

Weapons of War - Prayer Cover Part 2

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[0 : 00] Ephesians chapter 6, we're continuing in our study, warfare prayer, prayer cover.

Let's pray. Holy Father, we admit, Lord, sometimes our faith is weak.

And we need you as the man cried out when Jesus offered to take care of his son, to heal him.

Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief was his cry.

And Lord, sometimes we're like him. Lord, we believe a little bit. Help our unbelief. Grow our faith.

Help us not to be satisfied with just little faith.

Help us to ask you. Help us to grow in knowing you so that our faith will expand. Because you are worthy of great faith. You're worthy of a people who trust you.

[1 : 11] Without thought, just trust you because we know that you are faithful. You don't have to wonder. We're not confused. You deserve a people like that. But Lord, you got us instead.

And we get confused. And we ask why. Thank you that we can ask why. Thank you that you don't turn us away because we're frustrated.

Even when we fall. You still love us. Thank you that you pick us up.

You don't leave us in the dirt. You pick us up and you dust us off. And like Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, go now and sin no more.

You don't excuse what we do, but you call us to walk in holiness with you. But thank you that, Lord, you died for our sins. Each and every one. Past, present, and future.

[2 : 08] We will never be judged for them. Thank you. For who could stand? Who could stand? Father, we come to your word now.

We ask for your help. For me to preach it, Lord. I need your help to preach your word. Can't do it. Can't do it with any kind of power from you.

Can't do it with any joy. Can't do it with any conviction unless you help me. Certainly can't do it rightly. According to the truth in context. And need your help.

But Lord, we need to help to hear too. So help us hear. To truly hear. Not just with our ears, but with our hearts. Help us to hear. And help us to follow.

Help us to follow Jesus. We hear his words. He said to his disciples time and time again. Follow me.

[3 : 10] Help us. In Christ's name we ask it now. Amen. Ephesians chapter 6.

Our passage is verses 18 through 20. But I've been starting in verse 10 just to read a few verses there. And then we'll jump down to verse 18.

Verse 13. Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Verse 13 begins the armor. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.

And having done all to stand firm. Verse 18, our text. Praying at all times in the spirit. With all prayer and supplication.

[4 : 10] To that end. To that end. Keep alert with all perseverance. Making supplication for all the saints. And also for me.

That words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in chains. That I may declare it boldly.

As I ought to speak. Amen. That is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Please be seated. Thank you, Praising.

Thank you so much for your service. I think I mentioned it last week in one of these services. So I'm going to give you the full skinny today.

In the classic Pilgrim's Progress, which I would encourage you to read if you haven't read it. And even the children's version. In that classic, we see the importance of prayer and spiritual combat.

[5 : 15] Christian, who is the hero of the story, as it were, is on his way to the city of Zion. Heaven. And he must go through the valley of humiliation.

There, he fights Apollyon. The great dragon. The devil. He was almost defeated. But then he grasped the sword of the spirit.

The word of God. And quotes Micah 7. Rejoice not over me. Oh, my enemy. When I fall, I shall rise. And then he struck at the dragon. And the dragon drew back as if he had been given a mortal wound.

Christian presses his attack against him. He quotes Romans 8, 37. No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. And he gets at him again.

Apollyon spread his mighty wings and flew away in defeat. And the text says, and he saw him no more.

[6 : 18] But at the end of the valley of humiliation is another valley. It's called the valley of the shadow of death. Christian had to pass through it.

It was a place of darkness, fear, death, and evil creatures. There were flames and smoke. And he realized here was the very mouth of hell.

Bunyan writes, the flame and smoke would come out with abundance, with sparks and hideous noises, things that cared not for his sword.

And he had to use another weapon called all prayer. Quoting from Ephesians 6 there.

He speaks Psalms 116, 4. Then I called on the name of the Lord. Oh, Lord, I pray, deliver my soul. And by that prayer, he was able to continue his journey to the city of Zion.

[7 : 31] I love that phrase where Bunyan says that there were things in there that cared not for his sword. In other words, there were things there that seemed to have been a little resistant to the word of God.

And then, but prayer came. The two of them together working. Mighty. You see, prayer cover helps us to more effectively receive the mighty strength of the Lord that we might use the armor and stand against the enemy.

Prayer and the word. But the question is, do you have prayer cover? Do you have prayer cover? Does our church have prayer cover?

Prayer. We ended last time by talking about the fact that prayer is essential. And we talked about the idea of close air support that we get from our military.

Where we're able to bring, where we're able now, to bring spiritual resources to bear on the enemy as we wrestle and grapple with him.

