that's going on. We've looked a bit at the character of our adversary, the devil and Satan, and we've seen something about his activity, the things that he's doing on a large scale level throughout the world, the things that he's doing in the church, the things that he's doing to harass us on a personal level. We looked at the subject of the wiles of the devil, and we looked at the age old preoccupation of Satan, that of tempting man.

And then, of course, we looked at the armor of God, and we come now really to the final aspect of the armor of God. And as we pointed out in our previous study, the armor of God primarily consists of a defensive set of weapons, really, or an armor that is primarily defensive and protective. But then there is that offensive element to it.

And we talked about that at length in our last study, and that is the word of God being the offensive weapon that God has given us. And through that word of God, that's how we defeat the enemy. That's how we not only keep him from pushing us back, but that's how we push him back.

That's how we take ground as we take those specific words of God and we fight against the devil with the sword of the spirit. And now we come to prayer, which is the other offensive weapon that we have. So we see the Christian soldier standing in full armor dress for battle.

Yet at this point, he is not necessarily truly ready to fight for. Therefore, there are two essential things that must accompany a fully equipped soldier, and that is skill and strength. So, you know, you can take a person and you can dress them up in military clothing.

You can give them the finest and the most advanced in weapons. But if they are not skilled, if they are not strong, if they are not able to use those weapons efficiently, then you don't have much of a soldier, really. And the same can be true in the spiritual realm.

Prayer is to the Christian soldier. What physical fitness and mental preparedness are to the prayer is for us. What those things would be to those fighting in the physical realm.

So without these things, even though you're well equipped in the outward sense, that doesn't guarantee victory. The Christian soldier needs to be fortified within and that comes through prayer. And so that's why, as Paul comes to the end of his instruction on the armor of God, he says, and praying always.

With all prayer and supplication in the spirit now prayer, that's one of the main topics of the Bible. The Bible is full of examples of men and women in prayer. It's full of encouragement for us as God's people to be a praying people.

There are over 300 references to prayer in the Bible. But I do think that prayer could possibly be the most talked about, but least practiced aspects of the Christian life. We talk about it.

We preach about it. We write books on it. But do we really do it? That's the vitally important thing that we be praying as God's people.

Prayer is the energy. It's the force. It's the fuel that empowers the armory of God to advance and to take territory away from the enemy.

Prayer is the it's really the empowering of the machinery. If we're making little progress, it could be due to our lack of prayer. And, you know, sometimes I do wonder myself as we look and we see.

That there are many, many Christians. In our communities. That there are still many Christians and many churches and many good churches, for that matter, in our country.

But it seems like we're losing ground all the time. And I would suspect that it has something to do with a lack of power. We've got all of the machinery.

We've got the battle gear. We're all decked out in the armor. But yet we have no fuel.

We have no empowering. You know, it reminds me of what we read about back in the life and times of David. You remember that the Philistines were oppressing the Israelites and there came a point when the Israelites and the Philistines were lining up to battle against one another in the Valley of Elah.

And it says the Philistines were encamped on one side of the valley and the Israelites were encamped on the other side of the valley. And on a daily basis, the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, he went out and he taunted the men of Israel. But the interesting thing is, it says that they set themselves in battle array.

They were all dressed up. They were all ready for battle in the outward sense, but none of them had the strength or the fortitude or the courage to actually go out and engage the enemy. And Goliath knew that.

And so daily he would taunt them and mock them. And in some senses, it seems like the church is in a similar sort of a condition today. We're in the battle array, so to speak.

We've got all of the the weaponry. We've got all of the armament. We've got all of these advantages seemingly.

But yet there's not a whole lot of activity. And I do think it's due to the fact that we are missing this key element in the conflict. And that is the element of prayer.

We haven't put on the full armor of God unless we are praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. So until prayer becomes a real integral part of everything we're doing as Christians, we're not fully equipped. That's what the apostle is telling us.

And of course, we need to be fully equipped desperately in the days that we're living in. So what we want to do now is just sort of break down what the apostle mentions here as he talks about prayer, the prayer, the praying always the praying in the spirit. The various things that he goes on to list here.

So he begins by saying praying always. And in another place, he said, pray without ceasing, praying always pray without ceasing. The question is, how do we do that? I don't know if it's old age.

Or. I don't know what it is, but my mind seems to be more easily distracted these days than it ever was any time before. Maybe there's just so much activity going on in the air, the atmosphere around us.

