

## “Praying for the Releasing of Power”

*Ephesians 6:17-20*

Rev. Min J. Chung

(Lock-In, December 8, 2018)

### **Ephesians 6:17-20**

<sup>17</sup>*and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* <sup>18</sup>*praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,* <sup>19</sup>*and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,* <sup>20</sup>*for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

### **Introduction**

There are three main prayer sections in the book of Ephesians and they can be found in the first, third and sixth chapters. Chapter 1 is about praying for the knowledge of God and His power. Chapter 3, on the other hand, is about receiving the power of God, while the sixth chapter, as we herein examine, is about releasing the power of God, in the context of ministry. It is an amazing prayer section on spiritual battle. In essence, after we know and receive the power of God, we need to release it.

The world may seem chaotic when one watches the news, but the reality is that it is, in fact, a lot worse and that is why we need to pray. God is in control, but between chaos and control, there needs to be prayer. Andrew Murray once said, “*The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.*” Prayer is an amazing and unlimited resource that we have in God.

### **I. What should be on our minds when we pray? [17-18]**

<sup>17</sup>*and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* <sup>18</sup>*praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

The phrase in verse 18, “*to that end, keep alert*” can be translated to “with this in mind, be alert.” What should we have in mind as we pray? Verse 17 helps us answer this question. It is picturing a Roman soldier. During that time, Roman soldiers were fighting machines. They were the fiercest and most feared army of the greatest empire of the time. With that as an illustration, this verse is saying, Christians are soldiers for Jesus Christ.

Verses 10-17 help us to understand what was in Paul’s mind as he sees the reality of the spiritual realm. If we could see that reality, we too would want to put on the full armor of God because life is a war. There are physical battles in this world but those are just illustrations of the spiritual cosmic battle going on. There is always a battle happening in every heart and mind. Can we have the audacity to say that the physical war, as fierce as it is, pales in comparison to the spiritual battle in the world?

To answer that, first, the spiritual battle is wider than the physical war because the physical war is confined to a geographical location, while spiritual battle is in every sphere of this universe. Also, spiritual battle is longer than physical battle because it has been going on from the beginning of time, through all generations. Furthermore, spiritual battle is deeper because it concerns the deepest part of our hearts. It also involves more people than physical war because there are no civilians in spiritual war and every single person is involved in it. In addition, spiritual war is costlier because you do not just lose your life; you lose your soul for eternity. Spiritual battle also takes place in every part of our daily

lives. It takes place within the home, the workplace, and even in the church. It even goes bigger than all of that, as Paul states in Ephesians 6:12 that, “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.*”

Above all, spiritual warfare takes place in each generation differently. For example, I believe that this current generation is battling with technology. While technology can be amazingly used, Satan uses it amazingly for us to sin. We need to learn how to redeem technology for the glory of God because it is here to stay. We need to redeem everything that is surrounding us in this present darkness. It is necessary to redeem it, not for our sake alone, but also so that we can teach our children how to redeem everything for the glory of God as well.

In order to be ready, we need to pray. We need to be trained with the word of God to pray. Even the weakest Christian can, at any period of his or her life, cry out to God for help and instantly have the resource of the infinite sovereign God at their disposal. Church, that is what prayer does!

## **II. Why should we be praying for all the saints? [18]**

<sup>18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

Paul was chosen by God to be used to solve the mystery of the world. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul says, “*though I am the very least of all the saints.*” You think you are weak? Well, Paul says he is weaker. But because of the grace given to us, it does not matter how weak you are. What matters is how strong God is. And to Paul, grace was given to him to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to reveal the mysteries hidden for ages in God. This mystery is Jesus Christ. Paul wants us to know that he is not the only one being called to draw gentiles to Christ, but that we are all called, as believers, to be mystery solvers to help lead others to Christ. God enables us in this by pouring and giving himself to the church of Jesus Christ as observed from the following verses.

