

War Games – DEFCON 1

10/11/20

Ephesians 6:10-18

Sunday AM

I read something interesting this week. Since the U.S. declared its independence in 1776, the U.S. has been at war in some way 225 out of 243 yrs we've been in existence (or 92%) – meaning we've been at war all but 18 yrs of our existence as a nation. No U.S. president has ever led w/out some conflict w/ only Carter claiming to not having led the U.S. into war.

It's no wonder that in 9/1957, the US/Canada created the *North American Aerospace Defense Command* (NORAD) to prepare/protect the US/Canada from the threat of a nuclear missile attack. Soon thereafter, in 10/1959, the Joint Chiefs introduced the DEFCON system to measure our **Defense Readiness Condition**.

The **DEFCON** system has (5) levels of readiness/alerts:

D5 (blue) – *Fade Out*– normal readiness/lowest level

D4 (green) – *Double Take*– Increased intel/security

D3 (yellow) – *Round House*– Air Force up 15 min.

D2 (red) – *Fast Pace*– Nuke Ready – All Forces 6 hrs

D1 (white) – *Cocked Pistol*– Nukes hot – Max Ready

FYI – Only once in U.S. history have we gone to D2 –during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 10/1962 – and twice to D3 – during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the 9/11 Attacks in 2001.

Thru-out the NT, God's Word calls us to *be on alert*, to *be on guard*, and to *be watchful* – to have our own ***Spiritual Defense Readiness System*** in place so that we can stand our ground against our spiritual enemy.

For 4-weeks, we've been learning about the spiritual war being waged in/around our lives discussing both our enemy and armor. Today, we're going to look at what it means to have a ***spiritual defense readiness plan*** in place so we can vigilantly live on alert w/ God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle isn't against flesh/blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms. So, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, w/ the belt of truth buckled around your waist, w/ the breastplate of righteousness in place, and w/ your feet fitted w/ the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, w/ which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions w/ all kinds of prayers and requests. W/ this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:10-18

In this passage, we find (3) big admonitions:

- Be **STRONG** in the Face of Spiritual Warfare
- Be **EQUIPPED** to Fight the Good Fight
- Be **PRAYERFULLY** Alert to Spiritual Attack

So far, we've addressed the first (2) admonitions Today, let's look at being ***prayerfully alert***.

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions w/ all kinds of prayers/requests. W/ this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

As Paul is describing the various pieces of God's armor/arsenal, he concludes w/ the idea that prayer is the essential element which must be present w/in the life of every believer to empower/engage this armor. It's the thread that holds everything together.

Meaning – prayer is NOT another piece of the armor; but rather, it's the spiritual discipline/activity that make us *aware, alert, and able* to engage the war being waged in/around our lives. It's the means to provide us w/ access into the realm where spiritual warfare is to be fought – as all spiritual warfare is fought on our knees in prayerful dependence on God.

Sadly, I fear we have a gross *misunderstanding* and *misapplication* when it comes to prayer. Many of us are far too casual/flippant w/ prayer tending to think prayer is our means to get God on our side or to tip our hats in hopes of gaining his blessings on our folly.

In speaking w/ many people, prayer is often seen as a means to an end to get God to do what we want/need Him to do for us instead of a desperate seeking of God's heart/will for our lives.

But prayer isn't about getting my will done in heaven; but about getting God's will done in me on earth. It's is about getting my life aligned w/ God and His will – rather than getting God aligned w/ my hopes/wants.

Here in this passage, Paul gives us a good indication of the kinds of prayer necessary to live alert and to overcome the schemes of Satan/the demonic.

prayer (*proseuches*) It means to turn your face towards God to seek His face/provision. It refers to making general requests of God desiring His will to be achieved in/thru your life/circumstances.

requests (*deesis*) to petition, want or beg. It refers to urgently making known one's specific needs.

The idea is we're to be pursue all kinds of prayerful communication/dependence on God – seeking Him privately/publicly, at home/at church, alone/with others, deliberately/spontaneously, w/ hands up, or on our knees, or lying face down – at all times/in all ways.

Paul also explains that there are (4) essential elements to effective prayer. It must be H.S. led, alert, persevering, and interceding.

I Prayer must be **SPIRIT-LED**

in the Spirit – under the influence of the H.S.

This is absolutely the most critical issue in prayer – not that we talk, but that we pray under the direction of the H.S. – that is, we pray in Jesus' name, for the will of God, all under the guidance of the H.S. b/c He knows!

This might sound strange, but God wants us to pray under the leading of the H.S. He wants to guide our prayers in pursuit of His will/way b/c all too often, we only know our to pray our will instead of God's will.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we don't know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes w/ groans too deep for words, and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will. Romans 8:26-27

As we've discussed in the past – *every aspect of the Christian life is to occur in sync w/ the H.S.* There's never a time in which we're to operate independent of the H.S. – including when we pray!

