

Gunston Bible Church
Pastor Dave

Power of Prayer

Good morning GBC, this morning we are going to start a series of sermons all dealing with the same issue ‘**Prayer**’, as we go through this if we are honest with ourselves we will see that this is one area of our lives needs a lot of work.

For the next few weeks or so we will try and concentrate on different aspects of the topic of prayer.

The verse in Ephesians that we are going to deal with comes on the heels of the verses concerning the “*Full Armor of God.*”

I would like to suggest that Prayer should be considered as we think about the Armor of God, although Paul doesn’t have a parallel piece of armor from the soldier’s armor to compare this weapon with.

The Roman soldiers in that day had many weapons for warfare, not just the ones mentioned in the armor of God.

Besides the sword, the soldiers also had **spears** and their **bows** with quivers full of arrows. Then there were other weapons in Roman warfare, like the **battering ram** and the **catapult**.

But Paul doesn’t compare any of these to this last weapon which we are discussing because none of them come even close to the power and precision and effectiveness of this last weapon.

So since Paul doesn’t give us a piece of battle gear to equate this to.

This type of weapon began to be used in the end of the Korean War and was used extensively during Vietnam War.

We saw it used in Desert Storm, the Gulf War and with every conflict since then.

The modern battle field would not be the same without this type of weapon and this weapon is a perfect example of this last piece of spiritual armor for us today.

What is it?

Air support.

When a platoon is under heavy fire or pinned down...they call in air support.

They get on their radio, and give the coordinates of where they need some bombs dropped, and as quickly as possible, jets fly over and drop bombs onto the coordinates.

This technology has developed over the years.

In Vietnam, they sometimes ran into the problem of wrong coordinates, or the bombs not being dropped accurately enough, and times there were casualties from friendly fire.

In the Gulf War, however, they had these laser guided precision bombs and missiles, which we were all amazed at then.

The enemies were all shocked and we were in awe as we watched on TV the war that unfolded before our eyes.

C. S. Lewis wrote in his book **Mere Christianity** that this world is **enemy-occupied** territory and that Christianity is the story of how the **rightful king** has landed, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. And it is primarily through prayer that much of this sabotage takes place.

Prayer is how we **spiritually fight back** against the enemy. He says, “Prayer is fundamentally a **warfare activity.**”

With this in mind, it is sometimes humorous to see some people’s idea of prayer closets. They have the dim lighting and the cushioned seats with the padded kneelers.

There is soft music playing above, the oak doors and stained glass window, a little counter for your Bible and pencils.

But prayer is warfare activity.

A Prayer closet some time resembles a **fighting hole!**

Prayer is not chatting on the phone with God, it is the **frantic radio** calls of a platoon under heavy fire calling for air support.

God! Send in help!

We need your intervention, and we need it now, or we are not going to survive!

And it is often helpful to band together with other Christians in this.

When the pioneers headed west, they would always situate their **wagons into a circle** to give them better protection.

Illustration when we were headed to hospital when we heard about our son’s accident.

You could look at it like this, one of the keys to **quality relationship** with other people is time spent in communication, so the key to a growing relationship with the personal God

of heaven and earth is time invested in **speaking to Him** in **prayer** and listening to His voice in Scripture.

If you don't communicate with your loved ones, that relationship **suffers**, it is the same with the Lord, and it is us that sufferers because we miss all the blessings he wants to bestow upon us.

Prayer is **essential** in facing the enemy of your soul, because without prayer, **defeat is expected**.

When Jesus faced an attack from the enemy (Satan), it was done with scripture and He effectively and appropriately used the Scripture to **defend himself**.

The Scripture not only defended Him from the attack, but with the word of God, (**Sword of the Spirit**) Jesus went on the offensive!

This is the only **offensive weapon** described in the Armor of God.

Scripture allows us to navigate with power...

It seems that **power** is one thing that is missing in our lives, as too many of us are going through life just limping around.

Too many of us are motivated by fear, however, scripture gives us clear instructions on how we can go through life with power and victory!

The Scripture instructs us on how to navigate through life.

In Ephesians chapter 6 we see the issue of power in the face of Spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:13-17 ESV, ¹³ *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* ¹⁴ *Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* ¹⁵ *and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.* ¹⁶ *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;* ¹⁷ *and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

Concerning the whole armor of God, there is something that needs to be understood, we can't just end with the **Armor of God**, because if we end there and that's all we get out of it we miss one of the most important parts of facing spiritual warfare and experience triumph and victory.