Ephesians 1:22-23 - “*And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*”

Then, in Ephesians 3:10, he states that, “*so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*”

God gives us His power so that it can be released through us. It is through the church that the multicolor, multicultural, multiethnic, manifold wisdom of God may be made known to all. We need to pray for every Christian because every Christian is involved in a spiritual battle and the glory of God is at stake. Every single person matters, as we are a body that is connected, with Christ as the head.

## **III. How should we be praying for all the saints? [18]**

<sup>18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

We should be praying all the time in the Spirit. Some people may think that this means praying loudly or praying in tongues. Also, some people may think that praying in the Spirit means praying mindlessly or letting the prayer flow as the Spirit leads you. However, I believe that is not what it means. I will herein define and then dissect this subject matter into threefold portions to expound upon it.

What it means: *Praying depending on the Holy Spirit **in our spiritual nature** using the Word of God to receive power.*

**A. Praying depending on the Holy Spirit in your spiritual nature.**

Romans 8:16 - *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”*

This verse best describes the interaction of the Holy Spirit within our hearts. Praying depending on the Holy Spirit means there is a relationship between the Holy Spirit and our spiritual nature. When we put our trust in Jesus Christ, a spiritual nature is born, and we have two natures, with the sin nature being the other. The spiritual nature of a believer has the capability to connect to the Holy Spirit.

While the preceding chapter, Romans 7, focuses on our sin nature, Romans 8 talks about our spiritual nature that is now in connection with the Holy Spirit. In essence, by His power, we can live out our spiritual life. *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”* according to verse 16 and then, verse 26 explains how that happens in our prayers.

Romans 8:26 - *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”*

The Holy Spirit helps us even in our prayers. He is pouring His love into our hearts. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is connecting to us, bearing witness, and giving us convictions. He does this through the Word of God.

**B. Using the Word of God**

Ephesians 5:18-19 - *“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.”*

Colossians 3:16 - *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

In both of these passages, Paul is thinking of similar things. In Colossians 3:16, instead of explicitly saying *“be filled with the Holy Spirit,”* he says, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”* Praying in the Spirit means using the Word of God because it is the means that the Holy Spirit uses to fill us.

**C. To receive power**

Ephesians 3:16 - *“that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being”*

Our father is rich. We have unlimited and unending resources in Jesus Christ. The latter half of this verse is talking about the interaction of the Holy Spirit with our spiritual nature. This is similar to Romans 8:16, but this time, Paul is talking about power. We therefore need to pray depending on the Holy Spirit in our spiritual nature using the Word of God, so that we can be filled with His power.

Even though we may be equipped with the spiritual armor of God, it is nothing without power. As an illustration, let us say that you have a sword but no power to wield it. Such a sword is, in fact, useless. Prayer gives us the power to be able to utilize the armor of God. If you are knowledgeable with the Word of God, you have no power unless you pray. The Word of God is what you articulate and explain. Everything we do from evangelizing, leading a small group, parenting, to working, has no power apart from prayer.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 - “*And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*”

Paul is not just talking about pastors and those in ministry. I believe that Paul is talking about ordinary people who are used by God to speak to others. As the church, we need to speak to those who are discouraged, depressed, or in trouble. As those being used by God to minister to people, we must have a character and a heart that is empowered by God.

In verse 25, we see that as we speak to others, God may grant the people we are talking to, the realization of their need to repent, and also lead them to the knowledge of the truth. This can happen in everyday interactions as we simply talk with those around us.

Verse 26 talks about those who are caught by the devil. We may have a certain image of what possessed people should look like due to media portrayal, however, in reality, they are normal people. They are people trapped in the lies that are planted and stimulated by sinful desires. They may be discouraged, depressed, or deep into addiction. Satan wants us anywhere away from God. But as you converse with people, you can also be exorcizing in the process. If the Holy Spirit uses you, then your words will have the power to free them from the snares of the devil and transform their hearts. I am praying that every single one of us learns how to exorcize with words of truth that have power because of prayer. I end this point by emphasizing that the power described above, is one for normal people like us, that every single one of us can have, even as we spend time in prayer at times like tonight.

