

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 20:11:2007

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-24

## THE WELL DRESSED CHRISTIAN

### 9. PRAYING AT ALL TIMES

I read the story of an American lady, a Christian who was about to put a pie into the oven when the phone rang. It was the school nurse. Her son had a high fever and would she come and take him home. The mother calculated how long it would take to drive to school and back, how long the pie would take to cook, and she felt there was enough time. Popping the pie in the oven she left for school. *When she arrived her son's fever had got worse, and the nurse urged her to take him to the Doctor.* She drove to the clinic as fast as she could and got the Doctor to examine him. He wrote out a prescription and told her to get him to bed right away. By the time she got the boy home and headed out again for the shopping mall, she was not only frayed, but frazzled and frantic as well. However, she got the prescription and rushed back to the car, which was locked.

Yes, there were her keys, hanging in the ignition switch, locked inside the car. She ran back into the mall, found a phone and rang home. When her son finally answered, she blurted out, *"I've locked the keys inside the car."* The boy was barely able to speak. In a hoarse voice he whispered, *"Get a wire coat hanger Mum. You can get in*

*with that."* The phone went dead. So she began to search for a wire coat hanger which proved to be difficult. Wooden hangers and plastic hangers they had in abundance but the shops did not sell wire coat hangers anymore. At last she got one. Hurrying out of the shopping centre, she halted. She stared at the wire coat hanger. *"I don't know what to do with this."* Then she remembered the pie in the oven. All the frustrations of the past hour collapsed on her and she began crying. Then she prayed, *"Dear Lord, my boy is sick and he needs this medicine and my pie is in the oven and the keys are locked in the car and Lord, I don't know what to do with this wire coat hanger. Dear, Lord, send someone who knows what to do with it and I really need that person, now Lord."* Amen. She was just there wiping her eyes when an old banger pulled up to the curb and stopped in front of her. A young man in torn jeans got out.

When he got close to her she stepped in front of him and held out the wire coat hanger. *"Young man,"* she said *"do you know how to get into a locked car with one of these?"* He plucked the hanger from her hand and said, *"Where's the car?"* A quick look at the door and window and a couple of twists of the coat hanger and the door was open. When she saw the door open, she threw her arms around him, *"Oh,"* she said *"the Lord sent you."* *You're such a good boy, you must be a Christian."* He stepped back and said, *"No ma'am I am not a Christian and I'm not a good boy. I just got out of prison yesterday."* *"Bless God,"* she cried, *"the Lord sent me a professional."* Now that lady had a great prayer image. She did exactly what Christ said she should do. Do you

recall the words of the Lord Jesus, “ *Men ought always to pray and not to faint.* ” ( Lk 18:1 ) You see, the Lord knows that when the battle gets hot, you can faint, grow weary and abandon the fight if you don’t pray. We have only two alternatives. We can either pray or faint. There’s no middle war, so prayer becomes vital in the war. A well known Christian hymn writer, made this powerful statement about prayer in one of his hymns,

*Restraining prayer we cease to fight  
Prayer makes the Christian armour bright  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees*

Now after focusing on the armour of God in ( 6:14-17 ) Paul now discusses the theme of prayer. We have entitled this study, “ **Praying at all Times**, and we have divided it into five.

### **(1) THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER**

Why is it necessary to watch and pray ? For two simple reasons.

#### ***(a) Prayer is Needed to Put the Armour On:***

Look if you will at ( 6:18 ) Now prayer is not mentioned as part of the Christian’s armour because it is more than that. Prayer works in concert with the armour. Paul is not saying that in addition to the armour add prayer, he is implying that prayer is woven into the armour. In the Greek the words “ *Praying always*, ” actually read “ *by*

*means of praying.* ” In other words, Paul is saying that the way to put on the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the word of the Spirit is by praying. This truth is expressed aptly in that well known hymn

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus  
Stand in His strength alone  
The arm of flesh will fail you  
Ye dare not trust your own  
Put on the gospel armour  
Each piece put with prayer  
Where duty calls or danger  
Be never wanting there*

