***The Full Armor of God - Prayer

The Suffering of Spiritual Combat, No. 12 - PH34-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:28-30***

We are studying about the suffering that comes to every believer because he is in a spiritual conflict with Satan and the demon angels. We learn from Ephesians 6:18 that the tactics on the field of battle with the demon angels is prayer. You put on the armor. You secure the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. But then the procedure for using it is prayer.

So, Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This is what makes the Christian spiritual armor and the sword of the Word of God effective. The wrong tactics in a battle usually spells defeat. This is especially true in angelic warfare.

For this reason, Satan places maximum pressures on Christians in many subtle ways to keep them from praying. Each of us can look back upon this week that we have just spent--this past 7 days that we have used up part of our lives of the allotted times that we have on earth--and we can look back and see how effective Satan was in keeping us from praying. We can particularly compare that to the fact that we have already been looking at this subject and have been alerted to its importance and to its strategic value. It may be that we can now look back and say, "Yes, it happened again. Satan outmaneuvered me in many subtle ways. There were many things that were brought into the orbit of my life that took my time and kept me from praying. There were things that kept my attention which I considered very important, and I ignored prayer."

Satan places maximum pressures to keep us from praying. To the extent that he has been successful, we have been defeated. I repeat to you again that I don't care how emotional you get over the Lord; I don't care how much you love Him; I don't care how excited you get over your fellowship with your Christian friends; and, I don't care how much you know the Word of God and how effective you have become in understanding doctrinal principles, even to the extent that you have developed a real spiritual maturity structure in your soul, and thus have put on the parts of the armor. All of that is to no avail without prayer.

It is prayer that is the tactic that defeats Satan. Until we learn that, we are going to be just like most other Christians who go through excited; wonderful; happy; carrying on; serving the Lord; learning the Word; and, doing exactly nothing when it comes to changing the records in heaven. Don't forget: you and I must always ask ourselves, in reference to our ministry as a church and as individuals, were the records in heaven changed as the result of my service, or did life go on just as usual in heaven apart from anything I did? Unless prayer is playing its role, I can guarantee you that you haven't made any impact on heaven whatsoever.

**Prayer**

So, prayer is the issue that makes the whole thing work. Basically, we remind you again, prayer is asking God for things accompanied with thanksgiving. It is made to the Father; in the name of the Son; and, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This verse in Ephesians 6:18 pointed out that prayer requests are twofold in nature. One he called "prayer" which was the Greek word for anticipation of a life situation--praying before you get into a situation in life. You're going to, for example, get married someday. You're not married now. So you look forward to the day you're going to get married. So, right now, if you are a wise Christian, you begin praying for the person that God has prepared--that one and only for you to marry. Someplace somewhere in the world that person is alive now, and you should begin praying in behalf of that person and the marriage that you're going to enter. That would be covered by the word "prayer." That's the kind of praying that is covered by the word "prayer." It is in anticipation of a life situation.

**Supplication**

Then he uses the word "supplication," and this is a different word. This is the Greek word "deesis" which means prayer in behalf of the urgency of the moment of a specific situation. This is what you use in the midst of the battle. When you're on board the ship getting ready for the landing, you're using the word for "prayer" here. But, when you've gone over the side; into the nets; into the landing craft; the ramp has fallen; you're on the beach; and, you are in contact with the enemy, then you use the word "supplication" because you're asking for specific solutions to crises that you're meeting at the moment day-by-day.

After you have entered marriage, you will find there are a few problems. That's the time you begin using the word "supplication." You cry out to God in your desperation to meet your particular need at that particular moment. That is the difference, and it is crucial to know that there are two kinds of prayer requests: 1) before you are in the battle; the, 2) the specific issues once you are in the midst of the fight. I don't use that as an analogy to marriage. I mean that's just the general use of the term.

It could apply to your children. Someday you're going to have children. You look forward to that. Now you pray about those children. Kids can be terrible. Kids can do all kinds of terrible things. They can be a grief to themselves and everybody else. One of the biggest things you have to teach your kids is to never trust another kid. One of the smartest things you can do when you have teenagers is to keep them isolated from other teenagers. They mutually carry diseases of the mind and other kinds that they pass on to one another. When your kids are teenagers, preoccupy them with your family. Preoccupy them within controlled situations of group teenage activities.

There are all kinds of things that you should not allow teenagers to fall into in the matter of relationship, and you have to be praying about all these things. This is because the people who are going to hurt your children most of all, I'll tell you, are other teenagers. The people who are going to bring the greatest grief are the other kids, the peers, that your kids associate with. Therefore, before you ever have children, that's the thing to pray about. Once you're in it, the problems will arise and the crises of your life situations will come upon you, and you'll be crying out to God in desperation in supplication for mercy and for help.

