

Perspective in Prayer

by Paris Reidhead

Prayer is the foundation of the Christian life and the key to spiritual growth and effectiveness, and it is the one weapon that the Christian must have to fight the battle against spiritual forces.

Duration: 35:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:29-32, Ephesians 6:10, Ephesians 6:18-19

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the battle between the minds and hearts of humans against the things of God. He explains that there are also invisible powers of darkness controlled by Satan that seek to hinder God's work. The speaker emphasizes that the battle is not primarily with people, but with Satan who blinds the minds of individuals and leads them away from God. To equip believers for this battle, God has provided spiritual armor, including truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. The speaker concludes by urging listeners to pray always, not just for themselves, but also for the unsaved, the church, and the outreach of the gospel.

Transcript

Will you turn, please, to Ephesians, chapter 6. Our text will be today as it's been in the past, verses 18 and 19, but I wish to read from verse 10. We're speaking today concerning perspective in prayer. Your Christian life is measured by your prayer life.

It begins with prayer, it's sustained and nourished with prayer. All the ministry that you have for time and for eternity is by prayer. How important it is, therefore, that we should see the place of prayer here from the word of God.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness or wicked spirits in high places.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day in having done all to stand. 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 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, 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 inborn.

Now we'll stop there. May I remind you as we consider the perspective in prayer that we would see it first in relation to the panoply that God provides for the Christian. You will notice in the armor that we have read that every piece refers to armor worn by Roman soldiers.

This is the analogy that the apostle uses that we might understand something of the provision God has made to protect us in our battle. We are told that the nature of this battle is not primarily with people, though we understand from what we read in the Timothy portion that there were people involved in it. Oedemas forsook him and Alexander did him much harm.

So let's recognize that there is also flesh and blood involved in the battle. But primarily we are told here that it is a spiritual battle. It has to do with these forces that are arrayed against the whole purpose of God.

It has to do with wicked spirits, the rulers of the darkness of this age, of this world. These that have the ability to thwart and hinder when they are allowed such by men what God is intending to do in man's behalf. You recall that Daniel was told by the angel who came to minister to him that he had been withstood 21 days by the prince of Persia.

Thus we have a battle and two levels. The minds of men arrayed against the things of God. The heart, the carnal heart of man which is enmity against God and not subject to the law of God.

But then beyond that and above it and working through human personality and human frame and body are the powers of darkness, the invisible entities and personalities that are controlled by Satan that seek by every means possible to hinder the working of God and to bring to nothing all of God's good desires for men. It is Satan that blinds the minds of men. It's Satan that puts pressure upon them to press them by means of the attitudes, the philosophies, the ideas, the premises that are used, the ideas that are given as being axioms to guide one's life.

He presses men and women and young people out of the way of the Lord and into the way that will lead certainly to death. Now for this battle, we have been given equipment. There is to be, our loins are to be girt about with truth.

We're to understand the truth. We're to have a breastplate of righteousness, obedience to God's will and to his word and to his way. Our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

We're to have a shield of faith. We're to have a helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit. Each piece, I say, corresponding to the armor worn by the Roman soldier.

But here is something of which the Roman soldier knew nothing. And I believe it is the secret to victory. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.

Years ago, I recall bringing a series of studies on the Christian in full armor. And I recall stopping with verse 17, merely alluding to the fact that, oh yes, also there's prayer. And I would do it quite other than that.

In fact, have been doing it. I'm alluding to the armor and emphasizing the place of prayer. Because if we have the armor, however completely we may understand it and however fully we may wear it, and we do not have prayer, we are as those that are sent to battle with a stick rather than a sword and with the armor of paper mache rather than the steel that will turn back the biting weapons of the enemy.

And thus prayer, as we have seen since February when our brother Guesswine took us from our lethargy and indifference to this important matter, shook us up and forced us to face the fact that our prayer life had been perfunctory and casual. And this is not only my testimony but the testimony of so many others. I believe that we have sensed anew and afresh the tremendous importance of prayer.

And that the whole measure of our Christian life and effectiveness is by prayer. Now, this then makes it of primary importance. If we're to see a prayer in its full perspective we will realize that it is the one weapon, the one tool, the one piece of armor, the one instrument that we must have above all others or shall I say better with all others.

