

Ephesians 6:18-20

“The Weapon of Prayer”

October 21st 2012

Introduction – stand and read the text

- We have covered much ground on this series on being a vertical church and I hope your heart has been stirred to pray as much as my heart has been
 - Especially how prayer develops our relationship with God and we begin to see Him as Father
- But I want to wrap up this series with you on sharing how prayer can not just be essential to our relationship with God, but it is also a powerful tool in the hands of the believer

That is the point Paul the apostle is trying to make here in Ephesians chapter 6 – he has already laid out the fact the Christian life is a battle

- And in this battle you have a real spiritual enemy
 - It is not your wife or your boss or your children

The war you wage is a three fold battle

#1 - The world

- Through TV, through provocative fashion, through music – sometimes we think its neutral, but...
 - **James chapter 4:4 – “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”** – if you actually find some great satisfaction in this world – there is a problem – because it is an enemy

#1 - The world

#2 - Your flesh – your carnal will

- It is at constant conflict with the will of God for my life

Paul says - “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;” – Romans 7:18

You see I think the flesh is a great picture – when you got up this morning – you had to take care of it – Why? - your flesh stinks and so you needed perfume – under the arms, in the mouth, on the heart

- Because apart from care and concern your body stinks
 - And I think it is the wisdom of God – He gave us a body that smells on the outside, so He wouldn't have to convince us too much that we stink on the inside as well
- Apart from God my heart is not others centered – it is self centered

Our culture is that way – they have mirrors at the gym so when I can look at myself while I work on myself – then I can open up Self magazine, read how myself can improve myself, then maybe I will go to Facebook and look at photos of myself and read what myself has written about myself – yo soy muey importaunte

- I totally stole that from somebody else, but it is such a great illustration because...
 - I am always on my mind – **this after I am interested in what I am eating = order whatever you want – unless what you order looks better than what I have, then I am interested**

- Because I am always on my mind – our flesh, it stinks

But that is not the only enemy...

#1 - The world

#2 - Your flesh – your carnal will

#3 –the devil

- He works well with the world and your flesh to bring about your destruction
 - That is why we must be armed for the battle

We must as Paul says in Ephesians 6, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might

- We need to put on the whole armor of God

Paul is writing this letter not from some air-conditioned office, but in a jail cell

- And he looks up at this soldier and notices six parts of the uniform and compares it to seven things we need to be clothed in if we are going to be strong and in the power of his mind
 - The belt of truth
 - Breastplate of righteousness
 - Feet shod with the gospel of peace
 - Shield of faith
 - Helmet of Salvation
 - Sword of the Spirit
 - And then, the seventh... the final weapon for our warfare???

Now what do we do???

- What is the next phrase?
 - What do we do next??? – the armament is in place
 - I am ready – I have never been more ready in my life
 - We are ready – we have become God's mighty army
 - Now what do we do

Are you ready – come on say it – ready???

- Now – we need to be slightly Pentecostal
 - Ready – repeat after me - ready???
 - Belt on– ready???
 - In His righteousness – ready?
 - Shield of faith? – ready??
 - Helmet in place –ready???
 - Sword of the Spirit – ready?? – I like this

- What has called us to do next

Ready – pray!!! – Paul says Pray!!!

- Pray???
 - Oh wait a minute
 - We are going to have a prayer meeting now
 - I thought that was on Nov 4th – when I am “out of town”
 - I thought we were going to fight or protest or maybe even preach
 - Are you serious!!! – we are going to pray?
- Well, if you guys are going to pray – well I think I left the iron on
 - I have my dog to watch, my oven needs cleaning

Isn't' it strange, when the church is called to prayer anything and everything we have to do, but pray!!!

- Have you been at a home Bible study
 - The fellowship is sweet, the food is awesome
 - Even during the Bible study – we are listening
- But then it is time for prayer
 - And suddenly – I will go check on the kids
 - I just realized I have to get up early and tomorrow will come real early – and ah yeah its early
 - So I will be praying for you in the car on the drive home
- I can get a crowd for preaching, I might be able to get a crowd for protesting
 - But the prayer meeting – every church I have ever been a part of – not really the crowded service

What is it about prayer???

