

IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO WIN IT!

Don't Let It Get The Best of You | Mini-Series

Week 1

Scripture Lesson

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:18–20, KJV)

- I. Introduction: There is something special about watching a team finally discover how to win.....
 - A. Narrative:
 - 1. The 2026 New York Knicks did exactly that. After more than half a century without an NBA championship, the Knicks defeated the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA Finals and captured their first NBA championship since 1973. Under Head Coach Mike Brown, New York developed something greater than individual talent.
 - 2. They developed a winning mentality. They discovered that winning required believing in one another, remaining disciplined, trusting the system, playing through adversity, and refusing to panic when they fell behind. In fact, New York came from double-digit deficits in each of its four Finals victories. They learned how to win when they were ahead, how to win when they were behind, how to win at home, how to win on the road, and ultimately how to win when a championship was on the line.
 - 3. Every successful team eventually develops a winning philosophy. Talent is important, but talent without a strategy can still lose. Strength is important, but strength without discipline can still lose. Having the right players is

important, but having the right players without knowing how to play together can still lose. Somewhere along the journey, winning teams discover something that works, and once they discover it, they refuse to abandon it.

B. Analysis of the Text

1. The same principle is true spiritually. Every believer is involved in a battle, and God has not left us without a winning strategy. Ephesians 6 is Paul's great battlefield briefing to the Church. Beginning in verse 10, Paul declares, ***"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."*** Paul immediately establishes that spiritual victory cannot be achieved through human strength. We do not win because we are strong enough. We win because we have learned how to stand in the strength of the Lord.
2. Paul then reveals the nature of our opponent. ***"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."*** Our ultimate enemy is not the person who dislikes us, the coworker who frustrates us, the family member who disappoints us, or the person who works against us. Behind the visible struggles of life exists an invisible spiritual conflict. Satan is real. Spiritual warfare is real. Temptation is real. Demonic opposition is real. And because the battle is spiritual, our weapons must also be spiritual.
3. Paul therefore commands believers to ***"take unto you the whole armour of God."*** He describes the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet prepared with the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Every piece is necessary. Truth stabilizes us. Righteousness protects us. The Gospel prepares us. Faith shields us. Salvation secures our thinking. The Word gives us something with which to fight back.
4. But then Paul reaches verse 18 and introduces something that cannot be ignored. After telling believers what armor to wear, Paul tells them what they must do while wearing

it: PRAY! ***“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”***

5. Prayer is not merely another piece of armor. Prayer is what keeps the armored believer connected to the Commander. You can have truth around your waist, righteousness over your heart, the Gospel on your feet, faith in your hand, salvation over your head, and the Word in your mouth, but Paul says that in the middle of the battle, you had better PRAY!
 6. Then Paul does something remarkable in verses 19–20. The apostle who has instructed everybody else to pray asks them to pray for him: ***“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly.”*** Paul understands that nobody becomes so mature that they graduate from needing prayer. Apostles need prayer. Pastors need prayer. Leaders need prayer. Parents need prayer. Strong Christians need prayer. Weak Christians need prayer. Everybody who intends to win needs prayer.
- C. Inclusion and Parallel-This becomes especially important because our adversary does not want us to win.
1. The devil wants you to lose your walk with God until you no longer enjoy His presence.
 2. He wants you to lose your way until wrong begins looking right.
 3. He wants you to lose your mind under the pressure of what you are carrying.
 4. He wants you to lose your joy until you possess blessings you cannot enjoy.
 5. He wants you to lose your peace worrying about things you cannot control.
 6. He wants you to lose your family through unresolved conflict.
 7. He wants you to lose your marriage through division and distrust.
 8. He wants you to lose your children to influences that contradict everything you taught them.
 9. He wants you to lose your witness through one careless decision.

