

Weapons of War - Prayer Cover Part 1

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[0 : 00] It's a very apropos song for the subject matter in which we're going to begin to look at this morning in our now concluding section of the armor of God and spiritual warfare.

It's funny, this is one of the subjects in the scriptures that even when you finish studying it, you never stop studying it because you're living it. And so though we may in a few weeks leave this study, we will never leave the reality that we've been looking at for these many months.

So let's ask God's blessing and dive into his word. Father, we need you.

The song we have just sung is true. It's our reality. Every hour we need you. Forgive us that we forget that.

And forgive us, Lord, please, that for us not living like it, we have such spiritual amnesia. Even sometimes downright temporary insanity.

[1 : 27] Because we think we can do life without you. And we know we can't. That's why it's so insane. But Lord, thank you for your mercy and grace.

Thank you for your love that keeps bringing us back, keeps bringing us back, keeps bringing us back. And even in our singing. Lord, thank you for the good music that causes us to reflect upon Jesus, that causes us to draw near to you, that causes us to remember all of your blessings and benefits and gives us joy in you.

Sometimes it convicts us as we sing. And that's a good thing. But Lord, may we bring our conviction to you and feel your love in your arms and help us to learn.

Help us to learn. So, Father, as we come now to your word, we pray for that, that we would learn. That we would not just learn with our minds, though that's very important.

But we would learn with our entire heart, with our lives, that we would learn Jesus. That we would be true disciples, true learners of Jesus.

[2 : 43] Teach us and bless us and draw us near. Help us to walk worthy of the great name of him who has loved us and washed us from our sins with his own blood.

Use your unworthy servant to preach your word with conviction and power and joy as it should be preached.

In Jesus' name, amen. Ephesians chapter 6, beginning at verse 18.

Praying. Let me back up. Just keep that there. I'm going to back up and remind you of something. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in 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. Stand therefore. Stand therefore. Now, verse 18.

[4 : 00] Praying at all times in the spirit. With all prayer and supplication. With all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance.

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. Amen. That is the word of the Lord.

You may be seated. and let me just say thank you again Bethany for sharing with us it was so good to see you girl and to hear what God's been doing in your life and through your life you just made my day truly thank you and thank God for his mercy and power for many of us now we're talking about prayer today you got that right so we're all convicted let's just get that out the way we all feel bad we're all saying we don't pray let's just get that out the way get it on the carpet okay you got it I'm with you okay now so I gotta be honest with you prayer is like the national anthem before a sports game before the Super Bowl it's something we do but it has nothing to do what's gonna happen on the field it's a courtesy it's simply a courtesy

I'm in there sometimes I feel like I pray as a courtesy you know I'm supposed to pray right now not that it has anything to do with what I'm about to do not that it's gonna not that I'm really focusing but I know I need to pray right now I'm about to eat you know I should pray right now because well I got a bunch of guys together we're sitting there we're gonna talk we're gonna do something we should pray you ever feel like that?

[6 : 21] am I the only one? my goodness I am such a sinner you are so holy thank you I wanna be around you all more often because I need you it's ludicrous you know I've been I decided to think about prayer a little bit more yeah and it reminded me of air support you know I like that prayer support air cover baby and so I began I went I went on to a site I thought think about what is air cover and I came around I came across this this information something called close air support in the military C-A-S close air support it means to provide fire power power and offensive and defensive operations day or night to destroy suppress neutralize disrupt fix or delay enemy forces now watch this in close proximity to friendly ground forces close air support so you got so the so the the two sides of the battle are in close proximity and air support has to come in you know fire power from the sky from our ships from our planes has to come in with great accuracy so that you don't hit our troops we we're thinking about these things now with the situation in the Ukraine war is in our minds horrible that is there but that's where we are and if we're drawn into that conflict if that ever happens