Having I trust established this, let's proceed to see the scope of prayer. What are we in, for whom are we instructed to pray? Having looking back or remembering what we've said in the past that prayer begins the Christian life, the prayer of the sinner, the prayer of affirmation, prayer of thanksgiving, of confession, the prayer of thanksgiving, the prayer of praise, of petition, of intercession, all these aspects of prayer that we've considered are to be born in mind by you that have shared in the ministry in the past. Let's then ask ourselves, where do we begin praying for man and why? Well, obviously we must begin praying for the unsaved.

We should start there. I suppose that the first prayer of one who's come to know the Lord Jesus Christ after he has received Christ and thanked the Lord for saving him, the first prayer that he prays is something like this. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for dying for me.

Thank you for saving me. And now, Lord, save. And there's someone that rises on the horizon of the heart as the one they want to see next brought to Christ.

I recall in my case, having grown up in a Christian home with father and mother that loved the Lord Jesus, that no sooner had I come to know and love Christ, to know that I'd been born again, than I cried out to the Lord there at the same altar where I'd found him for Ted Cowden, the man that worked on our farm back in those depression years. He worked for \$15 a month for the good months when we had \$15 to give him. And he stayed those months we didn't waiting for the ones we could, you say.

It was this sort of an arrangement. And we got, he worked hard and we didn't have much to pay him. And I just somehow had come to appreciate Ted immeasurably because of the load he'd taken off of my shoulders.

And the times when I'd been too tired to do the work that I was assigned to do, and Ted would come on and hit me on the shoulder and say, you go on in the house and I'll do it. And he'd stay and complete the task. A kind man, a man who'd had no education and had no opportunities.

And all I could think of when I knelt there at the altar and knew that the burden of my guilt had rolled away and the weight of my sin had been lifted was, oh, God save Ted. Now, I believe this is as natural as breathing. And if it is that way, then it is an evidence of backsliding if you've lost that concern for the unsaved today.

If you have less concern for the lost than you've ever had before, to some degree water has fallen upon the flame that God kindled on your heart. And to some degree ashes have come where once coals glowed with a heaven given zeal for the lost. Oh, may God save us from ever outliving our burden for the unsaved.

This is Calvary love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And we ought to recognize that the perspective of prayer when seen in its full view must ever include the lost. Strangely enough, our Lord says he doesn't pray for the world.

This doesn't evidence a lack of concern on his part. He loved the world. The father loved the world and gave his son.

The son loved the world and gave his life, poured out his soul unto death. You find it strange then to wonder, ask why he doesn't pray for the world? Well, his instrument of mediating that which he accomplished by his death was his church, was his body, was you. Whereas he doesn't pray for the world, he prays for you.

He's praying that God will give to you the same kind of burden and vision and yearning and longing that he had, that he can reproduce his concern for lost men through you and in you. And when you allow the spirit of God to bring you into that relationship with Christ, you will find that the effect of it is a concern for the lost that's going to lead you to pray for the lost. Now there is not only a spiritual reason thus given in the sense that it is the work of the Holy Ghost giving you Calvary love and giving you a burden for the unsaved, but there is a legal reason, and I use the word in the light of our intercessory responsibility.

You recall that in the Old Testament there was this matter of kinsmen redeemership. You recall that there were instances, many instances in the Old Testament. You think of Ruth perhaps immediately going to Boaz, a kinsman that would care for her in need and in a time of difficulty.

And so it would be that we are to be viewed by the Lord as kinsmen of the sinner. There are our own kind. Once we were under the same sentence of death.

Once we were abiding in the same doom and the Lord Jesus Christ raised up someone to pray for us and to love us and witness to us. Now we in turn are made by the Lord, a kingdom of priests, kings and priests. He didn't ask you if you wanted to be one.

He made you one. And one of the aspects of your prayer is that of praying for the lost, praying for them in the sense of identifying with them, praying for the unsaved in the sense of legally representing them before the Lord. Lord, here is so-and-so.

Here's my father, my mother, my neighbor, or Jack or Art or Irv or whoever it is. Lord, he's no worse than I and doesn't deserve hell any more than did I. No more justly sentenced to death than am I. Oh God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, certainly not for his, he deserves nothing as did I, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus, move upon his heart, take the veil from off his eyes, cause him to see his lostness and put it in his heart to seek faith. Now this is appropriate praying.

Well, there's a reason for it. You'll see God respects the legal rights of the sinner to revolt against him. The soul that sinneth it shall die.

