

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Ephesians 6

Once again, we are continuing and this morning, we will also be concluding our verse-by-verse study through this very powerful and practical letter that the Apostle Paul sends to the saints in Ephesus and by extension to you and me – about who we are and what we are in Christ.

About the spiritual riches we have in Christ – right now.

That salvation is all God's work – we were spiritually dead apart from Christ

By grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone

He has set us apart.

That as believers, we have been empowered, we have been enabled to do what God has called us to do.

That as believers, He is continuing to do a work in us and through us – and He will finish the work.

He has brought us together, and He is fitting us together snugly – He is smoothing out those rough edges, He is putting brothers and sisters in our lives so that we may submit to one another and serve one another and love one another.

We are to walk in His wisdom, His love, His light, His strength

We are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might – not our own – not our flesh.

We are to live spirit filled lives – day by day

We have been commanded to put on the whole armor of God, we are commanded to leave it on – so that we may be to stand against the wiles of the devil.

We stand on our firm foundation – in Christ.

He gives us hope

He gives us courage

In Him we find strength

In Him we find confidence

And so – we stand

I was reminded - Last Sunday – in our Spanish study – we looked at Jesus' encounter with Jairus – he is the religious ruler who comes to Jesus because his daughter, his only daughter was dying – he comes to Jesus and invites Jesus to his house – and as they draw closer to his house, a servant approaches and tells him that his daughter is dead.

In Mark's account we find the following - **[Mar 5:36 NKJV] 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."**

In other words – stand!!!!

It is almost like Jesus grabbed his hands and said –

Plant your feet, trust in something greater, don't run away, and believe.

And if there was a message to you and I this morning – if there was a message for the church at large – this is it.

No matter our circumstances, no matter what we are facing, no matter the pain – do not fear. Believe!

Believe the fulness of His word

Believe the fulness of His power

Believer the fulness of His grace

So we stand, fully clothed in Christ – He is our armor

This morning, Paul is going to finish his letter – by providing us with the first and most important action of a fully clothed soldier.

Let's pray...

Read Text –

Not long before he went to be with the Lord, Billy Graham was asked if he had any regrets in his life –

Was there something that he would do differently in life –

And his response might surprise us....

He said – there were two things.

1. Spending more time in the Word – sword of the Spirit. We looked at it last week.
2. Spending more time in prayer.

Once again, this was Billy Graham –

Who, by God's grace and empowering, shared the gospel around the world to millions

Billy wished he would have prayed more

Billy found his prayer life lacking

You see loved ones –

The truth is – that most believers feel like they don't quite have prayer figured out.

Most of us have moments where we're not sure we're doing it properly - like seeing some of those machines at the gym and wondering how they work.

We try our best but suspect we used the wrong muscles altogether.

That is our prayer life

We all know that we don't pray enough

We all know we come up short in our prayer life

But – we should be encouraged this morning

Because God offers us comfort

The Bible meets us right where we are and gives us what we need

You see, it's not a secret to God that we struggle in prayer.

And why shouldn't we?

It is a heavenly activity!

How could we be masters of prayer without God's assistance and revelation?

We can't

Paul in Romans 8:26 - For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought

The disciples themselves approached Jesus and said, "We don't know how to pray.

Can You teach us?"

Prayer is our ammunition for the battle

Prayer is where we get our orders for the battle

And here is the thing – without fervent effectual prayers, we will not be able to fight effectively.

We will not be able to preach persuasively

We will not be able to communicate convincingly

We will find it difficult to minister peace or love or grace

Let's look at our text -

[Eph 6:18-24 NKJV] 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Here in verse 18 – Paul lays four “alls” of prayer.

The Christian – begins the battle on his or her knees and the Christian ends the battle on his or her knees.

What are the four alls?

1. We are to pray at all time – praying always – that means that we are to pray on a regular basis and on a consistent basis.
2. With all prayer and supplication – that means we pray thing generally and we pray things specifically.

3. With all perseverance – because good soldiers stay alert. Good soldiers don't abandon the mission.
4. With all supplication for all the saints – since God's people are united in one body – we are to pray for each other – always.

The U.S. Marine Corps' motto is Always Faithful.

Our Coast Guard's motto is Always Ready.

Paul would say the Christian's motto is Always Praying.