I don't know some of our loved ones may be involved who knows but close air support is essential for the well-being of our troops has to be very precise because you don't want to hit your forces this is the kind of support that we spiritually need as Christians as we engage the spiritual forces of evil in this present darkness you see the Bible says we are wrestling with them so we are in very close proximity to the enemy and we need precise spiritual weaponry to make sure we hit the enemy and we don't get accused of friendly fire hitting one another and we do hit one another we need to get more precise we need to pray we need close air support from our Savior so what does prayer support like that look like well we're going to talk about that as we work through here but how and also how can we bring prayer cover for the lives and work of our church how can we bring close air support for the lives of our people and for the work of God that he's caused us to do at this church and around the world through people like Bethany and others that we support how can we do it how can we follow the the orders of our commanding officer the Lord

Jesus more precisely and more powerfully well here we go we're at the end of our study we haven't said everything about spiritual warfare but I hope that we've covered here in Ephesians 6 has been very helpful Paul has finished writing now about God's armor and now he comes to prayer now keep in mind he's been talking he's been praying all throughout the letter if you want to go back and look it up for yourself go to chapter 1 verse 15 through 19 go to chapter 3 verses 14 through 19 go to go to chapter 3 verses 20 and 21 and even at the end of this section Paul then says pray for me you get the impression that prayer was extremely important to Paul notice how much space he gives to talk about prayer in our text as opposed to the individual pieces of the spiritual armor he gives much more space to prayer and keep in mind y'all he's writing to the saints at Ephesus not to the saint of

Ephesus he's not writing to one Christian he's writing to the saints he's writing to all of them plural the call to prayer is a call to group prayer it's called to body prayer without the neglect of personal private prayer Paul is calling us to church wide prayer you see because we're soldiers and soldiers usually are not alone we are stronger when we are together we are stronger when we pray together John Smed in his excellent book and ministry called prayer revolution says this praying especially praying together is our means of experiencing the present ascension presence and power of Christ now that's not on the screen but the idea he's right

I know John he's a dear friend but really close to the Ellis's this I want to just say one thing about his work and I want to encourage you to read the book I really do prayer revolution you see most books on prayer teach us about praying as individuals and that's good encouraging but prayer revolution is about churches being ignited in prayer which leads to revival that's why it's so important we're going to do more of that here but this praying together taps us in as it were to the ascension presence that is Jesus is reigning at the right hand of the father pouring out his blessings from that place as it were and when we pray together Smed is right it helps us group and as a group connect to that presence and power of Christ keep in mind something here

[13 : 24] Paul doesn't say explicitly but it's here in the armor that the because the armor brings us back to what Jesus has done for us time and time again which means our prayer is to be Christ centered you see if we're really relying on the armor of God prayer must be Christ centric and that it means that we're seeking to achieve the purposes and the glory of Jesus as we enter into prayer he is our great priority his kingdom what he wills becomes the center of our prayers even as those prayers bring us great intimacy with God so the first thing I want you to notice that prayer is essential in our

Christian life and warfare now if you can remember back in the fall series I showed you from the way that Paul wrote this great letter that spiritual warfare is the ordinary Christian life the ordinary Christian life this is not something that's like in the movies you know demons come jumping out of the walls and grabbing people and pulling them into purgatory or hell or something that's not what he's talking about this is ordinary Christian life that's why he starts talking about the family before he leads the prayer I find that very striking too that it's only after Paul talks about family life and that includes the relationship with the slaves in that family it's only after he talks about that that he begins to talk about specifically spiritual warfare because brothers and sisters the ordinary Christian life is spiritual warfare and that warfare will be centered in your home two amens and a grunt okay amen so now that he now he approaches prayer in this life war he is showing us that prayer is essential in this fight for the ordinary

Christian life it's not optional can I give you a more literal translation of verse 18 as I translated it here you go it begins with the word with or through all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit for this very purpose of keeping awake that is watching attentively with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints do you understand it begins with the word with or through through so go back to your passage and look again I hope you brought your Bible go back and look at it again verse 17 and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God with or through praying at all times in the spirit you see the word with or through begins the sentence which this is important for it modifies all that

