

The Believer's Weapon of Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

“Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.”

There are all kinds of prayer, there is a prayer to fit each particular situation or condition. There is public prayer; private prayer; individual prayer; corporate prayer; long prayers; short prayers; standing prayers; sitting down prayers; laying on your face prayers; while you walk prayers; the prayer of faith; the prayer of petition; the prayer of intercession; the prayer of submission; the prayer of repentance.

It is clear from Paul's writings under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Prayer is vital for the believer to be successful in spiritual warfare. In fact, the believer hasn't even begun to fight until he learns to pray. Prayer is not simply an afterthought to the believer's arsenal of spiritual weapons, prayer is in fact the way that the believer implements his spiritual weapons against the enemy.

It is through faith that we appropriate our armor and our spiritual weapons, but it through prayer that they are implemented (put into action). For many Christians prayer is their last resort (when all else fails pray). For others it is only a way of getting things from God (getting their needs met).

But for these who have understood the armor of God and it's purpose, prayer becomes a mighty weapon in itself. E. M. Bounds says, “Prayer is the great, universal force to advance God's cause; not to pray is a denial of God, a denial of his existence, a denial of his nature and a denial of his purposes toward mankind.” He farther says, “Praying men are the only men in which the Holy Spirit dwells, for the Holy Spirit and prayer go hand-in-hand. The Holy Spirit never descends upon prayerless men. He never fills them, he never empowers them. There is

nothing whatever in common between the Spirit of God and men who do not pray. The Spirit dwells only in a prayer atmosphere.”

It was when Jesus came up out of the water praying that the Holy Spirit came upon him. Acts 1:14 tells us that it was in a prayer meeting that the new testament *Church* was birthed, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” Acts 6:4 says it was through prayer the *gospel* was propagated, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” **It was through prayer that the gentile outcasts were brought into the fellowship of the inheritance of the saints.** Acts 10:30 tells us that *Cornelius* was praying in his house and an angel appeared to him and told him to send for Peter. Acts 12:5 tells us that while *Peter* was locked away in prison the early Christians were praying and an angel opened the gate and he walked away free. **Acts 16 tells us that as Paul prayed he received a vision to go to Troas to preach the gospel.** And the beat goes on and we are in the Kingdom today. **But what happens from this point on is left up to our prayers.**

In our last study of 1 Timothy we looked at God's instructions for us as individual *believers* to pray, and in tonight's study we are going to look at the instructions for the *Church* as a whole to pray.

It is reported that Mary, Queen of Scots, once said, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than I fear all the armies on the face of the earth.” That was probably the last time anyone feared they prayers of the church.

The truth of the matter is the world does not fear the church it barely tolerates it. Generally, the world perceives the church as no longer a player in world affairs, only an observer, a “*yesman*” for the pagan leaders of Western culture, a culture that has long since abandoned Christian presuppositions as a serious voice in shaping the values of modern society. The church is a quaint relic of the past that lends a certain charm to the neighborhood, a holdover from bygone days, big but harmless, like a beached whale.

If there is to be any real hope for a spiritual awakening in America, the Church must recapture its distinctiveness. We must learn to act instead of react and stop letting the world set the agenda. The sad truth of the matter is that by in large the church has lost our influence for Christ in the world. The more the church *looks* like the world, *talks* like the world or *operates* like the world, the less influence we have for the cause of Christ in the world.

So in 1 Timothy 2:8 Paul makes this statement, “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

One of the great things about the Word of God is that it not only tells us what we *should* do, it also tells us *how* to do it. There are at least four things that we are told here about praying. And in this study, we will look at how the church should pray.

First of all, we are told that we are to pray *everywhere*. In verse 1 Paul exhorts believers to pray for “**everyone**” kings, rulers, those in authority; and now in verse 8 he admonishes men to “**pray everywhere.**”

The Word of God makes it very clear that prayer is universal, that is, we are to pray for *all* people rulers, leaders, the mighty, and the weak. We are to pray for Christians to walk in fellowship, and for unbelievers to be converted. We are to pray everywhere, under any and all circumstances.

A great example of this is seen in Acts 3:18, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, Look at us. So he gave them his attention, expecting to

receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and anklebones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God.” **Because Peter and John were walking under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they were able to minister under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.** Child of God, don't look for something in a crisis that you don't have in your daily walk!

When the people saw the former cripple walking, leaping and praising God, they were drawn to Peter and John, and Peter seized the opportunity to preach Christ to them. He told the people that Jesus had been crucified, had been raised from the grave, and was truly both Lord and Christ. **And many believed.**

Folks, never underestimate the power of miracles. God has always used miracles to get the attention of the multitudes. **And I want you to know that today; God is still in the miracleworking business!!**

Second, we are told to pray *lifting up holy hands*. In verse 8 he says, “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands...” Now “lifting up holy hands” was a custom practiced in the early church. **It revealed the dedication in the lives of those praying and praising God.** This truth is seen in Psalm 63:14, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.” Psalm 134:1-3 says, "Behold, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who by night stand in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!" **And then in Psalm 141:2 David ties the lifting up of hands with prayer,** "Let my prayer be set before You as

incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

Now there are those who lift up their hands in services today, and they are sometimes criticized for it. Child of God, one of the ways that we have to praise the Lord is to "lift up holy hands" to Him!

The lifting up of one's hand is a universal sign of surrender. Child of God, the time has, come, and long past, that we need to surrender our lives to the divine and sovereign will of God!

Third, we are to pray without wrath. Look again at what Paul says in verse 8, "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath..."

The problem of Jesus' day is still a problem is our day! Again and again Jesus stressed the fact that we cannot hope to receive the forgiveness of God as long as we hoard an unforgiving and bitter spirit toward our fellowman. He said in Matthew 6:15, "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Spiritual giants have become spiritual weaklings because they have let some petty quarrel or disagreement develop into bitterness and malice.

Child of God, you cannot come in prayer with anger in your heart, or a bitter spirit, but with all your sins confessed, as seen in Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Before there is any power in our praying, there must be some "agreeing with God" as to what is sin in our lives!

Four, we are to pray without doubting. Look again at verse 8, "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

When we come to God in prayer, we are to come in faith. As James taught us about praying, he says in James 1:6, "But let him ask in faith, not wavering." Jesus told us in Mark 11:23-24 that great truth concerning prayer and faith, "For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Listen to me very carefully, before a man can be healed, he must believe that he can be healed. Before a man can be forgiven, he must believe that he can be forgiven. Before a man can have revival in his heart, he must believe that he can have a revival. In other words, we must take our prayers to God in the complete confidence that God is the God who hears and answers prayers!

The church today has far more power than it knows. God has made His Holy Spirit available to every child of God, and our greatest weapon is the faithful prayers of faith offered to a God of miracles!

In the recorded history of the church, there has never been a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in revival that did not begin in the persistent, prevailing prayers of desperate people. Revival has never come because men placed it on the church calendar. It has come because God placed it in their hearts!