

Ephesians 6:18—With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

The armor of God functions remarkably once fixed in place. It prepares the saint for spiritual battles he can't win. Only God overcomes the forces of darkness (Romans 16:20; 1John 4:4; Revelation 19:11-21). Therefore, the armor of verses 10-17 equips the saint to pray—the prerequisite for victory. Only saints who have “girded” their “loins with truth” (Ephesians 6:14), wear “the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14), have “shod” their “feet with the...gospel” (Ephesians 6:15), carry “the shield of faith” (Ephesians 6:16), don “the helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17), and wield “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17) are equipped to do battle in prayer.

Scripture confirms that God honors prayer. Through prayer the nation of Israel overcame the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-13), Hannah conceived and bore Samuel (1Samuel 1:9-20), Nehemiah was shown favor before King Artaxerxes and allowed to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:11–2:8), Satan's forces were overthrown (Daniel 10:1-21), Cornelius and the Gentiles heard the gospel (Acts 10:1-48), Peter was delivered from prison (Acts 12:1-17), etc. Prayer works! In fact, know all about the blessings bestowed to the New Testament believer (the subject matter of Ephesians 1-3), yet neglect prayer, and life becomes astonishingly fruitless. God imparted truth to teach us the necessity of dependence upon Him, a dependence confirmed and substantiated by a lifestyle of prayer. How we are to pray is the subject matter of Ephesians 6:18.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, (6:18a)

“Prayer” (*proseuche*) makes reference to prayer in general, while “petition” (*deeseos*) points to specific requests. By writing, “all prayer and petition,” Paul confirms that believers are to pray all types of prayers as needs arise. Sometimes we pray for others (intercessory prayer). Sometimes we pray for ourselves. We can ask for God's blessings (Numbers 6:23-27), confess sin (Psalm 32:1-5), and pray when emergencies arise (Matthew 14:30). We can pray silently or out loud, in all types of postures, and in all types of places—in fact, “in every place” (1Timothy 2:8). We are to pray “at all times” (Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18a); in fact, we are to pray “without ceasing” (1Thessalonians 5:17). Saints are to devote themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2), persevere in prayer (Daniel 10:12-13), and live in an attitude of prayer (Psalm 5:3; 55:17; Psalm 119:55, 62, 147; Daniel 6:10; Mark 1:35; Luke 2:37; 6:12; 18:1; Acts 10:2; 16:25; 1Thessalonians 3:10). Our lives should be characterized by uninterrupted communion with the Father.

To “pray at all times” (Ephesians 6:18a) doesn't mean to pray out loud (or even silently) every moment of the day. No one addressed in Scripture lived as such, not even Paul. What is being encouraged is an attitude of prayer. Consequently, when we are blessed, we thank God immediately for His blessings. When we meet someone in need, we ask God to meet that need. When we see a flower in bloom or a bird in flight, we praise Him that instant for His creativity and power. When we are tempted, we approach Him for grace to overcome. Through living in an attitude of prayer, we are “saved by His life” (Romans 5:10), the natural byproduct of living in uninterrupted fellowship with the Creator (John 17:3; 1John 1:3).

To “pray...in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18) means to pray in harmony with the Holy Spirit—Who approaches the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27). Because the Person of the Spirit intercedes for us “with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26) and “according to the will of God” (Romans 8:27), to “pray...in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18) simply means to pray in agreement with what the Spirit is already praying. Any prayer offered in this manner will agree

with the full counsel of God's Word, for the Spirit never leads us to violate truth. Only as saints are "*filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18) can they experience the prayer life described in these powerful passages.