It's interfering with our thinking process. I don't know. But there's so much activity and there's so much distraction.

And when Paul says to pray always or to pray without ceasing, that is a big challenge, because I find that I'm so easily distracted from prayer. I'm so easily overcome with thinking about other things and making other things the priority just because those things seem to bombard my life. But there is a place, no doubt, because God tells us to do it.

And that means that he will enable us to do it. There is a place that we can come to where we actually will be in that state where we're praying always. It's the sort of thing that happens.

As we're just getting more and more connected with the Lord in our hearts, and it's just working itself into every facet of our life, so wherever we go, whatever we do, we're just sort of going on in that silent communion with the Lord. John Wesley beautifully described the man who had matured in prayer. He said his heart is ever lifted up to God at all times and in all places.

In this, he is never hindered, much less interrupted by any person or thing in retirement, company, leisure, business or conversation. His heart is ever with the Lord, whether he lies down or rises up. God is in all his thoughts.

He walks with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon him and everywhere, seeing him who is invisible. Oh, that is a coveted place. That is a place that by God's grace, we all need to strive to arrive at where we're just living in this sort of unspoken communion with God, where even though we're doing the things that we have to do.

Throughout the day, throughout the week, yet those things that can interfere and distract because we're so connected with the Lord in our hearts, they don't really interfere or distract because we've got our focus set on him. So when Paul said pray always what he was encouraging us to do is to cultivate this real consistency in our communion with the Lord. You know, prayer is one of those things that is just such an incredible privilege when you think about it.

When you think of what prayer is, it is access to the king of kings, the Lord of Lords, the maker of heaven and earth, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God. It's access right into his presence. And it's the ability to approach him with anything and everything and just to lay it before him and ask him to deal with these things, to help, to do whatever needs to be done.

That is incredible. But I think for many of us, we don't really comprehend. The privilege that prayer is, we don't think of it in those terms, perhaps we don't totally understand it or or really believe it to the full extent that I can just go right in before God himself and I can pour out my heart to him.

I think if we understood it a little bit more, we would do it a lot more frequently. You know, if you had somebody that was near to you and that person had, you know, unlimited resources, unlimited abilities and so forth, you would probably call them on a pretty regular basis for advice. If you had if you had to access, you know what I mean? When you get a predicament, oh, this let me call and then you'd be right on the phone to him because, you know, that person can help in this situation.

Well, that's what we have with the Lord, except in a much greater sense, whatever the need, whatever the issue, whatever the problem. God is there and he is bidding us to come to him and to commune with him and to lay out our petitions before him. And boy, that is the privilege of all time.

Paul says, take advantage of this. This is what really fortifies the Christian soldier to fight victoriously in the battle. So praying always.

And then he says, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Now, I think what Paul is talking about here is praying in tune with the spirit or praying under the spirit's guidance, praying under the direction of the spirit. As we come to prayer, I think it's always a good thing to ask the Lord to lead us in prayer.

I believe that there are things that the Lord wants us to pray about. There are things that are, in a sense, pressing. To him, there are things that are on the top of his list of things that he wants to see it accomplished at certain points in time, so I think it's always a good idea when we start to pray to ask the Lord to direct us in our prayers, because sometimes we can end up just praying so aimlessly.

You ever have that experience where you're praying about this a little bit and then you get distracted and you start praying about that. And then another thought comes, you start praying about that. And pretty soon you're like, well, how did I ever get onto this subject? And you trace your way back, you know, through the steps and you think, wow, that was a crazy diversion.

And sometimes if you, you know, you get together for a prayer meeting, you got a small number of people and everybody starts praying and just, you know, prayer over here and over there. And, you know, there's no coherence to it. It's all just all over the place.

The Lord, I believe, wants to lead us in prayer by his spirit. And so as we come to him and as we seek him to guide us. He does that.

And you know what it's like. You've had those experiences, I'm sure, in a group prayer session or even in your own personal prayer where you sense that God is really leading this thing. Those times when you really sense the Lord is leading you to pray personally, prayer becomes no longer a real struggle or a battle.

It's just something that is flowing. One thought flows into another. One word follows easily after another.

And you just find yourself caught up in this beautiful thing that's praying in the spirit. And we need to seek to do that. Now, sometimes we've got to fight our way through a lot of different things before we can get to that place.