My .... every morning before we do anything else, we should first surrender ourselves to the Lord. We need to practice ( Rom 12:1-2 ) daily where Paul says, “ *I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.* ” You see, before we put the armour on, we must present our body, mind and will as a sacrifice to Him. Then by faith, we should prayerfully put on each piece of the armour. This is something that each of us must do for himself. I can’t put the armour for you, and you can’t do it for me. And all through the procedure of arming ourselves and undergoing the demands of the battle we are to be engaged in prayer. It is the very air we breathe. (a)

#### ***(b) Prayer is Needed to Make the Armour Work:***

Merely putting on the armour does not accomplish anything for us if we don't have prayer behind yet. You see, prayer gives the Christian soldier the energy, power and strength he needs to face the warfare. And “*take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, praying always ....*,” Just as we cannot separate the sword from the rest of the armour so we dare not separate the Word of God from prayer. My .... it's by the Word of God that we are spiritually enlightened, and it's by prayer that we are spiritually enabled. Now the book of Ephesians probably more than other book in the New Testament, presents the resources that are ours in Christ. This book is a catalogue of all that is ours as believers. The key is ( 1:3 ) where Paul says, we are blessed “*With all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” Paul describes those blessings for us in all of these six chapters.

The book of Ephesians lifts us up to great heights, and we stay there for the whole book until we come to ( 6:18 ) for it is there that God demands we fall upon our knees. Prayer becomes the key to appropriating our resources in Christ. We cannot float around in glory, we have got to come back to the reality of getting on our knees before God, so that these resources can be implemented in our lives. ***The book that begins in the heavenlies ends with us our knees as Paul calls us to prayer.*** Now you might think, that in a book describing such wonderful resources, prayer would not be that necessary. I mean what would we pray for ? After all, Paul wrote that we are wonderfully blessed, ( 1:3 ) we are tremendously loved ( 1:4-6 ) we are truly redeemed ( 1:7 ) we are spiritually rich ( 1:11 ) we are eternally sealed ( 1:13 ) and that's just chapter one.

There is so much more. I mean here are all our resources in Christ, so why pray ? *Because prayer is the key to appropriating your resources in Christ.* You see, there is a great danger that faces us right here and the danger is this. We understand our position in Christ. We know what our gifts are. We have seen God's blessing. We've had so much success and so little failure that it's easy for us to forget to acknowledge the Lord. We can fall into the terrible sin of self dependence and lose our sense of dependence on God. My .... this spiritual armour and our resources are neither mechanical nor magical, they are dependent on prayer. (1)

## (2) THE FREQUENCY OF PRAYER

When are we to pray ? Always. Did you notice the four alls of prayer in this passage ? “*Praying always with all prayer ...., with all perseverance .... for all saints.*” Now when you go to Israel you will see many Jewish people going through prayers hour after hour in front of the Wailing or Western Wall. But praying at all times has nothing to do with formulas and repetition, its simply living your life in the presence of God with an attitude of God consciousness. You see, your whole life should rise before the Lord in communion. Now,

### (a) THE PATTERN OF PRAYER:

Is given to us in the New Testament. Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus ? “*Watch ye therefore and pray always.*” ( Lk 21:26 ) The apostles said, “*But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the*

*Word.*” ( Acts 6:4 ) In ( Acts Ch 12 ) the church prayed unceasingly for Peter in prison. Paul indicated that he prayed without ceasing. He says to Timothy, “ *Without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.*” ( 2 Tim 1:3 ) And the apostle who prayed without ceasing encouraged others to do the same, and so he says to the Colossian believers, “ *Continue in prayer,*” and to the Thessalonians, “ *pray without ceasing.*” ( Col 4:2 Thes 5:17 ) Now does all of this not underscore,

### **(b) THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER:**

What does it mean to pray at all times ? Does it not simply mean living your life with an attitude of God consciousness ? Being conscious of God in every circumstance of life. So that everything we see and experience should become a prayer. Something we share with our Best Friend, something we instantly communicate with God. If we experience something good our first thought should be, “ *Lord, you’re the source of every good gift.*” If we see something evil we should pray that God would make it right. If we have an opportunity to meet someone who does not know Christ, our response should be, “ *Lord its so sad that person is not saved, help me to win him to your Son.*” Now do you see what is happening ? Life in its totality becomes an ascending prayer. All life’s thoughts, deeds, and circumstances become a point of communication with God.