Paul has just said about putting on and taking up the armor this suggests that all of the armor is to be used with prayer prayer is not part of the armor but is essential for using it well in order to stand and that's the goal here right the goal here that Paul keeps repeating is that we withstand stand withstand therefore stand the disciples of the Lord Jesus only stand in his name against the attacks of Satan and his forces as they pray stand therefore in prayer here's the thing saints we're only partially standing if we're not devoted to prayer think think of how often we get tripped up think of how we don't see things that are right in front of our face sometimes think of how often we get sucker punched the sneak attack comes up think about how often we lack discernment because and dad's decision making and we're so confused and so worried and we make sometimes some really bad decisions even though the word of

God is right there in our face could it be that we're not fully standing in prayer and if we are if we would we might find ourselves making better decisions sometimes I'm wondering out loud Kevin Smith talking to himself remember the pieces of the armor I made the case early on that Paul's language has been misunderstood too often by us and we seem to think the armor is somewhere and we gotta go find it it's somewhere over there oh go pick it up battle stations pick up the armor oh here comes the devil take up see I think we misunderstand Paul's language because you have the armor on already remember remember this you already have the armor on and again how do I know this because you're in

[19 : 36] Christ if you are joined to Jesus he did not leave his armor in heaven to come into your life and now you have to go get it if you are in Christ if you're clothed with Christ you are therefore clothed with his armor what Paul's language is telling us is that we must depend on it stop depending on ourselves and learn more and more to depend on the work of Christ for us God so Paul is calling us to a lifestyle a spiritual battle lifestyle of dependence upon what Christ has done now watch this the way to depend on the various pieces of the armor of God is through prayer without prayer we are not fully depending on

God's protection it's like having a body guard and you and you and I keep running away trying to sneak out and have a good time and get away from the body guard we're so prone to put our faith in our skills our education our knowledge and our abilities we tell people you can't depend on nobody but yourself we tell our children that so why should we pray if I can't depend on nobody but me why would I need to pray I got this we even say that I got this so prayerless warriors of the

Lord I'm setting the stage I notice it's convicting it's convicting me so join me in my pain but we gotta think about we gotta hear this prayerless warriors of the Lord are depending too much on themselves rather than Jesus in this spiritual fight and the devil doesn't care how skilled you are he doesn't care how smart you are he doesn't care that you got a degree in theology or engineering or accounting he's not impressed with you or me the only thing that impresses the devil is Jesus he's not even impressed that you're religious some of his best workers are religious and in the church he's not impressed with us what impresses him is the power of

God and prayer I'm learning y'all I'm learning prayer is key I can't win against the forces of darkness that plague my mind that plague this church that plague my family that plague this community and this city and this country I can't win I'm just not good enough I need something more more than me and more than you even prayer reminds me that I have something more prayer reminds me that I have God's armor I have Christ's work on my behalf and prayer says go and depend be a dependent because prayer reminds me and it makes me admit and

I'm happy too that I am helpless without you Lord I'm helpless I'm powerless I am not sufficient can you can you say that is that too much for you to admit that you are not sufficient that you are not enough I need direct communication with my captain in order to stand against as he Paul puts it against the cosmic powers over this present darkness do you understand who we're talking about it's horrible listen saints hear me as horrible as the war with Russia and the Ukraine is as horrible as that is this war we're talking about makes that look like peanuts the spiritual war in which we're engaged is much more damaging than the physical war is only an image of the true spiritual war that's sending people into eternity without help without hope there's something worse than dying there's something worse than losing your physical life what does it profit man to gain the whole world and lose his soul do you understand so what

