

Romans 12:12

by Doc Greenway

Continuing instant in prayer is a sustained attitude and approach to God, and it is through this that the answer comes.

Duration: 55:28

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 16:11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 7:11-12, Luke 11:9, Luke 11:13

Topics: "Romans"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of a Christian. He highlights that prayer is not just a one-time event, but a continuous practice that sustains and maintains our relationship with God. The preacher also encourages believers to stand firm in their faith and put on the whole armor of God, which includes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. He emphasizes that these spiritual weapons are essential for withstanding the attacks of the enemy. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the power of prayer and the importance of standing firm in faith.

Transcript

Well, as you know, we have been looking at Romans chapter 12 and we've been in verse 12 for some little time now. And I felt that tonight it would be perhaps a fitting subject to take the latter part of that 12th verse, continuing instant in prayer, especially as this is our last meeting for the year. And we're looking forward, I know, with great anticipation to the days to come.

But in the meantime, well, what better than continuing instant in prayer? The only thing that lies outside the range of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God. And while I think it's a very comprehensive phrase, is it not? The only thing that lies outside the range of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God. So that in this comprehensive ministry, we have a tremendous scope.

There is nothing excluded, except that which we know instinctively is not the will of God. Not only is it comprehensive in the sense of having a wide scope of subject, but it's comprehensive in the fact that everybody can enter into this particular ministry. And whether or not we are public speakers or whether we have any service in the public eye, it makes no difference.

We are all called to pray. And every one of us, without exception, at some time or other, if not regularly and as a habit of life, will be found in prayer. Because you know and I know there are times when there is

no other place to which you can turn except the throne of grace.

And nothing else that will meet the need except to bow in prayer before him. So when I thought about this, I began to see how real the whole question of prayer is in the Bible. And how dramatically, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit picks out particular choice, words and terms that he can use to express what prayer really is.

You know this is an amazing thing. In the Old Testament, before the coming of the Messiah, before Jesus was born, before they had a certain hope such as we have now, they were looking forward in anticipation to the time when Jehovah would manifest his presence in some new way. And so they were so dependent upon prayer, so completely dependent upon this approach to God.

In the New Testament, after Jesus was born, here again looking back upon that event, realizing his consummation, there is still this sense of the importance of prayer that comes to light again and again. There are twelve words in Hebrew in the Hebrew Old Testament for prayer. And there are seven words in the Greek New Testament for prayer.

And they all give us various aspects of prayer. I'm not going to talk about all of these tonight because there isn't time and that isn't the purpose. But just as a point of interest, and I may mention one or two of these in a moment.

But think of what the Apostle says to begin with. Let's look at the words themselves in the text. Continuing instant in prayer.

Now those two words, continuing instant, are one word in the Greek. It means to be strong towards something. Continually being strong towards a certain object.

This isn't something you can dismiss lightly, in other words. This continuing instant means that your whole being is being drawn out in an effort. A sustained effort.

Strong toward this particular thing. What particular thing? Well, prayer. Continuing instant in prayer.

Here is one of the words in the New Testament which I think is distinctive for prayer. It's the word for Sufi. And it means intense intercession or supplication which has about it a sort of inner fire.

That's in that word yuki. The inness of prayer. The inwardness of the fire that blazes in the heart of the person who is strong toward continuing constantly in this direction.

So when the apostle exhorts his friend, continuing instant in prayer, he's far more behind this in the picture that he uses than appears in the authorized version for him. Being strong towards something. To such an extent that your inward being is aflame with desire, with longing, with yearning, this is involved.

There's nothing peremptory about this, there's nothing that is taken as a habit of life merely or something that we do because it's customary. But in this kind of prayer, there's far more involved, far more that lies beneath the surface. So I feel that we need to look at this subject tonight.

Look at it perhaps not in the depth that we should because we haven't the time, this isn't the opportunity to do that. But at least we can see some of the prevailing principles that will enable us, will help us to fulfill this exhortation in our own personal lives and to do exactly what the apostle is exhorting people to do, continuing instant in prayer. The first scripture passage I would like to turn to is in Matthew chapter 7.

Because you know we are really exhorted to pray.

