

Prevailing Prayer

Ephesians 6:10-20

By [Rev. Benny Youngblood](#)

July 10, 2011 – Evening Sermon

Ephesians 6:10-20 says

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 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, 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.

May God bless the reading of His Word, let's pray.

Father, thank You so much for Your holy Word. Thank You God for giving us Your Scripture that we may hear from You. Tonight God we come and ask that You would speak to our hearts that You would move us to be men and women with prevailing prayer. God we desire Your strength. We desire to live out these great truths in Scripture. We desire to know the depths of all the blessings we have and we know God You open so many of these things in prayer. Take us tonight, encourage us, strengthen us and move us again to be men and women of prayer, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Have you ever known someone that by their life you learned to pray? They just prayed so naturally that it seemed as though prayer was as easy to them as

breathing. I know I did. In my life, my mom was that way. I learned to pray just being in my household. I'm the baby of the family and my room was right beside my parents. I was the youngest of four. I would often be awakened as a young kid hearing my mom pray. She would be reading the Scripture out loud in her room and she would be praying out loud and she would go person to person through our family, then she would pray for our pastor and she would pray for the president and I could hear her. She would sing songs to the Lord. Some mornings she would be crying to the Lord and other times she would be very happy before the Lord. I heard so many incredible prayers from my mom.

Not only did she spend time with the Lord privately like that but she prayed all the time. Sometimes we could be going down the road and something would happen and my mom would just say a prayer. If it was something good she'd say "Praise the Lord, all good things come from the Lord" or something tough would happen and she would simply say "We need to pray about that. God is in control. Let's trust Him." As a kid I would come to my mom and say "I don't know how to handle this situation" and she would say "Have you prayed about it?" I would say "No." She would say "Let's pray about it." It's amazing how many times my mom and I would pray I would know what to do right when we finished praying. She taught me to pray by her life and everything that was going on around me. My dad moved around about eight different times in my life and when that moment came when he'd be transferred in his job the first thing my mom would say to my dad was "James, let's pray." We knew we trusted God when we came up from praying. It was amazing.

The Ephesians in Ephesus, who this letter was written to, had a model also. It was Paul. Paul in his third missionary journey came to Ephesus and as he shared the Gospel people came to know Christ. Then more people came to know Christ and he stayed there. He planted a church and began to preach and teach. He ended up staying there almost three years and it was the longest place Paul was at. So these people knew Paul. He wasn't just their preacher or teacher but he was part of them. They knew him and they knew prayer was a part of Paul's life. It didn't surprise them in the first part of this letter of Ephesians when he said "I'm constantly praying for you" like he wrote to all the other churches pretty much. "Every time I'm praying I'm praying for you." It didn't surprise them when they heard that.

In the first three chapters Paul told them about all the Gospel blessings that come in Christ Jesus and that didn't surprise them because they heard him preaching those things. He penned it there by God's inspiration for us to have. In the last half it didn't surprise them when he started telling them they had Gospel responsibilities. Then when he got to the end of this letter he said "How do you live out these Gospel blessings and responsibilities? You need to be strong in the Lord, strong in God's strength. You know you can't live the Christian life on your own. You're saved by Christ and you live by Christ. You're saved by grace and you live by grace. You're saved by faith and you live by faith. You received Christ

and that's how you walk in Him." As they heard this and as we hear this we are to be strong in the Lord in the power of His might. Then we hear, how do you do that? We put on that Gospel armor, the armor of God and then he goes back to how we get that power. We get it through praying, praying always, through prevailing prayer before the Lord. That's how we walk with the strength of the Lord. The hymnist says "Put on the Gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer."

The key passage we'll look at in this sermon is Ephesians 6:18. This time look at how many times the word 'all' is used. It is used four times here. When God does that in a short period of time there's a reason. Again, Ephesians 6:18 says 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. Warren Wiersbe in his commentary on this verse said "Prayer is the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armor and to wield the sword. We cannot fight the battle in our own power no matter how strong or talented we may think we are. Prayer is the power for victory but not just any kind of prayer. Paul told us in this passage how to pray if we want to defeat Satan."

