

**Introduction:**

According to myth, Achilles was the greatest warrior among the Greeks. His ferocity in battle was due to his invincibility. Some stories claim that since it was prophesied Achilles would die young, his mother dipped him in the river Styx as an infant to protect him. The waters made him invincible except for the portion of his heel where his mother's hand held him. Other tales claim he simply had invincible armor with an open spot at his heel. Whichever story you prefer, Achilles had a gap in his armor. Amazingly enough, Paris took aim and fired his poisoned arrow, striking Achilles in the heel. A well-aimed shot killed the greatest warrior in Greece all because he had a gap in his invincible armor.

Regrettably, that is where many of us are today. First, we must recognize why this is so frightening. We are at war. Do not be misled by the seeming peace and prosperity in our land. We are walking through a battlefield. Paul said in **Ephesians 6:12**, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." We are in a battle and it is against powers too strong for us. We may not see the ruin wreaked by this war as easily as a physical war, but it is there. We do not see advancing tanks and infantry. But we see the advance of humanism, hedonism and individualism. We do not see bombed and burned out buildings, but we see broken homes. We do not see prisoners of war caught in torture camps. But we see seekers trapped in cults and false teaching churches. We do not see hospitals full of bleeding, crippled and paralyzed wounded. But we see masses of spiritually beaten, exhausted and lost sheep in need of a shepherd. We need to look past what we can see to see the battle and its ravages, to witness the walking wounded, to smell the stench of spiritual death that plagues this world. We are beginning a month long devotion to prayer and this battle is why. In this battle, we must not have any gaps in our armor (**Ephesians 6:13**).

**Discussion:**

- I. Prayer completes our armor (**Ephesians 6:14-18**).
  - A. We are well aware that our waist must be girded with truth. Our heart must be protected by the breastplate of righteousness. We must have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace that we may be mobile and stable on any terrain of battle. We must carry our shield of faith to protect us from the devil's fiery darts. Our head must be covered with the helm of salvation. And we must have in our hand the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We know this. We have heard sermons on this. We have had classes on this. We focus on this armor. But if we stop here the armor is incomplete. We enter the battle relying on our own attempts at invincibility and the devil will capitalize on our weakness.
  - B. Paul does not stop his explanation of the armor with the sword of the Spirit. He says we must put on this armor "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..." We are not fully suited for battle until we are praying. We might just as well go into battle without our sword or without our breastplate as to go into battle without prayer. Yet, regrettably, if we were to take a poll of brethren in general, I fear we would find that we Christians do not pray very much. For one reason or another, too many of us allow our prayer lives to slip. We are too busy. We have questions about prayer. We are not sure how it works. We cannot see it working. We plan to get to it later today. It just slipped our mind. Whatever the case, too many of us are walking away from the battlefield each night wounded and dying because we are entering the daily battle without complete armor, we are entering without prayer.
  - C. Take a minute and honestly assess your life. Do you find you often end the day beaten and battered by the world, discouraged because Satan overcame you again and again throughout the day? How is your armor? Is it complete? What is your prayer life like? For the next month, we will be devoting ourselves to prayer. My sincere hope is that each one who participates in

this series will become a stronger prayer. No matter where we are in the prayer spectrum, we all have room to grow. The purpose of this lesson is simply to motivate us to suit up for battle, remembering to pray.