Prayer cannot quite be described as a "**piece**" of the armor, but it modifies the armor.

In other words, as each part of the armor is “**put on**”, what Paul is saying here is that “**with each piece, put on with prayer.**”

Each piece of armor is put on with prayer

When you put the **belt** on do it with prayer

When you put on the **breast plate of righteousness** you do it with prayer

When you on the shoes of the **Gospel of peace** you do it with prayer

When you hold the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the Word of God, in your hand you do so with prayer.

Prayer is that **discipline** that is **essential** for the armor of God to be effective.

The first point we would like to address is.....

1. Pray all the time in the Spirit!

This doesn't mean that we should always be on our knees praying, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It means rather, that we should always be maintaining an **attitude of prayer**.

And if you've ever tried to do this, it's difficult to do, isn't it? It's always a struggle.

There are so many things competing for our attention.

Do not let your present situation or circumstances prevent you from praying and keep constant communication with our Heavenly Father.

The first aspect of warfare praying is that we should be praying always.

It should be all-occasions prayer not occasional prayer.

For what reason?

Because we are **engaged in war** with the enemy of mankind, the Devil and his cohorts.

You see, ever since you became a Christian, you have become a target of the enemy.

He has put these concentric circles around you with you as the bull's-eye and every moment of the day, he sends his fiery darts against you.

The more you pray, the more power you have.

The less you pray, the less power you have.

An old saying goes, “Seven days without prayer makes one weak.”

Ephesians 6:18–20, ¹⁸ *“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’* ¹⁹ *and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,* ²⁰ *for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Notice it does not say **PRAY** but **PRAYING** there is a subtle difference but it is important to understand.

In verse 18, the word all is used four times.

ALL times

ALL prayer

ALL perseverance

ALL the saints

The Scripture is telling us that prayer is essential in spiritual warfare.

The scripture is telling us that prayer is essential in Spiritual Warfare, without prayer your armor could be rendered ineffective.

Pray at all times!

- ✓ Not sometimes
- ✓ Not Just when you go to sleep
- ✓ Not just when you wake up in the morning
- ✓ Not just when you eat
- ✓ Not just on Sunday morning, during church service

Pray at **ALL** times!

Colossians 4:2, *“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”*

Prayer changes things, there is power in prayer

Prayer is to permeate our lives as a universal practice.

Prayer needs to be a natural experience (like breathing)

We need to be in constant communication/communion with God.

The power of prayer is gained by systematic discipline.

“Praying at all times in Spirit.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17, *“Pray without ceasing...”*

How do we learn to pray, we do it by praying and doing it often.

Just like basketball, volleyball, boxing, etc., we learn by repetition, its praying over and over again until it becomes second nature, we pray until it becomes part of our daily routine.

We need to develop that spiritual muscle, which can grab ahold of the effectiveness of prayer

Romans 8:26–27, ²⁶ *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groaning’s too deep for words.”* ²⁷ *“And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

I think that, in context, it means that if you are praying in the Spirit, you are praying according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And, if you are praying in that manner, then you are praying according to the will of God. And if you are praying according to the will of God, then you can be certain that every single thing you pray for will be given to you.

This is what **1 John 5:14-15** says. *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him.”*

The question is, how do you know the will of God?

Well for starters you need to get into the word so you can understand what God’s will is.

And then you need to have a personal relationship with his Son Jesus.

This doesn’t mean that if we just tack on the magical words **“In Jesus name we pray”** to the end of our prayer that whatever we pray for we will get.

It just means that we acknowledge that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and that we are praying to the Father through Jesus.

Now, not only should you have Jesus in your life to know the will of God.

You must walk daily with Jesus. That’s why the Bible says,

Psalms 37:4 *“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

Walking closely with Jesus, abiding in him, being obedient, is the key to victory.

Jesus, in fact, says,

John 15:7, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*

Prayer is an aspect of omnipotence that God has granted to us.

The more we pray in the spirit, or according to the will of God, the more is accomplished.

This is the incredible and unbelievable power of prayer.

Prayer is our pipe-line to the power of God!

Someone has said that “Prayer moves the hand that moves the world.”

