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SPEAKERS

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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 saints. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Hopefully, you've heard of pilgrims progress. It's a classic book. It's an allegory written describing a man journey on this earth. And his goal is to get to the celestial kingdom of heaven, written by John Bunyan to tell the story really of the Christian journey in life, and how Christ works in our heart. In that encounter, he speaks about the main character appropriately named Christian. During one encounter, he's going through the valley of humiliation. And there he is confronted by a poly on the destroyer, and in the midst of being inundated with doubt and despair, fiery

darts being thrown at him. Christian recalls that he has been given the full armor of God in Christ. And he not only needs to put on the full armor, but then Bunyan make sure that Christian acknowledges he also needs all prayer. The word Bunyan was getting that phrase is from Ephesians chapter six Verse 18. So I'd like you to look in your Bibles to Ephesians six and this morning, we're focusing on verses 18 through 20. Next week, we'll finish our study by looking at the final greeting there. But in verses 18 through 20, you have what Bunyan referred to as something that holds all of the armor in place that makes that spiritual principles and crews effective, and that is all prayer. So you notice in Ephesians, six, if you look at verse 18, it begins simply with and pray in the Spirit. That if you go back to verse 14, verse 14 began with the words stand firm that and there's a connection between these verses and other words, in order to stand firm, one must be covered not just with the spiritual armor, but in addition because covered in and practice all prayer. So we're going to look at verses 18 through 20. And look at two aspects of what this includes the first simply directions for prayer. What are the directions that Paul gives us here? To know how to pray in a way that is effective? And then secondly, not just directions for prayer. But in these two verses, we have a model of prayer. Once again, in addition to the Lord's prayer and other examples, we have here a model of prayer. So let me draw your attention to verse 18. As we begin with directions for pray, this may seem quite unusual, like why do we need directions does not just come naturally to someone when you're a Christian? You just automatically kind of know how to pray? Well, I think the answer is yes and no. You now know that you have this access to God. But is prayer something That we can grow into, and sharpen our ability to pray factually. And so notice what Paul says in verse 18, just the first couple words, he says, and pray in the Spirit. on all occasions, there are three components or elements of praying spiritually, that Paul's unfolding here for us. And the first is simply pray spiritually. He says, and pray in the Spirit. Now the question would be what does Paul mean by and pray in the Spirit? So this kind of fits. We've been talking in the adult class about spiritual gifts, is Paul saying here we need to seek some kind of ecstatic, miraculous experience to be able to pray, or as Paul saying here, the way you should pray, is in accordance with the working in person of the Holy Spirit. In other words, that Paul's not holding up here, some unique, limited experience, but he's saying this is the reality for every believer you need to pray spiritually. pray in the Spirit pray in accordance to the Spirit's leading, and guidance where he pulls in the scriptures to guide us in how to pray. And so it's a sort of support that I want you to turn to the book of Romans, Romans chapter eight. And we have two different places in Romans eight, where the ministry and working of the Holy Spirit related to prayer is presented to us. And again, the same writer of the letter of Ephesians. writing to a different group of believers in a different way reminds them and pray in the Spirit, pray spiritually. Romans chapter eight and look at verses 15 and 16. For you did not receive Spirit that makes you a slave again to fear but you receive the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit, that we are God's children. And so you have a title there