[8 : 45] We need close air support. We need God's power to come and intervene in the midst of this struggle. It is essential. Prayer, therefore, is essential to empowering our armor.

For without prayer, we spiritually hyperventilate. We can't catch our breath in the battle. As John Awachakwa, the pastor of Cornerstone Church in Atlanta puts it, we call him John O.

He said, prayer is breathing. Prayer is oxygen for the Christian. And breathing together is what our churches need. We need to breathe together.

Take some deep breaths. You ever hyperventilate? You ever can't catch your breath, you know? You've been maybe exercising, running, doing something, or just scared.

And you can't breathe as well. When prayer keeps us from spiritually hyperventilating. When we've been exercised, when we've been pushed to the limit by the devil, when we've been under attack, and you feel like you're ready to just quit, prayer helps us breathe again.

[10 : 06] Prayer together, even more so. But Rev. Kev, we're doing the thing God commands us to do in the Bible.

We're doing it, man. I know we may not pray as much as we should, but we're being obedient.

We're remembering the poor, Pastor Kevin. We're doing justice and loving mercy.

People come to our church every week looking for utilities and rent. We help them. We're tutoring more effectively. Many kids now, more and more children are coming through our tutoring ministry.

Young men are coming to our church throughout the week. They're being helped to learn good work skills. They're being kept off the street and out away from gangs. We're seeing this happen.

Members of our church are becoming greater advocates for the poor in the public square. Praise God. And now we have a school. Pastor Kevin, we're starting a school.

[11 : 06] You spoke about that. Aren't you excited about the school? Why are you hammering us about prayer? We're doing it, Pastor Kevin.

We're doing ministry, man. Come on. Cut us a break. It ain't me.

I'm just following the text. But notice the sword of the Spirit comes just before prayer. I don't think that's a mistake.

I don't think when Paul wrote this, I don't think he actually said, oops, I'll just put it there any other way. I think that was intentional. There are a couple pieces of armor that I really think were put in place intentionally.

This is one of them. This is one area where I think Paul did this intentionally. He wanted us to know something. To see the word bear more lasting fruit in our lives and situations and in our warfare, we have to get serious about prayer.

[12:17] Obedience without prayer is short-lived, or it becomes legalistic without the humility that prayer brings. Vision to follow God's word or any church's vision is not enough.

It has to be saturated rightly in prayer. Otherwise, people quit. They get burned out. They get tired of doing whatever vision your church may have.

They get tired of following. Because to follow any vision that God gives will require a sacrifice. And we get tired of sacrificing.

We need prayer. But here's one more thing about this order that I think is really important.

Meditation on the word of God is meant to lead us to prayer.

You see, to wield the sword of the spirit requires, I mentioned this way back when, it does require meditation. And Christian or biblical meditation is not emptying your mind or trying to clear your mind.

[13:32] That's maybe transcendental. That's spirituality that our culture and world. That's not Christian. We don't clear our minds to pray.

We don't clear our minds to meditate on God's word. We fill our minds. Meditation is on the word of God. Meditation, biblically, is to fill your mind with the word.

Matter of fact, in the Old Testament, the word meditation has the idea of muttering to yourself. We fill our minds with the word of God.

This is not yoga. We're filling our minds with God's word. In other words, we're filling our mind with the meaning of the passage or passages in front of you.

And you're asking yourself this question as you're meditating on that word. What would it happen in your life, maybe your church or even the world, if this passage, if this word from God became alive in you?

[14:34] What? You want to talk about visualization? Visualize that. What would it look like if Jesus got hold of you in that, just like in that passage, and begin to work in your life in this day, in this time?

What would it look like? Oh, yeah. Now you're cooking with gas. Now you're meditating on the word of God.

You're saying, Lord, this passage and its meaning is true. What would it look like if you had your way? Not just in me, because you're praying for it, and in my brothers and sisters' lives.

What would it look like? Meditation is the bridge between the study of the word and prayer. That's how you cross the bridge.

Meditate. Psalm 1. Read Psalm 1 again. Just enjoy it. Too often we're more serious about talking about prayer than we are actually praying.

[15:43] Hello, Kevin. But so what should prayer look like then as we render this close air support? What should it look like? Well, the rest of this passage.

Prayer support, prayer cover must be comprehensive. Again, the beginning of verse 18. Praying, well, the whole verse actually.

Praying at all times in the Spirit. Listen to this. 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. I'm going to come back to it. This is a good place to give a definition for prayer, okay? As we look at that.

What exactly is prayer? Our catechism is very helpful. The larger catechism, Westminster, question 178. What is prayer?