And one sense, and please don't press this beyond what I mean, the sinner honors God as much in hell if he refuses to repent as he does in heaven if he has repented. Just as the law says, pay the fine or go to

jail, the person in jail is honoring the law as much as the one who paid the fine. In the ancient Rome, drop the incense at the altar of Caesar or forfeit your life, the one who forfeits his life is honoring the law as much as the one who dropped the incense.

He had to choose which way he would honor the law to avoid it and escape it. This, of course, is to dishonor the law. And so it is that God gives to the sinner the option.

Repent or perish, turn or burn, said Spurgeon. Believe or be damned, come or be lost forever. And so God has given to man the responsibility in a sense to choose and he gives to man the privilege of exercising that choice.

But he turns to you and he says, do you see this one who's turned his back on me, revolted against me? I want you to pray for him. And he puts into your heart a concern for that person and a love for that person. And since you have access to the very holiest of all through the one that's there in your presence, in your behalf, the Lord Jesus Christ, you can now legally represent the sinner before the Lord.

You can acknowledge his guilt and accept his condemnation and then plead for God's mercy and thus release the Lord to work. You ought to pray for the sinner in terms of the phases of divine operation. It's too broad to say, Lord, save my father or save Dale.

There are phases, discernible phases in the divine work. And if you will pray in relation to this, you'll be so much more effective in praying for the unsaved. If you will ask God to awaken the sinner if he's unawakened, and when he's awakened to convict him and when convicted to bring him to repentance and when repentant to quicken faith, you thus entered into an intelligent fellowship in prayer.

You are praying in accord with the truth set forth in the word by the spirit. You're praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. It's not only the inspiration of the spirit, but I believe it's in accord with what elsewhere is taught in the word of the phases of divine dealing.

So you are to pray for the unsaved. But do you stop? Do you have a prayer list for the unsaved? And as soon as they've come to faith in Christ, you draw a little line through their name and say, well, isn't that wonderful? Now we can pray for Bill saved, let's pray for Mary. Now, if you understand the perspective of prayer, privilege and responsibility, you will realize that whereas you're responsible to pray for the unsaved when this person has come to Christ, you're still responsible to pray.

For we find here in the text, we're praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And so as soon as they've come to Christ, on the prayer list, perhaps another list, but nonetheless on the prayer list, there are your, now obviously, it's going to be difficult for you to pray for all the saints by name, be just a little hard. And therefore you've got to pray for all the saints cooperatively, that God will in the saints secure for himself this vehicle for the revelation of how glorious the Lord Jesus Christ is.

But we'll deal with that aspect of it a little later. Let's deal with your personal responsibility in prayer for the individual saint. Now, obviously you have critical faculties with which you are able to see the inconsistencies and the difficulties and the problems in other's lives.

We do not seem to have been missing in this when God made us, generally speaking, we were well equipped with the ability to see the moat in our fellow's eyes. I do not think that any of us would have to confess that we are incapable at this score. I rather feel to the contrary that one of the problems you faced

as a problem I faced is the inability to fail to see my own dame and yet with a two by four in my eye to look across the room and see the little hair splinter in someone else's eye.

Now that may not be altogether bad. Certainly it's bad that we shouldn't deal with a two by four, which is a good translation of the word dame. Isn't it ridiculous? The Lord said you have a two by four in your eye and you can't see it, but you can see a little sliver in somebody else's eye.

Let's allow that your heart is right and we'll deal with praying for yourself in this regard in a moment. But let's suppose that there is some value in your ability to see the moat in your brother's eye. It isn't a question of seeing, it is what you do about it that makes the difference.

Now if you see something in another's life that's there, undoubtedly the Lord sees it unless it's imagined on your part, which is often the case when minds begin to become diseased with egotism or from physical deterioration, they often imagine things that aren't there. But on the other hand, there's so much in us that isn't what it ought to be that it's quite possible that you can look at anyone and find something in their life that isn't to the highest glory of Christ. Now I don't say that it's bad to see it.

In fact, it might be somewhat bad if you didn't see it. The question isn't, is it wrong to see what's wrong in another's life? The question is, what are you going to do about it? What is it going to prompt you to do? Now if it gives you table conversation when you get home, then I think you have missed the point completely. You have failed to profit from it at all.