But also in that group setting, it's so great when you sense that the spirit is leading a prayer meeting, because what you find often is somebody's praying about something and then you think about praying about something else. And before you can even pray about it, somebody else prays about that very thing. And that just happens over and over again.

And you sense the Holy Spirit is putting things on people's heart as you go about in that time of prayer. That's exciting stuff when that happens. And we need to seek to pray in accordance with the spirit.

And I think we do that really by just taking a few moments before we enter into prayer and just asking the Lord to direct us as we pray. But like I said, there are times when we have to battle through a lot of the distractions and a lot of the chaos that might just sort of overtake our minds, because there is in this realm as well a spiritual battle. There are times when the spirit will prompt us to pray for certain things.

Sometimes the spirit will prompt us to pray for certain people, or maybe the spirit will put a certain place upon our hearts, or perhaps the spirit will put an event that's going to occur on our hearts. And we'll just have this thing coming back to us over and over again in our thinking. That's the spirit prompting us to pray for those things.

And I'm sure that you've all had that sort of experience where a person maybe just kind of keeps coming to your mind and you just feel sort of like, wow, I wonder what's going on with them. And Lord, I pray that you'd be with them and just God, whatever's happening in their life, just encourage them, you know, right

now. And then, you know, maybe a month or so later, you run into him and you say, hey, what was going on a month ago? And they tell you, oh, man, I'm the trial of my life.

You think, wow, the Lord had me praying for you back then. Those promptings, sometimes, as I said, it's a geographical area. God puts a place on your heart and you pray for that place, and then you find that the Lord is doing a work in that place.

Oswald Sanders, who was one of the overseers of the China Inland Mission after the. After the era of J. Hudson Taylor and D.E. Host, he said this about the these promptings of the spirit. He said the very fact that God lays a burden of prayer on our hearts and keeps us praying is evidence that he purposes to grant the answer.

Those are things that you can have real confidence that God is wanting to answer these prayers. That's why he's putting these prayers on our hearts. When George Mueller was asked if he thought that the two men that he had been praying for for 50 years would be saved, he replied, do you think that the Lord would have kept me praying all of these years if he didn't intend to save these men? The fact that God continues to put people and places and events and things on our heart.

This is really just an indicator that these are areas where God is wanting to work. So that's what I mean by. Seeking to be led by the spirit, I think that's what Paul is referring to when he says here, praying in the spirit.

Now it's also possible that he's referring to. Maybe included in it using a prayer language. The Bible teaches that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of tongues, and there seems to be a couple of different manifestations biblically of the gift of tongues in Acts chapter two.

We have the first occurrence of the gift of tongues, and there it seems to be. Manifest in a way where there's a proclamation of the truth of God in the languages of the various people that happen to be in Jerusalem at the time. And that's one manifestation of it.

But when you come to Paul's instruction for the church in first Corinthians, the 14th chapter, Paul talks there about praying in a tongue. And he talks about the person who prays in a tongue. He prays to God and not to men.

He speaks mysteries in the spirit. And so there is legitimately, according to Paul in first Corinthians 14, there is what you might call a prayer language that God gives to some people. We commonly call it the gift of tongues, and I guess that would be accurate, but it's a prayer language.

It's something that the Holy Spirit gives you that you can exercise in your times of prayer. And as you're praying in the spirit, in that sense, using your prayer language, you really are then praying in the spirit because it's really not even you that's praying at that point. It's the spirit of God praying through you.

So if God has given you that gift, if you have a prayer language, then, of course, it would be advisable to use it frequently in times of prayer. So praying always praying in the spirit. And then he says that we are to be watchful.

In prayer, we are to be on alert. We're to be on our guard. Remember the whole context here and the whole picture is a military picture.

And what a soldier on duty is supposed to do is to be on alert, to be on guard. And that's the position that we're in as God's people in the world today. We're soldiers.

We're in a battle. We're on duty. We need to be alert.

We need to be on guard. We need to be looking out for opportunities to exercise this great privilege and powerful weapon of prayer that God has given us. So just watching the landscape, just, you know, sort of.

Taking a regular survey of the activity that's going on in our families, in our church body, in the church, in a larger sense, in our country, perhaps in our world. Oh, there's so many things that need prayer. And this is a place where we as Christians need to be on duty.

We need to be regularly on duty watching for things that we can pray for. Boy, you read the newspapers and look at all of the things that are happening in our country. Look at all of the things that are going on in our world.