What does this look like? Instead of praying what we want or think, we ask God how we should pray and for what He wants us to pray about – and we wait for Him to prompt and guide us – which requires us to listen!

Example – Right now I'm praying for Abi and med school. It'd be easy to pray for her will/my will, but I'm asking God to guide me in praying for His will. **My prayer sounds like this** – Lord, thank you for Abi. As she pursues what she believes is her calling, show me how to pray for her, b/c I only want Your will to be accomplished in her life. How do you want me to pray for her? What Scripture do you want me to pray over her? How do you want me to help/encourage her so that she walks w/ you? Then I wait for the H.S.

Point – When we pray, we're to be led by the H.S. and we're never to pray in our understanding or ability; but rather under God's influence for His will to be done and for our ability to accept and live out His will/plan.

II Prayer must be **ALERT**

be alert (*agrupnountes*) – w/out sleep. It means to watchfully pray w/ your eyes wide open – constant.

Going back to the DEFCON system, while we might be at D5 – there are military personnel manning their post and keeping watch over our nation 24/7/365.

Like Nehemiah and Israel when they re-built the wall – in one hand was a hammer while in the other a spear.

Paul was saying in spiritual warfare, we must be in a constant posture of prayer alert to where God is at work in/thru us and how the demonic is attacking.

We're to pray aware that God's will is at stake.

Prayer isn't the constant articulation of words but an attitude of the heart where one keeps the receiver in hand always prepared, taking all things to God.

III Prayer must be **PERSISTENT**

always keep (*proskarteresis*) to continue doing what you're doing w/ obstinate persistence/intense effort.

IOW – Don't **FAINT!** Don't **QUIT!** When the going gets tough... the tough get more prayerful!

Prayer requires tenacity/patience – **Prayer isn't about changing God's mind but knowing God's mind** and adjusting our lives to His person/plan.

Often, God places us in a position of dependency/need requiring us to ***seek*** in order to ***find***. He doesn't always readily respond, but gives us a long rope to see if we're going to wait/rely on Him or to see if we're going to take matters into our own hands and do it our way.

I think of the ***Parable of the Persistent Widow*** in Luke 18:1-8 where a poor widow repeatedly approaches an unjust judge in her search for justice until he finally answers her request. I believe this speaks to our need to be persistent/persevering in prayer – continually seeking, knocking, and desiring God's will.

IV Prayer must be **INTERCEDING**

We're to pray for each other and for our spiritual leaders. We're to care not only for our lives but for all the saints and all the work of God. And we're to seek God's heart for others thru listening to the H.S. and then praying as we're led by the H.S.

BTW – intercession can be challenging – especially when we’re praying w/ the person we’re interceding for. Do you know why? B/c more times than not, we want to pray for their will instead of for God’s will. We want to pray for what will make them feel good and comforted – instead of how the H.S. might be leading us. Nonetheless, we’re to pray for each other.

So, there you go... Spiritual Warfare 101 – and basics every person needs to know if they’re going to stand firm against the devil’s schemes. We must be aware of the battle being waged, knowledgeable of our enemy and his tactics, equipped w/ the provision/protection of God made available thru the Gospel imputed to us in salvation, and prayerfully alert thru our intimate pursuit and dependence on God thru prayer.

Recently, I was reading a book on spiritual warfare by Chip Ingram and he quoted something from **Elizabeth Elliot** about prayer that I’d like to read to you, b/c I think it make an important point about critical it is that prayer becomes *Spiritual Defense Readiness System*.

People who ski, I suppose, are people who happen to like skiing, who have time for skiing, who can afford to ski, and who are good at it. Recently I’ve found that I often treat prayer as if it were a sport like skiing – something you do if you like it, something you do in your spare time, something you do if you can afford the trouble, something you do if you're good at it – otherwise we’d do w/out it most of the time... But prayer isn't a sport. It's work... b/c a Christian simply can't live a Christian life at all if he doesn't pray... It's something to be engaged in, not indulged. It's a job you give 1st priority... So, pray when you feel like praying. Pray when you don't feel like praying. Pray until you do feel like praying." In the wrestling of a Christian in prayer, our fight is not against a physical enemy: it is against powers and organizations that are spiritual. We’re up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil... When we recognize him for what he is, however, we have an inkling as to why prayer is never easy. It's the weapon that unseen power dreads most, and if he can get us to treat it as casually as we treat a pair of skis or a tennis racquet, he can keep his hold.

Pray under the guiding influence/direction of the H.S. at all times/in all ways both generally/specifically. And pray on high alert w/ a sense of urgency and w/ your eyes wide open to all that is occurring in/around you – and not only for yourself but for everyone you know in the faith and for the will/work of God.