So, that's the difference. It's a very crucial difference, and it applies to everything in life: your career; and, everything you're doing. It is before you're in the battle, and after you're in the battle. However, prayer must meet scriptural conditions to be effective. It has to be on the ground of temporal fellowship. It has to be in faith in God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer in the Early Church**

We pointed out in the last session that the practice of prayer was a very big thing in the local church of the New Testament times. All you have to do is turn back to the book of Acts, and as you read through just the book of Acts, the history of the early church, it is quite obvious that church prayer time was a major factor in the lives of the Christians. The Christians did not come to church prayer time and wonder whether they should go to prayer meeting or not. It was a climactic part of the fellowship of the local assembly, and the reason for it, perhaps, you can appreciate a little more now that you have learned that the Christian has armor to put on. He has a sword to use in combat, but it is the tactic of prayer that makes it all work.

The same thing is true of a local church. Yes, we know the Word. We explain doctrine. We have the organizations necessary to do that. We do it through various vehicles. But the thing that makes any local church ministry effective and usable is the Wednesday night prayer meeting. That's why prayer meeting should be a working session. It should be a time when people get together; evaluate; examine what is the need of the church, as well as of individuals; and, then go to prayer. The early church knew that that was how they operated. Without it, they could have closed their doors. It took the corporate prayer life of the church to move the ministry of the church as a whole forward. Don't ever make the mistake to think that corporate prayer life is an incidental thing because it is so small in churches today. We are so comparatively ineffective as churches. If the prayer meeting were bigger, our impact would be infinitely larger. But the only way prayer meeting can be bigger is by human beings showing up to join in prayer.

In Acts 2:42, we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Bible doctrine) and in fellowship and in breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper) and in prayers. In Acts 6:4, in dealing with the leadership of the church, the apostles' use of their time, they said, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. When Peter found himself in prison, in Acts 12:5, we read, "Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him." They went into an unending prayer meeting.

In Acts 20:36, the apostle Paul was going to Jerusalem, and he would never be returning to contact with the church at Ephesus. So he asked all the pastor-teachers all over the city of Ephesus (one pastor-teacher, or one elder, for each church, but to churches scattered all over the metropolitan area of Ephesus), he asked all those pastor-teachers to meet with him at a nearby town before he went on his journey. We found that one of the last things they did with all these pastors together meeting with Paul was to pray. Acts 20:36 says, "And when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all." The whole group knelt down together wherever they were meeting, and they engaged in a group prayer meeting as the final point of contact that they had on this earth with the great apostle Paul.

Acts 21:5 speaks about an escort party: "And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way." Here is Paul again continuing on his journey to Jerusalem. It was the custom for a church to escort the apostle and his party part of the way toward the next stage of their journey. So that's what they're doing here: "And they all brought us on our way with wives and children till we were out of the city." When they got outside of the city it says, "We knelt down on the shore and prayed." This was a group prayer meeting right there on the seashore at the point of embarkation.

You can multiply this certainly through the epistles. There is no lack of emphasis that what Christians should be doing privately is praying. But I'm trying to stress to you right now that the book of Acts makes it clear that there was a lot of *group* praying in the New Testament. There was a lot of local assembly praying.

The curse of the local church today is this indifference toward the prayer meeting where the real spiritual achievements are brought about. Frequently, and usually, it is left to the pastor and a few zealots who turn out on Wednesday nights. The system of group prayer is biblical; it is proper; and, it secures God's blessings. Certainly we have seen that around here for two decades and then some. We have seen it in recent days.

You would have enjoyed being here yesterday afternoon as the crew moved in from Fort Worth with a truck loaded with the print shop: the presses; the Linotype; and, the equipment. I wish I'd had my camera there. The scene got pretty exciting moving two-ton pieces of equipment into this back room to see the reality of what we have been praying for many years around here, seeking the Lord's direction as this came on and off, I've asked Mr. Cross to open the shop back here and let you see it. I would suggest that after the service you just walk through so that you'll requests for printed materials that we weren't able to supply. The Lord willing, we are going to start putting out publications of every kind. Anybody who is positive to the Word of God is going to have a chance through this ministry to learn the Word of God whether we ever see him on the face of this earth or not. Prayer has made that possible.