Do you know one of the reasons why the Lord saved you ? It was for fellowship ( 1 John 1:1-3 ) **Horizontally** we are to Fellowship with the Family, “ *that ye also may*

*have fellowship with us,*” but **Vertically** we are to Fellowship with the Father “ *and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*” Does that not stagger your imagination ? God wants your fellowship. You can have fellowship with God. You can be as close to God as two best friends walking down a country lane. How do you have fellowship with God ? It is simple. You have fellowship with the Lord through the Word and prayer. You read the Bible, God talks to you. You pray, you talk to God. Someone has said that while “ *Christ has no favourites, He does have intimates.*” Are you one of them ? Are you walking with God ? Do you know something of uninterrupted communion with the Father ? Or are you denying God this fellowship ? You see, if you are saved and you don’t commune with the Lord in prayer, you’re denying Him the purpose for which He redeemed you.

When we are to pray ? Always. When is the best time to pray ? All times. David said, “ *Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.*” ( Ps 55:17 ) Do you remember what Luke said concerning the Lord Jesus ? “ *And .... He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*” ( Lk 6:12 ) As Christian soldiers we are to pray at all times so that whenever the battle starts we are ready. Our life is opened totally to God. (1) (2)

### **(3) THE SPHERE OF PRAYER**

For Paul talks about “ *praying .... in the Spirit.*” Dr. Ted Rendall writes “ *While conceivably Paul could be*

*stressing the fact that all prayer must be the product of the renewed human spirit. I believe he is here stressing the fact that all prayer must be “in the Spirit,” that is “in the Holy Spirit.”* Now what does Paul mean when he exhorts us to be “**pray in the Spirit?**” Well, praying in the Spirit has nothing to do with speaking in tongues, some have tried to introduce that into this verse, but you cannot. When then does Paul mean? He could mean to,

***(a) Pray in the Holy Spirit’s Energy:***

This then would be equivalent to saying, “*pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.*” Now Paul could mean that here. This is the kind of praying referred to by James, “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” ( James 5:16 ) But Paul may have something else in mind here. He may mean that we are to,

***(b) Pray with the Holy Spirit’s Mind:***

***It has been said that the prayer that reaches heaven is the prayer that originates in heaven.*** You see, the Holy Spirit not only empowers us for the battle, but He also enables us to pray in the Lord’s will. Paul says, “*likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what should we pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*” ( Rom 8:26 ) You see, while you live the Christian life the Spirit of God within you prays on your behalf. He always prays the right prayer and receives the right answer. That’s why ( Rom 8:28 ) says “*All things work together for good.*” That’s not an accident. Praying

in the Spirit is simply making your own prayers into line with the mind and will of the Holy Spirit. The question is, how do you do that? By being filled with the Holy Spirit. And do you know what it is to be filled with the Spirit of God? It is to be filled with the Word of God. ( Eph 5:18-20 Col 3:16-17 ) It is allowing God’s Word to infuse every part of your being. If you want to be Spirit filled, feed yourself a steady diet of God’s Word. Then when you pray you’ll be asking God for the kind of things that are consistent with His will for your life and the lives of others. My .... this is what it is to “*pray in the Holy Ghost,*” ( Jude 20 ) It is to pray with the Spirit’s mind. So Paul touches here on (1) (2) (3) but then he turns to,

**(4) THE MANNER OF PRAYER**

And he gives us some guidelines that are important for us to follow when we pray. How are we to pray? Well Paul us here that we are,

***(a) TO PRAY SINCERELY:***

There is to be that element of sincerity, passion and fervency in our prayers. Does Paul not hint at this when he says, “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*” Ted Rendall tells the story of Dr. Wilbur Chapman, an American evangelist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chapman was in England and he tells how that the evangelistic mission he was involved in. But then someone sent word to him that praying Hyde was coming to the mission to pray for God’s blessing on the special effort. Things changed immediately and people starting

getting saved. One evening Chapman said “ *Mr. Hyde I want you to pray for me.* ” Hyde and Chapman went into a room and locked the door. Hyde dropped upon his knees and waited five minutes without a single word coming from his lips. Chapman takes up the story. He said, “ *Then with upturned face, down which tears streamed he said ‘ Oh God.’ Then for five minutes at least he was still again, and when he knew that he was talking to God his arm went around my shoulder, and then came up from the depth of his heart such petitions for men as I never heard before, and I rose from my knees to know what real prayer is.* ” (a)

