

# SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

## **Ephesians 6:18-20 - "Our Secret Weapon: 'All Prayer' "**

### INTRODUCTION:

Ephesians 6:10-20, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour 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 in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and 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 in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

The Bible and prayer go together.

The secret of being a saint is being a saint in secret.

In the same way, the secret of victory in spiritual warfare is secret prayer.

The Christian soldier fights on his knees.

Picture the scene . . . and the then the Christian soldier does the most amazing thing – he falls to his knees in deep, profound prayer!

Prayer is the supreme weapon to use against Satan's power – without it we are powerless.

Prayer is how we put the armour on (vs. 13)

Prayer is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armour and wield the sword.

What kind of prayer is needed to put on the armour and defeat the Devil?

Paul lists five aspects of prayer necessary for spiritual victory in verse 18:

Ephesians 6:18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

I. Continual Prayer (vs. 18) – "Praying always" or in all occasions.

When do you usually pray?

Whether you're a Christian or not, most people pray in times of difficulty, even atheists.

The sad truth is that many Christians pray only in times of difficulty.

It's okay to pray in difficult times.

James tells us in James 5:13, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? (in good times) let him sing psalms."

Prayer should be continual, not sporadic; a habit, not an isolated act.

Illustration – Acts 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

The key is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

How is this possible?

It's not the act of prayer, it's the attitude; it's not the articulation of words, as it is the attitude of the heart.

John Wesley (writing in the third person) – "[H]is 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 or company, in leisure, business, or conversation, his heart is ever with the Lord. Whether he lie down or rise 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 that is invisible'."

How about you?

II. Varied Prayer (vs. 18) – "with all prayer" or all kinds of prayer

Because we need to pray continually we must pray with variety.

We must know how to offer different types of prayer.

The Christian who prays only to ask is missing out on many wonderful blessings.

Illustration – A girl prayed, “Lord, I am not going to pray for myself today; I’m going to pray for others.” But at the end of her prayer she added, “And give my mother a handsome son-in-law.”

Notice the acrostic: **ACTS**

#### **A**doration – Praising God

- It stretches our minds, we are brought into touch with who it is we are praying to.
- And how great both He and His resources are.
- Without it prayer becomes just a ritual.

#### **C**onfession

- As we come before a holy God we realize how sinful we are.
- I John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

#### **T**hanksgiving

- Of the 10 lepers only one said, “thank you”.

#### **S**upplication

- In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus tells us to pray, “Give us our daily bread”.
- Illustration – A Scottish Presbyterian pastor prayed long prayers in lofty language that only heaven could understand. A woman in the chair tugged on his frocked tail and said, “Just call Him Father and ask Him for something.”

### III. Spirit Directed Prayer (vs. 18) – “in the Spirit”

Jude 20, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,”

What does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit?

It's not – Praying in Tongues  
It's not – Loud Praying  
It's not – Much Praying

Matthew 6:7, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

What is it?

It's praying with His help.

It's when the Holy Spirit : inspires, creates, and directs our praying.

Illustration – An elderly gentlemen passed his granddaughter's room one night and over-heard her repeating the alphabet in an oddly reverent way. "What on earth are you up to?" he asked.

"I'm saying my prayers," explained the little girl. "But I can't think of exactly the right words tonight, so I'm just saying all the letters. God will put them together for me, because He knows what I'm thinking."

Romans 8:26-27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

John Bunyan – "In prayer it is better to have heart without words than words without heart."

To often our prayers are *words without heart*.

Illustration:

Now I lay me down to sleep  
I pray the Lord nobody wakes me up.  
If I should die before I wake  
I wouldn't be surprised.

- Betty Rollin

If I am praying in the Holy Spirit, He tells me what to pray for (His will – His Word "*the Sword of the Spirit*").

If I am praying in the Holy Spirit, he gives me power.

I can't pray in the Spirit if I am grieving the Spirit by sin in my heart and life.

How about you?

#### IV. Persistent Prayer (vs. 18) – “all perseverance” – it's a war so be alert!

In Luke 18:1, Jesus said, “. . . men ought always to pray, and not to faint;”

Luke 18:2-8, “There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”

Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it shall be given 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; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

R. Kent Hughes – “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). The Lord's language is unusually compelling because the three verbs *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* indicate an ascending intensity. “Ask” implies requesting assistance for a conscious need. We realize our lack and thus ask for help. The word also suggests humility in asking, for it is commonly used of one asking a superior. The next step, “seek,” involves asking, but adds action. The idea is not just to express need, but to get up and look around for help. It involves effort. The final step, “knock,” includes asking plus persevering – like someone who keeps pounding on a closed door! The stacking of these words is extremely forceful, and the fact that they are present imperatives gives them even more punch. The text actually reads: “Keep on asking, and it shall be given to you; keep on seeking, and you shall find; keep on knocking, and it shall be opened to you.” The picture is of a man who will not stop knocking.

Satan wants you to give up and stop praying.

Don't give up on your unsaved family and friends!

## V. Intercessory Prayer (vs. 18) – “for all saints

Illustration - Exodus 17:11-13, “And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

Ephesians 6:19-20, “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 bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Pray for pastors, and other ministers of the gospel.

My prayers can help others defeat Satan!

Mary Queen of Scots, said “she feared the prayers of John Knox more than the efforts of ten thousand soldiers.”

The spiritual weapons of our warfare are: *truth, righteousness, peace, faith, confidence, the Word, and prayer* – prayer which is: *Spirit-directed* (“pray in the Spirit”); *continual* (“on all occasions”); *varied* (“with all kinds of prayers and requests”); *persistent* (“be alert and always keep on praying”); *intercessory* (“for all the saints”)

We close with these fitting words from Dr. John Piper’s book *Desiring God*:

Unless I’m badly mistaken, one of the main reasons so many of God’s children don’t have a significant life of prayer is not so much that we don’t want to, but that we don’t plan to. If you want to take a four-week vacation, you don’t just get up one summer morning and say, “Hey, lets go today!” You won’t have anything ready. You won’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned.

But that is how many of us treat prayer. We get up day after day and realize that significant times of prayer should be part of our life, but nothing’s ever ready. We don’t know where to go. Nothing has been planned. No time. No place. No procedure. And we all know that the opposite of planning is not a wonderful flow of deep, spontaneous experiences in prayer. The opposite of planning is the rut. If you don’t plan a vacation you will probably stay home and watch TV! The natural unplanned flow of spiritual life sinks to the lowest ebb of vitality. There is a

race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer you must plan to see it.