

During World War II, an army officer was instructing his men on how they were going to take the objective that they had to run up to. He said, there's an enemy position and there are snipers, there are machine guns, and to be successful, you're gonna have to stay low the entire time. Because if you raise up, you're gonna get killed. And he finished by saying this, if you advance on your knees, you'll always be safe. That's where Paul is pointing us today, at the end of Ephesians 6.

We stand in God's armor against the enemy. We stand in God's armor through prayer. And I'm gonna ask, would you please stand with me as we enter into God's word this morning. Ephesians chapter 6 will begin in verse 10. A final word.

Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still be standing firm.

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth in the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that come from the good news, so we'd be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the

spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the spirit at all times and on every occasion.

Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the good news is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him as I should.

Let's pray together. Father, as we come to this part of Ephesians as we wrap all this up, we've been on such a journey through Your Word. We've been on such a journey in our identity with Christ and who we are. And now this final piece of the battle is brought into our sight. And, father, it is prayer.

It is the power of prayer. It is a provision of prayer. And, father, it is something that we all know, but it's not something that we all do. And so give us a burden this morning. Open our hearts and our eyes and our minds to see how important prayer is, not just to us and for us, but father to you and for your kingdom.

We pray that before we leave today, we would be forever changed because we have been with you in Jesus' name. All God's people said, amen. Please be seated. Ephesians starts off by pointing us to all our blessings in Jesus Christ. It says that, you have been blessed with all blessings in the heavenly realms, and we've been adopted, and we've been taken in by God.

And now, he points us from the heavenlies down to our knees in prayer. Prayer is the final component in our outfit. Many times, it's the missing piece in our battle with the enemy. In the classic book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, the last piece of armor, the character of Christian is given is the weapon of all prayer. He said, it will stand you in good stead when all else fails.

Real prayer is underrated and overlooked by most Christians. We miss out on the power and the provision that God has for us. And like those soldiers, we can only advance safely on our knees. Even pastors can find ourselves running through the week, busy working for God, but failing to talk to God and have communion with Him, we can find ourselves so busy that we don't have time for the most important relationship that we have. For most people, prayer is optional.

But here it is shown as the culmination, the capstone of everything else that we're doing. With all our blessings and all our armor, let's take a look at verse 18. Pray in the spirit at all times and on every occasion. How often should we pray? Well, he makes that pretty easy at all times in every occasion.

The the keyword is all. He said, pray all the time. And it is not meaning that we are to constantly be saying words, that we are to repeat words constantly. The pagans did that and God said, I don't want just repeated words. I don't want repetitive prayers.

They don't accomplish anything. What he wants is an open line of communication. We should live in prayer like a fish lives in the

water, That is always, not always saying prayers, it is the environment that we're in. We are in God's presence constantly. Then he tells us to pray without ceasing in 1st Thessalonians 5:17.

Jesus says in Luke 18:1, men ought always to pray and not to faint. So we have two choices. We can pray or we can faint. I do not like fainting. The last time I fainted, I was 20 or came close to fainting.

I did not faint. But I worked myself up into a tizzy being afraid of needles. And I was about 20 years old and I was, rock solid. I was, 5% body fat, fight anything that walked, and she showed me that needle, and immediately my heart rate jumped up. And she gave me the shot in my arm, and I said, I'm gonna have to sit down a minute before I fell over.

Some of us are prone to fainting. We are prone to working so hard on our own or being so caught up in fear that Satan gained such a foothold in our lives. And Jesus said, you can pray or you can faint. We're called to be in constant communication with God, recognizing we're in his presence all the time and he is always listening to us. If it's a phone conversation, think of it this way.

I don't know if you've ever been on a phone conversation and then thought you hung up, but you didn't. And you are just listening to their day as they and sometimes it's just worth staying on the line for. Right? You just keep on listening, or somebody just kinda, you know, sits on their phone and it dials you. You just listen to them humming as they're driving down the road, whatever's going on.

If you think of our prayer life, when he says pray always, pray without ceasing, if you are on a call to God, you're on speakerphone and he's always listening. Don't hang up. You don't have to sign in and sign out. Pray all the time. Pray on every occasion, he said.