John Stott in his commentary said "Prevailing Christian prayer is wonderfully comprehensive. It has four universals indicated by the fourfold use of the word 'all' – at all times, with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance, with all supplication for all the saints. Most Christians pray sometimes with some prayers and some degree of perseverance for some of God's people but to replace some with all in each of these expressions would be to introduce us to a new dimension of prayer." God wants us to have that dimension of prayer taught here in the Scripture to have a prevailing, powerful prayer life. He wants us to have this every day of our life as Christians as we walk with Him. The mature Christians pray this way God would say here in telling us this is how you walk out the Christian life. It is outlined in this passage.

There are really four points from this passage and one is to have prayer as the way of your life, to pray as a way of life at all time with kinds of prayer. We are to pray in the Spirit and with God's power. We are to pray with all perseverance and to pray for all the saints. First we are going to look at praying as a lifestyle. I Thessalonians 5:17 says "pray without ceasing." It's a really short verse but takes a lifetime to live out. God has told us that we should be praying at all times. Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 18:1 which says "And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." Always pray. Prayer is a lifestyle.

We are to pray at all times and in order to do this we have to have constant fellowship with God. This passage isn't teaching us we need to walk around with our head bowed and formally pray to God. We need to pray to God and we need those formal times but that's not what this is saying when it says pray always but it's to have constant communication with God, constant fellowship with God,

walking with Him through every day of our life from the time we wake up to the time we go to bed. We know He'll never leave us or forsake us. He is with us always. He indwells us in the power of the Holy Spirit and that's what this is talking about.

How do we do this? Here are a few of my thoughts. When we wake up in the morning and we take that first waking breath just breathe out a prayer to God, "God I'm Yours today. This is the day that You've made and I rejoice and am glad in it." As we are getting ready just say a prayer to God. When we get in our car to drive to work and we look around and see God's creation we can pray and acknowledge "God thank You for all Your beauty. You are the Creator of everything. You're the Sustainer of all things." Maybe at work you bump into someone that doesn't know the Lord and instead of getting frustrated or pass by them, stop and pray, not necessarily out loud but as you walk by them whisper a prayer to the Lord "God would You grant them repentance? Please God save their soul." Maybe you'll get an email from someone who is having a tough day and it's great to send an email back to encourage them but do you know what's better? Stop and pray for them. It just takes a second to offer up a prayer to God for that person, their struggle and their issue.

Maybe you're tempted with something that has happened and instead of just turning your head away offer up a prayer "God, I need Your strength in this and I know that You alone can help. Satisfy my soul. That's a lie and I don't need that (the thing that tempted you) to satisfy my soul. I need You and You alone." As we go through our day we can constantly be in communication with God, acknowledging and knowing He is with us every where we are and wherever we go. Walking with Him is praying always before the Lord. I Timothy 2:8 says "I desire then that in every place the men should pray..." Remember, every place is a place of prayer, no matter where we are. So prayer is a lifestyle and by praying at all times.

Then this passage goes on to say with all prayer and supplication. With all prayer is really a broad term in the Greek and means with all kinds of prayer, every kind of prayer. We are to pray with every kind of prayer. What prayers do we most often pray? Most of our prayers our personal requests that are dealing with things that are going on with us. That's okay but our prayer life shouldn't just be our personal requests. We need to cast all of our cares upon Him because He cares for us, but our prayer life shouldn't just be about us.

Earlier in my Christian life somebody shared with me something that has helped throughout my Christian life in praying and that is four simple letters like the book of Acts – A.C.T.S. You want to have a prayer life like the people in Acts so that stuck with me. The A in A.C.T.S is adoration. You want to pray with praise and worship before God. You want to lift up the Lord and call forth all His greatness. You also want to pray with C, confession. Make sure as you go through life that you adore God and that you're confessing before Him your sin. Also confess your

needs before Him. We shouldn't wait weeks or days but doing it every day as we go through the day. The T in A.C.T.S. is thanksgiving. Mature Christians are thankful always, right? We know that by the Scripture. We need to be praying with thanksgiving. When something good happens in our life, right then, thank the Lord. As we're in our quiet prayer time make sure you take time to thank the Lord for all that He's done. All good things do come from the Lord. The S is supplication, to lay our requests before God for others and for ourselves. Those are the kinds of prayers we need to pray – adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Pray without ceasing. Pray always. I asked a Sunday school class not long ago, "Why don't we do this?" I was teaching through I Thessalonians 5:17. Someone answered quickly "It's our pride." We are self reliant and someone else said "It's just sin." This group got into this really quickly. We are just too self reliant and prideful to pray that way. We think that we can do it instead of understanding 'no.' We need the Lord in every breath that we take and every step we make. We need the Lord. Let's don't be fooled by the evil one. Part of that waging war is causing us to think things that just aren't true. Let's don't fall to the lie that we're just too busy to pray. That's just not true. We may be busy doing a lot of things but we're not too busy to pray.