- 10. He wants you to lose your money and resources through poor stewardship and destructive choices.
- 11. He wants you to lose your confidence, lose your focus, lose your purpose, lose your hope, and ultimately lose sight of the victory that Jesus Christ has already secured for you.
- D. The Radical Truth: But God did not save us so that we could spend the rest of our lives losing! Paul gives us a spiritual philosophy for victory, and at the heart of that philosophy is prayer.
- E. Proposition: So then, what does this text teach us that should empower us as believers to win?

II. PRACTICE REJOICING

- A. Practical Idea: If you are going to win, you have to learn the art of having a personal pep rally! There will be moments when nobody is around to encourage you. Nobody calls. Nobody claps. Nobody tells you that you can make it. In those moments, you have to learn how to encourage yourself in the Lord. Sometimes you have to become your own cheering section. You have to remind yourself of what God has already done, remember what He has already brought you through, and celebrate His goodness before your circumstances change.
- B. Principle From the Passage: Paul says, “**Praying always with all prayer.**” The expression points to prayer in its varied expressions. In other words, do not limit your prayer life to one kind of prayer. Bring everything before God, and learn that prayer takes different forms depending upon the need and occasion. Prayer is larger than asking God for things.
- C. Application: There are several biblical expressions of prayer, but three fundamental structures help us understand what happens when we approach God. There is requesting, when I bring my own needs before God. There is intercession, when I stand before God on behalf of somebody else. And there is rejoicing and thanksgiving, when I stop asking God for something new long enough to praise Him for what He has already done. There is extraordinary spiritual power in prayer that does not begin with what I need but with what God has already provided.
- D. Philosophy: Dr. C. Matthew Hudson teaches that thanksgiving is extraordinarily potent because thanksgiving changes the focus

of prayer. Instead of concentrating upon what I do not have yet, thanksgiving forces me to recognize what I already possess. Thanksgiving says, "Before I complain about what is missing, let me celebrate what remains. Before I ask for another blessing, let me thank God for the blessings already surrounding me."

- E. Biblical Illustration: First Thessalonians 5:18 declares, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Notice that Paul does not say give thanks for everything; he says give thanks in everything. Everything that happens may not be good, but God remains good in everything that happens. I may not thank God for the trouble, but I can thank Him that He kept me through the trouble. I may not thank Him for the storm, but I can thank Him that the storm did not destroy me. I may not thank Him for the tears, but I can thank Him that weeping endured only for a night.
- F. Practical Illustration: Growing up in church as a little boy, my father had a deacon named Brother Cox. Brother Cox would often lead devotion as worship began. When he knelt to pray, something unusual happened. Brother Cox hardly ever seemed to ask God for anything. He would simply say, "Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You for waking me up. Thank You for keeping me. Thank You for my family. Thank You for another day." Thank You after thank You after thank You! One day we finally asked Deacon Cox why he never seemed to ask the Lord for anything when he prayed. His answer floored us. He said, "I intend on asking Him every time. But by the time I get through saying thank You, I done forgot what I needed from Him!"
- G. Moment of Meditation: Have you ever tried thanking your way through? Instead of worrying your way through it, thank your way through it. Instead of complaining your way through it, thank your way through it. Instead of crying your way through it, thank your way through it. Maybe you have been asking God to change something when God is waiting for you to thank Him for what He has already done. Sometimes your victory begins when your prayer changes from "Lord, give me" to "Lord, thank You!"