**(b) TO PRAY STEADFASTLY:**

The Greek word for “ *perseverance,* ” speaks of steadfastness. It means “ *to stick to it,* ” or “ *to continue.* ” Prayer is more than free and easy communication with the Lord, but a life of persevering and struggling over deep issues. Do you recall the parable the Lord Jesus told about the unjust judge ? ( Lk 18:1-8 ) A woman kept coming and begging before the judge and finally he did what she wanted. My .... do you show to the Lord that you really care about what you’re asking for ? You see, if you really want what you are asking for, persistence in prayer will come naturally. Do you remember the parable that Christ concerning the man who kept banging on the door of a store owner for some food ? ( Lk 11:5-10 ) The owner said, “ *the store is closed, my wife and children are already in bed. I’m not getting up.* ” But the man kept banging until the owner got up and gave him the bread.

In other words he persisted. Are you praying steadfastly ? Are you holding on to God for that unsaved loved one ? George Muller tells that in 1844 five people were laid on his heart and he began to pray for them. Eighteen months passed before one of them got saved. He then prayed for five more years and another was saved. At the end of twelve and a half years the third person was converted. And now for 40 years he had been praying for the other two without missing a single day but they were not yet saved. He felt encouraged to continue in prayer and he was sure of receiving an answer to the two who were still resisting the Holy Spirit. My .... pray on, pray through, pray until God answers your cry. (a) (b)

**(c) TO PRAY SELFLESSLY:**

Do you know what’s going on in the people around you ? You see, that word “ *watching,* ” indicates that we are to be looking outward rather than inward. We know our own problems but that’s not where we need to spend time our prayer time. We need to pray for other people watching for their needs. But then selfishness kills thinking like that. Is it not true that most of us never get serious in prayer until some trouble enters our lives ? Then we are about ten times more intense about our own problems than we are about anyone else’s. ***Does this not reveal our selfishness ?*** My .... do we lose ourselves in the needs of others the way Paul did ? Do you know what he said concerning the church at Ephesus, “ *I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.* ” ( Acts 20:31 ) Have you ever prayed for anyone night and day with tears ? We may have wept a few tears over our troubles, but I doubt if

many of us have wept over someone else's problems ? But we are to watch intensely, being alert to the needs of others. (a) (b) (c)

**(d) TO PRAY SPECIFICALLY:**

“ *With all prayer and supplication,* ” ( 6:18 ) Now the word translated “ *prayer,* ” generally means “ *requests,* ” the word “ *supplication,* ” means “ *specific.* ” There are general prayers and specific prayers. Paul is saying, “ *Pray all the time in all ways.* ” But this word “ *supplication,* ” refers to specific requests. Why should we pray specifically ? ***Because the Lord answers prayer to display His power, and if you don't pray specifically, you won't see God at work.*** Now its interesting to note that Paul had a specific prayer request here. Look at ( 6:19 ) Mind you Paul did not say, “ *Pray that I will get out of here fast. Pray for me, the chain is rubbing my right leg raw, pray that might be healed.* ” My .... he could have listed many things for which he wanted others to pray to improve the quality of his life. But what a spiritual man he was. He says “ *Pray for me that utterance may be given unto me that I might open my boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.* ” In other words, “ *pray that when Satan tempts me to shut my mouth, I will win over the temptation and speak the gospel. Pray that I will win the battle.* ”

Now do you not find this revealing ? In other words Paul's specific request focused on a spiritual issue. He did not want prayer for his physical needs but for his spiritual battle. My .... praying for physical needs, that is praying

for someone's heart problems, broken leg, surgery is important. I pray for people's physical needs but what about the spiritual battle ? ***Is it not just as important ? Is it not more important ? Are Christians winning the battle ? Is the gospel getting out ? Are souls being saved ? Is the work of God going forward ? Are these not the matters in which we should major in prayer ?*** Certainly this was Paul's primary focus, the spiritual got priority over the physical. Now let me ask you as you put your prayer life over against these guidelines how are you doing ? Look at the closing statement in ( 6:18 ) and notice,