Martin Lloyd Jones said "Our ultimate position as Christians is tested by the character of our prayer life." Leonard Ravenhill said, "The church has many organizers but few agonizers, many who pay but few who pray, many resters but few wrestlers, many who are enterprising but few who are interceding. People who are not praying are playing." Samuel Chadwick said, "Satan dreads nothing but prayer. His one concern is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil and mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray." He caught the heart of this passage. It's a spiritual warfare that we're in whether we realize it or not.

As you read back through Ephesians there are principalities, powers and battles that are going on that we can't see. It's there and just like he said Satan does tremble when we pray. Prayer moves the hand of God. God uses prayer to do His work. He has ordained it that way. He lets us be a part of His incredible work as we pray. We need to be men and women who pray always.

Secondly, we also need to be men and women who pray in the Spirit, praying with power. The only way we know what to pray or how to pray as we should is by the Holy Spirit's work in our life. Romans 8:26-27 says 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 groanings 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. Isn't that awesome? Praise the Lord that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. As we pray He knows what to pray

for us and how to offer that prayer up to God as our Mediator. Praise the Lord for Jesus and for the Holy Spirit who prays on our behalf.

How do we pray in the Spirit? Earlier in this passage we talked about the armor of God, what is the sword of the Spirit? It is the Word of God. So we are to take up the sword of the Spirit and now we're to pray in the Spirit. The first way to pray in the Spirit is to pray the Word of God. That is power in our prayer life. How do we know if we're praying the will of God? Any time you pray the Word of God it's the will of God. That's His Will that He has given us and that's His Word. So when you pray for your family, those around you, and there is something going on go to the Scriptures and pray that Scripture for those people and for those things going on in your life. You might be thinking, "Where do I find passages? This is so hard."

Here in Ephesians there are two great passages that I pray for my children, my wife, for me, guys that I'm discipling and for everybody. If I have prayed for you I have definitely prayed Ephesians 1:16-19 and I also pray Ephesians 3:14-19. When you look through other epistles of Paul you can pick up other prayers of Paul. You can pray the Great Commission, the great commandment or Matthew 6:33. There are a lot of passages in the Sermon on the Mount to pray for people. I love to go to the Psalms and pray those. Go to the Scriptures and find some and pray them for the people you are praying for. Start building on that and when a situation comes up in someone's life ask God for a passage that He would want you to pray for that person. You want to pray in the Spirit. To have a prevailing prayer life you need to pray in the Spirit and the power of God. It's through the Word of God.

Secondly, we pray in the Spirit and with power by having a surrendered will to God. When we pray our will needs to be surrendered to God. As you think about praying the Word of God being in surrender to the will of God hear Jesus' words in John 15:7 which says "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." If we're full of the Word of God and praying the Word of God then we also need to be abiding in Christ. We're totally surrendered to Him. We trust in Him with whatever the issue is that we're praying, we can be sure He'll answer. It could be 'yes', it could be 'no', it could be 'wait a little while' but He is going to answer. It will always be right, just and exactly what is ultimately best for you. God's Word tells us that. We pray surrendered to the will of God.

John Wesley was a man who was surrendered to the will of God. God used him mightily and he wrote this covenant prayer to the Lord. Listen to his surrendered heart; "I am no longer my own but Yours. Put me to what You will. Rank me with whom You will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for You or laid aside for You, exalted for You or brought low for You. Let me be full or let me be empty. Let me have all things or let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal and now blessed

and glorious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. This commitment now made on earth let it be ratified in heaven, Amen.” That’s a surrendered life. He had a prayer life that was prevailing. He prayed the Word. He prayed surrendered before the Lord.

Thirdly, to have that prayer in the Spirit, we pray the Word, we pray surrendered before the Lord but we need to pray in faith to God. We need to have faith in God and God alone. Our prayers need to be in faith in God, faith in God’s character that we know He’s sovereign, true and that He’ll do what is good, right and just always. We pray with faith knowing that we’re trusting completely in Him and totally surrendered to whatever the issue is in our life. We pray in faith. When we do this it’s a prevailing prayer life. We are praying in the Spirit when we pray this way.