Way back in the Old Testament in 1st Chronicles 16 and 11, you read these words, Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his face continually. There at the beginning of time, as it were, in the Old Testament days, here is this exhortation coming as strongly as it comes from the heart of the apostle in New Testament days.

Seek the Lord, seek his face, do this continually. Same idea, continuing instant in prayer. But in the 7th verse of this chapter, Matthew 7, you know this occurs in the Sermon on the Mount, doesn't it? You read of Jesus saying, Ask and it shall be given unto you.

Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth.

Unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If he then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever he would that men should do to you, do he even so to them. For this is the law and the prophet.

Verse 11, when it says, Your Father which is in heaven will give good things to them that ask him. The parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke is, How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him? But notice in verse 7 the approach. Ask, seek, knock.

Now these expressions don't all mean the same thing. Asking, seeking, knocking. They represent stages in our approach to God.

Asking with the humility of a beggar because we deserve nothing at all. That's one phase of prayer. This asking, deesis, is the approach of an inferior to a superior.

Someone with a sense of need coming to someone whom he knows can supply that need. And isn't this a common experience in prayer? With all of us, without exception. Aren't we deeply conscious that again and again we have turned to God? And we have besought him because we have felt and sensed the depth and intensity and reality of our need.

And, praise the Lord, we have felt and sensed also the reality of his supply. We know that somehow faith is able to bridge the gap between the depth of our need and the greatness of his supply. And so we come asking with the humility of a beggar.

Ah, but that's only one phase of prayer, isn't it? Again, you know as well as I do that there are times in our lives when asking isn't enough. Seeking. This is what we read a moment ago.

Seek the Lord. Seek his face continually. If we are to ask with the humility of a beggar, we must seek with the diligence of a servant.

And this seeking goes far beyond the ordinary asking of the everyday experience of a prayerful believer. Seeking means you've got some positive objective in need. Seeking means you lay hold and you're not going to let go.

Seeking means that you've seen something. That faith has beheld something. And what faith has beheld, faith would appropriate.

This is the seeking. And I'm sure that many of God's people fail in the area of prayer because they give up the seeking too soon. Their heart as stones thrown away from the blessing.

They've asked and asked and asked and there's no answer. And they've sought and sought and sought again and there seems to be no reply. But the idea behind the seeking is the seeking of diligence, of persistency, a refusal to let go.

So here is another stage in prayer. Not simply asking with the humility of a beggar, but seeking with the diligence of a servant. And then as though this were not enough, the Lord goes a step further still.

Not. If we are to ask with the humility of a beggar and to seek with the diligence of a servant, there comes a point in the area of our prayer life where we can knock with the confidence of a friend. But you don't reach that point at once.

It is through prolonged asking. It is through determined seeking that at last you come to the point where you know instinctively you can knock with the confidence of a friend. Because God has heard and praise His name, God has answered.

Did you know there are times in your lives, you've experienced this as much as I have I'm sure, when you have known that the knocking is so effective that the time for praying and seeking and knocking is past and it's time now for praising and thanking and giving Him the glory because the answer is there. I'm sure you've experienced this many times. I know I have.

Times without number when I've come to the point where I've realized that there's no longer any need for asking. God has heard and God has answered. I remember testifying to this some time ago when we were having our meetings across the 21 Karaka Road.

But I think it will bear repeating and if some of you have heard me say this before, I trust you will bear with me for the sake of those who haven't. But it's something that I feel bears out what I'm saying here. A man came from Japan, a servant of God, who had been there for 25 years at the time that I knew him.

And he was so impressed with New Zealand as a country that he felt that he would like to have young people from this country go out of Japan. He was the principal of a Bible school in central Japan. And have them trained so that they could reach out to this great land of the rising sun.

And for some reason or other he felt that I could be of some help and blessing in this particular venture. And so after prayer I agreed that I would go out of Japan. But it was the tail end of the depression in this country.

And no one had any money. It was wonderful going to services in those days. Nobody had any money but there was tons of glory about it.

Because everybody was in the same position, you know. You had to really depend upon God. And God used to come and meet you in the evening.

Well, I said I was going to Japan. I didn't let anybody know about this. Except my wife, my first wife and I both.