[25 : 34] Paul is telling us here is that truth shouldn't I'm talking about the armor I'm going through the armor now truth should not be wielded without prayer because it can lead to pride or bad timing or even confusion righteousness cannot be relied upon fully without prayer because it could easily lead to self righteousness because true prayer keeps you humble you're not able to stand ready with the gospel of peace without prayer why because we fight we have to fight for peace sometimes on our knees fight for peace on our knees faith will falter under enemy fire without prayer because God strengthens our faith in prayer as we call upon him for help your assurance helmet of salvation your assurance of salvation will crumble without prayer because prayer helps us rest our confidence in his work for us when we start to doubt and using the sword of the spirit the word of God in the spirit's power is not possible without prayer you can't use the sword the word of God in your own strength well the word is more than principles it's more than just teachings it is meant to bring us to a dependent relationship with God through faith in Jesus prayer is running to father is running to father saying I need help prayer is running to father saying

I need resources prayer is running to father saying I just need you I just need you in my life I need you to come over and be near me I need you to I need you to I need you to pick me up here because I fell down the enemy tricked me he tricked me Lord help me get up and help me to be careful next time to not fall for that same trick again prayer is about conflict here in Paul's letter we're not just talking about intimacy and prayer I want you to get this he's not just talking about intimacy with God in prayer which is very important and very key in prayer hear me say that okay this is conflict prayer spiritual warfare this is conflict prayer this is wartime prayer this is prayer in the evil day that you might stand in the evil day this is evil day praying this is prayer and keep in mind something you gotta remember read Pilgrim's

Progress again folks please do that read it again if you haven't if you've read it or haven't read it go back and read it oh my my goodness Bunyan was brilliant God used him prayer prayer prayer reminds us that when we fall into the valley of humiliation or the valley of the shadow of death which come back to back in Pilgrim by the way when you fall into those valleys it reminds us that you may go from trial to trial to trial you ever feel like that maybe some that's where you are right now you're going from trial to trial to trial you don't need five second prayer before breakfast you're going from trial to trial to trial you don't need bedtime prayer with the kids alone you're in a fight and if you're not you will be you need wartime communication you need conflict prayer you need close air support you need to y'all the only ones live in walking in warfare everyone else is having a good life you are in a battle

I'm just I'm just you know you say we're in it and we we prayer taps us into the Lord's strength and might be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power therefore pray you see it you see how it's connected it's all connecting the dots there if we truly are relying on the work of Christ and his armor it is only because we have learned to pray prayer as it were fills up the armor and Christians and churches help us help us Lord they're not seriously continuously praying no matter how doctrinally sound we are no matter how involved in community we are these churches will fail eventually because we only stand in God's armor through prayer prayer keeps us coming back to God for his armor prayer is like running into the armory of heaven to make sure we have the equipment we need for spiritual fights isn't that cool I love that there was a there was a building

Sandy remembers there was a building on Temple University's campus called the armory and it was huge and the temple hadn't really done much with that building we were using it for archery classes I took one of those courses and I mean it was this big vast building it was so big and vast we were shooting arrows in there man and she's saying keep it low that's how high the ceiling was and we were scrubs we didn't know what we were doing I shot my finger one time that's another story you know so we're in there it was huge but it was called the armory at one time I'm supposed it was a place that they kept weaponry it was huge God's armory is huge he's got enough spiritual weapons and spiritual bombs and spiritual torpedoes and spiritual whatever you need lock and load saints in the armory of God not at your armory at home okay amen just make sure we're clear because they're watching online not trying to form a Christian militia and family this is the key witness of the

[32 : 55] American church it's one of our key witness weaknesses the prayer meeting has gone the way of the dodo bird the way of the dinosaur we're too busy we're all you know what I'm saying here's what kills me every year we're all upset about removing prayer from schools every year you know you hear somebody complain about removing prayer from schools that's not the problem that's never been the problem the problem is prayerless churches and prayerless Christians by the way you do know if we ever get prayer back in school it won't it cannot legally be just Christian we'll have to open the door for Hindu prayer Muslim prayer Wiccan prayer we you do know that's against the law in our country for us to legalize only