Next this passage tells us we need to persevere in prayer. We need to keep alert and to pray with all perseverance. As you read through the New Testament you hear Jesus saying over and over again to His disciples, “Watch and pray.” When He went to Gethsemane He said “Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation.” His disciples fell asleep and what happened? They failed the temptation and scattered. Too many Christians have fallen asleep spiritually and have fallen to temptation. The Scripture is telling us not to do it. Stay alert and don’t fall asleep spiritually. Don’t decide that you’re going to rely upon yourself. Rely upon God and walk that way. Pray always. Pray alert and don’t fall asleep spiritually. Stay alert. The battle is real. It’s true and the only way you can buckle on that armor is through prayer, every piece has to be put on with prayer. Pray with alertness.

Also pray with perseverance. Jesus taught about this often. In one parable Jesus taught about this in Luke 11 and the persistent neighbor. Someone showed up at midnight and he had no food. He says “I need some food to feed these friends of mine who just showed up at my house.” The neighbor says “I’m asleep, my children are asleep. Go away and I’ll give you food tomorrow.” The guy just kept knocking and the neighbor finally went down and gave him some bread. Jesus said “He didn’t give him some bread just because he was his neighbor. He gave him bread to get rid of him so he could go back to sleep.” Do you remember how Jesus ended this passage to say here’s the reason I gave you this parable? Luke 11:9-10 says 9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What a promise! It’s persevering prayer. God wants us to persevere in our prayers.

Don’t quit praying. That person God has put on your heart, keep praying for them, and don’t stop. That issue going on in your life that seems as if it is wearing you out, don’t stop praying about it. That family member you have been praying to come to know Christ for years, persevere in prayer. Continue to pray for them. Ask, seek, knock, knock, knock, knock and He promises He will answer

those prayers. F.D. Gordon said, "The great people on earth today are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer nor those who say they believe in prayer nor yet those who can explain about prayer. I mean those people who take time and pray. They have not time. It must be taken from something else. This something else is important, very important and pressing but still less important and less pressing than prayer." We need to be persevering Christians who take the time to pray, make the time to pray and pray always. We are to be supplicating for all the saints.

Aren't we supposed to be praying for everybody? Yes, but the priority of our prayers is to be for God's people. It is clear. The priority of our love is that we love one another as Christ has loved us and that's how the world knows we are His followers. The priority of our prayer is praying for one another – praying for the saints, praying for other believers. That needs to be a priority in our prayer life. Our role in the family of God is to be fighting that spiritual battle on our knees for one another. That's what we do. We're a family. We need to come together and pray for one another. We need to be praying for our church family. I know many Sunday schools do a great job. Briarwood is a praying church. I know you all are faithful to do that and that's great. We need to continue to do that. We need to be also praying for our own family members and then praying for the world. We need to find missionaries that our church supports and pray for them. The weekly is a great prayer tool for that. Pray for one person a day and use it to pray for the world. That's what he is saying here. Pray for all the saints, not just for you or your family but for other believers in your church and for all the saints in our city and in the world.

How do we do this? One, is to pray listening, meaning let God move you who to pray for. He'll lay people on your heart. Maybe He has already done that to you. You might say to someone "I was just thinking about you and I don't know why." It is probably because God wants you to pray for that person. So as God puts people in your mind or on your heart, use that as an indicator and pray for them.

I heard a story one time about a missionary that happened over 70 years ago and the missionary's name was Raymond Edmund. He was in Ecuador and he got really sick to the point he was on his death bed. The doctors told his wife that he wouldn't make it through the night and he's there but he's not there. The wife took her wedding dress and died it black so she could be prepared for the funeral the next day because they didn't have any embalming fluid so the funeral would have to be the day after he died. Now this was before texts and email but thousands of miles away in the United States there was a group meeting for prayer and Bible study. One of the guys there was a friend of this man who was sick whose name was Dr. Joseph Evans. During this group time Dr. Evans raised his hand and said "I just feel impressed that we need to pray for Raymond." "What do we need to pray?" "I don't know." They just stopped and prayed for Raymond until finally they had a peace and then finished their study.

