

Watch Night Service "Praying In The Spirit"

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Good evening everyone. Going to go ahead and start our watch night service.

Before starting, we'll go to the Lord in prayers. If you will please bow with me.

Father, we are the end of the year and we have so many things to reflect on throughout this year. And I pray God that you would help us to reflect it with our hearts in prayer towards the second half of this service. I pray that you would use this message that I will be preaching from to cultivate and prepare our hearts for that time of prayer. Give us discernment, give us openness to your word. Give us the grace of concentration so that we can please you and exalt thy son Jesus Christ at our time together here tonight. Bless this time to that end in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I would like to share something that I last week I made an error in that I mentioned that we had finished our armor of God series. We are not actually done. We're going to finish the series actually tonight. We're going to finish the series tonight because of this verse that I will be preaching from. It's a continuation of where we left off. So we left off in verse 17 if you recall. Well, tonight we're going to finish off in verse 18. So, if you will go ahead and turn in your Bible to Ephesians chapter 6, verse 18, and you'll understand why I'm choosing to end this series with this particular passage to close up this series with this sermon.

And before we go into the text, there are some notable individuals that have really blessed my soul in helping me to understand the importance of prayer. And I would like to share the quotes that helped me so much in that cultivation of prayer and preparation. And at this time I'd like to give you those. So this particular individual helps in understanding prayer as a lifestyle meaning that it's something that we do day to day and this is what Martin Luther said he said I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer notice it's not I have so many things to do that I cannot pray he says instead said I have so many things I must start with prayer. So he chose the attitude and the lifestyle that preparation of the day in prayer is vital. That's how he prioritized his day was with prayer.

The next person is John Bunyan. He puts in his quote that I'm going about to share with you what prayer does in your life when you start off your day with this posture. So he says this, you can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed. that's worthy to consider in your life. You can do more but only if you pray. That's the idea. So that is the prayer and action for our day-to-day.

The next one is the heart of prayer. So this is again from John Bunyan and he said this. When you pray rather let your heart be without words than your words be without heart. Let me repeat that again. When you pray rather let your heart be without words than your words be without heart. Essentially there he's saying don't just mouth bunch of words if your heart's not right. Make sure your heart is right before you say anything. That's what he means with that passage with that quote.

So I lay that before you to show what men thought about the importance of prayer in their lives. And as you know those men did amazing things, didn't they? John Bunyan wrote the book the pilgrim's progress he wrote other great books besides that Martin Luther obviously the reformation was brought about because of him so these were not just flowery words they meant something they made an impact in their actual lives.

So now I'm going to go to the Apostle Paul Apostle Paul was a man deeply committed to prayer in fact the passage that we're going to go over which praying in the spirit. That's the idea of intense prayer. When you are praying in the spirit, there's intensity about it that only the spirit can put upon your soul to set a flame how important praying in the spirit is. And it's evident in his writings. Let me just share with you amongst the many books that he wrote in the New Testament he mentions prayer he mentions prayers or prayer request approximately 41 times throughout all of his writings. The not four notable prayers is found written by Paul while he was in prison. two times in the book of Ephesians, once in Philippians and the last one in Colossians.

And so in this book in Ephesians, we see it twice. Chapter 1 beginning at verse 15 to 23 and in Ephesians chapter 3 14-21. So Paul's prayers consistently centered on the spiritual growth of believers. that is one of the main notable prayers in Ephesians was centered around spiritual growth of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and he would focus on and that the believers would know God's will that they would experience his immense power in their lives through the Holy Spirit that they would grow in wisdom and love and understanding to live a worthy life for Christ rather than just material blessings. You recall in his prayers he would never ask for material blessings. How many times do we ask so much emphasis on material blessings rather than these things that he mentions? Focusing on God's will, experiencing his immense power through the Holy Spirit, growing in wisdom and love and understanding to live worthy for Christ's sake.

It's worth noting, isn't it? Furthermore, he not only modeled a life of prayer but also repeatedly encouraged others to maintain a consistent prayer life. So he himself was modeling it out for others. And I think that's why he had such a great profound effect in the churches that he served at because people saw this man prays. This man really seeks the Lord in prayer and that's the result of all the people that got saved in his ministry and grew in the Lord Jesus Christ and the stature and fullness of God.

So with that said, let's go into verse 18 and let's read it together. So he starts off saying, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Notice that all is mentioned four times. Do you think Paul meant this word all lightly? Not at all. One verse, all mentioned four times. Pretty important.