Perhaps this is one reason why we're intimidated by prayer.

We hear these phrases - pray at all times, pray without ceasing.

Paul assumes that all of us can pray in all times and circumstances.

Every one of us has the same access.

Prayer is our first defense

When a crisis happens – instead of trying to fix it ourselves, because that is our knee jerk reaction. I gotta fix this.

No – we press into Him – we ask Him – we pray

The Bible over and over shows the importance of praying before the battle.

David was a good example of that.

We see God's people praying during the battle. Joshua did.

There is prayer after the battle. The apostles, having faced serious spiritual warfare, gathered to pray in Acts 4.

The Bible shows us prayer in caves and prisons, in houses and mountains, in the wilderness and in palaces, in the church and in courts, in joy and in crisis. There is no time, place, or circumstance where prayer isn't a benefit to us.

The Scriptures present it almost like spiritual breathing - happening all the time, naturally, in every situation.

Prayer is an attitude

It is a temperament – that I can't but He can

Prayer is a position of the heart

It is a posture of who we are on a regular basis.

There are times when we might be having a conversation with one another – or reading a story online about someone or watching something – and in the back of our mind we understand that we need to pray for that individual or those individuals or those circumstances because things are happening in their lives that are going to require a supernatural intervention.

We are to do it with perseverance – we are to be persistent

It means we don't give up – and it is easy to give up

Especially when it seems that we might be praying for a circumstance or a loved one and nothing seems to change.

Paul says – don't give up praying

And Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount - tells His disciples and us the same thing

[Mat 7:7 NKJV] 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Jesus is saying our prayers are to grow in intensity

Ask implies that we know and that we are aware of our need. The moment that my daughters ask me something – it is a concession that they need something from me.

We ask because we need something -

When we ask – we humble ourselves – because when we ask, we believe the person we ask has an answer or resources to our need.

Seek involves asking – but it adds action to the request. It adds effort. It adds looking

Then comes knocking – it involves asking, it involves seeking – but it also insists on persevering. It is the person who knocks and keeps on knocking until he or she gets an answer.

Remember, we are in a battle

And the person who perseveres in prayer is going to receive the answer and they are going to trust God.

[Jer 33:3 NKJV] 3 ‘Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’

When we are not hearing something we need to go to Jer 33:3

And we are to pray – “I know Lord – you said, to ask, seek and knock – You said that you will answer me – that You would show me great and mighty things”

And we are to trust Him

We are to pray for all our brothers and sisters – not just with our own family – not just within our fellowship – all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We pray for the immature Christian and the mature Christian – because nobody ever outgrows the need for prayer

We all can use prayer

No one ever becomes immune to the enemy’s fiery darts

And with the protection we all need a united, not a divided defense.

We are to be watchful

We are to stay awake

Remember, it was the disciples failure to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane that led to them abandoning Jesus when the religious rulers came to arrest Jesus

It was their failure to pray that led Peter to resort to the flesh in fighting spiritual battles as he took out his sword and cut Malchus's ear off.

19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Remember the context in which Paul writes this letter – he is prison.

Chained to a Roman soldier

Notice, he doesn't say – pray for me because I am in jail

He doesn't say – pray for me because I don't get to eat every day or I don't get water on a regular basis

There's so much to love about this verse.

First, even though these Ephesians were novices, even though some of them were barely out of paganism, even though none of them were apostles or mature in the faith, Paul wanted their prayers.

Paul practice what he preached.

He's talking about unity, about the value of prayer, and we see earlier in the book he prays for them.

Now he says, "How about you pray for me?"

He wasn't too proud to ask for prayer. He knew he needed it.

Paul the Apostle! A man who spoke to Jesus face-to-face.

Author of much of the New Testament.

The church planter

That guy says, "I need your prayer so that I won't be too afraid to do what God has called me to do. Your prayers clear obstacles for me."

And that reveals another beautiful thing from this verse.

Paul was the smartest guy in the room.

Paul was the most spiritual guy in the room.

The mysteries of God were revealed to him. And yet, he did not rely on his intellect as he served God.

He relied on the Spirit, working through his mind and experience and everything else, but it was the Spirit working in him.

Paul asked that they pray he would be able to serve God with boldness.

We should never be shy to ask for prayer, but God help us to be mature enough to recognize what we should ask for.