I must pray in the Spirit.

Then, the second thing I can do to be victorious in spiritual warfare is this.

2. Pray with all kinds of prayer

Ephesians 6:18, *“with all kinds of prayers and requests.”*

What Paul is trying to say is for us to pray for general and specific needs.

To put it simply, Paul says that spiritual warfare prayer means that we have to pray for all things!

I know that seems obvious to us, but some folks have wrong and false ideas about prayer.

I know a man who believes that since God knows everything, and since the Bible says that God knows what we need before we even ask him (**Matt 6:8**), we don't need to pray for anything.

Matthew 6:7-8, ⁷ *“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. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*

And this man doesn't pray for things. He never asks God for anything.

He just trusts God to supply for his needs and to take care of him.

C. S. Lewis wrote an excellent article called “**Work and Prayer**” which every Christian who is interested in prayer should read, and his basic point is that prayer is just like work, in that we use it to accomplish things.

Without work, we should not expect anything to get accomplished, and so also, without prayer, we should not expect anything to get accomplished.

Furthermore, the two work hand in hand.

God wants us to ask Him for things. God tells us to ask Him for things.

Why?

Well, one reason is that it gives God pleasure to give to us the things we ask for.

When children have birthdays, I imagine that all of us try to give good gifts to our children, some of them were asked for, and some were not.

Maybe your children made up a wish list. And you get joy out of both, and your children get joy out of both, but I would say that by far the most pleasure comes when we give something to a loved one which they have asked for, which they have dreamt about for months.

And furthermore, I would say that there are many, many things God will not do for us, and will not give to us unless we ask Him.

It is not because He doesn't know what we want, or doesn't know what we need, but He wants us to express our dependence upon Him.

He wants us to come to Him and share our needs and our desires. And unless we are willing to humble ourselves and ask Him for some of these things, he will not give them to us.

So those are a few of the things I would say to the person who doesn't bring their prayers and petitions to God, because “**God already knows what I need.**”

But there is a second class of people who don't bring their prayer requests to God for a far different reason.

This second class of people seem to think that their needs and their requests are too **insignificant** to bother God with.

These people seem to have a little hierarchy of prayer requests in their mind about what makes a prayer large or small. And they only feel that they can go to God with the big prayer requests.

When it comes to praying to God, there are no large requests.

They're all small and simple to Him. He's infinite. He's immense.

Philippians 4:6 (ESV), ⁶ “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

He's omnipotent. Asking Him to have the sun stand still for a day, as Joshua did, takes just as much of God's power as asking Him to help us drive safely to work.

And besides this, when viewed from the perspective that all of our prayer requests are small to God, this puts us in the correct mind frame of completely trusting and relying on God to work it out.

We don't come to God saying “Here's another big one for you, God.

See if you can handle this one.” No, we come to him and say, “Thank you, God, for being so powerful and wise that you can figure a way out of this situation that has got me stumped.

Thank you for being the God you are.

Thank you for being so powerful and loving as to take the time and help me out with this tiny little petition.”

Do you see the difference that makes? We must bring our prayers and petitions to God if we want Him to work on them. Especially in spiritual warfare.

Acts 2:42 (ESV), and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

We need a Spirit-directed, Spirit-empowered prayer in our life.

We need the supernatural work of God to flow through our prayer life.

You want to transform your prayers, rely upon the spirit

We need the supernatural power of God to be present in our prayer life.

Prayer with all prayer and supplication

We need to be thorough and deliberate in our prayer life.

There is more than one kind of praying: supplication, intercession, thanksgiving...

The believer who prays only to ask for things is missing out on blessings that come with intercessions and giving of thanks.

In fact, thanksgiving is a great prayer weapon for defeating Satan. “Praise changes things” as much as “prayer changes things.”

Romans 12:12 (ESV), *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

Nemiah prayed when he was building the temple wall, he prayed to the Lord and asked him what he should pray for?

We need to learn how to pray and pray all kinds of prayers

That includes “Lord what do you want me to pray for?”

That’s a powerful prayer,

That’s a critically important prayer,

That’s a transforming prayer

That’s a breakthrough prayer

James 5:13 (ESV), *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

Because there are other things that we need to include in our prayers, we need to be intercessors

We need to be filled with thanksgiving

We need to be filled with praise

They need to be part of our prayer life

The believer that only prays for things for themselves misses out on the blessings that comes from intercessory prayers.

