

And pray. A lot.

REVIEW: Ephesians 6:10-17 ESV

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

→ THREE "HAVINGS"

14 HAVING FASTENED on the belt of truth, [Piece #1] and HAVING PUT ON the breastplate of righteousness, [Piece #2]

15 and, as shoes for your feet, HAVING PUT ON the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [Piece #3]

→ THREE "TAKES"

16 In all circumstances TAKE UP the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [Piece #4]

17 and TAKE the helmet of salvation, [Piece #5] and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [Piece #6]

Q. THEN WHAT? **A.** THEN WE WILL BE: **10** ... strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

AND SO WE WILL BE ABLE: **11** to stand against the schemes of the devil. AND TO: **12** ... wrestle against ... the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. The Result? **SO THAT WE:** **13** ... may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Q. AND THEN WHAT? (And now what ?...) "Wholly armed"--`all dressed up`--and what do we do? **A: WE PRAY!**

Ephesians 6:18 ESV ... 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

A. WE PRAY A LOT! Notice the apostle's use of the word "all." [Four times in this one verse!]

Ephesians 6:18 ESV ... praying AT ALL TIMES in the Spirit, WITH ALL PRAYER and supplication. To that end keep alert WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE, making supplication FOR ALL SAINTS

So to Paul the apostle, praying is **NOT A SMALL IDEA**. It's not just a suggestion. Not a minor addition. Not a tweak. To the apostle Paul, praying is **A BIG DEAL**: to every "soldier of Christ" who has been armed with the armour of God. This is **PAUL'S BIG IDEA**: The whole armour of God, all six pieces, enables us "to stand against the schemes of the devil" AND TO "wrestle against ... the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." -- AND **ENABLES US TO PRAY. A LOT!**

And a new question comes to mind.

Q. Why? Why does God mean us for us stand there, praying. *Why is prayer given such a priority?*

My intention this morning to show you 3 answers to this question: THREE REASONS WHY GOD CALLS US TO PRAY But first, let's take a quick look at how NOT to think about this:

THREE FALSE REASONS WHY GOD CALLS US TO PRAY (from A.W. Pink's, "The Sovereignty of God")

1. God does NOT call us to pray because he needs to be informed.

Matthew 6:7,8 ESV And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

2. God does NOT call us to pray because he needs to be motivated.

1 John 4:16,19 ESV God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him ... We love because he first loved us.

3. God does NOT call us to pray because he needs to be permitted.

Psalms 135:5,6 ESV For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.



John Wesley (1703-1791), one of the founders of the Methodist churches, and in a number of ways quite a great man of God, once famously said, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

With all due respect, I think he was wrong about this. Quite wrong!

e.g. God made the world without being asked to. **There is such a thing as saying too much about prayer.**

Sometimes, in making much of prayer, we make too little of God.

So then, why DOES God make a big deal of prayer? Why IS prayer the thing we are specifically told to do as we stand there, fully protected with this armour that we have borrowed from God?

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THREE TRUE REASONS WHY GOD CALLS US TO PRAY

1. Prayer gets us and keeps us close to God.

Psalm 62:8 ESV Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.



C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) wrote these words of the subject of feeling and being distant from God. Two causes: “*the neglect of prayer*” and “*idolatry*”: *A neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline... The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart. He must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of His presence from a cold, wandering heart.*

→ **Having on** and **keeping on** and **taking up the armour of God** requires us to be close, and remain close to God: God IS the truth (belt), God IS our righteousness (breastplate), God IS the gospel and our shield and our salvation. **And when we are this close to God, all dressed up in his own armour, we can pray “IN THE SPIRIT.”**

2. Prayer gets us and keeps us close to one another.

Jude pointed out in our study of the shield of faith that the Roman soldiers’ shields **interlocked**: *we need each other!* And praying together is one of the reasons we need each other, and one of the ways we attain and maintain closeness.

Acts 1:14 ESV All these **with one accord** were devoting themselves to prayer, **together** with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

3. Prayer is God’s way of involving us in the work that only he can do.

Prayer is how God grants us the privilege of “*causality*.” The great honour of participating in his supernatural work.

We are the creatures God has made IN HIS OWN IMAGE. The Maker of heaven and earth calls us to make things.

Genesis 1:28 “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

WE KNOW THIS!

→ **We know that a baby is a great work of God**, but GOD GIVES A MAN AND A WOMAN THE PRIVILEGE OF “MAKING A BABY.”

→ **We know that a toddler learning to speak a language is a great work of God**, but GOD GIVES PEOPLE THE PRIVILEGE OF TEACHING THE TODDLER TO SPEAK. (“Hi Dad. How did Prayer Meeting went? I mean, “how did it go”?)

→ **We know that “spiritual birth,”** being “born again,” becoming a believer in Christ, a Christian, **is a great work of God.**

But again, GOD GIVES US THE PRIVILEGE OF COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL, OF DELIVERING THE GOOD NEWS, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. And all the while, **God doesn’t have to But he chooses to!**

+ Think of God creating ADAM (no biological parents at all) AND EVE (from the body of a man, no woman involved) and CHRIST (in the body of a woman, but no biological father.)

+ And it seems God didn’t use ANYONE to save the apostle Paul. Christ did it ALL BY HIMSELF.

BUT NORMALLY, God uses ordinary people. He gives us ways to make things: amazing things like babies, language-speakers and believers in Christ.

And so it is with prayer. Generally, God is pleased to involve his people in the great works that he is doing.

And he calls us to pray about things, so as to be involved in the things he alone can do!

Q. SO THEN, WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT PRAYER? (A. WE SHOULD PRAY. A LOT!)

Ephesians 6:18 ESV ... 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...

a) We should ask God and trust God to teach us to pray.

Luke 11:1 ESV Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

Ephesians 6:18 ESV ... praying at all times in the Spirit...

b) We should develop a habit of ongoing, unceasing prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 ESV ... pray without ceasing... And it should be **more urgent** than just a chat...



John Piper (1946-): The number one reason why prayer malfunctions in the hands of believers is that they try to turn a wartime walkie-talkie into a domestic intercom... They try to rig it up as an intercom in their cushy houses and cabins and boats and cars: not to call in fire power for conflict with a mortal enemy, but to ask the maid to bring another pillow to the den.

c) We should develop a daily “prayer closet” practice and join a weekly prayer group.

NEXT SUNDAY: **September 8th, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

LAUNCH!

AND THEN: **September 15th, 9:15 & 11:00 a.m.**

New series: **Strong Together! Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

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