

With All Prayer Praying¹ (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Prayer, spiritual warfare and the Traitor Prince

What about the devil a.k.a. Satan or Lucifer? ...Is he a real being that impacts our lives? ...Did God really create Satan? ...What about demons and evil spirits? Does Satan roam through the earth disguised as an angel of light? Are demons really at work on earth?

Unfortunately, far too many folks do not have an accurate view of who Satan is. Many underestimate him and his prowess, even going so far as to doubt his very existence. The Bible clearly shows us just how active and conniving the Devil really is. At the same time, Scripture also lets us know about Satan's limitations and ultimate demise.

The more we understand the tactics of this intelligent spirit being, the better equipped we will be to ward off his attacks. If believers have a clear understanding of our adversary, then **through faithful prayers** there can be mighty defeats and victories... defeats for the foe, victories for our rightful prince, Jesus! God's Word reveals Satan as a being of great beauty, of great dignity and position... endowed with remarkable intellectual powers. He is a prince, at the head of a most remarkable, compact organization which he has wielded with phenomenal skill and success in furthering his ambitious purposes.

Ezekiel 28:12,15 *"You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created..."*

Lucifer and his angels hate God.

Right from the time when God removed them from His service, and still today, Lucifer and these other spirits have been fighting against God and everything he does.²

From "Firm Foundations—Creation to Christ"³ we see that the Bible tells us that although God expelled Satan and his demon followers from his presence, they retained their immense power and intellect. The Bible shows us that they are enemies of the Most High God... Lucifer and his followers hate God and every good thing that God loves.⁴

As to the exact events that occurred right after Satan's rebellion, at the dawn of Creation, we can only speculate... you can almost see the Devil, consumed with jealousy and hatred, casting his shifty eyes around the universe looking for a weak link in God's armor. There must be some way to get even with God. Can't you just see Satan's eyes settling on the weakest link... *man*? Can't you just see the smirk on his face?

Satan's impact on our prayers

The simple fact is that Satan has the power to hold the answer... to hold back, to delay—for a time, the answers to our prayers. However, he doesn't have the power to hold them back, forever... that is, if we know him as he is, and then pray with quiet, steady persistence.

There are two facts running through the Bible from one end to the other. They are like two threads in a finely woven fabric... anywhere you check the fabric of the Word you will find these two threads. One is a black thread—the enemy... the other is a bright thread, a bit of God's glory streaming through. Turn where you will from Genesis to Revelation... always an enemy. He is keen. He is subtle. He is malicious. He is cruel. He is obstinate. He is a master deceiver.

¹ Based on Chp 7 of S.D. Gordon's "Quiet Talks On Prayer"

² 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

³ New Tribes Mission, Sanford, FL by Trevor McIllwain (From Lesson 3)

⁴ Genesis 3:1-7, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

The bright thread is this: the great leaders for God, in the Bible, have always been men and women of prayer above everything else... they give prayer first place. The Gospels form the central pattern of the whole where the colors come together in the sharpest contrast.

Prayer is fighting

We are going to turn to Ephesians... Ephesians is the prayer epistle. It is significant to note that of Paul's thirteen epistles Ephesians is peculiarly the prayer letter. He is on his knees here... he has much to say to these folks whom he has won to Christ. But, it comes in the parentheses of prayer... with bookends of prayer!

The connecting phrase running through is, "*for this cause I pray*" ...I bow my knees! The climax of this prayer-epistle is this paragraph, v.14-20, and the climax of the paragraph is prayer. And from praying Paul urges them to pray... "With all prayer praying!!

READ... Ephesians 6:10 through 20 (Keep your Bible open as we look at Paul's revelation)

In Paul's addressing the Church at Ephesus we see that the main drive of all their living seems very clear to this battle scarred veteran... "*That ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the Devil.*" Paul seems to have no difficulty in believing in a personal devil... he probably had too many close encounters. To Paul, Satan is a cunning strategist requiring every bit of available resource to combat.

This masterful paragraph states two things: who the real foe is, against whom the fight is directed... and, then with climactic intensity it gives us the main thing that defeats him. Paul clearly tells us who the real foe is... "*For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood.*" Not against men; never that... but something far subtler—"*but against the principalities*"—a Word for a compact organization of individuals—"against powers"—not only organized but highly endowed intellectually, "*against the world-rulers of this darkness*". They are of princely kin... not common folk—"against the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies"—spirit beings, in vast numbers... having their headquarters somewhere above the earth.

That is the foe... large numbers of highly endowed spirit beings, well organized, who are the sovereigns of the present age of moral darkness. Their headquarters of activity somewhere above the earth, and below the throne of God, but very clearly concerned with human beings on the earth. In Chapter 2 of the epistle the head or ruler of this organization is referred to as, "*the prince of the powers of the air*". That is the real foe—namely Satan... formerly Lucifer—the greatest of the spirit beings created by God "*in the beginning*" but cast to earth for his rebellion against God.