Now, we left off in verse 17 and earlier passages representing the full equipment and protection that the armor of God gives for a soldier to stand in the battle. Yet instead of watching for the enemy, we see here we see the posture of prayer, not advancement and watching the enemy. Instead, we see this picture of a fully armed, geared Christian with the full armor of God. And yet before he steps forward with this armor, it's pray. So the posture instead of advancing, it's kneeling to pray as a picture. And while this might seem a very vulnerable position, let's always remember the Christian life is a paradox, right? It's always a paradox. And this is one of them. You see him kneeling, praying. Just picture that this warrior ready to fight the battle. Instead, you see the opposite. He kneels down as it were and he prays.

And this is a picture of prayer being essential to victory in the battle. Even if all other preparations are made, omitting prayer guarantees defeat. That's what Paul was trying to image here with this text. Through prayer, you don't connect with the enemy but with God. That's the real reason here. Before you look at the enemy, he wants you to look to God.

So the almighty one is the one who holds all power for us to advance in the battle. And so when you have this posture of prayer, you ascend above the conflict, you don't look at the enemy, but you look beyond that, beyond the conflict, and you enter into God's sanctuary. That's what prayer does. That's where prayer takes you. And there, just imagine with God in his sanctuary, there you witness the immense power of the Lord Jesus, your commander who fights the battle for you. And it is his fight. He is the only one that can ultimately win. And he oversees, just picture him, he's the one that oversees the whole battleground that we cannot simply do in our position because he is sovereign over everything and he is the one that issues all the orders. So we must pray and listen from him. He is our commander.

And striking that no single symbol by the way exists to represent prayer, right? the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, shod with the feet of the gospel of peace. We don't see that with prayer. And you ask why why isn't prayer of something a physical illustration. And this is what I found because look at the word praying always. first phrases of the text. It's the idea is you're always connected with God that that is the posture of connection with God. So there's no representation of a physical element here. It's God and praying that can be compared to the soul's very breathing. Without it, your spiritual life will suffocate.

So I often do this like how would it feel like if I just held my breath and see how long it can go. That's a picture exact picture of it is if you don't pray you are going to suffocate you are going to panic. You're going to go into fear mode when God doesn't want that. And that's why it's the life and breath of the Christian in his armor is our life is prayer.

So, Holy Spirit, whom you have received, go to Ephesians 1:13, I'm going to get to where I'm going. I'm going to go ahead and read it for you. It says this, "In whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In whom also after that ye believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." So this is a believer that has believed in the gospel, received salvation, and now has sealed within him the Holy Spirit of promise.

And so the Holy Spirit desires to cultivate this life, this breath, this new fresh breath that you have as a believer. And that is a picture of prayer. So if you turn with me let me just say a little bit more about this text. You see he's the only one to whom we can actually pray aright. Let me

just say that he gives the ability to be capable of praying aright is the Holy Spirit and he is the one that helps us to know what Jesus wants us to do as a command for our lives. He's the only one that connects us to the Lord Jesus Christ, our commander. He instills that into our hearts as believers. He guides us in our prayers and supplication. He's the one that moves us beyond a rushed habitual prayer life to rather petitioning aright and praying for what's actually needed in our lives rather than what we want. That's what the spirit cultivates in us.

And so prayer carries the risk of distraction and falling asleep. You know who's the one that's keeping you up is the Holy Spirit from falling asleep. He's the one that protects you from distractions. And for this reason, prayer must be coupled with watchfulness and perseverance. Acts 2:42 says this, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and in prayers." So they continuously steadfast in all these areas of their life including prayer.

So through prayer, the soldier maintains his vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. And without this connection, everything will go wrong, leading to self-willed actions that will inevitably damage the unity of the army that you're involved in. And that's your brothers and sisters in Christ. And we can jeopardize the safety of others because we're doing it our own way. You see what the Holy Spirit does? unites us together in prayer.

And we see that in the text where it says in verse 18 if you go back with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. So it's not for me only but for all saints. The Holy Spirit helps us to see that we're not just praying for ourselves but for others. And so if you fail to act this way, suggest disregard for all the saints as I mentioned. And so since no saint is without need, we all have it. It is always vital to remember all saints in prayers. Ephesians 1:15, if you go back there, we'll see this. It says, "Wherefore I also after I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto there it is all the saints."