If you go home and say, oh, did you see? Or did you hear? You understand that you've moved from the possibility of any blessing to yourself or others, and you've put yourself on the grounds where God must deal with you. He must chasten you because you've sinned with the sin of gossip and backbiting. And this is that which you find in Romans the first chapter, 29 to 32, makes people worthy of death.

And if you have sinned with the sin of gossip and backbiting, it's broken fellowship with the Lord. It'll keep your prayers from being answered. It will keep God from using you.

It exposes you to the attacks of the devil, and it puts you in the place where God must chasten you or disown you. Well, that's extremely costly. And yet this, as someone has said, is the national indoor sport of the evangelical church, gossip and backbiting.

If this is the case, then heaven help us, we're far further from being blessable than it's been thought. But I am assuming that you are sensitive to the spirit of God and you want to live pleasing to him, and you can't help but see things that are wrong with others. Well, this is an evidence of critical faculties and ability.

The question isn't, can you see what's wrong? The question is, what do you do about it? Now, the first thing you ought to do about it is to pray for the person. You ought to go home and get alone in your closet and shut the door and don't pray so anyone can hear you outside the keyhole. That's a nasty way to gossip too, is pray loudly enough so that somebody else gets the thing.

No, you have to shut the door and silently breathe your earnest longing to the Lord for this person. Lift them before the Lord and groan and agonize and prevail in this and the life of this one who's in Christ is inconsistent with the glory of Christ. Now, if you'll do that, you're going to release the Lord to work in the heart of that saint.

Now, this is exactly what Paul did. Writing to the people of Galatia, seeing theological error and practical error, Paul said, I travail in pain night and day for you. He saw something wrong with them, but he did the proper thing about it.

He went to the people, he went to the Lord about the people. He came with the thing that was on his heart, he groaned over it, he made it his, he identified with this person and he prayed for that person the way he wanted the person to pray for him. Is that all you do? No, but that's what you do first and that's what you do foremost and that's what you do always.

What else? Then Paul went to the people about the problem. He didn't go to somebody else. You want to find out how to do it, read the book of 1 Corinthians.

There were problems there and he named the names and he went to the person. Oh, I think that it's a calumny against God as well as a crime against humanity to manifest a concern for someone and discuss it with a third party and not share it with the one that's involved. If there's anything that's moral insanity that jeopardizes the whole of the Christian life and all of one's relationship with God and the possibility of blessing, it's this.

To write a letter to a third party about a second party is the most despicable kind of moral cowardice. Or to write an anonymous letter where one is dealing with the problems in a life without having the moral courage to identify the person that has the discernment to see it is similar cowardice. And I am confident that God can't possibly bless that kind of thing.

No, there's only one way. If you have agonizing, prevailing pain for God to work in the heart of this member of his body, then the spirit of God will give you sweet and gentle, tender liberty to become a priest of ministry to that person. There has to be that prayer.

That prepares the way for profit in the body and not just an abuse of the members by using the club of conversation or talk to wound and bruise and hurt. So it's extremely important that we should understand perspective in prayer. We pray about the problem in another.

Paul says, by watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Why? There's things wrong in the saints. They're born as babes.

They need to grow up. They need to be nourished. They need to be corrected.

They need to be instructed. I love my children, but I don't talk to you about their problems. I go to the children.

Sometimes I have to get to the seat of the problem in order to broaden their understanding. I don't spank you because my children have disobeyed. I deal with my children.

I love them. You love me, come to me. I love you, I'll go to you.

The concern is that we should mutually profit. But if I come to you and say, now listen, I've got to spank you because my children disobeyed me. Well, you'd look at me as though something radically wrong had happened.

And this is exactly what happens when you go to a third party and criticize a second party. As though, now I've got to set this thing straight in your life because it happened in his. No, absurd.

When you pray for the saint, then there's great longing for this person to be all that God's made possible, to know all that God has intended and enjoy the privileges that he's provided through the shed blood of Christ. If you see this, then you're going to understand that to pray for saints is to pray for their correction. Paul wrote to them, he talked with them, he ministered to them.

This was his responsibility. Then he also prayed that they would enter into, that Christ be formed in you. There was a relationship that was possible that had not in their lives become actual.

And their participation in God's whole plan and purpose would depend upon this. Obviously, we are to pray for the saints corporately or to pray for the church, to pray for the local church. But remember, the local church is made up of individuals.

