

The Great Teachings of the Bible and What They Mean for You: The Armour of God

After listing six traditional pieces of Roman armour, the apostle Paul urged his readers to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." How does this advice tie in with the lessons we are to learn from the armour of God?

The Power of Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit

Prayer is an important part of our day-to-day lives. But how often do we think of it in association with the armour of God? Turns out, it's one of the most vital parts!

Artur Aleksandrov, a recent high school graduate in Tallinn, Estonia, tells this story:

"Just recently I was a high school senior, trying my best to balance school, God and various 'cares of this life.' When the new year started, I wanted to focus on picking the right national exams to take. When I decided on which ones I prefer, it didn't even come to mind that one of them could fall on a Sunday. By nature being rather forgetful and slow, I didn't notice the day of the week I was to sit for the first two exams (both were on the Sunday). I lived on unsuspectingly until, about three weeks before the first exam, one of my teachers casually mentioned something that made my pupils triple in diameter. That's when it hit me! "...I wrote a letter of request to the centre explaining my affiliation with a Sunday-keeping church and then I started to wait. They tested my faith and patience for a whole month before I got a reply on the 5th of May. They also requested an affirmation from the Church as proof, which Mr. [Johnnie] Lambert duly composed for me.

"They respected my beliefs, and although my request came way too late, allowed me to sit for the exams on the additional day appointed by them. This was another blessing from God. It was an answer to numerous of my prayers to Him while I was still awaiting the reply from the centre. In that period, I was partly preparing to receive a negative answer, which meant failing to graduate and staying for another year in school, and partly really hoping that God would still provide an easier way out. I knew He could—and He did! "...So, dear brethren, as you can see for yourselves, our gracious and all-powerful Lord responded to our collective prayers with abundant gifts... There is nothing more powerful in this world than the prayers of God's servants—His saints."

Praying Always

God's armour is comprehensive. In this series we have spent time examining it, from the ideas behind it, to its purpose and application. It is an absolutely essential part of surviving and winning our battle against Satan. However, right on the heels of his description of the armour of God, Paul adds that we should be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18).

Is there any significance to this admonition appearing immediately after the listing of God's armour? You bet there is!

Barnes' Notes comments, "No matter how complete the armour; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph" (Heritage Edition, Vol. 12, p. 133).

If we equip ourselves with God's armour, we must also be determined to keep a steady line of connection with Him. He is the commander of His spiritual army, and He alone knows how to lead it to victory.

How can we be "praying always"?

Luke 18:1-8

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

Luke wrote that Jesus gave the above parable to teach that "men always ought to pray and not lose heart," so it serves as a good starting point for understanding what praying always means.

In her quest for justice, the widow never gave up in seeking help from the unjust judge. In our quest for victory, we must never give up in seeking help from our perfect God. The command to pray always is not to say that we must be in a continuous, unceasing dialogue with God every second of every day. Rather, we must develop a connection to God—one that is maintained through regular prayer, Bible study and a godly lifestyle—that allows us to instantly come before our God in prayer in times of distress and need.

What is supplication?

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...

The Greek word translated *supplication* in both Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:6 is transliterated *deesis* by *Strong's Concordance* and means a petition or a special request of God.



What role does the Spirit play in a Christian's prayers?

Romans 8:26-27

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit [itself] makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because [it] makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Since we don't always know how to pray as we should, if we have the Spirit in us and are led by that Spirit (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:14), Paul says "the Spirit" will make intercession for us. This means that although we do not always know exactly what we should be praying for, God knows our hearts by living in us (John 17:23).

No matter how clumsily Christians present their requests and no matter how jumbled and confusing they are, God will always know what they are trying to say. Through His Spirit working in us, He has intimate knowledge of our hearts and minds. He understands us and will always work things out for the best in the long run (Romans 8:28).

Who or what should we be praying about?

Matthew 6:9-13

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

In what has become known as the "Lord's prayer," Jesus Christ lays out for us a framework for praying to God. It is not a strict, inflexible format to which we must adhere every time we come before God (Matthew 6:7), but rather an excellent checklist of things we do need to take the time to pray about. We should be praying on a regular basis for, among other things, God's will to be done, our needs to be taken care of, the forgiveness of our sins and deliverance from Satan.

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 21:36

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Along with praying for others, it is vital to also pray for ourselves. Our lives are filled with reminders that we can't make it on our own. It would be inconceivable to refrain from asking God for the help we so desperately require. Our God stands ready to provide us with the strength, wisdom and courage we need to stand against our enemy, but He wants us first to come before Him and ask for it. Will we?

Matthew 26:39

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

When Jesus prayed fervently before His crucifixion, He knew what He wanted to happen. But He always remembered that His Father was in charge and had the eternal best interests of everyone in mind. It is important for us to pray for God's will to be done too.

Ephesians 6:18-20

...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

The ministers of God's Church, on whom falls the bulk of His work, are just as human as the rest of us. They, too, are subject to exhaustion, sickness and heartache. They, too, can—and at times, will—fall short of the high mark God has set for us. Also, they can face difficult trials (Paul spent time in prison for obeying God) and many challenging decisions in doing God's work. Paul was particularly concerned that God would continue to give him the courage, opportunities and clarity to boldly preach God's truth even at the risk of suffering or death. As this is the case, we should be sure to keep God's servants in our prayers—and not only His ministers, but all His people. We are in this battle together, and prayer is one of the most effective ways we can support each other, care for each other and fulfil the God-inspired command given to us in Philippians 2:4.

Reflection

How often do you pray? Throughout the Bible, we see repeated examples of people who prayed regularly. Daniel, an Israelite taken captive to Babylon, made sure to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10). The author of Psalm 119 seems to have prayed seven times each day (Psalm 119:164). While there are no set numbers for how often or how long we should pray, we should be sure to give God adequate time on a regular basis. If you don't already, set aside time each day to talk to God, and don't take it lightly. Don't put it off or delay it; make the time to talk to your Creator. win our spiritual war.