And sometimes we look at these things and we just sort of almost despair at the condition. But we don't pray. But why don't we pray? Do we not believe that God cares? Do we not believe that God hears? Do we not believe that God is interested in these things? He certainly indicates that he is in his word.

And so we really need to, again, take advantage of this great privilege. And when we see these urgent matters arise before us, whether they're in our own personal lives or in the lives of friends or fellow members of the body of Christ, our local congregation, the church at large, we need to immediately go to prayer on those things. And pray through those things and see what God is going to do as we seek him in prayer.

And then he says, with all perseverance, persevering in prayer, Jesus said that men should always pray and not faint or lose heart. And it's so true that we so often lose heart in prayer. If we don't have some immediate.

Result from our prayers, we often just lose heart in prayer, don't we? We often just sort of. Fade out of our commitment to praying about that particular thing, because, well, you know, we prayed about it and nothing really happened, but yet we don't know. We don't know what's happening, but by faith, we ought to believe that God is doing something, even though we might not be able to see it at the present time.

And we've mentioned Daniel before. I think we talked about this in the first lesson in this series. But think of Daniel, who began to pray, asking God for wisdom and insight and understanding and how he was to conduct himself in light of where he was living at in history.

And there in the 10th chapter, we read that Daniel prayed for three full weeks before he got a response from the Lord. And remember how when he finally did get a response, the angel said, from the moment you set your heart to seek God in prayer, I was dispatched to come to you. But the Prince of Persia resisted me.

So there's a spiritual battle. That's going on the whole time that Daniel is praying, and I think that that happens when we pray, too. And so even though we might not see any immediate result in the physical realm or this situation that we're praying about might not be immediately resolved, perhaps there's such an intense battle over that situation that it's not going to be immediately resolved.

Maybe it's going to be a three week situation like Daniel encountered. But thank God for Daniel that he didn't stop praying. That he kept going until he got the desired response from the Lord, and that's what Jesus is calling us to men should always pray and not lose heart.

Why do we lose heart? We lose heart because we lose faith. We somehow think that, well, God doesn't really care about this or he's not really interested in this or, you know, this is. Not important to him or whatever.

But we have to understand that if God moves on us to pray, it's important. And since we're God's children and he loves us. There isn't anything in our lives that he doesn't deem important.

And so we need to persevere in prayer. Jesus, again. He said to his disciples, he said, ask and you shall receive.

Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be open to you. And what he said literally was keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking.

How long do I keep on asking? How long should I keep on seeking? How long do I go on knocking until you get a response? When you get the response, then you can see where to go from there. But what happens is we give up prematurely, we. We don't get the response in the in the time that we, you know, think it should come.

And so we lose heart. We faint. We don't persevere.

And many times we don't see our prayers answered simply because of that. I told you, I think. About the situation that we encountered.

A suddenly we found out that our youngest son, Braden, his passport had expired and he was scheduled to get on the plane the next day. And we went up to L.A. and we tried to walk in and just get his passport taken care of. And they laughed at us and sent us away, told us that we weren't going to get in without an appointment.

And, you know, trying to call and make an appointment with the automated systems, you know, is just almost impossible. And there's no available time prior to the flight and all of that. And and yet we just believe that the Lord was going to do something.

That. Braden was supposed to go on this trip, and so we prayed and we kept praying and we kept praying and many of you prayed and we just got everybody praying. And at the last moment, when it just seemed that it wasn't going to happen, there was that breakthrough.

And sure enough, he got his passport at two o'clock, was on the plane at five. The Lord took care of it. And, you know, over this past summer and some of the things that we were involved in, some of the outreach, I really saw the Lord answer.

As people were persevering in prayer. When we were doing an outreach over in Debortson, Hungary, this summer. We had, you know, planned to go over in the church that we were working with, they'd set up to do an outreach concert in the streets and preaching and all of that.

And so, you know, the day came when when that was going to happen and the venue that we wanted didn't come through and all kinds of, you know, little frustrations were there. But yet there there was a

place that we were going to be able to do it at, even though it wasn't the ideal situation, it was still there available. And we were supposed to have this outreach at four in the afternoon.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, I was sitting in a square and I was about the only person in the square. I think there were two other people meandering around. And I'm looking around thinking, Lord, there isn't a soul around here.

What? Who are we going to outreach to? And the Lord just was speaking to my heart. Don't faint. Just pray.

Just trust me. Just keep praying. And so I just sat there in that square by myself.