And if there is someone that's been joined of the Lord to you that's less mature than is necessary for full participation in that church life, then you have the same responsibility in prayer and in exhortation to that babe in Christ as a parent has to the little one that's been born into the family, to nourish, to care for that child. And so prayer for the church is in the local church, is in a sense, prayer for the individuals of the local church. Pray that the individual will understand the nature of the body.

Pray that he'll understand the nature of the relationship to the other members of the local church. To pray for all saints is to pray that the church will become what God intends it to be. That there'll be insight given to pastor and people to understand what God intends the church to be.

And that there will be a joining of heart to heart, that it should become under God and by his power, the vehicle in that community for the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ. But we must touch it in passing. It is also for witness.

Paul says, pray for me as a witness. And therefore it is quite appropriate that you should beg for the prayer of God's people. The dear brother Freely, whom I love to see and trust to see at council, was with me out in California when I was ministering there at Pacific Palisades some years ago.

And he said, oh, brother Reedhead, pray for me. He said, you know, ever since I've been saved, I've been a beggar for prayer. And I know exactly what he means.

The cry of a heart is pray for us. Forget me not. Pray for me.

Pray for me. This ought to be your, this is Paul's utterance. Paul's a beggar for prayer.

This is one thing that he can beg for with great freedom and great liberty. Pray for me. Why? Well, pray that I won't become absorbed with the things that perish.

Pray that I won't become oppressed by the problems in the church. Pray that I won't become frightened by the barriers and difficulties that stand before me. Pray that I won't become indifferent to the claims of Christ upon my life.

Pray for me that utterance may be given unto me. Any message that is a message God can honor has to come from him. It'll come through the prayer of Paul, but he realizes that there's aspects of this conflict that he doesn't see and understand fully.

So he says, pray for me that utterance may be given to me, that I may have God's message. Then pray that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. And therefore it ought to be

that we pray one for another and pray for the church.

Pray for the young people that rise in our midst that God will send them as missionaries, that utterance will be given to them in India. And utterance will be given, boldness will be given on the ends of the earth. And pray for us as we go into our offices and schools and factories and home, wherever it is, that utterance may be given.

Well, here's the perspective of prayer. It reaches to this man outside of Christ to whom we have an intercessory responsibility. It's to the individual that God allows us to see whose need is pressed upon our heart, that we may hold them up in prayer.

It's for the saints corporately in the life of the church, that it may be all that God intends it to be. And then that it may be a prayer for the going forth of the gospel. Now there's in this also, and we haven't dealt with it, place for personal needs.

But I believe that when we're dealing in the church life, when we're dealing in our Wednesday prayer meeting and times of prayer, that this perspective of prayer we have here, not necessarily in the group praying for the individuals by name, unless it is sufficiently small that each one can share fully. But that is thus that we are seeing the focus as the different rays of prayer now. And the full perspective from this point comes down to where we are.

And thus there radiates from us prayer in every meaningful direction according to the power of God. Perspective in prayer. Oh, to see it.

It's not just an I, me, my, mine matter. It's for the unsaved. It's for the saints.

It's for the church. It's for the outreach of the gospel. And if we see this, then we're going to have prayer take on a new dimension and it's going to take on a new reality.

May God teach us not only to pray, but how to pray. I'm staying after in school these days, not only taking the lessons as they come, but oh my, I realize that I've got to make up for so many years, learning, place, the meaning, the matter of prayer. Join me.

Let's go on together that our lives can become the instrument in prayer that God wants them to be. Shall we bow together before the Lord? Our Father, there's so little we know about the most important thing in our lives. We're just as children.

We've spent so many years in kindergarten. Lord, God of grace, how we long to learn what it is to have a mature ministry in prayer. How we long to realize that prayer must undergird all activity, must support all witness and testimony, must be the means whereby the genesis of all plans is given, teach us to pray.

Lord, if we fail here, we fail everywhere. Every failure in the Christian life is a prayer. Failure in every victory is a prayer victory.

With thine disciples, we cry out, Lord, teach us to pray. We hope and trust our Father that something that's been said today is to the scope of prayer, perspective in it, is going to enlarge in one sense and bring into stricter focus in the other our prayer ministry. And so grant our Father that there shall be profit, eternal profit, because we have lingered in thy presence and have been told by thee that thou dost open to us the door of blessing if we will but come in with prayer.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask it. Amen. Let us stand together for the benediction.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost be in abide with each of us now and evermore. Amen.

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