#### **IV. How comprehensively should we pray for all the saints? [18]**

<sup>18</sup> *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,*

The “*alls*” to examine from the passage are fourfold. Each one that assists us in addressing the above question regarding the comprehensiveness of prayer, with respect to all the saints.

##### **A. All occasions - occasions [18]**

This refers to praying at all times. In every moment of our lives, we are under attack, however, every single moment can also be redeemed for God’s glory.

##### **B. All kinds of prayers - styles [18]**

There are different styles of prayer: silently, loudly, publicly, short, long, immediately, planned, soft, meditatively, written, popcorn-style, and so on. Sometimes, with two or three people, small groups, or alone. We pray for others in adoration, in confession, in thanksgiving, or in supplication.

##### **C. All requests - contents [18]**

All the arenas of our lives are under attack, however, they can also become a place where Christ can be magnified. When Paul talks about “*all supplications,*” he really means “*all requests.*” Request means to pray specific comprehensive prayers with absolute dependency.

In order to request something, you must be actively engaging your mind. This is why I am disagreeing with the school of thought that praying in the Spirit means to mindlessly let pray

flow. There are times when we do need to do that, so that we can listen to God speak to us. However, for the most part, requesting means you are in control of the flow, there is a logic behind your prayer, and, above all, there is an order to your prayer, even as you pray in alignment with God's word. We need to train our minds to go to our requests. Do not let it flow!

One of the keys in spiritual life is learning to train your mind. Sometimes, we are killed by the train of thoughts that lead to our addiction. We need to learn to control it, so that our train of thought leads to prayer requests and to the Word of God. As you pray, intentionally engage your heart and your mind. Be a child at heart, but a veteran warrior in your mind, as you pray. I end this subpoint by quoting Samuel Chadwick who once said, "*The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.*"

#### **D. All the saints - people [18]**

How do we pray for everything? A practical suggestion is to create a prayer chart. There are things that you need to pray for daily, weekly, or even monthly. Strategically divide the given time you have to different prayer requests. Be realistic and plan them out. Like time management, you need to have prayer management, as well. You do not have to pray everything every day.

#### **V. How should we pray for all the individual saints? [19-20]**

<sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

There are seven things that we can learn from Paul's act of asking for prayers for himself, but first, the video clip that we will now see, helps us to realize the importance of praying for others.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAHYuXcHil8>

*Description: Two children are playing in front of a basketball hoop. A little girl begins to cry after she unsuccessfully attempts to make a shot. The boy that she is playing alongside, stops playing and tries to console her. He encourages her by telling her that she is strong. However, after observing that his words of encouragement were insufficient to brighten her mood, he proceeds by first bringing the basketball back to her. Next, with the ball in her hands, he picks her up such that she could now reach the basket. She then shoots again and the ball swishes right through the basket. Elated at her success, she stops crying and the boy kisses her multiple times on the cheek.*

Praying for other people is a beautiful thing. In fact, I think that the best thing we can do for others is to pray for them. In the game of life, as we pray for one another, everybody can score, and all the scores matter for the glory of God.

#### **A. Pray for others individually [19]**

Very rarely does Paul use first person pronouns, especially throughout the book of Ephesians. Paul mainly writes using *us*. However, here, as a leader, Paul is asking for prayers for himself. You need to pray for your leaders as well as members. Pray for others individually.

#### **B. Pray for opportunities [19]**

Pray for every mundane moment to become extraordinary moments of ministry.

#### **C. Pray for wisdom [19]**

When you are communicating with someone in-person or over the phone (including text messages), during small group and prayer partner meetings, as well as in any ministry that we are engaged in, pray for words so that you may be ready to speak in any given context.