for the Holy Spirit that He is the spirit of sonship. It is through the Spirit that Christ work on the cross is applied to us by faith. And we are now sons and daughters we are in the family of God. But in addition, as verse 16 reminds us, the spirit continually confirms that in us, that we are children of God, that we have, not just the privilege but the, the right by grace to come before God and prayer to pray spiritually. But then, if you go a little further in Romans eight notice verses 26 and 27. 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 with groans that Words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints, in accordance with God's will. If you know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have to intercessors you have one here on Earth, the Holy Spirit lives in you. And he has to take those prayer requests that sometimes we we wrestle with articulating and to convey them before Jesus Christ, our heavenly intercessor on our behalf. Notice as well it says the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. What would be the weaknesses? Well, probably referring to the fact we still have a sinful nature and at times, our prayers can be more self centered and God centered. A times our prayers can be more directed toward our will not what God's will is. And so one of the works of the Holy Spirit as you pray spiritually, is to refine our prayers to help our prayers be more focused where they should be on God's glory, on God's design on God's working. That's all included when you just unpack these first couple words of verse 18. And pray in the Spirit. Even the apostle Jude would pick up on this thought when it his very brief letter in the book of Jude, verse 20. He says, As believers facing a world where there are false teachers, he says and pray in the Holy Spirit. So a consistency of the Bible teaching. What's a guideline for prayer, pray spiritually Right under the direction and guidance of the Spirit, which will always be in agreement with the Word of God. But if you go back to Ephesians, chapter six, Paul has a second element that goes with directions for prayer. And Paul is not at all hesitant to say whether you've been a Christian a short while or for many, many years. These are directions for all of us. So back to verse 18. And now he goes on and says, and pray in the Spirit, on all occasions with all kinds of prayers, and requests. Now, he adds another element, a guideline for prayer, pray comprehensively. In other words, think about what do our prayers cover? And so we gives you some insight here as to what that means to pray comprehensively. First, he says on all occasions, this is a very specific word it refers to at all decisive moments. And so yes, we are to pray without ceasing in a very broad way. But are there moments, temptations trials, we're going through, which are very decisive moments, decisive encounters, much like Christian in Bunyan's book when he's going through the valley of humiliation. That that's a precise trial, a difficulty. So when you think praying comprehensively praise specifically on those occasions This is what prayer is intended for, to strengthen us to enable us to be able to stand in this armor in the spiritual truth that we have put on in Christ. But you notice he says not just pray on all occasions, but with All kinds of prayers and requests. So I'm translations put this with all kinds of prayer and supplication. Now, it seems like these

words do distinguish a little bit. They're both related to prayer. But in the fullest sense, prayer is not just you, bringing your personal petitions before God, that that is a part of prayer. But another whole dimension of prayer is intercessory prayer, praying for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ, praying for those who are not believers. So when you think of guidelines to help you know how to pray, maybe consider sometimes, you know, where do your prayers tend to fall. And I would say if we don't check this once in a while, most of our prayers tend to be about us. Our situation, our needs, what we feel we are going through, there's nothing wrong and we should bring those before God but if that exclusive lovely is what your prayer life is being composed up. That's not meeting the directions for praying that Paul's giving here. He's saying our prayers need to be comprehensive prayers and supplication intercession for ourselves but intercession and pleading for the needs of others. Maybe you're probably familiar with Martin Luther the one of the key reformers had a good friend Philip marathon. And on one occasion he wrote to him, and in his letter, he said, I'm going through some very difficult trials. I'm begging you. Please pray for me. Pray for me. But what a reminder to us as Christians that our prayers need to be much bigger than just our own little immediate world and needs. So Paul says pray on all occasions, with prayers and requests But then he has another dimension he's going to add in a moment. But you'll notice if you look closely at verse 18, you have four times the word all or its equivalent. Everyone, everything, all kinds are stressed. What a way for Paul to say, you know, your prayer should be broad, specific. Not that's so General, that there's no way to kind of clarify what are you actually asking God for? But they should be broad in their scope. Just kind of listen to this again, on all occasions, all kinds of prayers or requests. With this in mind, Be alert, always keeping praying for all the saints. Anytime you see any particular form of speech repeated that many times. And one verse, says you Paul stressing this. He's emphasizing this. Later when Paul will write to Timothy, to give him guidance on how to pastor church. He says Timothy, teacher people to pray for all people in authority. So there is this thought of praying spiritually. Praying comprehensively is not lost on Paul's other letters. It's a part of how he would look at prayer. And I think how we should look at prayer. But there's a third element in verse 18. That probably is one that we we've all heard this, but yet we all guilty of not falling through on this at the end of verse 18, and Ephesians six with this in mind. In other words with this in end before you, be alert, always keep praying for all the saints pray with perseverance. CS Lewis was known as saying far too often we it's not that our opinion are answered, we give up too quickly. We don't pray with perseverance. And listen to how Paul puts that Be alert. Be watchful, be vigilant in this, implying our tendency will be, we will grow discouraged. We will not see maybe something immediately that tells us these prayers are being heard. And so we, we give up. And I start to think of Paul's not the only one who mentioned this concern to believers, Jesus Christ on at least two occasions, and certainly others gave similar instruction. In Luke 18, he gives a parable of this persistent widow who keeps coming to someone for a need. And finally the person gives in and says,