One day, one morning on a Wednesday morning at 11 o'clock in the morning. I remember the time because the clock was striking. Not the time.

We'd been praying, we were on our knees. I turned to my wife and said, I've suddenly realized God has heard my prayer about Japan. I'm not praying about this anymore.

I said I'm going to start thanking him for the answer. I said he's going to provide the means. And right away I began to praise him.

The next Sunday morning, a lady in the congregation who was not a member of my particular church, where I was ministering, came to me and asked if she could have an interview. I said, well, I can arrange this this afternoon. I'll tell you what, I'll come back to the church and we'll meet in the vestry.

We did this and the first thing she asked me was, are you going to Japan? I said yes. And she began to weep. Well, I've learned by experience, when a woman begins to weep, it's best to let her get her weeping over with.

I mean, you can't get anywhere until that's all finished. So then it was all over and she had sort of dried her eyes. I said, now then, what is all this about? She said, have you got the money? I said, I haven't got it in my hand, I said, in actual fact, but I know that I've got it.

And this started the whole thing all over again. I said, now look, you've cried enough. I said, now, let's begin from there, you know.

I said, now tell me the story. And she said, well, she said, last Wednesday morning at 11 o'clock in the morning, I was busy sweeping in the kitchen, and a voice said to me, give my servant the money that he might go to Japan. And she said, I didn't know a thing about it.

So she said, I've come today to ask, are you going to Japan? You need the money, if you do, it's here. I said, I've got it for you. Well, that was remarkable.

We had a prayer session right on the spot, of course. And then she said, now, what would it cost? So I quoted her a single fare to Japan. She said, well, that won't get you back again, will it? I said, oh no, what's the use of that? And she said, are you quoting me the fare for yourself only? I said, well, naturally.

Well, she said, what's the use of you going unless your wife is with you? She said, you'd be like a bird with one wing. Well, I agree with her, of course. And so I quoted the whole thing then.

Now she said, I want you to come to New Plymouth. She said, will you speak at the evening service? And then she said, I've got the money in the post office, I'll bring it to you. I don't want anyone to know a thing about this.

I said, all right, we'll do that. So at the end of the service, she gave me an envelope. I went home, I counted the money, there was far more there than I needed.

And I couldn't sleep all night. I went back. By breakfast time the next morning, I said, excuse me, but you gave me far more than I asked.

Yes, she said, but you really hurt me. She didn't know that I had only one suit and one pair of shoes. She didn't know, and this is no exaggeration, my wife had one frock that she could put on.

When she had to wash it, I had to put it on the line and wait until it dried. And then she could iron it before she could be seen in public. Now no one knew that.

These were days of depression. No one knew this. But God knew.

And there at that identical moment on our knees, when God was speaking to me and saying, I have heard your cry, there's no need to ask or seek or knock any longer, but only to receive, God was speaking to her away in New Plymouth. I was in Wellington, she was in New Plymouth, and telling her what was necessary to do. And I'm sure, as I say, that many of us have had like experiences.

So here it is. This is how Jesus expresses it. Ask, seek, knock.

Ask with the humility of a vagrant. Seek with the diligence of a servant. Knock with the confidence of a friend.

And these, as I say, are stages and degrees in the area of our prayer life. But notice what he goes on to say further. Having described the approach that we have, think now of the action that he mentions.

Verse 8. For everyone that asketh, receiveth. And he that seeketh, findeth. And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Now you don't get the force of this in the Authorized Version. What Jesus actually said was this. For everyone who keeps on asking, keeps on receiving.

And everyone who keeps on seeking, keeps on finding. And everyone who keeps on knocking, to him the door keeps on being opened. So it's a continuing instant in prayer that is behind it.

A keeping on. Not a giving up, a giving over. But a keeping on, a continuing attitude and approach to God in this action of prayer.

And notice the appeal in verses 9 and 10. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? How encouraging the Lord is. He's reminding these people that even on a human level, an earthly father will not receive his own son by giving him a wrong thing.

Well how much more will your heavenly father, he says, give you those things that you need? Or as we have in the Gospel of Luke, as I mentioned, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him? He won't give them a serpent, he won't give them a stone, but he will give the Holy Spirit to those that keep on asking. And it's in this strong, continuing attitude that the answer comes. This proskaterio, this strength toward of him.

