

Wrestling in Prayer (Part 7)

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Colossians 4:12

*12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always **wrestling in prayer** for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

Review (Parts 1-6)

In our series on WRESTLING IN PRAYER we began by discussing the basic **PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER...**

- Prayer is first and foremost about relationship
- Prayer is believing in and understanding who God is
- Prayer is not a formula
- Prayer is not telling God what to do
- Prayer is not bribing or manipulating God
- Prayer is not bringing God into conformity with our will but bringing our will into conformity with God's

Then we learned to pray for **DAILY BREAD** and **WRESTLE TO MOVE**

- from **FEAR** to **FAITH**
- from **DOUBT** to **TRUST**
- **COMPLAINING** to **THANKSGIVING**
- **ANXIETY** to **PEACE**

We talked about Wrestling in Prayer for **A WORD FROM GOD** when, like John The Baptist, we find ourselves in a personal prison of sickness and disease, persecution, impossible situations, unanswered prayers, devastating circumstances. A place of confinement, loneliness, discouragement, questioning, doubt, depression, fear.

As we wrestle in prayer, we hear the voice of the Lord speak to us...

- **The Kingdom of God is so much bigger than my own personal circumstances**
- **Keep the Faith**
- **I see your integrity and devotion**
- **Persecution and struggle are part of the package**
- **You're not alone in your struggle**
- **The Kingdom is advancing**
- **There will always be people who are upset with you**
- **You are my child**
- **It's ok to be tired**
- **I will take care of you**

We saw how important it is for us to Wrestle in Prayer for **THE LOST**. Praying that...

- the **EYES** of those who already believe will be **OPENED TO SEE** to see those who are still lost
- the **HEARTS** of those who believe will be **MOVED WITH COMPASSION** at the condition of the lost
- our **RESPONSE** to the need would be one of **ACTION**
- their **EYES** would be **OPENED** to their true condition
- their **HEARTS** would be **CONVICTED** of the **TRUTH** of their sin, their eternity, and their need to repent
- they would **RESPOND** by putting their **FAITH** in God's love, Forgiveness and Power to give them a new life.

Next, we discussed the power of prayer in **OVERCOMING TEMPTATION**. We learned that this type of prayer begins by humbling ourselves

- **BELIEVING** God **EXISTS** (Our Father - who art - in heaven)
- **ACCEPTING** that God is absolutely **HOLY** and that His ways are **PERFECT** (hallowed by your name)
- **OBEDIENTLY** living out those truths in our lives (Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven)

We said that we...

- We wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by asking God to lead us or give us **DIRECTION**
- We wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by focusing on the **PROVISION** that God has already given us.
- Finally, we wrestle in prayer to **OVERCOME TEMPTATION** by standing in His **STRENGTH**

A couple of weeks ago we focused on wrestling in prayer for **FORGIVENESS**

- We wrestle with our own sinfulness allowing the Holy Spirit to examine us, acknowledging, and confessing our sin
- We wrestle with the Magnitude of God's grace in our lives reminding ourselves how much God has forgiven us.
- We wrestle with the emotions of our hurt and pain not denying them but asking God to heal us.
- We wrestle with our anger and trust in God's judgement and justice
- We wrestle to let go of the debt that has been incurred
- We wrestle to pray for blessings in their lives and wish them well
- We wrestle to love them with God's unconditional love

Today, we will wrap up this series by focusing on the last part of the Lord's prayer as we talk about **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

Matthew 6:5-14

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. **for yours (Thine) is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Every time I read this statement, I feel like there is an unspoken reference to another kingdom - the kingdom of this world, the kingdom inhabited by our enemy the devil. I feel like this statement reminds us that God's kingdom is the true kingdom. God's kingdom is the real kingdom of power. God's kingdom is the one that will reign in glory forever. And what establishes the reality of that truth in this world in which we are engaged in a battle of two kingdoms - **PRAYER**

We cannot discuss what it means to wrestle in prayer without talking about Spiritual warfare. Remember what we learned early on about this phrase "wrestling in prayer"

Transliteration: *agonizomai*

The word itself can mean to labor or strive earnestly or to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers antagonistic to the gospel

Paul refers to the weapons of Spiritual Warfare...