Giving thanks is a **great weapon** for defeating the enemy in our prayer life

When you are going through trouble when you’re lonely and feel as if the world is cashing in on you, the first thing you should do is Thank God for his presence in your life, give him praise even before asking for his help, praise him...

Worship him, honor him

When you start doing that you can feel as if the flood gates from heaven are open and you receive him and his promise and Gods miracle working power in your life.

Mark 11:25 (ESV), *"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that you're Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*

3. Pray with ALL alertness and persistence!

Luke 21:36 (ESV), "But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Pray with your eyes open!

"Keep alert with all perseverance..."

When I pray it is often with my eyes open, but that's another story...

One of the best times is when we are at the church and there is no one here, we can feel free to walk around and pray over the building, Pastor Lynn sings all day... Just saying

It is not just about keeping your eyes open but it is also about being alert, being aware of what is taking place around you.

Nehemiah was alert and aware of his surroundings and still prayed

The phrase "**watch and pray**" occurs often in the Bible.

When Nehemiah was repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and the enemy was trying to stop the work, Nehemiah defeated the enemy by watching and praying.

Watch and pray is the secret of victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Praise defeats the enemy, thanksgiving defeats the enemy

Watching and praying is the secret of victory...

Victory over the **world**,

Victory over the **flesh**

Victory over the **Devil** himself

Say it again, and then say it again...

Mark 14:38, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We are indeed weak, even after spiritual highs and great victories, we often experience extreme discouragement and defeat

You could look at the prophet Elijah who claimed victory over the false prophets one day and then the very next thing we see is he is curled up and wants to die.

We need to be aware of our limitations but also be very aware that our God is limitless.

As we maintain alertness we need to maintain persistence
 We need to create the habit of persistence
 As we maintain alertness, we need to maintain persistence!

We need to stick to it and not quit.

Perseverance in prayer doesn't not mean we are trying to twist God's arm, but rather that we are deeply concerned and burdened and cannot rest until we get God's answer.

We think all we need to do is pray **five minutes** one time and God is going to make everything alright. And never pray again as it is not our problem anymore it is now his problem.

We need to pray **constantly**.

Here is a question when was the last time you spent **an hour** praying about anything?

Ok here is an easier question when was the last time you spent more than **30 minutes** praying about anything?

15 minutes, you get my point...

I typically pray on the morning on the ride to work, it is usually only 10-15 minutes I leave between 530 and 545 every morning.

Some times when I get to the gate and roll my window down to give the gate guard my ID card I have tears in my eyes, from talking to the Lord or singing the Old Rugged Cross and a few times have been asked was everything OK, I typically would smile and say it is awesome... or God is good and sometimes I would even get all the time, or a Roll Tide when I'm on my Bike...

I think one of the greatest hindrances we have as a church toward real revival is the **lack of prayer**.

And the problem is when we do pray it is typically not as we should, it should not just be a shopping list of things we demand...

Sometimes we as a church think we should have **another program** or committee, how can I get into this area so you can understand without stepping on too many toes, mine included.

It should be more than just **Church beautification**, I know there are things that there are things that we need to do in order to maintain this property, however doing all that is **no guarantee** that we are going to defeat the enemy in this spiritual battle.

Now don't get me wrong we are going to be faithful stewards in maintaining all the Lord has blessed us with but cannot do this by **neglecting the disciple of Spiritual prayer**.

It is more than how nice our crosses look, parking lot, TV screens etc. its more than the different ministries we have or support in this church, all that is great however if we are going to defeat the enemy **we need to be a people of prayer**.

GBC needs to be a **people of prayer**, powerful, effective prayer that seeks the face of the living God on any and everything we do, we cannot **lose sight** of this very important weapon.

Saints another way of looking at this is to say that **without a prayer** life our relationship with God is **hampered**.

We are in a serous disability when we are not seeking the face and the will of God daily. Keep on praying until the Spirit stops you or the Father answers you. We need to earnestly be a people of prayer

We need to stick to it and not give up.

Do you remember in Daniel 10 when Daniel prays **three** times a day for **21** days for a particular prayer request, and after persevering for so long in prayer, he finally gets his answer.

