

Prayer: Calling for Help to Stand Firm Together

Intro: Prayer is a war-time communication. It is not a peace-time conversation. The metaphor of battle continues into the realm of prayer, where we are told to ask the Lord for the resources that we need to stand firm together. You don't win a nuclear war with pistols, neither do we win a spiritual war with man's strength. Our strength to stand firm in the gospel of Jesus Christ lies in the power and provision of the great General, the King, the Warrior Jesus Christ. In His name and by His Spirit we have access to the Father over all who will generously grant to us all that is needed from His infinite provisions of heavenly grace. So, as you put on your armor of the Gospel and grab your sword of God's Word, this battle starts and ends on your knees.

1. Prayer is Asking for the Resources Needed Among the Ranks to Stand Firm in the Gospel
 - a. A life of prayer is the attitude in which we wear such armor of God
 - i. *through* every prayer and entreaty
 1. through "formal" prayers
 2. through entreaty, or communications to God
 3. these are the means of praying
 - ii. *in* every time (circumstance)
 1. At all times and situations in this battle we are to be praying
 2. When we "take up" the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, it always is to be done with prayer
 - a. God wins the war!
 - b. Our strength is not enough
 - c. You don't win a nuclear war with pistols, neither do we win this spiritual war with man's strength or wisdom
 - b. Our Father is transforming us through faith in the Gospel of Jesus and the power of His Holy Spirit
 - i. **2 Cor 3:18** – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
 - ii. We are being formed, presently, into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit
 1. *in* the Spirit
 - a. in-line with the Holy Spirit's desires and work
 - b. all that the Holy Spirit is working for is what we are praying for
 - Christ's glory
 - Truth, Righteousness, Peace, the rest of the armor
 - Fruit of the Spirit
 - Etc.
 2. As we give to Christ what is rightfully His (worship, glory), we are transformed into His image
 3. Ultimately, in our completed redemption of resurrection, we will be like Him
 - a. **1 John 3:2** - Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears¹ we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
 4. Even now, to the degree to which we glorify Christ, we are made into His image, from glory to glory by the power of the Holy Spirit

- a. The transformation of our character and our behavior to being in-line with Him is honoring to Him because He is the One working it out within us and through us.
 - b. So, as we are glorified as *belonging to Him*, He gets the glory as the Master Redeemer and Glorious King
 - c. **Is 62:11-12** – The redeemed ones are the Lord’s reward
- c. There is a strong relationship between prayer, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and transformation of our hearts into agreement with the purposes of God
 - i. **Luke 11:11-13** - What father among you, if his son asks for¹ a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
 - ii. **Rom 8:26-27** - Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because¹ the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
 - iii. Are we asking the Commander to see the saints grow to the glory of God?
 - 1. Do we pray for Christ’s character to be formed in His saints by the power of the Holy Spirit within us?
 - 2. Do we ask for the transformation of faith in ALL the saints (EBF, Eugene, US, the World)?
 - a. Fidelity of doctrine (orthodoxy)
 - b. Purity of life (orthopraxy)
 - c. **Gospel transformation of repentance and faith in Jesus to the glory of God!**

2. Pray as We Stay Alert for the Weakness of Unbelief Among the Ranks

- a. We need to “stay alert” for the schemes of the Devil (unbelief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ)
 - i. *in* all perseverance
 - 1. Stay awake! Keep watching! Don’t let your guard down!
 - 2. Watching for fallen comrades, weak points where a brother/sister is not trusting in Christ for truth, righteousness, peace, etc.
 - 3. This is corporate, together!
 - ii. *in* all requests
 - 1. We keep watch by praying for each other according to the Spirit
 - 2. Our prayers are for the glory of Christ and each brother and sisters’ full and complete dependence upon Christ crucified, risen from the dead, and seated in authority over all things (1:10)
- b. Our prayer is not that we would all simply try harder
 - i. We *stand firm* in repentance and dependence, in the Gospel of Christ crucified for us!
 - 1. The Holy Spirit “bears fruit”, we don’t create it mechanically through our own effort
 - 2. We do make effort, but it is the effort to believe, not perform
 - a. This faith in Jesus, then, produces performance
 - “Put on God’s armor”
 - “Stand firm” in the Gospel
 - “Take up” the Word of God
 - Do it all PRAYING (dependence upon God alone)
 - b. But God’s grace and our faith in Jesus *precedes* the performance
 - Pray for deeper faith in Jesus that leads to obedience