[16:42] I think it's on the screen. Yeah. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God. I like that. In the name of Christ. By the help of His Spirit.

With confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies. Take a screenshot of that if you don't have that at home. That's a nice. I like that. That's beautiful. There's so much beautiful stuff in there.

Notice in that definition, we don't offer up our demands, but our desires. What we would like from God. Notice we pray in the name of Jesus.

That is, in keeping with His character. Tim Keller is helpful here in his book on prayer. He says, our prayer must be in full, grateful awareness that our access to God as Father is a free gift won by the costly sacrifice of Jesus, the true Son.

So when I come to God in the name of Jesus, I right away, I'm remembering that the only reason I can come to God in this moment of prayer is because of what Jesus has done for me.

[17:53] Otherwise, I could come, but I will not be welcome. Let's be clear about this. God the Father loves you.

But access to Him only comes through His Son. You are denied access unless you come in the name of Jesus.

It's kind of like parent. Suppose you had to make a hard decision. Say you were a parent and you had several kids at home and then you had one child who truly went off the rails. And this kid got involved in crime and drugs.

And you still love that child. But you can no longer give them access to your home. Because you have other children you have to protect from them.

It is the only way they can get access is if they turn away from that lifestyle and come with an agent who can bring them into the home and say, he's okay.

[19:04] Because you don't believe in anything they say. Some of you know what I'm talking about. You've been there. Or you know someone who has. Jesus is the agent.

God the Father loves you. But you can't come into the family until you've repented of your sins and you've experienced the agent, Jesus, to bring you into the family. You good?

In the name of Jesus. But also it has the idea too of praying in keeping with who Jesus is. I can't pray in the name of Jesus asking for things that he doesn't want me to have.

I can't pray in the name of Jesus asking for that which goes against his name. So all this goes in. I love what Jesus says himself in John 15, 16 about prayer.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

[20:14] Jesus said that. To ask the Father in his name that he would give it. We ask according to his character, his will, and his glory.

And we pray in the spirit, the catechism says, which we'll deal with later. Essentially, prayer is access to God and his resources. Access to Kevin Smith.

Shorten it up. Access to God and his resources. Guy Waters in his book. I mentioned these books so you maybe read them if you get a chance. Guy Waters, an old acquaintance.

Persistent prayer, his book is called. He says, it's not that God has given us everything we need to make our stand and then left us to fend for ourselves. God has given us everything we need.

He has also given us ongoing access to himself. We have access to his limitless supplies of wisdom, power, and grace. We have access to all that he is in and of himself whenever and wherever we may need it.

[21:25] Prayer. Prayer. Access to God. Access to his resources. Access to all that he is for us in Christ Jesus. Family.

We got to take advantage of our access. I mean, to have access and not make use of it. It's kind of like a person who has access to a million dollars in the bank, but they are not paying their mortgage.

They're not paying their water bill. They're about to be evicted. Their car is behind in payments.

They're coming to the church asking for food. But they've got access to a million dollars, but they're not going to the bank.

I think as Christians, that's what we're doing. We've got access to the living God. Prayer. It's that wonderful access. It's fellowship.

It's God. You're there. You're always there. It's his resources for my good. And he's offering them. And we are busy dumpster diving.

[22 : 40] Spiritually dumpster diving when we could be going to the throne room of heaven to receive grace and find help in time of need.

And not just in time of need. In time of joy. Amen. In time of peace.

Enjoying rich communion with our living God. Remember Bunyan referred to prayer as all prayer. When I read verse 18, you heard him emphasize all, all, all, all. Paul, you. He was quoting from Paul right here in Ephesians.

He repeats the word all in verse 18. This is what I mean by comprehensive prayer. All situation. All types of prayer.

[23 : 42] All perseverance. All God's people protected by prayer cover. Private prayer. Group prayer. Intercessory prayer. Prayer of thanks.

Prayer of praise. Prayer of supplication. Supplication. Meaning, help Lord. That's a prayer, by the way. I mean, we can, it's okay to take a moment, but sometimes that prayer of supplication is help. Sometimes when you're driving in this city, I'm trying not to say too much here. I'll get sidetracked. All I got time to say is Jesus.

That's all right. That's prayer of supplication. Woo. Lord, we have needs, and we need you to supply, please.

Now, there's a model in the Bible, as you know, for comprehensive prayer and supplication, and it's called the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6, 9, 13. You know, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

[24 : 52] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And by the way, the Greek there can also be translated evil one. That's usually how I translate it personally. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.

Notice this, that the first thing we notice about praying comprehensively is to recognize we're approaching our Father. Father. In the Lord's Prayer, our first desires are to be for our Father to be exalted.

