

# Prayer in Times of Conflict

## Ephesians 6:18-20

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Ephesians 6:18-20** - “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- 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.”
1. This is a passage about prayer by a prisoner who knew the value of prayer—the apostle Paul.
  2. Sometimes it is easy to prayer . . . sometimes we find it to be difficult.
  3. ILLUSTRATION: Two days after the horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York City and the Pentagon in our nation’s capitol, I received a telephone call from Gwen Fowler of the Myrtle Beach Sun News asking if I would write an article for the Sunday edition of the paper, a article that would offer comfort and perspective to the community in view of the tragedy. Within minutes I began to write such an article. Somewhere in the midst of it, I received a telephone call from a stranger, an elderly lady. She introduced herself. She was in tears as she asked her question . . . “How can I pray in view of all this, knowing that we are going to try and kill those responsible.” How can I pray for them?”
    - a. Our conversation continued long . . . after a while the tears ended.
    - b. I called her attention to a number of both Old & New Testament passages.
    - c. I concluded with Romans 13:3-4 in order to establish the right of Government to punish evil doers.
    - d. Among the suggestions I made were these:
      1. We can be thankful that the destruction, as devastating as it was, was not more extensive than it was. More cities, more buildings, more people could have become victims.
      2. We can pray for the survivors, one of which was her nephew on the 81st floor of the south tower. He grabbed another person or two and exited the build five minutes before it collapsed.
      3. We can pray for the victims and their families.
      4. We can pray for the multitude of workers who are laboring in the danger zones.
      5. We can pray for the rulers who have to make some tough decisions.
      6. And perhaps the hardest of all . . . we can pray for those who have chosen to become our enemies.
      7. And above all else, we can pray that God’s will be done.

- e. As the conversation ended, she assured me that she was feeling much better.
  - f. As I returned to the keyboard to continue the article, I could not help but think about her question and wondered how many others were feeling much the same way.
- B. Perhaps we need to pause and study about prayer and conflict.
1. Prayer in conflict, that is during times of conflict in our lives, is often overlooked, and yet, it still remains the greatest weapon of all.
  2. No matter how great the armor we wear . . . and no matter how skilled we are in warfare . . . and no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayers we stand be defeated.
- C. The lesson text points out three definitive things about prayer.
1. Prayer must be constant - "Praying always."
  2. Prayer must be intense - "With all perseverance."
  3. It must be unselfish - "For all the saints."
    - a. Speaking of the saints . . . our fellow Christians, why should prayer be offered for them?
      1. Because they are our brethren.
      2. Because, like us, they have hearts prone to evil, and they need the grace of God.
      3. Because the church will always experience trouble . . . Satan will not leave it alone.
      4. Because all Christians are faced with some temptation.
    - b. How many times have your heard someone say to you, "Please remember me in your prayers"?
- D. Prayer is speaking to God. Its contents are:
1. Directed to God.
  2. Praise
  3. Thanksgiving
  4. Confession
  5. Requests - Petitions
  6. Offered in the name of Christ . . . that is by the authority of Christ.
- E. Prayer has as it purposes:
1. To achieve fellowship with God.
  2. To praise and glorify God.
  3. To express thanksgiving for past favors.
  4. To confess sins and receive forgiveness.
  5. To seek God's guidance.
  6. To request God's continued blessings.
  7. To seek God's help in solving problems or difficulties.
  8. To intercede for others.

F. From time to time it is good to revisit the Model Prayer that our Lord gave in **Matthew 6:9-13** as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

1. The prayer is a model in **BREVITY** - Some 66 words in the NKJ and can be prayed in less than a minute.
  2. The prayer is a model in **SCOPE** - Man’s needs, both physical and spiritual.
  3. The prayer is a model in **SIMPLICITY** - It is easily understood.
  4. The prayer is a model in **DIRECTNESS** - It is not vague.
- G. The foundation of prayer rests in our understanding of God.
1. God is personal.
  2. God is able.
  3. God cares.
  4. God has a purpose and destiny for our lives.
- H. Concerning prayer . . .
1. Prayer is the expressing of the soul’s desires and may be expressed audibly or unexpressed.
  2. Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, and in the name of Christ.

### THREE HURTFUL THEORIES ABOUT PRAYER

A. God is unchangeable, therefore prayers will have no effect.

1. Answer: God has answered prayers in the past . . . God answers prayer in the present . . . and God will continue to answer in the future.
2. **1 Peter 3:12** - “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

B. God is omniscient, He knows all, therefore He knows all our needs before we pray, so there is no need to pray.

1. Answer: Yes, God knows, but He still desires that we ask.
2. **Matthew 6:8** - “For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”

C. Miracles have ceased. The theory is that God cannot answer prayer without a miracle or without violating His will.

1. God’s Will and God’s power are not dependent upon miracles.
2. May we never underestimate the power of the living God.

## PRAYER IS APPROPRIATE IN TIMES OF TRANQUILITY AND IN TIMES OF CONFLICT.

A. What we pray for during times of conflict, we should remember to Thank God for when the crisis has passed.

1. From one of the books in my library I have lifted this prayer in the form of an invocation: “O Lord, we cannot cope with this loss of life without Your help. So please, God, put Your hand into our hands, put Your hope into our hopelessness, put Your strength into our weakness, put Your thoughts into our confused minds, put your Spirit into our hearts. Then we will be able to cope, through Jesus Christ. Amen.
2. Some only utilize prayer when they are in crisis . . . when events are critical.
  - a. **ILLUSTRATION:** Little boy falling off a roof . . . “Lord, save me . . . caught on a nail . . . . “Never mind, this nail has caught me.”
  - b. During times of individual crisis . . . we pray.
  - c. During times of family crises . . . we pray.
  - d. During times of national crises . . . we pray.

B. Poem:

Christian, seek not yet repose;  
 Cast thy dreams of ease away.  
 Thou art in the midst of foes;  
 “Watch and pray.”

Principalities and powers,  
 Mustering their unseen array,  
 Wait for thine unguarded hours’  
 “Watch and Pray.”

Gird thy heavenly armor on,  
 Wear it every night and day;  
 Ambushed lies the evil one;  
 “Watch and Pray”

Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,  
 Him thou lovest to obey;  
 Hide within thy heart His word.  
 “Watch and pray”

Watch, as if on that alone  
 Hung the issue of the day;  
 Pray that help may be sent down:  
 “Watch and pray.”

**C. ANGER** is one letter short of **DANGER**.

1. **Ephesians 4:26** - “Be angry, and do not sin . . .”
2. We have examples of God and Christ being angry.
3. **GOD** - **Hebrews 3:10** - “Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.”
4. **CHRIST** - Two separate cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem.
  - a. Early in His ministry. **John 2:15** - “When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.”
  - b. Last week of His life. **Luke 19:45** – “Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it.”
5. **Have you ever been so angry that you could not pray?**

**CONCLUSION:**

- A. During the time of national crisis, remember **Matthew 5:44** - “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”
- B. Praying for one’s enemies may be among the most difficult prayers one will pray . . . but it is a prayer that must be prayed.
- C. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**