- II. Prayer plugs us in to the only Power who can defeat our enemy.
  - A. Look again at **Ephesians 6:12**. If all we were dealing with was our next door neighbor who does not want to serve God or our co-worker who blasphemes, we would not need prayer. We could exercise a little bit and take care of those people. But that is not the case. We are fighting against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts. We are fighting against Satan himself (**Ephesians 6:11**). Here is the reality—we cannot win. No matter how strong our armor is, if we are fighting on our own we will be pierced through by the devil's darts.
  - B. Allow me to share with you one of the great mistakes I have made and I hear often made regarding prayer. This mistake has become so much a part of our Christian culture that I will probably slip and say it myself as we study through this series. How many times have we heard people talk about the power of prayer? That is a mistake. Prayer has absolutely no power. Too often we have treated prayer as if it were some kind of magic spell that, if worded properly or chanted correctly, will shine forth power. That is not prayer. Prayer is not powerful. God is powerful. Prayer is not useful in our battle because of some inherent power within it. Prayer is useful because it plugs us in to the real power—it plugs us in to God. Prayer is the means by which our will aligns with God and we invite Him to work through us. When we are in God, we cannot lose (**Romans 8:31-39**). We must not believe in the power of prayer. Rather, we must believe in the power of God and, therefore, pray.
  - C. Consider **Ephesians 3:20**. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..." Look at what God can do. He can not only do all that we ask or think. He can not only do above all that we ask or think. He can not only do abundantly above all that we ask or think. He can do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. But He will accomplish this through us. However, we have to ask.
  - D. Sometimes we miss the great importance of the Old Testament stories. They are written for our learning, that we might learn to have faith in God's power. Remember David before Goliath. Saul wanted David to wear his armor (**I Samuel 17:38-39**). However, it would not work because David was not used to it. Amazingly, David went into battle without armor. But he was armed with God's power (**I Samuel 17:45-47**). David had no power. David's prayer had no power. But the God to whom David prayed has all power. In **I Samuel 17:50-51**, David slew Goliath and cut off his head. If God could win that battle through David, He can win our battles through us.
  - E. Let's cut to the chase here. Until we believe we are in a battle and until we believe the only way we can win is to be connected to God, we will never pray like we ought. But when we believe, then prayer will follow. It will be our natural response and we will become fully armed.

### III. Prayer will provide boldness

- A. A soldier may have great armor, but if he is too afraid to engage in battle, he will lose by default. Prayer, by completing our armor and connecting us to God, provides the boldness we need to face the battle. Here is another amazing aspect of prayer. So often we treat prayer as the means by which God will be bent to our will. That is why we spend so much time wondering how supplication and petition works and complaining when we did not get what we asked for. Prayer is not about bending God to our will, it is about bending us to God's. As we connect to God, growing in prayer, we gain the courage to do God's work in God's way and face the battle. Be honest? How many times do you stay out of the battle because you are afraid? You know you should restore a brother, but you are afraid to ruffle feathers. You know you should rebuke a sister for sin, but you are afraid to rock the boat. You know you should defend the faith, but you are afraid to be rejected. Prayer, our connection to God, increases our courage.
- B. In **Ephesians 6:19-20**, Paul asked the brethren to pray on his behalf that he might have boldness to proclaim the Gospel. In **Acts 4:29-31**, the disciples prayed for boldness in the face of persecution and God granted it to them. Only when we have the boldness and courage that comes through connection to God will we face our fears and stride into battle and win. Through

prayer, as our will aligns with God's, we can say along with the Psalmist in **Psalm 118:5-9**, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

- C. Look at Paul's courage in the face of any circumstance. In **Philippians 4:13**, he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." How could he have this confidence? Because in **Philippians 4:6-7**, he showed that he made his requests known to God with thanksgiving.

#### IV. Prayer maintains our vigilance.

- A. In time of war, when the army is gathered together, sentries are always posted. Someone has to pay attention and watch out for the enemy's attack. The sentry can arouse and warn the army, protecting them from the enemy's surprises.
- B. According to **Ephesians 6:18**, prayer is the means by which we maintain that watchfulness. Prayer, by its very nature of focusing us on the will of God, alerts us to the dangers that oppose God's will. The term translated "watchful" (NKJV) literally means "without sleep." Prayer, along with Bible study, is what keeps us alert and prepared.
- C. However, we must persevere in our prayer. Prayer will never be effective if it is a flash in the pan experience. We must "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it" (**Colossians 4:2**). This is why we are beginning this focus today. Because, we like the apostles in the Garden will have times when we must be spiritually and physically strengthened enough to watch and pray (**Matthew 26:40-41**). The disciples could not pray as they should while Jesus was in agony, because they were not trained. Though they were willing, they were weak. If we are weak, if our armor has gaps, Satan will exploit them. We must commit ourselves now to grow in prayer, completing our armor, connecting to God, empowered and emboldened by Him, maintaining a vigilant watch against Satan. The only way to accomplish this is through training and practice.

#### Conclusion:

The fight is on. We must not sit on the sidelines. If we do, we have already lost. We are the warriors God has chosen to fight these battles. We must gird up our armor, completing it with prayer. We cannot fight the good fight or keep the faith unless we are empowered by God through prayer. Victory can be ours, but not if we overlook this most important part of our armor—PRAYER! Commit to memory **I Thessalonians 5:16-18**, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."