**(5) THE OBJECTS OF PRAYER**

Who are we to pray for ? “ *For all saints.* ” ( 6:18 ) You see,

**(a) WE MUST PRAY FOR EACH OTHER:**

It does not tell us to pray for ourselves, that is not the priority, we are to pray for each other. Many a time some Christian has said to me, “ *Denis, I don't sleep so well and many a morning in the wee hours I am praying for you.* ” Do you see what Paul is saying here ? Don't worry about yourself, pray for others. Someone else will pray for you. When one part of the physical body is ill, the rest of the body compensates for it. ***Is it not the same in the prayer life of the church ?*** The sick can't help itself, the rest of the body has to support it in its weakness. We must pray for each other and as we do, others will not only be blessed but we will be blessed ourselves. Do you recall

what the Lord did for Job ? “ *And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.* ”

( Job 42:10 ) Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones tells the story that before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, in Barcelona, Madrid and other places there were psychological clinics with large numbers of neurotics undergoing drug treatment and others attending regularly for psychoanalysis and such like. *They had their personal problems, worries, anxieties, temptations, having to go back week after week, month after month to the clinics in order to be kept going.* Then came the Civil War and one of the most striking effects of that war was that it virtually emptied those clinics. These neurotic people were suddenly cured by a greater anxiety, the anxiety about their whole position, whether their homes would still be there, whether their husbands would still be alive, whether their children would be killed. ***The greater anxieties got rid of the lesser ones.*** In having to give attention to the big problem, they forgot their own personal and somewhat petty problems.

Do you want to be a spiritually healthy person ? Then lose yourself in the things that matter, the spiritual battles of other people. Lose yourself in prayer for the kingdom of God and see if your petty troubles disappear ? Is it not needful for us to learn that ? Surely one of the reasons people in our society are experiencing all kinds of psychologically induced pains and aches is simple. ***We are totally self-centred.*** Do you find it hard to tolerate people who are totally consumed with their own problems ? Is that not a manifestation of self-centredness that is foreign

to the Christian life ? Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones in his book “ **The Christian Soldier,**” writes “ *When you are sorry for yourself and feeling that you are having an unusually hard time with everything against you, and its almost enough to drive you to despair, one of the best remedies is to sit down and say, ‘ What about so and so ? What about this person ? What about believers in other countries ? Get down on your knees and pray for them, and you will soon get up finding that you have forgotten yourself, and you will find that in praying for them, you are solving your own problems and obtaining release.* ” Its wonderful to pray for others, but you cannot so do unless you know what’s going in their lives, that’s why Paul says,

***(b) WE MUST SHARE WITH EACH OTHER:***

Look if you will at ( 6:21-22 ) Since Paul did not expect the Ephesian believers to pray for him without some information, he brought word to them through his friend Tychicus. What did Paul want them to pray for ? That a spiritual battle might be won. Do you know something ? God answered that prayer. ( Phil 1:12-13 ) My .... we have to share the battle and the victories so that we can pray for each other. What about the folk around you ? Are you aware of their spiritual needs ? Do you know the spiritual needs of your spouse, children, friends, neighbours ? Are you praying for them as they fight the battle ? Or are you neglecting them ? Praying at all Times. Those who knew C. H. Spurgeon personally knew that he interleaved his life with prayer, every occasion was one for prayer.

D.L. Moody in commencing his first address in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1892 feelingly recalled the time when he first entered the building twenty five years previously. He had come four thousand miles to hear Charles Spurgeon. What impressed him most, then, he said was not the praise, though he thought he had never heard such grand congregational singing, it was not his sermon fine though it was, it was his prayer. **Mr. Spurgeon seemed to have such access to God that he could bring down the power from heaven.** Many years ago Robert Murray McCheyne said this “ *What a man is on his knees before God, that he is and no more.*” Measured by that yardstick, how do you stand ?