- Again if I said – put on the helmet, get that sword ready and lets go out and protest
 - We might have quite a crowd
- If I said lets have a debate
 - Or if I said lets go out and fight

But if I said – lets pray

- Well in too many minds prayer is like, oh, I need another cup of coffee – your subject today is prayer
 - Looking around – how many lights are up there
 - There is a problem
- We just don't understand what prayer is, a powerful weapon
 - How so?
 - Well leave Ephesians 6 for a moment and lets turn a few books to the right, to the book of James, James chapter 5:13-18 – we see why it is a powerful weapon

4 Things the weapon of prayer brings

#1 - Prayer brings Comfort - James 5:13

- James says, are you suffering????
 - And the word he uses there means anything that brings mental anguish
 - Does something have you stressed out, and worried – bummed out, confused
- Do you feel like the world is closing in around you???
 - Hey – God wants you to know that prayer brings comfort!!!

I don't know how many times I have been to my limit, not knowing what was going to happen, and been reminded to pray and God brought comfort to my heart.

- It is funny that when we are suffering we will go to anybody and everybody that will hear us
 - We will go to our Mom, we will go to our friends

Some of you poured out your heart to your pet – oh felix, only you understand me? – some of you know I'm telling the truth

- But what does that accomplish???

- Take it to the Lord!!! – James says it is prayer that brings comfort

I think Paul says it best – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:6

- One more note of James 5:13, that word there is continual in the Greek
 - We are to keep praying
 - And that is the idea of “if you are cheerful” – sing psalms
- In others words there needs to be continual contact
 - If you pray only when you are suffering, maybe God will let you suffer just because He wants to hear from you
- We want to cry out when things are going bad, and cry out when things are going good – in praise and worship
 - It is to be continual

4 Things the weapon of prayer brings

#1 - Prayer brings Comfort - James 5:13

#2 – Prayer brings Healing – James 5:14-15

- not only does prayer bring comfort in our lives, it can bring healing as well
 - God lays out pattern of what we should do when we are sick
 - Call for the elders – elders are spiritual, mature – **notice you are to call**

Some people get mad because they are home sick and no one calls – I don’t know if you are sick

Next the elders anoint you with oil and pray for your healing

- now don’t misunderstand this verse
 - God is not saying don’t go to doctors if you are sick

If fact some scholars believe that when James says, anoint with oil – God is giving them full permission to try out the common healing practices of the day

- In their day, a common treatment for illness was to be covered in oil
 - Now in our day – it might be to take an antibiotic
 - This may be what God is referring to – so don’t misunderstand
- The oil is seen as medicine, it is also seen as a point of contact for your faith as well, because the two are tied in together
 - God uses medicine, but He also uses faith

James says, “the prayer faith will save the sick”

- again there is much misunderstanding and it usually goes one of two ways
 - either people believe God always heals
 - Or they believer God never heals and therefore He is speaking of spiritual sickness

The truth is found in I John 5:14-15 “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him.” – I John 5:14-16

- We are to pray for healing knowing God is going to do His will
 - Sometimes He heals – guy with Cancer

- Sometimes He doesn't - me
- Well then, why pray???