- ii. He is the vine from which all of our fruit grows...but it does grow!!! And it grows in those who ask Him!!!
 - 1. **Matt 16:18** – “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”
 - 2. What fruit do you want to see grow to the glory of Jesus? ASK HIM TO PRODUCE IT!!
- c. We bolster our ranks with prayer, battling unbelief with dependence in Christ
 - i. If we don’t believe that God is the one who changes hearts and transforms minds, why would we pray at all?
 - ii. God is at work in us! Jesus is powerful to accomplish all He promised and the Spirit will finish what He started. Trust in Him!
 - 1. **Phil 2:13** – “it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure”
 - 2. **Col 1:9-10** - And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
 - 3. **2 Tim 1:13-14** - Follow the pattern of the sound¹ words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

“Our fallen hearts are predisposed to think that we can ‘do church.’ But we only think that way if we’re task-oriented to begin with. Real ‘church’ is not running a program; real church is the manifest presence of Jesus among His people. And we can’t program Him. We can only pray for His presence.” ~Ray Ortlund

3. Prayer seeks the glory of Jesus Christ as the Lord of Every Heart

- a. The ultimate purpose and goal of our prayers is the glory of Jesus Christ
 - i. Not our glory, reputation, comfort, purposes
 - 1. We must learn to repent of our self-honor and ‘man-centeredness’, even in our prayers, and turn again to the glory of Christ as the center of our existence and of our walk. We have been called to honor the King.
 - 2. God doesn’t exist for us, we exist for Him. Are our prayers in-line with this truth?
 - a. Let’s pray to this end, that Christ would be glorified as we stand firm in Him and boast only in His cross (Gal 6:14)!
 - ii. But the reputation, glory, and purposes of Jesus Christ
 - 1. Is this, then, the goal of our prayers?
 - 2. When other things supersede this purpose, then we dishonor God and our prayers are unfulfilled
 - a. **James 4:2-3**

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
 - b. **1 John 5:14**

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
 - iii. God’s glory and reputation is built up through the proclamation of the Word and the humble prayers of His people

1. God is the only one who can transform hearts, enliven affections, and change minds by the power of His sovereign Spirit
 2. In our prayers, God gets the glory of all success, and we get the supplication that we need in order to glorify Him as we stand firm in the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 3. God's glory is revealed through the gospel proclamation, and for this we pray with fervency: notice that we take up the Word of God PRAYING
 - a. **John 14:13** Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- b. **HOMEWORK: PRAY *for all the saints***
- i. "concerning all the saints"
 1. We are in battle together with all other believers. Pray for each other!
 2. The glory of God in the Church is rooted in humble, dependent, and active prayer
 - ii. The prayers which honor God are centered around the glory of Christ in the gospel
 1. Every piece of armor is supplied by God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit
 - iii. **PRAY FOR THESE THINGS THREE TIMES THIS WEEK:**
 1. Pray for each other to **put on the armor of God**
 2. Pray for each other **to stand firm in the truth of the Gospel**
 3. Pray for each other **to trust in the imputed righteousness of Christ**
 4. Pray for each other **to rest in the peace bought us by His blood**
 5. Pray for each other **to stand in complete Christ-dependence**
 6. Pray for each other **to wield the Word of God in proclaiming the gospel in power.**
 7. Ask God **to cause the growth of the gospel in our hearts**, up into our **praises of Him**, and **out into all the earth**

Conclusion:

Prayer and the Spirit are the inseparable powerhouse which make us stand firm in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It is by His very power that we are able to take up His Word for HIS GLORY, accomplishing God's gracious and sovereign plan of the redemption of persons from all the nations of the earth. Our passion for His glory, His reputation, His honor, His praise, is poured forth in prayer. Prayer asking for His name to be worshipped in all the earth, for our hearts and lives to be transformed into the image of Jesus, for the gospel to take root in the hearts of those from among the nations, and for the Holy Spirit to powerfully work out the plan and purpose of God. Does this mean that we only ask for the eternal things? No, but we make all other requests secondary and subsistent to the revealed Word of God. Jesus asked for the cup to pass from him, so we, too, may ask the Lord for what we desire, but He submitted that request to the greater glory of the Father (the answer to Jesus was "no" by the way). So, we must always, in all times, keep in the forefront of our minds and therefore in our prayers the great glory of the Almighty God. It is Him we desire to be worshiped, and so it is with great dependent vigor that we cry out to Him so that He will move mightily among us and through us and glorify His name in all the earth, strengthening us to stand firm in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.