I just can't take this persistence anymore and the point of the parable was to teach his disciples to persevere in prayer. And in fact, at the end of the parable, Jesus says, when the Son of Man comes, will he see such faith on earth? In other words, saying there's a connection here, between praying with perseverance and your faith in God, your trust in God. And I think that is true is we think of prayer. Prayer is easy when you think you see the immediate results of it. where maybe it's something tangible that you can touch and measure. What happens when those prayers are not measurable to us. does not mean as a child of God that those prayers have not been heard. But it means and reminds us God's ways are not always our ways. And so we must play with perseverance. And we could say in a way, you should pray until the prayers answered or until God changes your request. That's praying with perseverance. But let me have you look at Mark chapter 14, which the occasion itself merits attention when we know the rest of the story, Mark chapter 14, and verses 37. To 38. Not only the Jesus need to teach his disciples in general, don't give up praying. But there are three in particular that needed this lesson Peter, James, and John. In other words, those that certainly were the closest to Christ, those that we might hold up as being ones that would be the word the examples of others, and yet we see their own frailty at times, and failing to pray with perseverance. Mark chapter 14, verses 37 and 38 in the garden, of good seminary. Jesus leaves them to go off and pray to the Father. It says in verse 37, then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour, watching pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. And all you need to do is go a little bit further and you see Peters denial of Christ. The failure to trusting God, and to not be watchful and remain in prayer. How appropriate that, Paul, in writing to believers, how do you stand in a world where your faith is constantly going to be under attack and challenge? Not just outwardly but even inwardly because you're still a sinful creature? How can you stand firm. Well, you must stand in all prayer that binds everything together. But that gives you an example of directions for prayer. But I mentioned a second dimension of Ephesians. Six, verses 18 through 20 is a model of prayer. And Paul's already in Ephesians given us to prayers, where he has prayed for the church. And so we could look and say, Well, those are good models. But I think we sometimes fail to realize and verses 19 and 20. Paul's two requests are a model of prayer loss. They say to us, that prayer should always be driven by the desire to glorify God. And so you notice his two requests, beginning of verse 19. Having prayed for them and numerous occasions now says pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth words, maybe given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, Paul's first request that models for us, this is praying with the glory of God before you would be that he'd be given the right words to speak. They want me thinking about this, what is Paul mean by that? That, that God would give him the right words to speak? Well, he gives you a little indication, he says that I would make known the mystery of the gospel. That mystery. He's explained to us in Ephesians. Two, through chapter three, that

