

Ephesians 6:18-19 by Wayne Barber

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Ephesians 6:18-19: STANDING IN THE NEED OF PRAYER

by Dr. Wayne Barber

There is a song that says,

"Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

The apostle Paul, singled out by God Himself, commissioned in the will and the sovereignty of God, was not above needing the prayers of others. If the apostle Paul was not above needing prayer, neither are any of us. We all live in the same spiritual war zone. Prayer is one of our key defenses against the deception that is in this world. In verse 18 Paul tells us to pray at all times in the Spirit, and not just for ourselves, but for one another. He is saying, "Don't just watch out for yourself, watch out for one another. Pray for one another."

**We live in a world of darkness.
Deception is all around us.**

There are 2 things that we need to do in the spiritual war zone:

1) First of all, we need to stand firm

We saw that in [Ephesians 6:13-14](#). How do you stand firm? You stand firm dressed in the armor of Jesus Christ, the armor for battle. What is the armor? It is the garment which is found in chapter 4. How do you put on the garment? You don't put it on the outside, you put it on the inside. All the things mentioned in [Ephesians 6:14-17](#) are like a list. They all have to do with standing firm. Each one of those things is a motivation that causes a person to live like Ephesians 4:24-6:9 describes. These are the kind of motivations we need. These are the armored threads of our garment. As we stand in the face of the enemy day by day, we are to stand firm, immovable.

2) Secondly, we are to be praying at all times in the Spirit.

One hooks to the other. We can't just be standing there. We've got to pray something. Paul says,

"Standing firm, praying at all times in the Spirit."

Why does he put "standing firm" first and "praying at all times in the Spirit" second? Because you can't pray in the Spirit until you are filled by the Spirit. Look in [Ro8:26](#). Paul makes a confession that every one of us has to make. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us in divine prayer. Prayer begins with God, not with us. Now, watch this in verse 26 of Romans 8:

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

He is not talking about some kind of prayer language. He is saying you can't pray in the Spirit until you are filled by the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the other advocate who helps us pray to the Father. These two things help us to stand in the world that we are in, the warfare that we are in, the war zone that we are in.

Remember, it is not a power struggle, it is a truth struggle. The battle I have every day, the battle you have every day, is how we think. [Proverbs 23:7](#) says,

"For as he thinks within himself, so he is."

Therefore, the devil seeks to do one thing, to turn upside down my way of thinking. Once he gets me thinking wrongly, he can get me living wrongly. Paul says we don't war against flesh and blood, and since we are not each other's enemies, then we need to learn to pray for one another. The apostle Paul adds himself to their prayer list there at Ephesus. He says, "Don't forget me. Pray for me."

Let's read verses 19-20:

*and pray [on my behalf](#), that [utterance may be given](#) (5684) to me in the [opening](#) of my [mouth](#), to [make known](#) (5658) with [boldness](#) the [mystery](#) of the [gospel](#), 20 for [which I am an ambassador](#) (5748) in [chains](#); that *in* [proclaiming](#) it I may [speak boldly](#) (5667), as I [ought](#) (5748) to [speak](#) (5658).*

There are three things I want you to see about Paul's request for prayer in these verses. I think it might encourage us. First of all I want you to see the humility of Paul's request. What do I mean by that? Paul was not above asking believers at Ephesus to pray for him. Here he is, a converted Jew, asking converted Gentiles to pray for him. You see, no man is an island. The word "pray" in verse 19 does not show up in the literal translation. However, it is implied because of verse 18. Paul is saying, "As you are praying for others, please don't forget me." I love the humility of this man. When I get to heaven one day I want to just spend some time with him. I want to shake his hand, first of all. Of all the people in the New Testament, aside from Jesus, he is the one who impresses me the most. Here is a man with the greatest intelligence of anybody in the New Testament. He studied under Gamaliel. Here is a man trained in every area and yet a man who understands how desperate he is for the prayers of others. That is the humility of his heart. He knows he can't, and he knows God alone can do it in him. Therefore he says, "Please, please, please don't forget me when you are praying in the Spirit for others."

When you start examining the prayer life of Paul, you find he is a man who lives out what he preaches. He is not just someone who says it, he is a man who lives it out. He is a man who prays for other people. In [2Cor13:7](#) he prays for the Corinthians that they would do no wrong.

"Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear unapproved."

In [Eph1:18](#) he prays for the eyes of the hearts of the Ephesians to be opened to the riches that they have in their salvation.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"

In [Php1:4](#), he says,

"always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all"

In other words, you are never far from my mind.