I just sat there praying, Lord, bring some people, Lord, do something. Lord, we've come all the way over here. We've Lord, please.

And, you know, sure enough, at four o'clock, to my amazement, the crowd gathered and it kept building and building. And for the next three hours, we got to share the gospel with hundreds of Hungarian people. And it was a great experience.

But as I walked away from it, it was one of those lessons again and persevering in prayer. We had a similar thing when we did our outreach in Devon, England, that I shared with you. And there we were on the day that we're going to do the outreach and.

The weather is horrible, it's sort of raining off and on intermittently and the beach is desolate and there's no people around and we're all set up and ready to go. Lord, where are the people? And I remember I'm sitting on this bench, I'm overlooking the beach that's usually crowded with thousands of people. I could count the number of people on the beach.

There were probably like 20. And this village that's usually just swarming with people like, you know, ants just trampling on each other and everything. There's nobody around and we're sitting there.

Lord, what is going on? And oh, God, help Lord, bring people clear up the weather and. But, you know, sure enough, at the appointed time. The crowd started gathering and by the end of the evening, several hundred people had come and heard the gospel.

And I'll tell you, the Lord is faithful and I am seeing right now that God is really. He's answering prayer right now. In a real extraordinary way, so many things that we have been praying about.

Personally. For quite some time now, it's just everything's kind of coming to fruition. God is answering prayer and it's so exciting to see what's happening.

And as you see the Lord answering prayer, it just really excites you about prayer, makes you want to pray more. We've got to persevere in prayer. Don't give up.

I mentioned. George Mueller and the prayer for 50 years, there were actually five men that he had put on a prayer list that he wanted to see saved. And I can't remember the exact ratios there, but it was something like the first one was saved after 10 years of prayer.

The second one was saved after 20 years of prayer. The third one was saved after 30 years of prayer. And then after 50 years of prayer, there were two that were still unconverted.

After 50 years of prayer. But George Mueller was faithful. He kept praying just before he died.

The fourth one received Christ. So now George Mueller has passed away. He prayed for 50 years and one of the guys he prayed for was still unsaved.

Guess what? He came to George Mueller's funeral and there a message was preached and he gave his life to Christ. And so all five were saved. 50 years of prayer.

Boy, that's a lesson for us. Be perseverant. Keep on praying.

Keep praying for your family members. Keep praying for that husband or that wife or those children or those parents or whoever those neighbors, those people you care about, old friends from the past. Keep praying for those people.

Because you never know what's happening. You see, again, we don't know what's going on. If we just go by what we can see, we can easily get discouraged and just say, oh, forget it.

I'm not going to pray. After all, I've been praying for this and nothing's happening. And, you know, sometimes you pray and things get worse.

Have you ever noticed that when things get worse? That is an indicator that something is happening. Because God's moving and the devil's getting stirred up and the flesh is getting aroused. And so there's things going on there.

We need to persevere in prayer. And then he said, be watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Now, have you ever felt like.

Well, you know. I don't really know what to pray about. Maybe you wanted to really get into prayer, but you're you're kind of your prayer list is kind of small.

Well, here it is. Pray for all the saints. That'll keep you busy the rest of your life.

You'll never have to worry again about not having anything to pray about. Paul said, pray for all the saints. Pray for all the saints everywhere.

Remember, we're just a little group of saints here, but there are saints everywhere. There's God's people everywhere. There's all throughout our community.

There are more fellowships, more Christians and all the way across our country, but all around the world, God's people are everywhere. And Paul says that we are to make supplication for all the saints everywhere. Here's a good idea.

Family project. Get a map. Get a map of the United States.

Get a map of California, if you will. Get a map of the world. Get a globe and just sit that thing before your family.

Take some time and just go around the globe or point out places on the map. And just there are surely Christians anywhere you point on the map, they're going to be Christians. There might be very few.

They might be in distress. They might be greatly persecuted. They might be suffering in some way.

But yet you can be sure that God's people are every place you can point on a map and you can just say, Lord, we pray for the saints in that place. Lord, you know those things, but we pray for them. We pray your blessing.

We pray your healing. We pray your mercy just as the spirit would lead. Praying, praying for pastors.

The church sometimes. Is in a dire. State because.

Of bad leaders or no leaders. And so we can help the church by praying for pastors by praying for leaders. By praying that God would raise up faithful shepherds, we can pray for the pastors and ask God to protect them because pastors and leaders are, of course.