This having a positive objective and sticking to it. It's to this end that the Lord is speaking. And to this purpose that he presents them with this picture.

But in verse 11, he has the argument here, and I think it's a strong one. If he then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that keep on asking him? Prayer is a wonderful thing because it includes, as I said, in its comprehensiveness, every one of us. We begin our Christian life with prayer, Lord save me.

And we end our life with prayer, Lord into thy hands I commend my spirit. And all the way through from our new birth until we see the Lord face to face, our lives are maintained and sustained by prayer. This, I'm sure, is something we have to understand and comprehend.

It's not something you can take on or leave off or something you can accept or reject, something you can reason about or else you can analyze. It's something which is basic and fundamental in the life of every believer. You can live without many things in this world, but you cannot live without prayer.

It's impossible. And how beautifully Jesus speaks about this. Matthew 19 and verse 19.

You don't have to turn to it, I'll read it to you. Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven. Isn't that a lovely thing? But you begin to break it up a little bit.

Get beneath the surface. Think of what he actually said. Again I say unto you, that's the highest possible authority.

You can't go higher than this. He said it. That if two of you, that's the smallest possible company.

Can't have less than two in a company, can you? Shall agree, that's the plainest possible condition. As touching anything, that's the widest possible scope. That they shall ask, that's the simplest possible action.

For even a child can ask. It shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven. That's the strongest possible guarantee.

Now you read that verse again. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven. Isn't this a tremendous area into which God has introduced us? Right.

Now I mentioned at the very beginning that there were some words in the Hebrew language which have a bearing on prayer. I just mentioned, I think they're very beautiful. The word char, char, it means the request of prayer.

Positive request. The word ana, which means entreated in prayer. The word kanan, which means the attitude that we shall have in prayer.

The word ata, the perfume of prayer. The incense of prayer, if you like. The word paga, the insistence of prayer.

We've been talking about this, keeping on. The word pala, the habit of prayer. Something which goes on moment by moment as the natural world of the spiritual person.

The word sela, which is humility in prayer. The word sya, which is thoughtfulness or meditation in prayer. The word kala, which is pleading in prayer.

The word lakach, which is the whisper of prayer. And the word bia, which is fervency in prayer. Sometimes translated baha, which means the boiler, an inner flame of prayer.

And this is the word, of course, the equivalent in the Greek is prosuper. Uk has to do with the innes of things, with the fire of things. Pros is a preposition which strengthens it and so makes it intensely strong.

So you have this idea of strong intercession or supplication which has taken fire. And the equivalent in the Hebrew is this word bia. I won't go into the Greek words because I've touched on these at various times and I hope, God willing, in the future to touch on them again.

But now, having looked at the fact that we are exhorted to pray and that we are encouraged to pray by the Lord Jesus, let us remember that we are expected to pray. You have it in Luke 18 and verse 1. And, of course, in the parable which follows. And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

Now this word pray, what is it? Diasis? Lasting of a beggar? No. It's the same word, prosuperman. Prosuperman.

Intense intercession on fire. Men ought always to pray in this way. You have the like expression in the epistle of James.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man the day that met with God. This is the thought behind it. This effectual fervent prayer is prayer which has caught fire.

And this is how Jesus said men ought always to pray. And if you pray like this then you are not going to faint. The idea behind this word faint, of course, is loosing away, letting go.

Tell me. Don't tell me, you tell the Lord. Isn't it true? That again and again you've lost your grip because you've forgotten to pray.

Isn't it true that this accounts for so much slackness in our spiritual life as Christians? Our inability in the area of prayer. But you say I don't know how to pray. If you have a need you'll know how to pray.

If you have a sense of dependence on God you'll know how to pray. Yes, but I can't pray like so and so. God doesn't expect you to pray like so and so.

God expects you to pray like yourself. How many times have I heard people say this word, I'd love to pray but I haven't got the language. When a child wants something, a child doesn't bother about whether it's got language or not.

It finds a way of expressing its need. And isn't this true where we are concerned? How much we need to learn this lesson that Jesus is teaching here. Men ought always to pray.