Then in [Php1:9](#) he prays that their love might abound for one another, even more and more.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

If you remember correctly, [Acts 16:13](#) shows us that the Philippian church was born out of a prayer meeting led by the Apostle Paul. He is a man of prayer.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

He prayed for others. In [Colossians 1:9](#), he prays for the Colossians that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

In [2 Thess 1:11](#), he prays for the Thessalonians believers that God may count them worthy of their calling and that God would fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.

11 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power;

12 in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In [Ro10:1](#), he prays for his fellow kinsmen that they might be saved.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."

In [Ro9:1](#), he says, I wish that I could be accursed that my brethren could come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be saved.

9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Here is a man who walked filled with the Spirit and prays in the Spirit. He prays for the people around him. They are not his enemy. He prays for them. Now you see something else about his heart. He says,

"Listen, I am praying for you. Please don't forget me. I need for you to pray for me."

You see, he was in the same war zone that we are in. He fought the same battles that you and I fight. Several times in his epistles he mentions the fact that he is bold, but that boldness is of the Lord Jesus. Whenever he was in a hostile situation, he needed the boldness that the Spirit of God gave to him. Don't ever put these people on a pedestal. Don't ever think of them as being up there with Jesus. Oh, no. They are not. They are human beings like you and me. The apostle Paul understood that. He alone knew that he was an apostle born out of due season. He never thought himself worthy of the calling that God had given to him. He continues to say,

"I am praying for you. Please, will you pray for me?"

Look at the humility of the request that Paul makes in his prayer!

Do you know what I have discovered? Any time I have ever been critical of anybody, it is very obvious that I haven't prayed for them. Have you ever thought about that? Since we don't war against flesh and blood, we need the strength of praying for one another. So often we get perverted in our thinking because we let the devil influence our minds. We don't let the Word of God influence them. I am the same way. We get turned upside down. We begin to think of each other as enemies, as problems. We don't pray for one another. We would rather tear each other down or be critical of one another. This happens in families. This happens in all relationships of life.

The apostle Paul says,

"No, no, no! You don't see the point. We are not each other's enemy. There is something else out there enforcing all the deception that we have to come against. We need to be filled in the Spirit and be praying in the Spirit, especially for one another. And while you are doing it, please remember me."

There is something about a man who requests prayer from others. There is something about a man who stops thinking of himself

so arrogantly that he realizes that he can't. God never said he could. He is desperate for the prayers of others. I wonder if we know how desperate we are.

I got on the plane in Memphis and when I sat down beside a man, something in my spirit said, "This man is in deep need." The first thing I sensed was a humility in his spirit. It is incredible how you can tell. Some people are so arrogant, and think everybody else is wrong. I love to sense somebody who has a humility that is willing to reach out and say, "Can you help me?" As we took off there, we started talking about bass fishing. Well, that caught my attention. "Do you fish?" I said, "Not much but I love it when I get to go." He talked about his boat, and I talked about the one I used to have. We talked about that for a while. On into the conversation finally he said, "I am reading a good book here." I said, "What book do you have?" It was a self-help book. I asked him, "Do you have a Bible?" He said, "Oh, yeah. As a matter of fact, I have received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."

I talked about that for a while just to find out if he really knew the Lord. I really believe he did. He said,

"I have been sober for 27 days. I am really a fool. I knew better all my life. I never drank in front of my wife and kids. I travel all the time."

He said,

"I just started drinking on my trips while trying to wine and dine the customers, and I became an alcoholic. It almost ruined my family."

He said,

"My wife has not filed suit on me yet."

Evidently there had been some real bad things that had happened. He said,

"She is not living with me right now, but she has not filed suit. She is a Christian and is in the Word every day. I would just like to believe that somehow when God puts me back together, He can put us back together."

I said,

"Yes, sir. You've got that right."

He was sitting there on the plane, and I said,

"How about your Bible? Tell me about your Bible."

He opened it up and he had little things written all in it. I said,

"Do you know how to study your Bible?"

He said,

"You know, I've been praying that somebody would show me how to study the Bible for myself."

I said,

"I've got something to share with you."

We began to talk about how to study scripture. The sweetest thing that came out of that man's lips was the understanding of how desperate he really was. Tears were streaming down his face as we landed in Atlanta. He said,

"Will you pray for me?"

I said,

"Not only will I pray for you, I will tell our church to pray for you."

The next Wednesday night we prayed for him and his wife. God hit me with something as I was getting off the plane. He said,

"Wayne, that man is fortunate. He knows how desperate he is. I wonder if you know how desperate you are, Wayne, for the prayers of others in your life?"

I want to tell you something. A lot of times we look down on people like that. To me, those are the ones who grab my heart. At least they know what is going on in their life. They know what they can't do. They know how desperate they are. The apostle Paul expresses that same kind of humility. He says,

"I am desperate. When you are praying for others, please don't forget me. Pray on my behalf."