Every occasion means you pray in good times, you pray in bad times, you pray in blessings, you pray in trials, you pray in challenges, you pray when you're happy, you pray when you're sad, you pray on every occasion, because every occasion is lived in his presence. Philippians 4:6 says, be anxious for nothing, but in everything supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. We're to pray prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, intercession, and praise at all times and at all occasions. And then he says, pray in the spirit. Now this one can be confusing because there's so many things going on when people say, you you know, the whole talk talking about the Holy Spirit.

When they say pray in the spirit, people can confuse that with speaking in tongues. That is not what he's talking about. Always interpret scripture with scripture. So when we want to figure out what scripture is saying, go to another scripture that helps us to understand it better. Romans 8:26 says, likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself 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 he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. The formula for prayer is we pray to the father through the Son in the Spirit, understanding that as we pray, the Holy Spirit is also praying along with us. It's an incredible realization when we think of this, that when we go to the Lord in prayer, even though we don't know exactly what we should ask for, that God himself is praying along with you, talking to himself, so that he can pray so, when we pray and we pray in the spirit, what we're doing is we're submitting ourselves to the will of the Lord. Father, I am I am here in this situation and here's what I would ask. But father, as I am asking, I understand your the Holy Spirit's also talking to you and I want what you want.

And so even as we ask for what we think is best, we also submit our will to what he knows is best. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. Read the words, watch and pray often in the Bible. We see them when Nehemiah is repairing the walls of Jerusalem and the enemy said they're going to come in and try to stop the work and Nehemiah set his people to watch and pray. And he said, some of you need to work with one hand and you need to hold a weapon in the other hand.

Be ready at all times. We watch and we're alert. We are always before God. We're always looking out and praying for others. And he says, be persistent in our prayers.

Romans 12:12 said, rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble. Keep on praying. We see this over and over again in

scripture as we are told to not stop praying. It doesn't mean that we're we're gonna just complete continually repeat the same prayers as we talked about earlier.

It means that we pray and we don't quit praying. When we have a request, we don't stop. We're not trying to twist God's arm or talk God into it. We're concerned and we're burdened and we're calling out to the only one who can do something about it. Mindy and I prayed for weeks about coming to Calvary, and then after we came in view of a call and the church extended the call, then we we went around town and we prayed for days as we were going around.

The one thing we wanted, the one thing we knew we had to have was God saying, yes. Because in that we have comfort and safety and peace. And finally, I think it was in a Walmart parking lot that, God answered. That's the only answer I've ever gotten in a Walmart parking lot, but that was, it was a good one. Keep praying until the spirit stops you or God answers.

So if you want to know how long to pray, keep praying until the Spirit of God stops you or God answers your prayer. And he said pray for all the saints. The Lord's prayer begins with our Father. We are a family of God. And so he said as you pray, pray for all the saints.

We pray as a family. We pray for other members of our family. It's called intercessory prayer. And that's not an easy thing, but to realize we're not alone in our battle. If we could see with spiritual

eyes what's going on in this room right now, and we looked around at every person, we would see battles going on that we didn't know anything about.

We would see struggles that we didn't know anything about. Battles with fear, battles with depression, battles with trials and anxiety, battles with loneliness, battles with grief and hurt that we don't know. And so, we ask God to help us and we look out and we pray and we lift people up. And then Paul asked for prayer for himself. He didn't ask that he would be freed from the chains.

He didn't ask he'd be freed from prison. He didn't ask for his health. He didn't ask for wealth. What he asked for was boldness to preach the gospel. And when you and I ask God for something, that should be our number one request.

God, help me to be bold in sharing the faith. One of the great mysteries of our faith and one of the greatest struggles people have is believing prayer works, is understanding that when we call out to God we don't always get what we want, but we always get what is best. And so we are called to do this even if we don't always understand it. The first thing I'd like to point out is we should pray and be alert always. When we are tempted, we go to the Lord in prayer.