They didn't think much of it and I'll tell you the end of the story. God healed Raymond. Several months later Raymond comes back to the United States travelling around telling groups of people what great work God had done in Ecuador and then he would get to this story and share how God had healed him miraculously off the death bed. He got to this one prayer group and was sharing this story and someone said "What day was that?" Raymond told them the day and they said "What hour was that?" He told them the hour and they said "That's when God stopped us to pray." God will lead us to pray and we may never know the end of the story like this group did. By the way, Raymond Edmund ended up being the President of Wheaton College for 40 years. God used him to train up missionaries and pastors, Godly men and women at Wheaton College. We may not know why God lays people on our hearts and we may never know but when God puts someone on your heart, pray. We have to pray listening.

Also, we have to pray intentional prayers. When we are talking with someone and they share something that is going on in their life, capture that and write it down somewhere. I know a lot of you like to use index cards and carry them with you so you can pray for people as you go. We want to pray intentionally. Have a prayer plan. Not only should we pray as we go and everywhere we go but we need to set time aside to pray every day. So often we think I'll pray as I go and we find that we've gone a lot before we have prayed. So we need that intentional time where we stop and we pray before the Lord. We need to make sure we have that worship time of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication before the Lord. We need that every day. Set a little bit of time if you're not doing it already and begin there. Find a place that you won't be interrupted and a time that works for you, whether it's early in the morning or late at night or during lunch. The key is to set a time and pray.

How do you pray for all kinds of people? We all can't pray for all people everyday but we can capture a list of people and pray for different people on different days. I found that helpful for me. I pray for different people on different days of the week. In this intentional pray Paul in that passage knew that those in Ephesus were praying for him while he was in prison in Rome. So he gave them a specific prayer request. He said "and also for me...pray these two things. Pray that I share the Gospel clearly and pray that I'm courageous to do it that I don't wimp out." Paul, wimp out? He is saying "I'm Paul but I need you to pray for me. I need my brothers and sisters in Christ to uphold me in prayer." If Paul is humble enough to realize he needs prayer then I need to share with some people how to pray for me too. I encourage you to do that. Share with others how they can pray for you.

Another point you can take from this is to pray for your spiritual leaders. They need it. While Pastor Reeder is on a study sabbatical we need to be praying for him each day. Pray for your elders, pastors and deacons. Paul is saying the same thing here. Our spiritual leaders need prayer as they lead us.

We have talked about prevailing prayer in our life and maybe you are thinking “I don’t have that kind of relationship with God. That’s awesome but I just don’t even know if I’m there. I don’t really feel that I walk with Him every day. I don’t even know where I am spiritually.” You can have that relationship with God. If that is you I encourage you to receive Christ as your Savior today. Just confess to God that you need Him. Surrender your life to him. Confess your sins. Trust Him and say “I need you Christ. Today I just ask you to forgive me of my sins and make me the person you want me to be.” He’ll give you that kind of prayer life. He’ll give you that kind of life where you can walk with Him every day.

Now for us believers, what do we do? We pray with a prevailing prayer life. We take these points and we pray all prayers with all supplication. Pray as a lifestyle. We want to pray with power in the Spirit. We want to persevere in our prayers and never give up. We want to pray for all the saints. Let’s be men and women who pray. That’s the life takeaway.

Pastor Reeder called me today even on his sabbatical and prayed for me. As we were getting off the phone I thanked him so much and said “I only have one application Pastor and that’s pray.” He said, “That’s it. That’s what we need to do and the only way to learn to pray is to pray.” That’s our application in this study. We just need to pray. Let’s pray this way that God gave us to pray to be men and women with a prevailing prayer life. Though a man have all knowledge about prayer and though he understands all mysteries about prayer, unless he prays he will never learn to pray. Let’s go to the Lord in prayer.

Prayer:

Father we do thank You for Your Word. Thank for tonight as we’re encouraged that You hear us, You care about us, You give us Your Holy Spirit to live within us and You will give us the strength and power to walk out the Christian life as we pray before you. Thank You God for those great promises. Thank You God that You do answer our prayers and for that Great Gift. I do pray right now that You would make us men and women of faith, men and women who will be prevailing in our prayer life that we will truly pray as a lifestyle, pray always as we go and we’ll take time to pray and that we’ll pray in the Spirit and the Word of God according to Your will, surrendered to You. Also that we will pray in faith persevering in our prayers, we won’t give up and we’ll keep praying. Father, we will pray for one another and all the saints. I pray that You will do that in our lives today, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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