Primary targets of the devil. The devil. He's a brilliant military strategist.

He knows if you can knock out a leader, you can take a lot of the foot soldiers with him just by knocking him out. And so he goes after the leaders. Pastors need to be prayed for.

Pray for the evangelist. Pray for the missionaries. We've developed here at our fellowship this beautiful little guide to all of those who are serving as missionaries through our ministry, and you can pick that up and you can take that home and you can pray for each one of these missionaries.

You can have that as a project. Pray for all of those serving the Lord in the various capacities. Pray for Christian parents and Christian children.

Pray for Christians in all walks of life. It's really just as Paul said, it's praying for all the saints in every conceivable situation. Praying that God would bless and strengthen, praying that God would anoint and use them, praying that God would raise them up to testify and to be his witnesses at this time.

If you don't have anything to pray about. Pray for all the saints. Jay Hudson Taylor recorded an interesting experience he had upon visiting.

England. Coming back to England after being in China for some years, and as he was speaking at. An event.

He happened to mention a particular mission station, and after the teaching aspect was over, a man came in and greeted him. And began to talk to him about this mission station. And Hudson Taylor was really puzzled as to why that particular station had been so blessed in comparison to others in the same region.

This was something that was just personally on his mind. And he really didn't understand why this one station just seemed to really be flourishing while the others seemed to really be just limping along, struggling. But as he begins to talk to this man, to his surprise, this man knows all about that particular mission station that's prospering.

And he's familiar with names and and different situations that have gone on there and and all of this. And so Hudson Taylor finally says, how do you know so much about this particular station? He said, oh, the man who is the missionary there, him and I were friends in college. And we made a covenant together that when he would go to the mission field, I would support him in prayer.

So he's kept me abreast of the needs and all the things that are going on. And I've prayed for him each and every day since he's been there. And all of a sudden it struck Hudson Taylor.

He realized that's why that station is prospering. That's why extraordinary things are happening in that one place while everything else is sort of floundering around it, because there's someone specifically praying for it. That's great encouragement, I think.

DE Host, who was the successor to Hudson Taylor as a director of the China Inland Mission, he told a similar story, but it was one that he actually experienced himself of of a mission station across a range that really was prospering in an obvious manner above even the place where he was ministering himself. And he was, to some extent, baffled by it. But what he realized is that.

Although he was at the particular station, he was counseling, he was teaching, he was ministering personally to the people, he spent much more time praying for the place that he wasn't at than praying for the place that he was at. And he realized the deficiency where he was was due to his lack of prayer for that particular place. Because he was there and just assumed that, well, I'm here and I'm teaching and I'm, you know, so everything's covered here and he forgot to cover it in prayer.

In analyzing that whole thing, he concluded this. There are four basic elements in making disciples. Number one, pray.

Number two, pray. Number three, pray. Number four, minister the word to him.

He said in that order and in about that proportion, I think there's so much truth to that. We don't see the spiritual prosperity of the church that we potentially could see because we don't pray as we ought to. We don't see prosperity in our own lives, not physical prosperity, spiritual prosperity.

We don't see that because we're not praying. And so we're like that soldier. We might have the armor, at least most of it on.

But yet we've never been fortified ourselves. We've never been energized. We've never been empowered ourselves.

So we've got all the weaponry, but we just don't have a clue how to use it. You see how easily defeat would come in a situation like that. So we've got to be fortified, we've got to be strengthened ourselves.

And that's where prayer comes into the picture. And that's why Paul, in concluding his section on spiritual warfare, he brings it back down finally to praying. Praying always.

And that's where we're going to find the victory lies. That's where we're going to see. Real significant progress for the church when the church begins to pray, and like I said earlier, if the church would start praying and stop depending on so many other things, I think we would be doing a lot better off as far as advancing the kingdom of Christ in this day and age.

Because history shows us that people with not nearly the resources that we have on the human or physical level have done so much more for the kingdom than we're doing. Because they were empowered by the spirit, because they were seeking God and prayer was the foundation of their lives in ministry. And if we're going to see the church progress, if we're going to see the church become an influence once again in our community, if we're going to see the church ever impact our country or our world ever again.

It's not going to be. Apart from prayer. The prayer of God's people, if you as a Christian individually, if you're struggling in the battle, if you're losing ground, if you're falling before the enemy more often than

not.

But you're thinking, well, wait a second, I you know, I thought I was putting on the armor of God. I'm trying my best to get into the Bible and coming to church. I'm I'm doing those things.