**D. Pray for courage and love [20]**

I believe courage comes from love. When are you nervous? When are you cowardly? It may often be when you want to protect yourself. Thus, courage comes from selflessness. When you forget about yourself, you are courageous to speak about Christ.

**E. Pray that they will make known the mystery of the gospel [19]**

This is what we are going to pray for, even as we pray for one another, that the tribe of Jesus Christ may increase.

**F. Pray in in the knowledge of their circumstances [20]**

Paul is writing in the context of being in prison. We need to know the context and the circumstances of the people that we are praying for. What kind of prison are they in? What kind of hardships and sufferings are they facing? Pray that they may not be altered by their circumstances, but instead that they will alter their circumstances. Pray that they have the strength to go through life and glow for the glory of God.

**G. Pray for their effective and powerful declaration. [20]**

Pray that everything we do is a declaration of His love and character. Pray that whether it is through the mundane moments of life or during direct proclamation of the gospel, that we will have the power to turn hearts that people may be free from the snares of Satan and the world.

When I pray for the church, I pray specific and general prayers. I pray specifically for people who have asked me to pray for them and for those that I specifically know are going through something difficult. However, when I pray for alumni, I pray generally, as I cannot pray for 10,000+ people individually. We need to prayerfully decide when to pray specifically or generally. In different seasons of life, there will be people that we need to pray for specifically, but we also need to pray for one another, in general.

My confidence is not in our prayers but my confidence is in God who answers our prayers. God alone can change the people that we pray for. To quote William Coper, "*Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees.*" As soon as we get on our knees, we are prayer warriors. In the Bible, the only type of warriors are prayer warriors. We need to be feisty, knowing what kind of resources are available to us.

**Conclusion**

We need to be people who learn how to prepare, not people who simply repair. Of course, when we make mistakes, we do need to repair, as that is the minimum. However, thinking about it from the perspective a person's health, as well as parenting, are twofold illustrations that may be quite helpful here, even as we conclude. Someone who is always sick is always repairing because they do not take care of their body. But those who prepare, are healthy in the long run. Similarly, some parents may let their kids do whatever they want, and then then try to repair when such children cause problems. However, the best parents are those who prepare their children. Teach, train, and spiritually prepare people rather than constantly correcting and disciplining them, upon the occurrence of problems. God repairs us in our repentance, but He is also always preparing us for our future. The secret of Christian victory therefore, lies in learning to prepare.

While there is a preparation prayer, there is also a reactionary prayer. The latter occurs when you cry out to God in your problem or repent after sinning, and this is, in fact, necessary. However, while there is a “Forgive us! Forgive our debt!” type of prayer, there is also a “Lead us not into temptation” kind of prayer. The secret to overcoming temptation is right at the beginning. Pray that you will not fall into temptation. Perhaps, when one has no pervading problem, is the time when one needs to pray, in preparation, the most. A repairing Christian is an immature Christian with misplaced priorities. God may work through the problems that make such a Christian react in prayer, so that he or she comes to the Lord, but mature Christians are preparing Christians. Since they are prepared, they are capable of ministering to people even in the midst of their own toughest times.

If you really believe in God, then even one sentence of prayer can change your heart. Many of us may think, “How much will this prayer really do?” Just remember that though we are weak, God is strong and He listens to every prayer. In fact, He is pursuing after you to hear your prayers, to change your heart and to change others through your prayers. Through prayer, God can change circumstances and possibly change history from one degree to another, so that redemptive history will carry on.

Get into the right mindset, not of “I need to pray,” but preparing your mind to know how great God is. Prepare to know that the world is a lot more chaotic than what we see in the news, as there is a spiritual battle going on. Then, as we think about those things, it should motivate us to stand between God and the world. May we become a funnel of God’s blessings, such that God will pour His power into us, so that His power can be released. Pray that the manifold wisdom, power, love, and beauty of God can be released through us.