Always ought to be at that boiling pitch, if you like. That fire of prayer in their very being. Because this is the only way in which they will never let go and so lose the vital glow in their lives.

This is the only way to prevent a spiritual fainting fit is this intense intercession on fire. But you say how can it be maintained? Well I'm sure it's maintained because of our sense of need. How much do you need of God? What are you saying to him from the depths of your being? Are you really saying like the psalmist, my soul thirsteth for God? Are you really saying I hunger and thirst after righteousness? Are you really putting God in his composition? Are you giving him the first place? If you are, then believe me you'll find that this idea of maintaining a life of prayer is something which is spontaneous.

The depth and degree and extent of our own longing and yearning for God will always determine the quality of the prayer life that we have as believers. So Jesus makes it very clear here that we are expected to pray and the whole substance of what follows in the story that he told, you remember, of the unjust

John. You know, it's a very interesting story, isn't it? He said there was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded men.

There was no time for God and there was no time for men. There was a widow in that city. She came unto him saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

And he would not for a while. But afterward he said unto himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard men. Well, this widow is something else.

She's something altogether different. Yet because this widow troubled me, I will avenge her, lest by a continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said.

And shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear wrong with him? Don't you see? He didn't fear God. He had no respect for man. But here's this widow determined, persistent, importunate.

She's going to get what she wants. And she's going to keep on until she gets it. In the end she went astray.

Now, said Jesus, if an unjust judge will do that, how much more will your Father in heaven listen to your cry, if you keep on crying to him, but not if you pray fast and loose in the area and realm of prayer. When I was a boy in Wales, especially in the wintertime, you know, the nights come on very quickly. We used to have a favorite trick.

We would tie a long string onto someone's door knocker, because every door has a knocker, it's the rule in your country. Then we would take the string, of course, down over the street and hide behind someone's wall. And then one of us would just pull on the string and say, you know, rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat, and away.

Sure enough, before very long, we'd have to pay off the string because the door would be open. And the person was there looking and wondering, well, who on earth would knock at the door? Who was the door? Give them ten minutes. Rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat.

Once again, the same procedure. Couldn't understand it. And we'd keep it up for about half an hour.

You know, knowing, of course, that curiosity would cause that person to come out and have a look to see who was around, until sometimes they would discover the string, then the game was up, naturally. And how many times did we play this sort of game with God? Rat-tat-tat. The very gates of heaven.

When he comes to look to see who's there, who's gone? Who disappeared? Can't be found. He didn't really mean it. He didn't have any real business.

He ransacked her open. That is the thought behind what Jesus is saying. You're a heavenly father.

He is an unjust. He'll listen if you're prepared to do what he wants you to do, and that is to keep on coming to him. For if we are encouraged to pray and expected to pray, thank God we're all so equipped to pray.

Now turn to Ephesians 6, verses 10 to 12. Just a little of my time. Yes, we've got a little time left.

Ephesians chapter 6. We are equipped. Verse 10. Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me, that

utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bond, that therein I may speak boldly as I always speak.

Praying always, being instant in prayer, never failing. How is it possible? Well, thank God he hasn't left us to our own devices, but here's the equipment that will enable us to pray in the way that has been suggested here. Notice the equipment that we are to wear.

Mentioned in verse 11, put on the whole armor of God. Mentioned again in verse 13, wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God. Mentioned again in verse 14, stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helm of the salvation, and the soul of the spirit, which is the word of God.

Here's the equipment. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord. This word strong is the same as the basis of the word dynamite.

Strong in the Lord and in the power, same word again, dynamite, of his might, kratos, his inherent strength. It's come a fail. How can we be strong in the Lord? How can we stand in the power of his might? By putting on the whole armor of God.

No one will do this for you. It's something you have to do for yourself. Put on, take up, put on the piece by piece armor of God.

For this panoply, or this equipment, was that of the Roman soldiers. Their notice, we do this that we might be able to withstand in the evil day. When that attack is over, still able to stand, ready waiting for the next attack.

And when that is done, well, stand therefore. How wonderfully the apostle makes it clear that this is what we are called to do. Stand fast.

Where God wants you to be. It's no use looking for marching orders when God says stand still. But you can't stand still, and you can't stand fast, and you can't withstand until and unless you put on the whole armor of God.