I mean, when you set aside time to pray, I'm talking about when you set aside time now, not when you're riding your bicycle or going to work.

I mean, and that's okay to pray, though. We'll talk about that later. But I'm talking about when you set aside time to pray. When Jesus says you've gone into your prayer closet in Matthew 6, when you go into your closet to pray.

[26 : 02] Our first inclination is to recognize we have a Father and we want Him to be exalted. Hallowed or holy be your name.

As Father, He's telling us we're welcome. Welcome. It is a term of respect as well. But we're welcome. He wants to hear from you.

He delights in you, His children. He rejoices over you, His kids, with singing. When you go to sleep at night, it's your Father.

You probably don't hear Him, but sometimes you might. Who knows? Because He's singing over you. He's singing a lullaby to put you to bed at night. Because He neither slumbers nor sleeps. And He's keeping you and watching over you so you can slumber and sleep. Every night, He's whispering over you, as it were.

[27 : 04] I love you. But I love the fact that in order for us to, because we get, especially today, we don't like authority figures.

Authority really makes us nervous, you know. And so, but Jesus doesn't care. He's going to tell us the truth anyway. Anyway, the first thing we say about this Father, hallowed be your name.

So, comprehensive prayer, when we're going to pray like Paul is teaching us in Ephesians 6, we've got to recognize we have a Father, but this Father is holy.

Hallowed be your name. Holy be your name. His name refers to His character and person. Holy means He's not like us.

He's above us completely. And He's completely morally pure. The big ticket word that I love to describe God is He's transcendent.

[28 : 07] If He did not condescend, if He didn't speak baby talk, as it were, we would never comprehend Him. We'd never understand Him. But He did. He has spoken. He has come condescending.

He has spoken down to our level. That's okay to say that now, because we're talking about God speaking down to you. Because you ain't Him. We are praying that the world would honor Him in this way as holy and that it would begin with ourselves.

Now, keep in mind, the Lord's prayer is, first of all, not a personal prayer. It's a group prayer. Our Father. Our Father. Our Father. That's true.

That's a true plural. It's not the plural of majesty, you know, or whatever. No. It means Jesus meant for His disciples to pray this way together.

And by the way, the Lord's prayer, saying the words, is not exactly what the Lord was teaching. But this is the framework for our prayer in particular. Oh, you can say the words, but better to fill the words with content from your heart and from the Word of God as you pray.

[29 : 25] Amen. We approach Him not just as Father, but as Holy Father. The larger catechism says it this way, with reverence and all childlike dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehension of His sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension.

We're approaching with reverence, and we recognize that He is sovereign, that He has all power and authority, that He is majestic.

The way Moses put it, He is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders. That's what they sang when they came out of Egypt.

Do you have that sense when you pray? That you are approaching one who is like that? The word that we're looking for is awe.

To approach God with awe. To go into our closets and call upon Father and recognize that He is holy. And that it's about His kingdom and His will being done, not yours.

[30 : 45] And that's a good thing. When we see this, it produces a loving awe of God in us.

And by making the first three petitions about God, Jesus our Lord was teaching us that our greatest desire and our greatest concern must be for Him.

That keeps us from being demanding, spoiled children. Because that's what happens. Children aren't spoiled because we give them.

You give your children neat things and great opportunities. That doesn't spoil children. What spoils children is their heart and how they receive that and how you encourage it.

God gives us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.

[31 : 47] All, all, all. He is lavishing us with grace and mercy and opens the storeroom of heaven to welcome us in.

He is giving. By nature, He gives. Love gives. He's giving and giving. That doesn't spoil us unless we don't see Him rightly. Then, nothing like a spoiled Christian.

We forget that we approach Him. Not in our own merit. Not because we deserve to be here.

But we approach Him because He is so gracious and merciful that He sent His only true Son. His true Son. His only begotten Son. The one who truly images Him and represents Him in the ways that we cannot.

It's only because He sent Him to be our armor. That we can come. Prayer humbles us. Prayer humbles us.

[32 : 58] Right prayer. True prayer. Humbles us. If you're not, if you're not humble, you're not praying. They cancel each other out. When we see such a being is for us, then it becomes much easier to seek His glory even before our own desires.

When I recognize that this being, this God, this Holy Father, this Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the whole Trinity has gone to great lengths, humanly speaking, to redeem me and to make me one of their children.

When I see that, man, it makes me want to just give myself. When I go, ah, Lord, you have done so much. I want. Here. Here.