If anything has convicted me in this series, it has been that I have majored so much on the standing firm. I have to work on praying at all times in the Spirit. That seems to be the weakest link in my Christian walk. What about your walk? If you are filled with the Spirit, then you can pray in the Spirit.

Secondly I want you to see the sincerity of Paul's request.

When a man is under pressure, something will surface to show where his heart really is. Many times you can't see this, but when any of us are under pressure, that is when our true heart begins to surface. How do we know that? By what we request when we want others to pray. Look at what Paul requests in verse 19:

Ephesians 6:19 *and pray [on my behalf](#), that [utterance may be given](#) (5684) to me in the [opening](#) of my [mouth](#), to [make known](#) (5658) with [boldness](#) the [mystery](#) of the [gospel](#), 20 for [which I am an ambassador](#) (5748) in [chains](#); that *in proclaiming* it I may [speak boldly](#) (5667), as I [ought](#) (5748) to [speak](#) (5658).*

"that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

It is incredible to me that he didn't pray, "Would you pray that I be delivered from this situation? Would you pray that my circumstances be made more comfortable?" He didn't say that! He said, "I want to be bold in the assignment that God has given to me." Something is surfacing. Listen to what a person requests. Listen to how they pray. It will show you the true reflection of where they are in their walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. If they have anchored down their surrender to Him, then their requests will always be that they be about their assignment and that God be glorified in everything.

Paul understood what I hope I can understand every day of my life. He realized he was not a prisoner of the Romans or the Jews. He was a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look in Ephesians 3:1:

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus"

Look in Ephesians 4:1:

"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord"

What is he saying? If you will look over in [2Cor2:14](#), I really believe you will see what he is trying to get across. Paul understood this and it comes out in his requests, in his prayer. What we pray for and what we request has a lot to do with our walk with God. Whether or not we settle the issue that we are His and nobody else's, we are to be about His purposes while we are here on this earth. Look at [2Cor2:14](#). He is talking about when he went to Troas and couldn't find Titus, so he went on to Macedonia.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

This is explaining what he means by "I am a prisoner of Christ." Let me explain it to you.

When he says in [2Cor2:14](#),

"[always leads](#) us in [triumph](#) (5723) (Gk: [Thriambeuo](#)) in [Christ](#)"

that is a word that really doesn't appear in some translations like it should. In their culture they would understand. It is a word that means to be chained to His chariot. It is reflecting a custom of that day. Now what does that mean? They would send out their army and if they were victorious they would send a runner back. The runner would come in with some incense and spread the incense around the town, sometimes on the doorposts. Why would he do that? The people would begin to smell the sweet aroma of that incense which reminded them that a victory had been won somewhere. They had smelled that before. So they would line the streets for a victory parade. They may wait for hours. Finally the dust would start in the distance. They would see the commanding general of their army coming on a horse drawn chariot. Behind his chariot would be the captains and the generals of all the armies he had conquered. They would be chained to his chariot. As they went through town, the people would just yell and salute the fact that they had conquered these men in battle.

The apostle Paul says that it is the same thing in the Christian life. He said,

"I have been conquered by Jesus. I have been absolutely captured by Christ. I am a prisoner of Christ. Wherever I go, I am chained to His chariot. I know I am in prison in Rome, however, I am a prisoner of Christ. Wherever He leads me, He will lead me in His triumph."

Oh, folks, if we could anchor this, all of our requests would be different because we would want to honor the assignment God has given to us while we are chained to His chariot.

Paul is saying,

"It ought to be a sweet aroma to understand that you have been conquered by Christ. You are a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

You might be in a situation. Prisons don't have to have walls. They don't have to have bars. You might be in a marriage where your husband does not care about God and you do. Maybe your wife doesn't. You may be in a job situation. It is a prison that has been created because of your love for Jesus Christ. For some reason He has chosen to lead you into that circumstance in your life. If He hasn't led you out of it, evidently He is not finished with you while you are in it. He will lead you in His triumph. He becomes our circumstance. Paul knew that. Paul was not overwhelmed with prison. Paul was not overwhelmed with the enemies around him. He knew who his true enemy was. He knew he was on an assignment from God to be light in the midst of all that darkness.

Therefore, he prays a prayer that shouldn't surprise us. He doesn't pray something that will benefit himself because he knows that regardless of how bad the circumstances are, he is chained to His chariot. He will be led in the victory that Christ will give to him. He just needs to be about what God has assigned him to do while he is in the dilemma God has allowed him to be in. He asks them to pray that utterance might be given him.

As I have listened to giants in the faith pray when they were under pressure it has said more to me than anything else. Listening to the requests when the pressure is on tells you where their heart is. It tells you where their devotion is. It tells you where their commitment is. It is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's heart comes out and it is pure and it is clean. He wants to be about the business God has assigned him.