When we experience something beautiful and good, a blessing, we go to the Lord in praise. When we see in a meeting that we need God's guidance, we go to the Lord and ask him to guide our words and guide our hearts. When we see evil around

us, we pray that God would make it right, and he would rescue those innocents who are in trouble. When we see struggles around us, we pray that God would be glorified somehow in that struggle and draw people closer to him. When we see someone who doesn't know Jesus, we pray that God would open their heart and help them to know Christ through our words and our actions.

When we encounter trouble, we turn to God as our deliverer. When, in other words, our life constantly becomes this continually lifted up prayer in every situation, in every circumstance, at all times. Prayer should be the first thing we do when we're aware of a need. John Calvin said this. He said, it is therefore by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the heavenly father.

The second thing is we should pray in the spirit. I wanna there's there's a hard truth, and that is we cannot pray in the spirit if we are in rebellion against God's word. If we're in rebellion against God, we will not be able to pray in the spirit. Psalm 66:18 says this, if I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear. That's a tough one.

We cannot become we cannot come before the Lord's throne if we are holding on to sin. And so he says, drop it at the altar, then come to me. Do business with the Lord, then come in prayer. And sometimes prayer is doing business with the Lord, but if we hold on to sin, then God's ears are closed. If we have sin in our life, we confess it, we turn from it.

Whether anyone else knows, God knows. The Spirit of God will never lead us to pray contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. And so if you are all have all those in agreement, you are good to go on your prayer life. Number 3 is trust God in prayer. And this may be the most difficult one of all.

There are times we face things too overwhelming, too difficult to be able to pray and know exactly what to ask God for. There are times when we face something that's so huge in our lives that we are literally almost paralyzed, either with fear, with worry, with anxiety or with just a lack of knowledge. When that happens, when the grief is too deep, when the pain is too great, then we know even as we sit before the Lord and try to pray when and words just don't come, that according to the scripture, the Holy Spirit is praying for us during those times. There are times when God places things on our heart to pray for. We feel an urgency.

I cannot tell you how many times I have thought, I need to pray for this person. It's just burden just comes over your heart or their name comes into your mind and and you need to pray for them, I want to tell you something. When that happens, send them a text, call them, send them a send them a note and let them know you just prayed for them, because I can't tell you how many times somebody said, how did you know what I was going through? How did you know I was struggling? I had one intern.

It happened so many times with this guy that when I called, he said, what did I do? And I said, I don't know. What did you do? And he would say, what did God put? God told you to call me.

What did he tell what did he say to tell me? Sometimes when God puts somebody in your heart, just respond. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Pay attention when the Spirit's prompting. We may never know this side of heaven, what God was accomplishing, but you can trust that he is working.

Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction as you pray. Pray with all kinds of prayers at all times in the spirit. If you see a person who's suffering, pray that Satan wouldn't get their eyes off the Lord. Pray for their faith to be strengthened. If they're going through a trial, pray that God would keep them safe in their trial.

When you see somebody who looks depressed or discouraged, pray that God would lift their spirits, draw them closer to him, that they would seek God during that time. If you see a husband and wife who are sitting a little bit further apart some of y'all about to scoot closer together. Right? If if you see a husband and wife who are sitting a little bit further apart, you know, than normal, maybe they're just don't seem like to pray for them. Pray that God would draw their hearts close to each other and to Him.

When you hear of a church member who's at odds with another church member, you see somebody that doesn't look very happy, pray. Ask God to start working in their lives. When we see one of our kids who's struggling or our spouse who's struggling, God said, come to Me. Lift them up to Me because I'm the one that can do something about it. So many times you and I want to fix it.

I am a fixer. I don't know how many how many fixers do I have in here? Any fixers? Okay. We get in trouble a lot, don't we?

Sometimes people don't want to fix it. They just want to be heard. Well, lift them up to the father first. Even if you don't know why you're praying, trust that God does. Sometimes you just need to look around the sanctuary, take your little notes, and write down some notes of people you're gonna pray for this week and send them a note of encouragement, send them a text.

Sometimes you may need to take your Sunday school role or the church directory and just start praying through it. You may not even know the people you're praying for, but I guarantee you God knows them. You can call or text. Tell people I'm praying for you. Do you have anything specific I can pray for you about?

