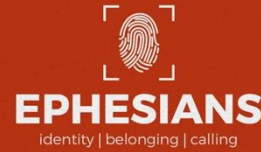


14 A PRAYING CHURCH

What sport would you compete in if you were in the Olympics? Why *that* one?



To succeed in any Olympic sport requires training, skill development, fitness, coaching, resilience, and money. Except for the money, all these are true for the Christian to flourish. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul speaks to his friends of their position of strength and grace in Christ (ch 1-3), then he talks about spiritual fitness and training as believers practice living out who they are in Christ.

And it's a battle, but we have access to God's strength and armour.

The 'secret weapon' at our disposal Paul leaves to last – it's called prayer.

Read Ephesians 6:18–20 (ESV) ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Notes:

1. The Jewish people of Paul's day had several prescribed times for daily prayer. David said, "Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice. ... God will hear and answer" (Ps. 55:17, 19). With the birth of the church came a new dimension to prayer that Paul introduces with: ¹⁸ praying at all times... (read Luke 21:36; Acts 2:42; Acts 10:2; Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

John MacArthur says: "To **pray at all times** is to live in continual God consciousness, where everything we see and experience becomes a kind of prayer, lived in deep awareness of and surrender to our heavenly Father." (MacArthur, 1996:380)

Comment:

2. In this short passage, what does Paul teach about the variety of prayer? frequency of prayer? power and manner of prayer? objects of prayer?

3. One can't help but wonder if in writing this the Apostle had in the back of his mind the experience of Jesus with His disciples (Matthew 26:36-46). Read that text with Ephesians 6 in view. What can we learn from Jesus in what He was facing?

4. Read Matthew 6:7 in light of Ephesians 6:18-20. What does 'vain repetition' sound like and what does it indicate about our prayers?

5. What is meant by 'praying in the Spirit'?

6. While Paul is writing about prayer why do you think he doesn't use the moment to request prayer for his release? (consider 2 Timothy 2:9)

7. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4. What does this passage teach us about why prayer is a constant priority for Christians?

8. On Sunday Riley mentioned the three C's on prayer: consistency, content (of our prayers), and connection (with the Father). Which one of these can you work on this week, and what will that look like?

PRAYER: Father help us to do what we were created to, live in constant communion with our God.

Journaling Take a few moments to record your personal insights from this lesson.