The angel who brought him the answer, however, basically tells Daniel that the prayer was answered on the first day, but that because of wicked forces, the angel could not get through for three weeks.

This passage seems to teach that what goes on in the **spiritual realm** may significantly affect how, when and even whether or not God can answer any given prayer.

It implies that it is only because of persevering prayer that the angel was finally able to get through with Daniel's answer.

Persevering in prayer is required for some prayers to get through—especially since we are in spiritual warfare.

You cannot think you are going to win a battle by going out and swinging your sword only once and then sitting down and saying, "Well, I swung my sword, but I didn't get victory, so I guess I'll just give up."

No!

Keep swinging, Keep standing, Keep fighting, keep praying.

A woman had stayed at a hotel, and when she got home, she realized that she had left her diamond earrings on the bedside stand. So she called the hotel and got the manager on the phone and asked him to go and look for them.

He went to the room, found the diamond earrings, and immediately went to put them in the safe, and then returned to the phone to tell her the good news but when he picked back up the phone to tell her, she had grown **impatient** of waiting and had **hung up!**

How many of our prayers which we think God has never answered, were actually answered, but now they are sitting in a safe in heaven, just waiting for us to persevere in prayer?

Sometimes, we just need to **hang on and pray**.

Sometimes, God is working to answer our prayer, but we give up too soon.

Spiritual warfare prayer requires us to keep on praying.

Acts 12:5 (ESV) *So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.*

The early church prayed without ceasing when Peter was in prison, Herod had just executed James and if everything worked out Peter was next...

4. Pray for one another

At the end of verse 18, he tell us to be “**praying for all the Lord’s people.**”

Paul, obviously, refers to Christians.

We fail in this in so many ways.

Sometimes, it seems that we spend much of our time praying for unbelievers that they might become Christians. And I think that is a good idea, but it should not be a priority in our prayers.

If you want a person to become a Christian, **witness** to them, rather than just to pray for them. And if you are going to pray for them, make sure you are part of the answer to your prayers.

Some of us have a different struggle though.

While we do spend most of our time praying for believers, we just spend it praying for one of them—ourselves.

Sometimes, it seems all we ever do is pray for ourselves.

My sickness,
 my injury,
 my job,
 my finances,
 my marriage,
 my car,
 my dog.

But notice that Paul calls us to pray for the **Lord's people**.

And although you are one of God's people, if you are a Christian, Paul means you are to pray for all Christians other than just yourself.

Pray for others!

Make "supplication for all the saints."

1 Timothy 2:8 (ESV), *"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling."*

Samuel's final address, as he was discouraged that the chosen people of God didn't want to follow his spiritual lead but wanted a King to lead them to rule over them instead of him. However he instructed them to pray for one another.

1 Samuel 12:23, *"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way."*

People have become too selfish, more concerned with ourselves and our wellbeing than the importance of praying for the fellow saints and all the followers of Jesus Christ.

When we become, too selfish we miss out and don't see or grasp the importance of praying for one another.

James 5:16, *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."*

You want to see the power of God working in your life, then begin to **pray for one another**.

Build your list of things to pray about and then put you at the bottom of that list, you want to try something **really radical**?

Put those that **bother you** at the top of your list.

Those who have **wronged you**,
turned away from you or have **hurt you**.

Pray, Lord I pray that your blessing and power be upon them, anoint them with your covering and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Maybe there is someone you just **can't stand**, and every time you think about them it takes you to a bad place or brings back bad memories.

I will tell you that what I have just described can **hinder** your walk with the Lord and his blessings he has in store for you.

I am just being honest with you, as I too **struggle** with the same issues, however, it is like putting up a **road block** of Gods miracle working power in our life, not theirs.

So when you begin to pray for that **person** who has hurt you, slandered your name/ reputation, and lied to you stabbed you in the **back**, etc.

And you pray God I pray your **rich blessing** be upon them, or I pray for their **congregation** to grow in not just numbers but strength and your grace.

I pray your abounding blessings and power **overwhelm them**, when you do that you will begin to see and feel God's favor in your life.

Luke 6:28 (ESV), Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

In life, the battle against the enemy can be **overwhelming**.

In spiritual warfare, we need to engage in warfare prayer:

Pray all the time and in the Spirit!

Pray with all kinds of prayer (including thanksgiving and praise)!

Pray with alertness and persistence!

Pray for one another.