

Ephesians

6:18-24

Introduction

The United States Army has a new slogan: “*An Army of one.*”

Christians are part of an army. You are told to put on your full body armor and stand your ground against sinister supernatural enemies. Your battlefield is at home and at work and anyplace else you find yourself in a world that is under the control of the devil.

If you are honest you’ll admit that you sometimes feel like “an army of one” who is *alone* and has been *abandoned* both by the Lord and by your fellow soldiers!

As the letter closes Paul reminds you that you are *not* alone. You have your own unique and individual **deployment** in the battle; but you are also a member of a much larger **detachment** of soldiers who all share a singular and unwavering purpose.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Ask For Courage In Your Deployment, and #2 Act With Encouragement Toward Your Detachment.

#1 Ask For Courage In Your Deployment (v18-20)

These verses continue the military metaphor. Paul says “be watchful... with all perseverance...” He’s describing a soldier on the field of battle who must remain constantly vigilant against his or her enemies.

Paul’s current rank was as “an ambassador in chains.” He was under house arrest in Rome but he did not consider himself to be a prisoner of war. He saw his imprisonment as a strategic **deployment**.

From his post in prison he issued these orders:

Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -

We're still talking soldiers in the battle, but "prayer" is not technically a piece of the full body armor. You notice it isn't compared to anything the way the other spiritual qualities were in the preceding verses. Prayer is more like the line of communication on the battlefield.

Prayer is an inexhaustible subject. I'll concentrate on our context and point out four things about prayer on the spiritual battlefield. Each of the four things are introduced by the word "all" or "always." You are to "[pray] always," "with all prayer," "with all perseverance," and "for all the saints."

"Praying **always**" means both *regularly* and *constantly*. Regular prayer would be specific times you are able to set aside your other activities to pray. Constant prayer means a readiness to direct your words heavenward throughout the day, even if only for a brief moment.

"With **all** prayer" reminds you there are many and varied ways to pray. Prayer can be confession, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, or intercession. It can be verbal or nonverbal. If you have the gift of tongues it can be incomprehensible to you. We may pray publicly or privately; in loud cries, in soft whispers, or silently; deliberately and planned or spontaneously; while sitting, standing, kneeling, or even lying down; at home or in church; while working or while traveling; with hands folded or raised; with eyes open or closed; with head bowed or erect. The New Testament, like the Old, mentions many forms, circumstances, and postures for prayer but prescribes none. Jesus prayed while standing, while sitting, while kneeling, and quite probably in other positions as well. We can pray *wherever* we are and in *whatever* situation we are in.

Paul especially mentions "supplication in the Spirit." "Supplication" is a word for specific requests. Praying "in the Spirit" does not mean going into a trance or speaking an ecstatic utterance. It is depending upon the Holy Spirit to guide you into specific requests. The Holy Spirit gets our hearts in harmony with God's purposes and thereby we are able to know God's will and pray accordingly.

“Being watchful to this end with **all** perseverance.” “Watchful” means *sleepless or to lie awake*. “Perseverance” means to pay *constant attention*. You are to lie awake sleepless if necessary and pay constant attention in your battles. As I mentioned last week, there is no furlough in the spiritual warfare. You’re not at war only when you’re on the mission field or involved in some ministry. Your enemy is constantly plotting against you at home, at work, and everywhere else you are in his world.

“And supplication for **all** the saints.” It is not inappropriate to pray for ourselves. But just as the Bible primarily calls us to pray about spiritual needs rather than physical, it primarily calls us to pray for others rather than ourselves. The greatest thing we can do for another believer, or that he can do for us, is to pray. That is the way the Body of Christ grows spiritually as well as in love. When one member of the Body is weak, wounded, or cannot function, the other members compensate by supporting and helping strengthen it. Samuel said to the people of Israel, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Wait a minute: Doesn’t Paul pray for himself in the next two verses? Not really. *He asks other believers to pray for him!*

Ephesians 6:19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,
Ephesians 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Paul was in prison, under house arrest. He asks the believers to pray for him – ***but not for his release!*** He wants prayer for “boldness” to “open [his] mouth” and “speak” to others “utterances” that will “make known the mystery of the Gospel.”

Paul described himself as “an ambassador in chains.” In those days when an ambassador was sent on an official diplomatic mission he would wear golden chains – necklaces or bracelets – that spoke of his exalted position. Paul was wearing “chains.” From an earthly perspective they held him bound by the power of Rome. From a heavenly perspective they adorned him with the power of God and His Gospel.

Paul didn't necessarily want out of prison because he understood that he had been strategically **deployed** there by His Lord. Instead of asking for his release from prison, he asked for courage in prison to accomplish the Lord's objective for putting him there.