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (AMP)

3 For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh *and* using the weapons of man. **4** The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Epaphras wrestled in prayer and surely some of that included prayers of spiritual warfare set against the rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And in our lives, we too, must wrestle in prayer to see victory in this very real spiritual warfare. Thankfully, the scriptures teach us exactly how to prepare for this battle in prayer.

Ephesians 6:10-18

The Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. **13** Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. **14** Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, **15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the **gospel of peace**. **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. **17** Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God.

18 And **pray in the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

The Helmet of Salvation

Our prayers have no authority without a relationship with Jesus. This is what Jesus seems to be alluding to in His statement about the Pagans prayers

7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

There was no relationship, so there was no power.

Through salvation we have right standing with God, our relationship is restored and all authority on heaven and earth has been given to us

Matthew 28:18

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Luke 9:1-2

9 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, **2** and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

That's why we pray *In His Name* because we are invoking (standing in) His authority

One of the first places the devil will attack is our minds. He wants us to believe we have no power, no right standing with God, no authority. But the Word tells us that

Revelation 12:10-11

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. **11** They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

We fight this battle by putting on the helmet of salvation and walking in the assurance of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the power of his authority to conquer the enemy in prayer

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16** Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The largest piece of our armor, it protects the most targeted part of our bodies. Righteousness is provided by Christ but must also be lived out in the choices we make every day. When we fail to live righteously, we expose ourselves to the attacks of the enemy and we weaken the power of our prayers

James 5:16

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

1 Peter 3:10-12

10 For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. **11** They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. **12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Isaiah 59:1-2

59 Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. **2** But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

The Belt of Truth

It is important for us to use the weapon of truth in our prayers. The devil is a liar and a deceiver and loves to lead us into false truths. The truth has great power

John 8:32

32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

When we pray knowing the truth, our prayers have the power to set the captives free. In fact, the only way we can defeat the enemy is to confront him with the truth. This is what Jesus did when He was tempted. Satan twisted the truth and Jesus defeated him by using the truth.

This is why Jesus taught us to pray... "your kingdom come your will be done" We must know the truth of God's will so that we may pray it.

1 John 5:14

14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

The shoes of the gospel of Peace

You might ask... What does this have to do with spiritual warfare. But we must remember that God's ultimate goal in this world is to reconcile the lost to himself. Every spiritual battle has at its heart God's plan to save mankind and Satan's attempt to keep that from happening.

That's why we took time to talk in detail about Wrestling in prayer for the Lost. Our pray should be that through every battle God would be glorified. That the name of Jesus would be lifted high. Without the victory of salvation there is no victory.

The Shield of Faith

With the shield of faith, we are able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. But without faith, the bible says we cannot please God. Prayer without faith is weak and ineffective. That's why Jesus told us...

Matthew 21:22

22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

Mark 9:23 (To the man with a demon possessed boy who said if you can)

23 “‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

Mark 11:23-24

23 “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The Sword of The Spirit

The next piece of Armor Paul tells us to take up is the one offensive weapon that is listed. It is The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

What power there is in praying the Word of God. The great thing is we can be assured that we are praying God's will when we pray His very words. There are so many great prayers already written for us in God's Holy Word. The entirety of God's will is written for us to learn and know and use.

But we cannot pray the Word if we don't know the Word...

VIDEO: Church in China

Hebrews 4:12

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Isaiah 55:11

11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

The Baptism of The Holy Spirit

Finally, Paul tells us that Spiritual Warfare Prayer requires that we pray in the Spirit.

Jude 20

20 But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

Romans 8:26-27

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

We once again need to emphasize the importance of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and the purpose of praying in tongues

Fasting

There is one more tool in our prayer arsenal that we need to discuss. In a time of great spiritual warfare Daniel declared.

Daniel 9:3

3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Throughout the scriptures men and women of God turned to God in prayer and fasting. When Jesus was asked by his disciples why they couldn't drive out the demon from the young boy he told them that "this kind comes out only by prayer and fasting.

Ezra 8:23

23 So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.