Because God has commanded, and He might want to heal you, and He may want to use this pattern that is laid out in the word

- So do not neglect to pray.. Continually

4 Things the weapon of prayer brings

#1 - Prayer brings Comfort - James 5:13

#2 – Prayer brings Healing – James 5:14-15

#3 – Prayer brings Forgiveness – Jams 5:15-16

- prayer not only brings physical healing, but spiritual as well
 - We are spiritually sick (sin)
 - And again we are told of a blessing of prayer
- Forgiveness comes from it

I John 1:9, “If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” – I John 1:9

- Notice – God will forgive you
 - You need to confess

Why

- I think God does it because we verbally agree with Him, making it stick in our mind when we are tempted again
 - The word confess is “Homolego”
 - Homo meaning the same
 - Lego meaning to speak
- We speak the same as the Lord
 - Lord, I agree with You, this sin needs to go in my life
 - It does not fulfill, it does not bless my soul
- So Lord I agree with you
 - This helps the next time you are tempted, you are on record – Lord I agree with You and it helps with temptation

But James says something else about forgiveness and being healed of spiritual sin, and that is sometimes it needs to involve others

- nothing wrong with just you and God
 - but sometimes you need help

God has put Godly brothers and sisters for that purpose

- We need accountability
 - This is why we have men and women up front available for you – Pastor Rob and I don't sit in a little box and hear your sins – but we have these men and women available to partner with you in prayer for many things, but also for repentance

4 Things the weapon of prayer brings

#1 - Prayer brings Comfort - James 5:13

#2 – Prayer brings Healing – James 5:14-15

#3 – Prayer brings Forgiveness – James 5:15-16

#4 – Prayer brings Power – James 5:16-18

- James says clearly that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”
 - There is power in those whose lives are given over to prayer and intercession

And James’ example is the prophet Elijah

- Unlike many other prophets, we know very little of his background
 - We don’t know about his family history, we don’t know about his young years growing up
- All we know is that he all of a sudden appears on the scene – stands before the kings of his day, boldly declaring the word of the Lord
 - and radically effecting the tone spiritually for generations
 - Elijah was a man through whom God was magnified - A man whose life availed much!!!

Now you might say – yeah, but that was Elijah

- he was a prophet, he was a holy man of God
 - I’m just an average Joe
- Oh – before you let Satan rip you off, would you notice with me verse 17...

The Bible says “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours,”

- Some of your versions might say “he was a man with like passions as us”
 - What James is trying to tell you is that Elijah was not a super hero believer
 - We think all of these Bible characters had capes with giant S on the back for Superman
 - But the reality is so much different – they were real people with real sin like you and I

He was a man who struggled with sin, He was a man who had mood swings, He was a man who failed just like you and I

- Some of you know the Classic Story of Elijah and his victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel – The challenge is given, the prophets gather, they both make alters but only God rains down fire.
 - We know that story well

But did you know that after that, in fact immediately after that, wicked queen Jezebel threatens his life, and Elijah, the man of faith, the man of God runs like a little baby (now I’m thinking this would be the moment of greatest trust)

- And more than that he acts like a baby too – he cries out for God to kill him because he says, “I’m the only one who loves You, just kill me”
 - And God tells him – I love it (I Kings 19) – take a nap – eat some food – you need another nap – you need some more food
 - I knew it was godly to take day for just eating and sleeping – I keep telling Christy this – its in the word
- But Elijah goes through this great time of depression and complain
 - Just like I do – just like you do

Hey, Elijah was a man with a nature like ours

- So then why was he different?????
 - Verse 17 “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, (you could translate it) but he prayed...”

- He was a man of prayer

You see back in verse 16 we are told, “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”

- Now you might say – yeah there it is – “righteous”
 - I’m not righteous!!!

I believe the word when it says Elijah had struggles like me, so I don’t know how he did it, but I know when I read the end of verse 16 that can’t apply to me because I am not righteous

- But I want you to realize, you are!!!!
 - I know Satan tells you otherwise, but listen to what Paul says in Romans chapter 4...

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” – Romans 4:3

- Abraham believed God and God declared Him to be righteous
 - And the reality is the same thing happens to you and me
 - God declares us righteous simply because we have believed in Him, because we have given our lives to Him
 - I know you know – we still fall and sin
 - But in the eyes of the Lord if you have taken what Jesus did on the cross for you, you are righteous

You are righteous (God has you covered there)

- But are you effective and fervent in your prayers?