But are you committed to prayer? Are you praying always? Are you cultivating a prayer life where you're in that communion with the Lord frequently? Often just communing with him throughout the day, Paul, the great prayer warrior or the great warrior that he was, he himself needed prayer. And he closes this epistle by asking that they would pray for him. And pray for me, all of us need to pray for each other.

I need prayer. You need prayer. All of the saints need prayer.

All of those serving the Lord need prayer. Wouldn't it be great? If we could make a commitment to set aside some time daily, just some time, the amount of time is not important, but just setting aside some time and saying, Lord, for this time right now, I want to just spend it in prayer. Lord, prompt me, lead me to pray.

And just let the Lord lead. Set aside some time during the week where you could invite members of your family or or friends for a time of prayer and just come together and seek the Lord. Ask God to direct, lift up those requests before him.

And make that the habit of our lives as God's people in this 21st century, that is where we are going to see victory take place. You know, again, as we look at our world, as we look at the increased wickedness in our culture, as we look at the the giving over of man to every sinful practice and behavior, as we look at. The.

War clouds sort of gathering over in the Middle East and the prospect of our nation even going into war, all of these things. Are matters for prayer. These are all the things that.

We need to be committed to praying about. And God help us not to be frivolous in these days and not to just, you know, be caught up in the meaningless things. I'll never forget what somebody told me when I was in England a few months ago.

And this comment came from a non-Christian, believe it or not. And this was back at the time when everything was really hot between Israel and the Palestinians, and it looked like, you know, any second the whole thing could just explode. And it was the time of the.

World Cup. Soccer. Football match.

And of course, everybody was glued to the TV and it was all about the World Cup and and an interesting comment from a woman. In England, non-Christian said it to a friend of mine. She said how pathetic it is to see the world on the brink of nuclear war and all of the men in England glued to their TV set.

Watching a game. And you think, boy, that is really pathetic, isn't it? And that's where. We are today, we were in a precarious place where we're in a very dangerous time in history.

And as Christian people, we should not be sitting on the sidelines watching. The reality of heaven and hell. But we need to be focused on heaven.

We need to be focused on eternity. We need to be focused on God's plan and we need to be wielding the weapons of righteousness and taking the full armor of God in this battle. And praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.

God, help us to do that. Let's pray, Lord. Here we are once again, and as we said in the beginning of the teaching tonight, Lord, we're talking about prayer.

But Lord, help us not to simply or merely talk about it. Help us to do it. Lord, forgive us for failing.

To. Avail ourselves of this wonderful privilege that you have granted to us. Oh, Lord, help us not to neglect.

The privilege of prayer. But help us, Lord, to be men and women of prayer. Help us, Lord, to pray always.

Help us, Lord, to pray in the spirit, help us to be watchful. Help us, Lord, to persevere. Help us, Lord, to pray for the saints and the Lord, we do pray tonight for your church, the Church of Jesus Christ, that is scattered throughout the entire world.

Lord, we pray for Christians in every nation, on every continent. We pray, Father, that you would bless your people. We pray you'd strengthen them.

And Lord, where there are those who are. Underfed and. Lord, poorly taken care of.

Oh, Lord, we pray you'd send them shepherds after your heart that will tend to them. We pray for those who are suffering and in need, Lord, that you would deliver them. We pray for those, Lord, that we might help through the abundance that you've given us, that you would direct us, Lord, to help them.

We pray, God, that you would. Visit your church. Be with your people.

Touch and minister to all of the saints this hour, we pray. Build up your church that your kingdom might be spread and your name might be exalted in the earth and use us, Lord. Oh, Lord, we have many times.

Failed to put on the whole armor of God. So help us, Lord, to put on the whole armor. Help us to be fortified from within through the spirit.

In prayer, strengthen us to glorify you and Lord, do a work through your church. In these last days, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Let's stand together. So you can pray for me because we just finished our spiritual warfare series. And now the big question is, where do we go next Saturday night? And so I trust you'll be praying for me this week.

And by the time we get together next week, I will know where we're going and I'll let you know that. So look forward to moving into whatever the Lord has for us in our next study venture here. So trust that you'll be praying if you do need some prayer tonight.

Personally, you've got some things going on in your life that you just really want to bring before the Lord. Some of the guys are up front and they are waiting to pray with you. So come on up and let them pray for you.

God bless you.

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