And then Ephesians 3:18 says this, "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes all understanding or all knowledge and then that he might be filled with all the fullness of God." So while prayer for groups of believers is good, we should also strive to specifically mention every saint by name. And we do that right in our times of prayer.

So those are just some brief thoughts on how we are going to cultivate the second half to time of prayer. But before I do, I want to share some more people that have influenced my life for my good in my own prayer life. And it's Leonard Ravenhill. Leonard Ravenhill was a truly unique individual in this way. He at his peak of his ministry, the most busiest, most difficult time of ministry where he had so many obligations, this man committed eight hours of prayer daily.

And this is the reason why because as more ministries are involved, we can get spiritually indifferent. Meaning that the spiritual things get neglected and just taking care of all these ministry, the physical stuff takes over. And he determined to not be in that state. No matter how busy, how busy it was, he would maintain an 8-hour regular scheduled time of prayer. And if you ever heard this man preach, it's just you can just see the spiritual life in this man. He influenced so many people in so many ways in the importance of prayer.

Other thoughts according to Ravenhill, prayer is the essential pulse of true revival. Without it, we lose sight of our purpose and calling. We can get easily distracted by what God ultimately wants for us and as a church. He says this, "Never mind if you were challenged, are you changed?" Never mind if you were challenged, are you changed? See, challenge is just a physical exertion that it doesn't really do anything spiritual good. So he's saying when you pray is your life changed or does it just convict you and that's it? That should never be what prayer does just leave you convicted but it goes beyond has prayer changed your life for Christ.

And then he said this an 18-wheeler with a Volkswagen engine trying to pull a heavy load is impossible. Picture a small little engine and an 18-wheeler. You think that load is going to be carried? But when he was full of activities, he would say, "Okay, we got all these things, but where we are in our prayer life, because nothing's going to pull these activities unless we have a robust, powerful prayer life."

And so I want you to envision this is that yes, I think God has a lot for us in this church. I have so many things that God has shown me in terms of ministries and activities for this church. But where is the prayer meeting? Where are we at in our own prayer life as a corporate prayer life? Because that is ultimately what's going to move things for the purpose and calling of God.

So always remind yourself of that. Wherever you are with your load this evening, is it carrying you in your prayer life? Do you feel the strength of God's power resting on you to help you? Because that's what we ultimately want. We want to be connected to God in his power and his strength and his will and his purpose for us. Because the point is that a true church's spiritual vitality is not rooted in our size. We have more people here. We're not basing it on that. Or how well we know the Bible. Not that. Or the multitude of ministries and programs. It's not that. The indispensable source of power for the mission of God is prayer.

That's it. That's going to be where I'm going to go. Yes, we're pleasing God and we have the power of God resting on our church. I want to look at the prayers. I want to hear the prayers. I want to see the prayers not only in my life but in every one of yours's life. That's where I'm looking at because without a strong active prayer life, the church is dangerously underpowered for the task God has given it.

So according to Ravenhill, the prayer meeting is essential to the Christian life serving as its place where we gain clarity for the next step for our church where the next battle that we have to face that is at the core is our prayer life. And so he Leonard Ravenhill strongly exhorted believers to prioritize passionate sacrificial prayer above all other activities.

How can we make the duty of this as a privilege instead of a neglect that we neglect this privilege that we have every time we gather is this time of prayer? Because think about it, if Christ was comforted and strengthened by prayer, can we as Christians live without it? is not a prayerless Christian in danger of being no Christian at all.

So that's where I'm going to end off. Those are some things to hopefully change and transform us as a church and see this meeting as the most important. And my prayer is that we see this room filled up more than our regular ministries that we have. that the prayer meeting is where people come to more than any other ministry that we're involved in.

So, I pray at this time, will you follow with me? Will you go into this time of prayer with me? Before we go there, let me just close us out in prayer. We'll go to the second part of our time.

Father, I thank you, Father, for all the Christian examples that you have placed in my life and also the timeless truths of what Apostle Paul shared in this passage of Ephesians chapter 6 verse 18 on the importance of prayer. Help us, Father, to make this time meaningful where we are not just challenged but that our lives are changed to become more and more saturated in our hearts and our souls with prayer. Father, help us to do this tonight.

And I pray God that we will come out truly changed and transformed and Lord that we would please you ultimately in our prayers tonight. We know that you hear us Lord and we're asking as we draw nigh unto you tonight that you will as your promise says that you will draw nigh unto us. Father help us to do this tonight in Jesus name. Amen.