Ezekiel 28:16-17 "*Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth...*"

Lucifer did not go without a battle... he was still a very strong being and many other angels followed him. The Bible indicates that one-third of the angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion. The rebellious angels that followed Satan were called *demons* or *evil spirits*. The Bible tells us that after this rebellion they were no longer God's servants; instead, they lived in constant rebellion against God. In the Book of Job, the Bible tells us that Satan could still come to speak to God in Heaven. However, Satan and his followers could no longer live in heaven, nor could they be God's servants.

The armor of God

In one of his strong piled-up climatic sentences Paul tells how the fight is to be won. This sentence runs unbroken through verses 14 to 20 inclusive. There are six preliminary clauses leading up to its main statement. These clauses name the pieces of armor used by a Roman soldier in the action of battle. The loins girt, the breastplate on; the feet shod... the shield, the helmet, the sword, and so on. A Roman soldier reading this or hearing Paul preach it, would expect him to finish the sentence by saying, "With all your fighting strength" ...fight!

This would be the usual rhetorical conclusion of this sentence... however, when Paul reaches the climax with his usual intensity he drops the rhetorical figure and instead tells us the very thing with which our fighting must be done—“*with all prayer praying*”. In place of the expected word “fighting” we see the word “praying”. Our fighting is praying... praying is fighting, spirit-fighting! What this aging evangelist-missionary bishop says is that we are in the thick of a fight... there is a war on! So the question is, “How shall we best fight?”

First, Paul points out that we must get into good shape to pray and then with all your praying strength and skill “pray”. The word “praying” is the climax of this multiple-verse-long sentence **and** of the whole epistle. This is the sort of action that exposes the enemy’s flank... and reveals his heels. Paul is saying, **Satan simply cannot stand before persistent knee-work!!**

Let’s examine Paul’s insightful description of the most effective work in praying. **Read... Eph 6:13-18**

There are six qualifications under the analogy of the six pieces of armor:

1. v.14a *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...* A clear understanding of truth.
2. v.14b *...with the breastplate of righteousness in place...* A clean, obedient life.
3. v.15a *...and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace...* Earnest service.
4. v.16 *...in addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one...* A profoundly simple trust on the Lord.
5. v.17a *...take the helmet of salvation...* Clear assurance of one’s own salvation and relationship to God. (see 1 Jn 1:7-10)
6. v.17b *...and the sword of the Word of God...* A good grip of the Truth—no relativism.

These things prepare us for the real battle... the conflict of prayer. Such praying drives back these hosts of the traitor prince. Someone praying in the full armor of God is invincible in his Chief—Jesus Christ! The equipment is simple and it is readily available to any willing, earnest heart.

Look with me at the strong climax of this long sentence... it is bristling with points. All of them soldier-points... like bayonet points. Just as a general engaged in a battle would give to his men.

Look carefully at Paul’s words...

- “*With all pray and supplication*”—there is intensity, intentionality;
- “*praying*”—this is the main thrust; ceaselessness... night and day, hot and cold, wet and dry;
- “*in the Spirit*”—as guided by the Chief;
- “*and watching thereunto*”—sleepless vigilance... watching is vital in battle, watch the enemy, watch your own forces;
- “*with all perseverance*”—persistence... joyful yet, head down, dogged persistence, bulldog tenacity;
- “*and supplication*”—intensity again;
- “*for all the saints*”—keep the whole army in mind.

Satan and his demons are the foe to be fought... and this is the sort of spiritual fighting that defeats this foe. Satan believes in the potency of prayer... he fears it. He can hinder the results for a while and he does his best to hinder it and to hinder it as long as possible... as he did to Daniel (See chp 10)

Prayer overcomes Satan

Prayer overcomes our adversaries in the heavenly realms... it defeats Satan’s plans and Satan himself. He trembles when some saint, in simple faith in God, prays... one who is in sympathetic touch with the Lord. Prayer is insistence upon God’s will being done... its basis is Christ’s victory on the cross... it overcomes the opposing will of the great traitor—leader.

“What must we do?” Should we fight against the powers of darkness? Paul said, “No”, emphatically... rather we are instructed to simply stand: “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to*

withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (6:13). In that “standing” position clothed in the armor of God, we must stand in faith and testify that Jesus is Victor.

That is your calling, and it is mine!

We are not called to fight against darkness, spiritual wickedness, and principalities because the Lord has already won that battle on the cross. Therefore, I encourage you: Stand and do what is instructed in Ephesians 6:18...

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints...”