III. PRAY REQUESTING

- A. Practical Idea: Everybody in the kitchen cannot cook, and everybody who is praying does not necessarily understand how to pray. Prayer is not merely talking loudly. Prayer is not impressive vocabulary. Prayer is not repeating religious phrases. Effective prayer requires divine assistance.
- B. Principle From the Passage: Paul says, “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” The idea is that our praying takes place under the influence, direction, and assistance of the Holy Spirit. We are not left alone when we pray. The Spirit of God assists the believer in approaching the throne of God.
- C. Application: The Holy Spirit does much more than make believers shout during a worship service. He empowers our entire Christian existence, including our prayers. There are times when the burden is so heavy that we do not know what to say. There are circumstances so confusing that we do not even know what we should ask God to do. But when our vocabulary runs out, the Holy Spirit does not run out. He helps us in our weakness and intercedes according to the will of God.
- D. Doctrine: The Holy Ghost is the third Person of the Godhead: coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Son. He is not merely an emotion, an influence, or a feeling. He is God. He possesses divine wisdom and perfect knowledge. Therefore, when I cannot articulate what is happening inside me, the Holy Spirit understands what I cannot explain.
- E. Biblical Illustration: Romans 8:26 declares, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” What a promise! Sometimes I know that I need God, but I do not know what I need God to do. Sometimes all I have are tears. Sometimes all I have are groans. Sometimes all I have is, “Jesus!” Yet the Holy Spirit knows how to assist me in my weakness and bring my need before God according to His will.
- F. Practical Illustration: Years ago when my children were small, my daughter Sumone would come to me and ask for dollars. I would smile, reach into my pocket, and give her a handful of

spare change. She was little and did not understand the difference. Pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters all looked like money to her. But one day her mother told her to come ask me for some dollars. I gave her my usual handful of change. Her mother immediately interceded and said, “Baby, go ask him for some dollars out of his back pocket!” That changed everything! I only had one twenty-dollar bill back there, but because her request came with the intercession of somebody who knew what to ask for, I gave it to her. That is a picture of what happens when the Holy Spirit helps us pray. He knows what we need when we do not know how to ask for it!

- G. Moment of Meditation: In what ways have you ever discerned the Spirits guiding you and helping you in prayer? What took place?

IV. PERSEVERE IN WATCHING

- A. Practical Idea: Please hear this: If you are planning on losing, make sure you don't pray! But if you are planning on winning, you had better learn how to watch and pray!
- B. Principle From the Passage: Paul says, “watching thereunto with all perseverance.” Prayer does not make the believer passive; prayer makes the believer alert. The Greek idea behind “watching” carries the sense of staying awake, remaining alert, and refusing spiritual drowsiness. Paul is describing a believer who prays with his or her spiritual eyes open.
- C. Application: If you pray but never watch, you may miss the enemy's attack when he launches it. If you watch but never pray, you may recognize the attack but lack spiritual strength to resist it. Watching without praying produces anxiety. Praying without watching can produce carelessness. But watching and praying together produce spiritual readiness. The believer must remain prayerful enough to depend upon God and watchful enough to recognize what the enemy is doing.

So WATCH AND PRAY!

1. Watch and pray for your family because the enemy wants your house.
2. Watch and pray for your children because the enemy wants the next generation.
3. Watch and pray for your marriage because the enemy loves division.
4. Watch and pray for your friends because everybody around you is fighting something.
5. Watch and pray for your church because ministry attracts spiritual opposition.
6. Watch and pray for your pastor because shepherds become targets.
7. Watch and pray for your mind because every battle eventually tries to enter your thoughts.
8. Watch and pray for your money because poor decisions can destroy years of labor.
9. Watch and pray for your health because your body carries your assignment.
10. Watch and pray for your mouth because one sentence can destroy what took years to build.
11. Watch and pray for your relationships because offense can separate people who love each other.
12. Watch and pray for your weaknesses because the enemy studies where you are vulnerable.
13. Watch and pray for your opportunities because every open door requires discernment.
14. Watch and pray for your future because destiny demands preparation.
15. WATCH AND PRAY FOR YOUR SOUL, because what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

- D. Biblical Illustration: Jesus told His disciples in St. Matthew 26:41, ***“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*** Jesus understood something about spiritual warfare: temptation often arrives when vigilance disappears. The disciples loved Jesus, but love without watchfulness left them sleeping when they should have been praying.

- E. Practical Illustration: There was a young lady who collapsed at a local high school one day and was rushed to the hospital. I hurried to the hospital to pray for her. When I arrived at her bedside, her mother stormed into the emergency room. She saw me and said, “Pastor, thank you for being here, but I got this! The devil is a liar!” She reached into her purse, pulled out some oil, laid hands on her own child, and began to pray. By God’s grace, that young lady’s health was restored. She had something money could not buy. She had a mother who knew how to watch and pray!
- F. Moment of Meditation: In what ways has prayer helped you to see what the enemy was doing before it ever happened?