Now look at this armor. Loins gird about the truth. The belt of truth, first of all.

And this is the basis of it all, truth. You can have false emotions. You can have false enthusiasm.

I suppose you can have false love, that seems to have developed in Hollywood. But you can't have false truth. And so the first essential is this belt of truth, which the soldier wore for a purpose.

He bound his flowing garments together for one thing, and stopped him from being tripped up. So this belt of truth, put this on. And having on the breastplate of righteousness, this word used to be spelled right-wiseness.

The breastplate of righteousness is the breastplate of equity. Now, if you're going to put on the belt of truth, you can't put on the belt of half-truth, and expect to get bound. There are some people who talk about truth in a very loose sort of a way.

They talk, for instance, about business lies, and about white lies, and social lies, as though there are any differences where God is concerned. The trouble with people that are always talking about white lies is that they get covered lies. And then every sort of a lie has the same sort of a hue.

But the belt of truth, like the breastplate of righteousness, there's no playing around with this. It means what it says, right-wiseness. There is no right way of doing a wrong thing.

And if we're going to put on the breastplate of righteousness, we have to accept the fact that there is equity in the union, which cannot be described, and cannot be dispensed with, to suit anybody. Breastplate of righteousness. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

This preparation of the gospel of peace, and having your feet shod in this way, it literally means firm-footedness. The sandals of the Roman soldier were studded with nails, spikes, so that he could stand fast on the battlefield. You can't hope to stand fast in slippery places.

And therefore, you have to accept the fact that the sandals of the gospel are needed, and how beautiful are the feet of those that publish good tidings. Well, have we got the sandals on? Above all, taking the shield of faith. And this is the heavy shield of the infantry.

It measured four feet six by two feet one. And therefore, it was something really substantial. Usually made either of metal or of leather.

But it was an effective shield. The shield of faith. Wherewith he shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

We shall look at it in a moment. And the helmet of salvation. For the thought-life is protected here too.

And the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It's not your sword. It's the spirit's sword.

And only he can use it. It's when we try to use it that trouble begins. When we think we've got all the answers.

As long as we've got half a dozen proof texts. And we can ram these down the throats of people. And expect that if they take this medicine, everything's going to be fine.

Not at all. The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It is always the Holy Spirit's sword.

And he alone can use it properly. For only he can bring conviction. Jesus said this.

So you see, we have all this armor for defense. But we have this for offense. The shield of faith.

The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Now, what about the engagement that we have to face? Look for instance in verse 11. That he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

I love this word wiles because it's the word methadiah. Did you know that the devil was a Methodist? Small M of course. Methadiah.

He's methodical. What he does is done with a purpose. You can be sure of this.

It's methadiah. So the kind of person against whom we are fighting is a person who has method in what he does. The wiles of the devil.

And again in verse 12. Notice. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.

So you're not quarreling with your brother and sister. And you haven't got time to wrestle against your own flesh and blood either. If you have found the answer and the secret to the glorious living.

But against principalities after the first ones. Against powers exalted. Against those who have delegated rights.

Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Against the potentates that govern the darkness that covers the earth. Against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Against wicked spirits that haunt the upper air. And remember when Satan is called the prince of the power of the air. The word which is used is the word used for the air which touches the tops of the mountains.

That's as close as Satan's empire is to the world in which we live. This is the proximity of Satan's kingdom. And it's against these powers that you and I are engaged.

Spiritual wickedness in high places. Wicked spirits that haunt the upper air. The fiery darts of the wicked.

Fiery darts of course are separate temptations. Which can be quenched when they come against the shield of faith. Which can cause terrible havoc if there is no shield of faith there at all.

That's why the armour is important. The fiery darts of the wicked. Now the wicked is ho poniros.

Another word for wicked and evil is the word kakos. An abstract thing. But the wicked here is ho poniros.

It pictures the devil as a person. And as a person so evil that he is not content with facing his own destiny. But is determined to drag down to doom and destruction with him as many as he possibly can.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God. Because if you don't how can you stand against powers and forces and wicked spirits. I mean turn and pull such answers.

The wicked one is. This is the engagement that we face. This is the enemy that confronts us.