Can we meet at church and pray together earlier if you can get there? I mean, look for ways to start praying. We have to depend on Him. We have to depend on the Lord and leave the results up to God because He knows best. And here's here's the hard part, and this is a sensitive subject.

God has blessed Calvary Baptist Church. We are blessed with a wonderful family, great facility. We are doing good. God has blessed us. And in our blessings, if we look back at Israel, the greatest danger they faced was never from an army.

The greatest danger they faced was never from a foreign king or our million man army. It didn't matter what the enemy was doing.

The greatest danger they always faced was a lack of prayer, a lack of turning to the Lord, a lack of faith. And it can be the same way with us today. I don't know what your prayer life's like, but let me ask you, what would it take to make it better?

What would it take to make it better? Because if God knows that that's important for us, wouldn't he do whatever it takes to make your our prayer life better? And that may mean a trial. It may mean a hard time. It may mean for a nation, it may mean an invasion.

It may mean captivity. Whatever it takes for us to get our hearts lined back up with the Lord. When we're comfortable, we're in the greatest danger. Because in our comfort, we forget the Lord. In our comfort, we forget to pray.

When you're going through a hard time, there is no problem praying. When you're in pain, there is no problem praying. When you're struggling, there is no problem calling out to Lord. When you face a giant, of course, it's easy to say, Father, look. But when we face our blessings, sometimes the prayers fall away.

We need to pray. Prayer calls us back to God's word and God's will, so that in the spirit, we come boldly to our heavenly father asking for great things. And when we don't, we miss out on so many things. In prayer, God is the filter through which every experience we have passes. In other words, when anything happens, it comes to us and we take it right to the father in prayer.

Father, thank you for that blessing. Father, I pray for that person. Father, thank you for this trial. Father, I ask you to give me the wisdom to get through this. David said this, he said, I have set the Lord always before me.

I've set the Lord always before me. In front of me is God. In every experience I have, I'm going to him right now. Prayer is in a time that we wait for. I love the song, sweet hour of prayer, but that's not what God says.

God didn't say go have a sweet hour of prayer. God said pray constantly. Be in my presence. Every single thing in our life is something to talk to God about. Yes.

I want you to have a sweet hour of prayer, but don't hang up. Don't stop praying. Have the sweet hour of prayer that lines your heart back up, and then walk out of that room with the conversation still going on. And so our prayer is this, Lord, bring yourself glory through this. Father, bring yourself glory through what I'm going through somehow.

I may not understand it. I don't always like it, but father, show yourself powerful. Bring glory to your son, Jesus. Work in my life through these circumstances. Psalm 55:17 says, evening, morning, and noon will I pray.

If we don't get consumed with the things that heart of God, then we tend to get consumed about the wrong things. Look around.

Watch. Be alert. Make a list of things to pray for, start praying so when a prayer is answered, you can say, God gets the glory.

Exodus 30 speaks of god's instructions to the priests. And in the tabernacle, they had, the holy of holies, and they had a big curtain. And in front of that, they had a table. And on the table, they had the showbread that was there, and they had a lamp that was there. And the bread and the lamp represented the provision of God for us, represented the fact that God provides for our needs and he gives light into our darkness.

But there was also a little altar. And that altar was acacia wood, it's covered with gold. And on that altar was where they burned the incense. And that incense had to be made just right according to God's instructions. Man could not substitute any anything else.

The incense burning before the Lord was representative of the prayers of God's people rising to God. The fire on the altar is a picture of the Holy Spirit who takes our prayers and ignites them in the will of God, so they rise to the father and they're pleasing to him. Psalm 141 says, accept my prayer as an incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering. Most of us are passionate about something. And I'm gonna ask you today, are you passionate about prayer?

Are you excited about coming to the Lord? I want to tell you, Ephesians is an incredible journey. I've loved every every session we've been through in Ephesians, but this is the hardest one. Because sometimes when we look around at what's going on in

our world, doesn't it puzzle you that our prayers are so lacking? Doesn't it puzzle you that with all that's going on, what will it take to ignite our hearts?

We see reasons for prayer all around us, but all too often the altars are empty. We see this morning prayer needs right here in our midst. Praises that God deserves to hear. Thankful hearts lifted to Him in praise. Petitions that are called out for family members who are lost and dying.