His deployment was a strategic success for the spreading of the Gospel:

1. Under house arrest Paul was chained to a Roman guard from the household of Caesar. The guards rotated on three eight-hour shifts. Paul was witnessing to these elite Roman guards. They were getting saved and taking the Gospel directly into Caesar's household.
2. Under house arrest Paul was able to receive visitors. He was receiving Jewish leaders to whom he was expounding the Gospel, explaining from their Scriptures why the Messiah must die and be raised from the dead.
3. Under house arrest he was allowed to go into the city and preach the Gospel. We know this because it was at this time that Paul encountered the runaway slave Onesimus. Onesimus gets saved under Paul's preaching and Paul sends him back with a letter to his friend Philemon asking him to receive Onesimus back as his brother in the Lord.
4. We would add to this list the writing Paul was able to get done while under house arrest. Along with Ephesians, the Books of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are thought to have been written during the same time period and hence are called the "Prison Epistles."

The Lord had deployed Paul to prison. I want to suggest to you that **you** are deployed by the Lord. Wherever you find yourself is **your** deployment. In your home, or on the job, or elsewhere in the world, you are deployed to share the Gospel. To do so you, too, will need courage.

We lack power in our lives because we want to be discharged from our deployment. Ask others to pray for you, and ask for courage in your deployment.

#2 Act With Encouragement Toward Your Detachment (v21-24)

Paul might be deployed as an ambassador in chains, but he was also part of a larger **detachment** of soldiers. The remaining verses discuss a soldier's responsibility to the larger detachment he or she is assigned to by the Lord. In a word, it is to **encourage**. Tychicus was dispatched to the church at Ephesus and he acted to encourage the detachment.

Ephesians 6:21 But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you;

Tychicus had been chosen to accompany Paul and the others in taking a relief offering to Jerusalem. When Paul was arrested, he apparently went with him and was with Paul in Rome. He would deliver this and the other letters and then fill in the blanks regarding Paul's treatment and conditions.

In the next verse we'll see that Tychicus would bring "comfort," or *encouragement*, to the believers. He was able to do so because of two prerequisites: He was "a beloved brother," and he was a "faithful minister in the Lord."

Tychicus was "a beloved brother." If you are a Christian, then all other Christians are your brothers and sisters. Not all of us are "beloved," however! Some of us make it harder to be-loved than others.

An anonymous writer once wrote,

*To dwell above with the saints we love,
O, that will be glory;
But to dwell below with the saints I know -
Well that's another story!*

How can you become beloved by the saints? Look at verses twenty-three and twenty-four:

Ephesians 6:23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:24 Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

These are the qualities you must cultivate in order to be beloved among the saints.

“Peace to the brethren.” The Church is notorious for strife and division. We need to remember that we are not in a spiritual battle with each other! Earlier in this letter Paul exhorted us to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” You’ll be beloved if you seek to maintain peace among the brethren.

“Love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Love” is your willful decision to love others inspired by your “faith” in the Lord. It is putting love into practice. You can’t help but be beloved if you are loving others with God’s agape love.

You are to “love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” “Sincerity” means *without corruption*. It is possible to corrupt love. For example: Lust can corrupt love. If you’re dating and you pressure your partner to have a physical relationship prior to marriage, it’s not love; it’s lust. If you really loved him or her, you’d want the best – God’s best – and you’d wait.

“Grace” is the mark of a Christian who loves the Lord without corruption. We extend grace to others; we seek to motivate them only by grace; we adopt methods that are gracious. You’ll be beloved when grace marks your dealings with others.

Grace, love, and peace are the formula for becoming a beloved brother or sister in the Lord.

Tychicus was also “a faithful minister in the Lord.” “Minister” is the Greek word *diakonos* from which we derive *deacon*. It originally meant *to wait tables*. The first deacons in the Church did exactly that – they waited tables in the distribution of food to widows.

I don’t think Paul means to limit his thoughts to deacons. He is talking about serving in general, whether you hold an official position or not. At any rate the key idea is that you be “faithful.”

Can people count on you? Let’s keep this in the context of our chapter and spiritual warfare. At home – can your family count on

you? At work – can your employer or employees count on you? In the Church – can the leadership count on you? Can your brothers and sisters count on you?

There are serious battles being fought in all of those places. People are counting on you; you can't afford to be distracted by sin and selfishness. You may not be a deacon in the official sense... But you *are* a husband, wife, parent, or the like. Be faithful to your calling.

Look back at verse twenty-two:

Ephesians 6:22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts.

Paul could count on Tychicus to “comfort” the believer’s “hearts.” “Comfort” is the Greek word *parakaleo*, meaning *to come alongside*. You are to come alongside other believers in your detachment and encourage them.

Listen: ***You and I don't need any more discouragement!*** The Church, and other Christians, should be the one place where you can be encouraged to take your stand and withstand the onslaught of your supernatural enemies.

Encouraging others is something most of us need to work on. It starts with a mindset toward ministering to others. It starts with thinking about others rather than myself. I come to wait tables! What can I do to encourage you? What are you going through? How would I want to be treated?

Conclusion

Many believers are defeated in their deployment. To then come together and be discouraged by their detachment can be debilitating.

You need to be a source, and we need to be a center, of encouragement if each of us is to have the courage to stand in the battle.