To know that, we need to be in tune with the Spirit, in harmony with the Word.

Because that is exactly what Paul did.

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

“Pray that I might be the way I should be.”

That is what Paul is saying here

That even in chains

Even as death is around the corner

He is asking for prayers so that he may body continue to preach the gospel

Even to those who where chained to him

Even to those in Rome who hated Christian and persecuted Christians and mocked God

What an amazing reminder of God's tender grace. He keeps sending emissaries to His enemies to offer them peace, to offer them forgiveness, to offer them life everlasting.

Paul gave the Ephesians instruction on prayer and then asks them to get right to it. He did not condemn them for not being masters of prayer.

He invited them to enjoy it, grow in it, and wield it.

To recognize how essential it is, but also revealing what a powerful, accessible gift it is.

21 But that you also may know my affairs [and] how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; 22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and [that] he may comfort your hearts.

Tychicus was Paul's faithful friend and beloved brother

Many people believe that it was Tychicus who pens these letters as Paul spoke them.

Tychicus personally hand delivers this letter to the church in Ephesus and he delivers the letter to the church in Philippi and to Philemon and others

Remember: Most of the recipients of this letter didn't know Paul personally.

Tychicus could be a witness.

He could tell them that Paul wasn't faking.

That even though Paul was in chains -

God was fulfilling His promises.

Paul wanted the Ephesians to know these things. He said, "I'm sending Tychicus so that you may be informed."

This has been a major theme of the letter - that God's people understand and grow in knowledge, and apprehend more and more of the truth of God and the power of God for day-to-day living.

God wants the saint to be informed.

Informed of His truth.

Sharing in His wisdom.

Growing in our understanding of His heart and His work and our place in it.

23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What God wants for His people is peace and love and growing faith. God does not want us to spend our lives full of fear or confusion.

He doesn't want us to waste our days in constant aggravation or discontent.

He offers us peace and calls us to it.

Because peace makes possible the reality of the gospel

We get to have peace because Jesus brings it

The enemy offers no peace

We can't negotiate with the enemy

24 Grace [be] with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Paul offers here a final prayer –

Grace

As believer – we must grasp that....

All of the victory and the peace and the love and the spiritual strength and the unity was possible because of God's grace and only by God's grace.

A few verses earlier, Paul spoke of the armor of God.

We remember the images of the battles coming our way.

We've heard about our everlasting inheritance and our place in God's eternal, cosmic work.

We've seen how much God loves us and His affection for us.

It's all from His grace.

God loves us and delights to pour His favor and His kindness into us so we can experience life more abundantly.

This was Paul's closing prayer for these precious people: That they would grow and flow with God's grace as their love for Christ endured, day after day.

Now – fast forward 30-35 years

A new letter is delivered to the saint in Ephesus

This time it is not a letter that Tychicus carries to them

This time it is Jesus that delivers to them. Revelation 2

There, the Lord commends the church at Ephesus for their good works and their unwillingness to tolerate evil people.

They had good doctrine.

They had good programs.

They endured hardships and had not grown weary in doing Christian things. But they no longer loved the Lord.

The Ephesians teach us that loving God isn't just about serving. Serving is part of it.

Enduring is

part of it.

Defending what we believe is part of it.

Suffering patiently is part of it.

But, at the base level, our hearts must belong to the Lord, personally, passionately, affectionately.

Their love had faded.

And, from what we can tell, it faded imperceptibly over time.

But, one day, it was gone.

And so, the Lord wrote them a very loving, but very direct letter, urging them to return to that love they once had.

If it could happen to this church, it could happen to any church.

And so, no matter what lies ahead, our personal and corporate focus should be to walk with the Lord in love.

Love for Him.

Love for His truth. Love for His leading. Love for His people. As we love God, His grace flows in us.

And when grace is operating in our lives and in our midst, we see what's possible.

It's been God's plan all along for all His people.

He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to lavish His grace on us so that we could be saved and transformed and assigned in His purposes and then put on display forever to prove His greatness and kindness.

Which is exactly the message of this letter –

We may be done with our study in Ephesians – but my prayer is that it's impact will continue in all of our lives

AMEN

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul began his letter with grace and ends it with grace -

Grace is the means and the reason that God saves sinners – through Jesus Christ

And peace is the result of that salvation

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'