now Jew and Gentile in Christ are made one. That's the mystery, that he wants to have the right words to speak when he opens his mouth, but the reality would be well hasn't paused. Been doing that he's a missionary, he's an apostle. He's establishing churches. Why would he kind of accentuate now? Here's my prayer request? Well, I think it's because Paul is in prison in Rome. And he's anticipating an opportunity to defend himself before Caesar, where he's going to have to explain how does Christianity relate to the Jewish faith? Because when the Roman eyes, Jews were permitted to practice their faith, but there is no recognition here of what is this Christianity? Is this completely a new faith that somehow has suddenly erupted? Paul needs wisdom, how to open his mouth and explain to Caesar by God's grace who is not a believer. I'm not promoting here something That is going against Judaism. I'm actually fulfilling what Judaism was pointing to. It spoke of the promise of the Messiah. This is the completion of that century old promise. How interesting Paul does not say anything about pray that I be comfortable. Pray that no one would criticize me in this endeavor, pray that I would get out of prison real soon. Because I don't like it here. He prays for the glory of God that when I open my mouth, I would have the right words to speak. But you notice in verse 21st, part of the verse The irony when he says, I am an ambassador, in chains, but you need to think about in terms of that is what we think of ambassadors today, is basically the same thing the Roman Empire Thought of ambassadors. It was a position of honor. It was a position basically, that meant you were immune from imprisonment. And even today, we've seen cases like that where someone maybe commits something overseas or an ambassador, and they are immune from imprisonment, in some cases because they are an ambassador. But Paul says, I'm not an ambassador in chains because of Rome. I'm an ambassador in chains because of Christ. That would get your attention as you hear this being read. Wait a minute ambassadors are honored. They don't go to prison impulse turning that upside down, saying, I'm an appointed representative of Jesus Christ. So it's not Caesar who has me in chains, even though I'm in a Roman imprisonment. But I'm in chains for Christ. I'm a slave. of Christ. In other words, his first per request is all about the glory and honor of Christ. But then he has a second prayer request at the very end of verse 20. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Not just that I would open my mouth and the right words, but now he's getting to his own heart, attitude and recognition. Paul needs boldness. He needs to be able to declare God's Word in this kind of setting, without restraint with a sense of candidness and confidence in Jesus Christ. But then he adds a phrase to that at the very end, as I should tell you pause thinking Paul saying this is my dad. This is my obligation as a an apostle, but I would even go farther than that as a Christian. This is my obligation to speak about Jesus Christ. And so as you think of Paul's desire and Ephesians, to have the believers in that church stand firm in their faith, he says you need to understand the spiritual truth that is depicted in the imagery of the different pieces of the armor. But all of those pieces are held together are made effectual by putting on our prayer. JOHN Bonnie's book pilgrims progress has gone through repeated republishing. It has sold

hundreds of thousands of copies been translated into over 120 different languages. One makes the book the allegory so appealing. Because it's not just the story of a guy named Christian, trying to be faithful to Christ until he gets to the celestial city to have it. It's really the journey of all of us and Christ. how vital it is that we understand you cannot stand in the armor that has been given us and God without all prayer. But he wrote that book not to entertain, didn't read it. He didn't write it. So children would read it and have this very elaborate picture. He wrote it for believers to be challenged. And so this point for all of us to kind of ask ourselves, what role does prayer play in our life? is it just an immediate sort of emergency mode that we get into when there's a crisis when there's a crisis Now there are times where that kind of prayer is definitely appropriate and be a part of our walk in the Christian life. But if that's all prayer is to you, then you're not putting on our prayer. You're not praying spiritually, you're not praying comprehensively. You're not praying as you should, as Paul has established here. Because the directions are quite clear, and the model itself is a challenge to us to think about how we pray, will have opportunity later this afternoon to pray together. Well, how would our prayers sound and not thinking of Well, how do they sound to one another? Because we're not to be critiquing or judging each other's prayer, which I don't believe we do. But we should be thinking do these prayers reflect to God who we are? Speaking to, that we're seeking His kingdom first, that our requests in a way are similar to Paul's here. It's all about God. It's all about God's work, and God's work through us and in us to accomplish His perfect way. Christian would not have made it to the celestial city. Without the spiritual armor of God, without all prayer be an integral part. And throughout it, it's evident that it is a work of God through the believer, that will be the means of our assurance of salvation. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, may this text disturb us may cause us in a new way to look at prayer to refine misconceptions that we have, but your grace to correct. There is when we pray that we often go and miss. And Lord, if we're not praying, or we only pray just on Sundays, that you convict us that that really is not prayer. And there's no way we will be able to stand firm in the faith. If that is all prayer means to us. We pray this in Jesus name, amen.