Thirdly, there is the integrity of Paul's prayer.

Let's look at the prayer again: "that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." There are three things in that verse I want to show you.

First of all is the word "[utterance](#)." What does he mean by the utterance of the gospel? The word [logos](#) comes from the word that means to speak intelligently. (Click here for in depth study of [lógos](#)) That somehow rung a bell. I know he is talking about presenting the gospel, but you've got to remember something. Paul has been assigned the ministry of preaching the gospel to Gentiles. Paul is in Rome and the target that Paul has is Caesar's household. Paul is saying,

"I don't know how to do it in such a way that they can understand it."

There is another word for speaking. It means to make sounds, sometimes unintelligible sounds. Paul says,

"That is not what I want. I want to be able to share with integrity and intelligence the gospel of Jesus Christ to these Romans, so they can understand that God loves them just like He loves me."

So we see the integrity of it.

The second word that I want you to look at is the word [boldness](#)," [parrhesia](#). It means confidence and boldness. Paul is saying, "I want to present Christ intelligently and with power and with confidence to those who hold me captive. I want to have the ability, God given ability, to share it in such a way that it is understandable, with intelligence and it is reasonable so that they can see that as Gentiles God loves them just like He loves His own people, the Jews."

The word "[mystery](#)" (Gk: [mysterion](#)) (click for more in depth word study of [mysterion](#)) is another part of that. It refers back to 3:3-7. What is the mystery? That the Gentiles are included in God's plan for this world. He explains it very clearly in [v3-7](#) of chapter 3. Paul says,

"I have an assignment, and here I am, in prison. It's not fun. God, I am not asking for myself. I am simply asking these people to pray for me so I can win the battle over fear, so I can win the battle over intimidation, so I can with boldness preach the gospel."

He says he is an ambassador in chains. Every time Paul moved his arms he heard the sound of chains which reminded him of the opposition that surrounded him. He knew they were there. He also knew they were not his enemy, that his enemy was the spiritual enemy behind all those people and that these people could come to know Jesus Christ if he was able to properly get the gospel to them. So he prays that he might do that.

The word [ambassador](#) is the word [presbeuo](#). It refers to the imperial legate of a Roman emperor. The legate was a representative of an emperor who lived in the outposts, outside the empire. He didn't live in the empire. He enforced imperial policy and was

directly accountable to the emperor. Paul says, "I am Christ's imperial legate." I am in the outpost of the Romans and as far away from the people I know who are in the kingdom of God. His whole mission, he said, is to carry out the assignment of his Lord, which is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world.

Paul asks the Ephesians,

"Hey, guys. I am in the same kind of warfare you are. I am a man just like you are. I have fears just like you have and I am asking you to pray for me because I need to overcome those fears. I need to have boldness to carry out the assignment God has given to me."

I have had the question asked me many times,

"If you believe in the sovereignty of God, how come you believe in prayer if God is going to do it anyway?"

Do you know why I believe in prayer? Because God says to pray. That is why I believe it. God says to pray. God is sovereign, but I want to show you something. The prayers of people way over in Ephesus had something to do with Paul way over here in Rome. How does that work? I don't know how that works. How does it work when people pray in America for missionaries over in Albania? I don't know how it works. But somehow it does. Somehow it strengthens them while they are over there.

How feebly I look at prayer sometimes. How frail I see a prayer and yet God says if we will pray in the Spirit, He will strengthen you. How does that work? I don't know but I know it does.

Look in [Php1:12-13](#). Did the prayers of the Ephesian believers work? Paul wants the Philippians to know something:

"I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances [my imprisonment] have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else. Most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."

Paul is telling the Philippians what he requested in Ephesians. He said, "Hey, it is working." He said, "Everybody knows about my imprisonment for the cause of Christ."

Look at [Php4:22](#). This is a precious verse tucked away in the last part of the chapter.

"All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household."

How did they get in there? Paul was in prison and was on a journey. He was chained to God's chariot and God said, "You want to reach Rome?" Paul said, "That is right. Let me get a tent and I'll have a tent revival." God said, "No, I am going to put you in jail and I am going to put the praetorian guard over you. But you stay chained to My chariot and stay bold in the Spirit and we will touch all of Caesar's household before it is over with."

The humility, the sincerity, the purpose of Paul comes out in his requests. So often I want people to pray for me so I can get out of something. That just shows you where I am. I have not grown to where I need to be. Also the integrity of Paul's prayer just blesses me. Where a person is spiritually is reflected in the requests that he makes in his prayers. None of us are above asking others to pray for us. We are all desperate. My prayer is that we will know how desperate we really are