You see, look at those words in verse 16

- Effective meaning you are not going through the motions – just repeating some wrote prayer
 - not religious words – oh Holy Deity (unless)
 - not for fleshly gain – Lord give me that lady

FERVENT ...

Not just a meals times and bed times as you drift into sleepy

- But set aside time, have a prayer list so your mind doesn’t wonder

For most of us our prayer life consists of our prayers for our food and our good night prayers

- That is what we are famous for, lets be honest
 - Our food prayers, our good night prayers
- And when you think about what we are missing out on - In the Scriptures we know there are

Different types of angels

**Military angels – to battle on behalf of God
(2 Kings 19:35)**

**Messenger angels – to answer your prayers
(Daniel 9:20-23)**

Ministering angels – to comfort you in trials (Matthew 4:11)

Keep Slide up while I explain

- Military angels – when all seemed dire to the nation of Judah surrounded by the armies of Assyria that had just hauled off their brothers from Israel into captivity– Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed – one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians
- Messenger Angels – Daniel prayed wondering about his nation and what God was doing, and angels were sent to out to give him wisdom and direction
- Ministering Angels – After Jesus temptation Angels were dispensed to comfort and encourage him

Do you see the power is available through prayer

Yeah but that was Isaiah and Daniel and Jesus

- Those are some pretty heavy hitters
 - I am just back row BOB
 - No – listen, listen

These Military angels, this messenger angels, these ministering angels – all of these are released at the command of God as His people pray

- **Hebrews 1:14** says speaking about angels – **“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? – Hebrews 1:4**

There is power available for us church – but what do we do..

- Well, this afternoon we go to our local restaurant
 - And there they are – military angels, ministering angels, messenger angels – all ready to go
 - The Calvary Christians are going to prayer now – are you ready, ready
 - And then we pray – thanks for the spaghetti, bless our fellowship as we talk about the ball scores and current movies
- And I image these powerful angels think – oh man, another food prayer
 - And that is when Clarence shows up – little Clarence the angel, little dumpy guy – doesn’t have wings because he isn’t going anywhere – he is the food blesser
 - Did I hear nachos, bless the ribs
 - 4th of July Weekend is my favorite!!
- And the rest of these angels are waiting for the church to pray for something other than food
 - To be fervent and effectual in using the weapon of prayer

If that be the case and it is - there are problematic people who are not cured because the church is powerless

- And we can look up to the heavens and say – why aren’t you doing this, why aren’t you taking care of that
 - And maybe the answer from heaven would be – I have provided everything – you need for life and godliness – but you are powerless, because you are faithless and perverse
 - And maybe we need to wake up

And you see here is the deal we read these things and we start to pray – Lord these things are so tragic

- But I, then I sense God knocking on my heart saying why is it that my church always seems to pray for things after rather than before

- Lord we are really busy having nachos and going to local restaurants with stickers on the back of our cars letting people know we are Christians
- And I'm guilty – We are five years old church – and most of us have walked with God for a lot longer than that
- It is time to grow up!!!

Do you do this???? - Why not

- you see you are righteous, but do you pray fervently, effectively
- It is that which will avail much in your life
- God will work His power through the young man or woman who does

Now I want to close by asking you why????

- Why would you want to take the time
 - Maybe you are fine
 - You are not in need of comfort
 - You are never sick - You hardly sin

If you are in that place come shake my hand so some of whatever you have might rub off on me

- But maybe you don't see your own desperate need for prayer
 - Look at the closing verses of this book

Verse 19-20

- If you dare to step into the battle, if you dare to intercede in prayer for your friends, for your family, for this youth ministry whose focus it is to turn people toward Jesus
 - If you do – God will honor that prayer, that heart and souls will be saved, sins will be forgiven, lives will be touched and changed
- Your friends, your family, this ministry needs you to care, needs you to be fervent in your prayer

Elijah a normal guy, but a man of prayer – effected his nation – James who wrote this, prayed – effected his church, it is effecting you tonight – What about you?????