Needs and concerns that should drive us to prayer, calling out to the one who can truly answer. Our country, our city, our families, our trials, our heartaches, all these things, our desire for more of God, are these enough to draw us to prayer? Because when we come to the word of God and he says, do this, this is our choice. Jesus said, you can pray or you can faint. And too many times, we find ourselves fainting, weak, and and afraid instead of powerful in prayer.

What will it take for us together to pray? We're comfortable, and we're blessed. And it'd be easy for us to relax, to say, thank you, Lord. You are a good God, and I love singing that song. But is He good enough to drive us to prayer?

This is the hardest time to pray when things are good. It's the hardest time to let our hearts be burdened and to call out to God passionately. Can we stir our hearts or will God have to stir them? Can we realize our desperation and our need for God or will we

just wait? Can we care enough about what God cares about to let our hearts be stirred?

The altar can be a place where we call on God together. Our rooms, our cars can be a place where we call on the Lord constantly. But if we don't, then we're being disobedient. Because God said, I want you to pray always. Prayers for salvation, repentance, unity, passion for God to bring himself glory through us.

So can I ask you this morning, are you ready to pray? Are you willing to pray? Can we pray together right now? And can we ask God for something big? Can we ask God for something that will bring Him glory and will show Himself powerful and strong in our midst?

And if you are willing to do that, can we just bow our heads right now where you are. Father, in this room, there are so many people who love you. So many people whose hearts are stirred for you. Thank you for our blessings. Thank you, father, for all you've done for us.

Would you help us to let our hearts be burdened for the things that burden your heart? It is not the fact that we're comfortable, Father. It's the fact that others are in deep sin. Father, it's not the fact that we're okay right now. It's the fact that others aren't okay.

Father, there are brothers and sisters in Christ who are dying around the world. There are people right now in severe need right

here in our midst. Father, there are all kinds of things going on. Marriages that are struggling, hearts that are struggling, and we need you. Would you answer our call?

Father, would you stir our hearts? Would you let your spirit move in each one of us so that we feel the way you feel? We understand the burden that should be on our hearts and we ask you for that in Jesus name. Amen. Some of you in this room need to start a very simple place, and that's putting your trust and faith in Jesus.

You need to stop right now and just go, I cannot do this on my own. I will never be good enough. So Father, would you would you forgive me and would you cleanse me of my sin? I believe Jesus died on the cross for me. Jesus came died on the cross for your sins and rose again.

The Bible says, when you believe in him, when you call out to him. You are saved. So, would you do that this morning? Right now, would you bow your heads? Close your eyes.

If you've not trusted in Jesus, would you would you stop what you're doing and stop the way you're going and turn around and follow Jesus. And if you would, would you just express that to the Lord in a prayer right now. Father, thank you for loving me. I know I have done so many things wrong. I believe Jesus paid my price on a cross.

Jesus. Thank you for dying in my place. Would you please forgive me of all my sins and help me to follow you all the days of my life

until I stand before you face to face. If that is you this morning, you prayed that prayer, you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, then you are made new. You are cleansed.

You are renewed. You are a new person. And so, we praise the Lord for that. If that is you, would you just raise your hand say, hey pastor, I prayed that with you this morning. Awesome.

Thanks. Some of us in this room are comfortable. And I praise God for all the blessings that let us be comfortable. Many of us have lost family. Many of us live in neighborhoods full of lost people.

A city that is growing more lost by the day a country that is struggling so badly. Sometimes when we're comfortable, we need to we need to ask God how he feels about what's going on around us. What's going on in us. And so would you do that right now? Would you ask God how he feels?

How you can pray? Father, it's so wonderful having your blessings, But please don't let them keep us from you. Don't let our blessings fill our hearts. Don't let our blessings fill our minds. So that we forget what's truly important our relationship with you and calling out to you for not only ourselves, but for others.

To rely on you every day, in every circumstance, in every situation, to be in constant communication with you. We have neglected that and Father, would you forgive us? Would you give us your heart for those around us again? So, the traffic, so the neighborhoods, so

the work, so the school, so that our homes are different. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen.