

Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 31

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: **“The Bond Between Believers”**

Ephesians 6:18-24 ~ October 30, 2011

OBJECTIVE: To help believers apply the power of God in their life.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Fall Festival TKU's
- Chili cook-off 1st place
- Annual Business meeting after 2nd service
- All-Church work day – Nov. 12th

Today is our final message in Ephesians... and next Sunday we'll begin looking at some Biblical heroes and zeros – and life lessons we can learn from the Biblical account of their life.

Paul has been encouraging us to fight the spiritual battle we are in with the armor / weapons of God. He has commanded us to “put on” the full armor of God, and to “stand firm”.

When soldiers go through the rigors and horrors of battle, they forge a bond that only they can understand and appreciate. The constant threat of death and destruction, and knowing that the skill and alertness of your fellow soldiers is what holds your life in the balance, is what forges this bond.

Those of us who are in a *spiritual* battle and are fighting for the cause and reputation of Christ, we also have a bond with other believers. It's a bond that those outside of the faith cannot fully grasp or appreciate.

This bond is formed through our common faith in Christ and our attempts to live a God honoring life. And part of what seals that bond is our prayer for one another.

At the close of his letter to the church in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul gives some final instruction regarding prayer.

Don't think that since I'm the Pastor, and I'm preaching this message, that I have a perfect prayer life. A vibrant prayer life is a challenge for me and I struggle with dedicating blocks of time for extended prayer. So, as I preach this message today, I'm preaching to myself as much as I'm preaching to you!

I'm thankful to God that I have taken some steps forward over the past year in my prayer life, but I have many miles to travel on this road.

Now let's move our thoughts to today's passage...

Weapon #7: Prayer vs. 18-20

Read vs. 18

Whenever you see something repeated in a passage of Scripture, it should cause you to take notice...and when something is repeated multiple times in the same verse, then pay attention! Paul repeats the word "all" 4x in vs. 18

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions"

1. Pray when the Spirit *prompts* you

'occasions' = *kairo* – which means: *opportunity, time, season*
Some people have a specific time of day that they pray. That is great – something to be commended. But Paul is trying to help us understand that our prayers should not be **limited** to a specific day of the week – or a specific time of day, but whenever the occasion arises. When the Spirit brings a person or a situation to your mind, then you should pray for them.

You don't need to stop what you're doing to pray – simply pray for them as you go about your day. Two of the times I pray is when I'm running and when I'm working in the yard. One of the meanings of *kairo* is when something has “*come to a head*” or when it's a “*favorable moment*”. We need to be open to the Spirit's leading (“...in the Spirit”) and pray for the need before us.

“...with **all** kinds of prayers and requests.”

2. Pray 'fresh' prayers

Your prayers should be more than memorized recitations to God. We need to be mentally engaged in our prayers, not simply going through the motions of prayer or repeating ritualistic sayings.

“prayers” is an '*umbrella*' term that encompasses all kinds of prayer.

Some of you may use the acronym ACTS to help you pray.

A= Adoration – first part of prayer is to praise God for who He is and what He has done in history and in your life.

C= Confession – the next part of prayer is to confess your sins to God.

T= Thanksgiving – Thank God for all His provision in your life.

S= Supplication – This is when we bring our needs and wants before the Lord.

This 'formula' or template helps prevent our prayers from simply being a list of wants/needs we bring to God. It helps us pray in a way that is more pleasing to God and honors Him as our Lord and Savior, not a 'genie' God.

“Requests” is a term that is more narrow than “prayers”. “Requests” is a form of prayer that refers to the actual needs and wants we bring before the Lord.

So, Paul is helping to expand our prayers with these two words. Don't just bring your requests to Him, but Adore Him, confess your sins, and give Him thanks in addition to bringing your needs before Him. Remember, prayer is our primary way

of communicating with God – so have a conversation with Him...don't just list your demands.

3. Pray with *stamina*

“...and *always* keep on praying”

Have you ever prayed for something but God hasn't answered your prayer yet?

Are you discouraged by what seems to be unanswered prayers? It's tempting to give-up on certain prayers, thinking that it's a waste of time to keep praying for the same thing over many years. I believe Paul is encouraging us to continue praying...to not get discouraged or to give-up on certain requests.

Have you been praying for your son/daughter to commit their life fully to Christ? Keep on praying.

Have you been praying for years that a family member or friend would put their faith in Christ? Keep on praying.

Have you been praying that God would heal you? Keep praying.

Only one thing will close the ears of God towards your prayers...when you are unrepentant in your sin.

Psalm 66:18 “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”

But when your heart is clean because you have confessed and repented of your sin, then God hears every word!

God always answers our prayers, but it's not always the answer we want, nor is it usually according to our timeline. Don't be discouraged by this...He is the sovereign, good, all-wise, all-knowing God of the universe, so if your prayer is not answered

how and when you had hoped, then know that God has a better plan – a plan that you must trust.

4. Pray for all believers

“...for *all* the saints.”

That a pretty big list! Why is this important? Paul’s direction here is probably to keep our prayer life from being selfish and to help us consider and value the needs of others.

Praying for Christians who are persecuted in other countries, praying for new believers in foreign lands, praying for our missionaries around the world who are spreading the Gospel through word and deed are a few ways we can pray for believers we never meet.

But our tendency is to pray about our own life because it’s so much easier to think about our own needs and wants.

Praying for all the saints also pulls us into relationship with other believers (more on this in a few minutes).

Prayer sustains and encourages leadership vs. 19-20

Read vs. 19-20

You need to know how I covet your prayers for me and my family – and how your encouragement is so precious to us!

Clergy Appreciation Month is October – and I want to thank those of you who have expressed your appreciation to me and my family.

Illus. Encouragement Flags – April 10, 2011 – when we came home from church on a Sunday in April, we turned onto our street and saw

all these fluorescent pink landscape flags in our front yard. However, when we got up close to them, we noticed that on each flag was written a unique and encouraging message about the church – and about my ministry. What a great boost for me as the pastor! I don't know who did this...but to whoever did this...THANK YOU!!!!

Myself...Pastor Scott...Pastor Joseph...the church boards, and all the other leaders and teachers in the church – we need your prayers – and we need your encouragement.

Notice what Paul asked for...and more importantly what he didn't ask for.

He asked for clarity and boldness in presenting the Gospel. He was under house arrest...chained to a Roman soldier all day – and soon he would be called before Caesar (Nero) to present his case. Nero took great delight in torturing and killing Christians, so Satan was probably tempting Paul to keep quiet...and don't say anything that will cause any waves...especially something that would mention Nero's sin and his need for a Savior. Paul's request was that fear would not prevent him from sharing the Gospel.

He didn't ask for his freedom.

He didn't ask for better health or comfort.

Please encourage your leaders...and pray that our lives would reflect the righteousness of Christ...pray our lives will bring honor to God...pray that we would be bold and

gracious as we speak the truth, and that we would clearly share the Gospel.

The fraternity of faith vs. 21-24

In the interest of gender fairness: The sorority of your salvation!

Read vs. 21-24

God designed you for relationships in the church. vs. 21-22

Tychicus (Tī-kī-kiss) was not only a courier for Paul, carrying his letters to the various churches in the region, but he was one of Paul's dear friends. Tychicus was a spiritual partner with Paul and a dear friend – note that Paul calls him a “dear brother” (beloved – NASB) and a “faithful servant in the Lord” (faithful minister – NASB)

Tychicus' character and his faith was the platform that his relationship with the Apostle was built. None of us are called to live the Christian life in isolation. If a soldier tries to function on the battlefield alone, he will be killed by the enemy. It's been said that “*Satan watches for those vessels that sail without a convoy.*” (Quote by George Swinnock, Puritan pastor, 1627-1673)

Read article by Noel Piper

God's truth and grace is our common bond. vs. 23-24

Paul closes the letter by repeating some of themes he had written about throughout.

Our peace in Christ...leads to peace with other believers.

Our love from God...leads to our love for others.
Our faith...we are chosen by God for faith (*vs. 23 - notice: "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"*) which leads us to value other believers.
Grace from God...motivates us to extended grace to others.

Application

Commit yourself to prayer

Prayer Gathering - First Sunday of the month – 6 p.m.

E-mail prayer chain

Share the Gospel with boldness and clarity

Oikos!

Close in prayer