V. PROCLAIM YOUR VICTORY

- A. Practical Idea: One of the things I loved about watching the NBA Finals was that both teams talked! Competition has a way of producing confidence, and confident players are not afraid to communicate what they believe they can do. Paul introduces a spiritual version of bold speech.
- B. Principle From the Passage: Paul asks the Ephesian believers to pray “that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.” He continues in verse 20 by asking that “therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” The Greek word is *parrēsia*, meaning openness, freedom of speech, confidence, frankness, or fearless boldness. Paul is not literally commanding Christians to insult the devil or engage in boastful trash talk. But the preaching picture is powerful: Paul wants enough Holy Ghost confidence to open his mouth and speak without fear!
- C. Application: Believers must rediscover the power of opening our mouths and bragging on God. Our confidence is not in ourselves; our confidence is in Him.

D. Biblical boldness says, “You may know my weakness, but you apparently do not know my God!” Stop spending all your time telling God how big your problem is and start reminding yourself how big your God is. There are moments when faith needs a voice!

1. So open your mouth and proclaim what your God is able to do! My God is able to make a way where there is no way!
2. My God is able to open doors nobody can shut! My God is able to shut doors nobody should open!
3. My God is able to heal sick bodies!
4. My God is able to mend broken hearts!
5. My God is able to restore broken families!
6. My God is able to save lost children!
5. My God is able to deliver from addiction!
7. My God is able to provide when the money runs out!
8. My God is able to give peace in the middle of chaos!
9. My God is able to give strength when your strength is gone!
10. My God is able to turn midnight into morning!
11. My God is able to turn mourning into dancing!
12. My God is able to turn setbacks into setups!
13. My God is able to turn stumbling blocks into stepping-stones!
14. My God is able to turn enemies into footstools!
15. My God is able to make crooked places straight!
16. My God is able to make rivers in deserts!
17. My God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!
18. My God is able to keep me from falling!
19. My God is able to finish what He started! And if God be for us, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

E. Biblical Illustration-

1. ST. MATTHEW 28:18 -ALL POWER BELONGS TO JESUS

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**”

2. JEREMIAH 32:17 - NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR GOD

“Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, **and there is nothing too hard for thee.**”

3. JEREMIAH 32:27 - NOTHING IS TOO HARD FOR HIM

“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: **is there any thing too hard for me?**”

4. ST. LUKE 1:37 - NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

“For **with God nothing shall be impossible.**”

5. JOB 42:2 -GOD CAN DO ANYTHING

“I know that **thou canst do every thing**, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.”

6. PSALM 62:11 - POWER BELONGS TO GOD

“God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that **power belongeth unto God.**”

7. EPHESIANS 3:20 - HIS POWER EXCEEDS WHAT WE CAN ASK

“Now unto him that is able to do **exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**, according to the power that worketh in us.”

8. REVELATION 19:6 - THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNS

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: **for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**”

9. I CHRONICLES 29:11 -EVERYTHING BELONGS TO HIM

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and **the power**, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and **thou art exalted as head above all.**”

10. ST. MATTHEW 19:26 - WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US IS POSSIBLE FOR GOD

“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, **With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.**”

VI. Celebration and Conclusion

A. And that brings us right back to the New York Knicks.....

1. For 53 years, New York waited for another NBA championship. Generations of Knicks fans had come and gone without seeing their team reach the top again. They had experienced disappointing seasons, heartbreaking losses, missed opportunities, and years when it looked like the championship might never return to Madison

Square Garden.

2. But in 2026, the waiting finally ended. The Knicks defeated the San Antonio Spurs four games to one and became NBA champions for the first time since 1973.
3. But what makes their victory preach is HOW THEY WON! In all four games that New York won in the Finals, the Knicks had to come from double-digit deficits. In the championship-clinching Game 5, they were down by 16 points, but they refused to surrender. Jalen Brunson poured in 45 points, including 13 consecutive Knicks points in the fourth quarter, and New York came roaring back to win 94–90.