Christian prayer what are we asking for saints this is where we need to pray and in your homes in our small groups this is where the prayer needs to be we don't we really don't need prayer in schools we need prayer here among the people of God that's going to affect the school y'all don't believe me oh my goodness let's try it let's see what happens come on let's humor me we have to stop making excuses for not praying well we we don't have prayer in our small group because we got we got to eat food and we got child care and we got pastor come on I mean listen come on let me toss them out to you I'm gonna give you some excuses here we go I've made some of myself why don't we pray together more often well we don't like the format oh we don't feel comfortable praying out loud

I wrote them down it's boring that's why these excuses we don't come to prayer we don't gather for prayer we don't have time see if it's on Sunday see Sunday I gotta get ready for Monday or if it's in our small groups well we don't have time because we gotta do all these other things we don't have time to pray we gotta do all these other things the truth the truth is we prefer to vote rather than pray I prefer to study rather than pray we prefer to march and protest rather than pray we prefer to start ministries rather than pray we prefer to worry and complain rather than pray we talk and teach about how the gospel is to transform communities and cultures and we're all excited about that and yet we don't pray do you understand you ain't transforming nothing you and I will transform nothing if we don't give ourselves a prayer

I don't care how many com div courses you took at covenant college if you don't learn to pray we should do those other things except worry and complain of course we should do all those other things I just mentioned but we must saturate our actions with prayer family saturate everything you do raising your children pray over them can I encourage you parents if you go in your children's bedrooms and lay hands on their little heads and pray for them at night gather the family together pray for them I don't you're teenagers I don't care I go shut up come here I'm joking on that one grab them come here

I love you Lord bless them don't be afraid to pray for your teenagers don't be afraid moms and dads to sit there at the table and say okay I know you're busy but you're not leaving this house until we pray don't be afraid to do that oh we're pushing them away yeah prayers pushing them away you're pushing them real far maybe you're pushing them into the arms of God by praying for them push them push them family we shouldn't do any ministry without prayer we shouldn't feed the hungry without prayer we shouldn't pay anybody's electric bill without prayer we shouldn't dig wells without prayer we shouldn't do trauma ministry without prayer we shouldn't do community development or medical missions without prayer we shouldn't talk about racism without prayer prayer we shouldn't mentor or tutor without prayer we shouldn't do

[38 : 25] ESL without prayer we shouldn't preach without prayer we shouldn't evangelize without prayer we shouldn't approach this city and calling upon this city to do justice and mercy without prayer don't raise your children without prayer so prayer by way of introduction Paul says prayer is essential to war I said all that just emphasize what Paul is saying here so don't go out of here saying I feel guilty can't make me feel so guilty and bad no that's not my goal it's to wake us up it's to wake us up to what Paul is saying here you gotta feel the gravity of it the armor of God is the work of Christ it's the work of

Christ nothing can stand against it but then Paul says for us to depend on it we've got to learn to pray so listen it's essential for living it's essential for doing the Christian life we've got to get over whatever it is that's keeping us in my office and study so much and not pray is it because my sermon is where I get my kudos so therefore I'm gonna put all my effort into the thing that gets me kudos rather than prayer which gets me no kudos you don't even see me praying but my heavenly father does I want to tell you family I want kudos from Jesus I want kudos from Jesus I want the well done if none of you say well done

I want to hear him say it more than anything else help me to pray may God help you to pray may God help us to pray and do battle against the forces of darkness on our knees there's victory his victory is there for us father in the name of Jesus teach us to pray Paul gave so much time to prayer in this letter and then at the end here I know he did this because you led him to because you are calling the church to pray father at this time in our history oh God we are facing so many battles against the church against Christians against the truth so many battles or raging all around us Lord even within the church we are being pulled and pushed and we

Lord teach us to pray we can't win so many people are just giving up it's so easy to give up it's so easy just walk away Lord keep us from that by teaching us to pray and depend upon the armor of God and love one another help us Lord forgive us for our failure in Jesus name