Not flesh and blood. Those souls who said so and so about me and I never got over it. Who are you? Yes but you know it was all wrong because there was no foundation to it.

And they said these terrible things. They did these awful things and so on and so on. But Lord help us.

The world hasn't come to an end yet as I can see. These are not the things that matter. What matters is the prompting, the motivation.

The evil thing that prompted it. The telling of what was wrong. The doing what was wrong.

Look past the flesh and blood path. See the sinister force behind it. That's where your battle really lies.

Not against people. But against the wicked one. And don't you see.

Although you can put on every bit of the armor. You don't start fighting until you start praying. For this you see.

Is the enablement of the experience. Praying always. Verse 18.

With all prayer and supplication in the spirit. What she led unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Oh these are tremendous verses.

Constant attention to prayer. Praying always. Save strong word for prayer to begin looking at.

Intense intercession on fire. With all prayer and supplication. In the spirit.

This is a creative agency in prayer. Now you begin to fight against wicked spirits. Where you begin to pray in the spirit.

And by means of the Holy Spirit. And watching there unto constant alertness. It means being on sentry duty.

All the time. Watching there unto. With all perseverance and supplication.

For all saints. This is the comprehensive action of prayer. For all saints.

And for me. The greatest blessing you can ever confer on any servant of God. Any saint of God is to pray for him.

All of you. And although he is the master theologian of the New Testament. Here he is.

With a consciousness of his own need. Humble enough to say to them. Oh please pray for me.

To what end? That utterance may be given unto me. That I may open my mouth boldly. To make known the mystery of the gospel.

All speak. Paul understood. That prayer liberates the word of God.

And prayer liberates the worker in the word of God. That I may make known the mystery of the gospel. That I may uncover.

Unveil. The glad tidings. For which I am an ambassador in bond.

That therein I may speak boldly. As I ought to speak. No wonder when he wrote to the Thessalonians.

In those terse commands of his. When he is saying to them. Why he is not prophesying.

He couples that with praying without ceasing. It is as important. One as the other.

Continually instant in prayer. There's a lot to this isn't there? There's a lot we haven't touched upon. My earnest prayer and longing is.

That we shall see. Behind what has been said tonight. That there is this tremendous need we have.

As individual believers. To put on. To take up.

To adjust to ourselves. The piece by piece armour of God. When we've done all that.

Not to forget the importance of it. Praying always. With all prayer and supplication.

In the spirit and so on. May God bless you. Let us pray.

Eternal God. It is with a consciousness again. Of our own inability.

Thy human inefficiency. That we turn to thee once more. And thank thee.

That thou hast made provision. Where we are weak. Thou canst make us strong.

We bless thee and praise thee. Thou hast found a way. Of causing our ignorance.

To be superseded by thine intelligence. Our weakness. By thine almightiness.

And our very simpleness. With thine own holiness. That this has always been thy purpose.

We purpose. That we might stand. In the evil day.

And having done all to stand. We might be able to withstand. The onslaughts of the devil.

Oh God help us to know. That thou are preparing us. For a battlefield.

Not for a flourishing. We might know. That the disciplines of life.

Are therefore necessary. Not something we have to accept. Grudgingly.

But something we should welcome. Gladly. Because these are the hallmarks.

Of our sonship before thee. And these are the signs. Infallible.

That thou art concerned. Oh God we know. That if there is any error in our lives.

Or we fail thee. It is in this area. Of our prayer line.

That is why we humbly beseech thee tonight. That thy holy spirit. Will come into this area.

Of our lives. And make us strong. Where we are weak.

And make us persistent. Where somehow we seem to fall short. Oh God.

Will thy help us. That in the intervening time. When we shall be absent one from the other.

Before we meet together again. In this place as such be. Thy precious will.

We may grow in grace. And in the knowledge of our lord and saviour. Jesus Christ.

We may grow indeed. Into the likeness of the one. Who spent time.

In his father's presence. We may get to understand. And experience.

That we may forget the words themselves. All. That the new testament.

Tells us about prayer. Its efficacy. And its power.

Lord hear us tonight. Because we do want thee so much. Because that's all there is.

For Jesus' sake.

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