B. Parallel-In other words, BEING BEHIND DID NOT MEAN THEY WERE BEATEN!

1. And somebody studying this lesson needs to hear that!
2. You may be behind-but you are not beaten!
3. You may be down-but you are not done!
4. You may have lost a round-but you have not lost the fight!
5. You may have taken a hit-but you are still standing!
6. You may have cried-but you are still praying!
7. You may have stumbled-but you are still walking!
8. You may have been wounded-but you are still worshipping!
9. You may have been attacked-but you are still armed!
10. You may have been delayed-but you have not been denied!
10. And you may have been waiting a long time-but God is not through with you yet!

C. The Knicks waited 53 years for a championship. That means the length of the wait did not cancel the possibility of the victory! And somebody ought to grab that tonight: JUST BECAUSE IT HASN'T HAPPENED YET DOESN'T MEAN IT ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN!

1. Keep praying!
2. Keep watching!
3. Keep believing!
4. Keep rejoicing!
5. Keep requesting!
6. Keep standing!

7. Keep declaring!
 8. Keep trusting!
- D. Because according to Ephesians 6, we are not fighting an enemy that can be defeated with human strength. We are wrestling “not against flesh and blood.” That is why Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God and when he finishes naming the armor, he tells us to PRAY!

Prayer is not what you do when everything else fails. PRAYER IS HOW YOU FIGHT!

Prayer is not your emergency exit. PRAYER IS YOUR BATTLE STRATEGY!

Prayer is not the believer’s last resort. PRAYER IS THE BELIEVER’S FIRST RESPONSE!

1. So when the devil attacks your family-PRAY!
2. When he attacks your finances-PRAY!
3. When he attacks your mind-PRAY!
4. When he attacks your marriage-PRAY!
5. When he attacks your children-PRAY!
6. When he attacks your health-PRAY!
7. When he attacks your ministry-PRAY!
8. When he attacks your faith-PRAY!
9. When you cannot see your way-PRAY!
10. When you do not know what comes next-PRAY!

Because IT’S THE ONLY WAY TO WIN!

- E. The Knicks had their strategy for the basketball court, but the Church has a strategy for the battlefield. REJOICE! REQUEST! WATCH! PROCLAIM! AND PRAY! And after 53 years, when that final horn sounded, New York could finally say, “WE WON!” But child of God, we have something even better than a final horn. We have an empty tomb! We have a risen Savior! We have a defeated devil! We have the Holy Ghost! We have the whole armor of God! We have a name above every name! And we have a Savior who stood on resurrection ground and declared, “ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH!”
1. So I can REJOICE-because God has already been good!
 2. I can REQUEST-because the Holy Ghost helps me pray!
 3. I can WATCH-because I know the enemy is coming!
 4. And I can PROCLAIM-because I already know who wins!

THE DEVIL DOESN'T WIN!
THE ENEMY DOESN'T WIN!
DARKNESS DOESN'T WIN!
DEATH DOESN'T WIN!
HELL DOESN'T WIN!

JESUS WINS!

And because JESUS WINS-WE WIN!

So PRAY WHEN YOU'RE UP!
PRAY WHEN YOU'RE DOWN!
PRAY WHEN YOU'RE AHEAD!
PRAY WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND!
PRAY WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND!
PRAY WHEN NOTHING MAKES SENSE!
PRAY UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS!
PRAY UNTIL CHAINS BREAK!
PRAY UNTIL DOORS OPEN!
PRAY UNTIL STRONGHOLDS FALL!
PRAY UNTIL THE DEVIL BACKS UP!
PRAY UNTIL GOD GETS THE GLORY!

Because when the battle is spiritual, when the enemy is relentless, and when the stakes
are eternal

PRAYER IS NOT JUST ONE WAY TO WIN.
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO WIN!