That's what I can present my body a living sacrifice. Take me. Please use me for your glory no matter what it costs. No matter what it costs, Father, use me for your glory.

Don't let me leave this world without you getting glory through me. Amen. That's my prayer. We recognize that His glory is the best thing that could happen to us.

[34 : 30] Not our own glory. To hallow His name is to walk in the fear of the Lord. And that's what Paul, and that very phrase, fear of the Lord, is the very indictment that Paul ends on.

When Romans 3, when he begins to list why humanity is separated from God, there's none righteous, no, not one. Remember, he walks through, he ends it, the summary statement in 3:18 of

Romans.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. That's the whole world. That's the world without Christ. That's anyone who doesn't know Jesus. That is the summary statement of their life. There is no fear of God. No matter how much God talk they do, there is no fear of God before their eyes.

There is no hallowing of the name of God. He is not holy. And I'm so afraid sometimes that even among Christians, we don't know what it means to hallow and to fear Him.

[35 : 38] That's why we pray. Teach me the fear of the Lord. Teach me to hallow Thy name. Years ago, I was, I think I was still in seminary.

I wasn't ordained yet. And I remember I had to, I was asked to introduce the president of my seminary, who was a friend. He taught many of my classes. I love this man, T.M. Moore. And I was asked to introduce him at Presbytery.

So I stand up and I say, I make some jokes about T. I always make jokes about him and he vice versa. And I said to, ladies and gentlemen, the only wise potentate, T.M. Moore.

And everybody started cracking up because the only wise potentate is a description of God in the pastoral letters. I think it might be 1 Timothy. And so later that week, I got a phone call.

Jim, you would enjoy this. I got a phone call from a teaching elder. And I knew who, I won't say his name because dear brother, love this man. He calls him and says, and he says to me, he takes me to the catechism about the name of God.

[36 : 44] And he read through there to me. And basically what it reminded me of was that God is holy and so are his names. And to use his names or descriptions of him in an unworthy manner was an insult to his holiness.

From that moment on, I learned to stop using the name of the Lord Jesus as a swear word. And the name of God as if it's just something to fill in the blanks.

I mean, you know, just Jesus. I begin to learn what it means to fear the Lord and to respect his name and to recognize his person as holy and glorious.

Whenever I hear Christians using the name of the Lord as if it's flippant, as if it doesn't mean anything at all, or the name of God, I cringe inside because I recognize, don't you understand? He's holy father. Jesus is Lord of glory. And we use his name as a catchphrase for frustration. Who are we?

[38 : 01] Hallowed be thy name. Comprehensive prayer has to begin with who to whom we are coming. And to rejoice that he would welcome us at all.

And to know that he does welcome us. And he does call his children. And he does hear us when we pray. Because we are praying in the name of Jesus.

And in this spiritual battle, brothers and sisters, family, in this spiritual battle, that's where we got to live. We've got to live in the name of Jesus.

We've got to live in the face of Holy Father. We've got to live in praying kingdom prayer. Not just about my grandmother's toe. But no, and Aunt Bertha's diabetes.

Pray for that. We'll get to that next time. But listen, kingdom prayer is for God to be exalted. God's kingdom to come. God's will to be done.

[39 : 05] We're praying for God to show out and show up. We're praying for God to strengthen this church in Ukraine, in Afghanistan, in America.

We're praying because the devil is popping people left and right. Playing with our emotions. Praying with our thinking.

Praying with our desires. He's praying with us. And we need God's strength. We need comprehensive prayer.

All kinds of prayer. All times of prayer. And we can't stop. That was a good introduction.

How's your prayer cover? Are you covering your life in prayer? Are you covering your family in prayer?

[40 : 13] Are you covering our church in prayer? Please. I'm not trying to indict you. I'm begging. I'm begging for prayer.

For your elders. For your deacons. For your church staff. For your brothers and sisters. Look around the pew. Just do me a favor. Look down your pew. Look down the other side. Pray for these people.

But I don't know them. We'll get to know them. Say hello. It's okay. Can I pray for you? And even if you don't know. Open the Bible. You'll find plenty to pray for any Christian who would not mind

hearing you pray this for them.

Pray the book on them. Book them, Dan-o. You know. Pray the book on them. No. No Christian would mind that. Well, we got to have the Lord's Supper, so let's pray.

Father, for those of you who are leaving, we praise God for you. Father, in Jesus' name, bless our time now as we come to the table.

[41 : 18] May your word find good fruit in our hearts and lives. And may we come to the table now with joy because this table is a visible word to us.

The work of Christ portrayed for us at this table. May we enjoy him even as we enjoy one another in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.