God has such a great sense of humor. It really makes you laugh. The Lord picks some rinky dink outfit like Gideon and his little 300 men, and He does great things. Then the Lord, with a twinkle in His eye, has a great laugh as the enemy scatters, wondering how did this happen to us? Well that's what the Lord is doing here. He's got a twinkle in His eye, and He's taking the most unlikely group in the city of Irving, the only one to whom He has given such a fantastic thing like a full print shop operation. Is this cause for pride? No. You better be scared a little bit. You better be frightened of the implications of the burden of responsibility that rests on your shoulders, lest this be abused and misused, and the Lord bring judgment on us, or lest we neglect it and He bring judgment on us. And the enemy is going to be out to see that we do both--that we abuse it and misuse it; and, that we neglect it.

So we're back to square one. It is prayer that makes the difference. It is prayer that is the tactic that is going to outmaneuver the demon angels in what you may be sure they will bring to us in every kind of pressure possible. You ain't seen nothing yet toward this ministry in the way of pressures like you're going to see now--if we really hit a stride with this that God has given us in the way the print shop and perhaps the radio.

**Dallas Theological Seminary**

Satan can hinder the delivery of finances, for example--finances that the Lord has designed for us to have. I've mentioned before that I used to wonder, as a student at Dallas Seminary, why it was that the seminary never could pay its bills. I wondered why it was that, just before I came there, the seminary actually came to the brink of bankruptcy. Dr. Chafer would sit in class and tell us that one crucial week came where it was all over, and he said, "That which we all hoped we could avoid, that which we all feared, we recognized had now come to pass." He said, "Dr. Lincoln (who was the treasurer at the time) came into my office and said, 'Dr. Chafer, we cannot go on.'" They were ready to close the doors of Dallas Seminary.

Now, did Dallas Seminary come into being because God wanted a place that had the vision of training men with the equipment to exercise the pastor-teach gift? Well, you know the story (which we won't go into here) of how the seminary came into being, I think it is quite evident that it was the will of God that that seminary should be put together by those three men that met in that Atlanta, Georgia motel room all day. They were hacking this thing out, and putting together, under Dr. Chafer's vision, a school which taught men how to preach the Bible; how to explain it; and, how to understand their calling as expositors of the Word. Yet, God is not going to supply the money for that which he asked these men to do?

So it made me wonder. They would pull us out of class, even after they had come past the bankruptcy stage. They were able to avoid bankruptcy because that week a large gift came into the school that saved them from closing the doors. However, even when I was there, after the war, they were calling us out of class to go into prayer meeting in behalf of the finances of the school. It wasn't until the middle 50s that they came to where they could begin to hold their heads above water. Why wasn't the money there? Why should God call an operation into being and no money be there? Well, of course, Satan, through his human agents, was pointing the finger at Dallas Seminary and saying, "You see. The Lord isn't blessing you. You see. The Lord is not in favor of what you're doing. You see. The Lord is anti-dispensational. The Lord is anti-premillennial. The Lord is anti-pre-tribulation rapture. And until you learn that, you are not going to have any money." They were pointing the finger at the seminary saying, "You're out of the will of God," in effect.

But the seminary was not out of the will of God. God, in His providence, had his reasons for allowing the demon angels to be bottlenecking money that God had designated for that school. The demon angels, working upon the old sin nature of people, were able to keep funds that people should have been giving to the seminary from arriving at the seminary. Every local church who is doing the Lord's work--genuinely doing the Lord's work--is going to face the same thing. The demon angels are going to work on your old sin nature to cause you to crimp off the finances that He says, "I want to come through you," and to cause a bottleneck in the work by keeping the money from flowing because we have held back on the Lord. I want to alert you to that because Satan is capable of doing this.

Ultimately, the Lord is not going to let his work go down the drain. He allows this pressure because this too has its values, and it orients us to our dependence upon the Lord. You remember, in Daniel 10, the capability of Satan to withhold that which God has designated should come to a person. Daniel was praying to the Lord asking for information concerning God's plans toward his people, the Jewish people. In Daniel 10:12, we read, "Then said he unto me (that is, the angel said unto me), 'Fear not Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.'"

This angel is saying, "The very first day that you prayed and asked God for this information, God heard you, and the information was sent." "But the prince of the kingdom Persia withstood me 21 days." The prince of the kingdom of Persia here refers to the demon angel who was assigned to influence the heathen king of the kingdom of Persia. Behind every governmental ruler, there is a demon influence. Behind every governmental leader of every nation, there is a demon influence who is guiding that nation because all nations on the face of the earth belong to Satan.

This demon angel of considerable power in this position, apparently, was literally able to keep the information from coming to Daniel for 21 days: "But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, and I remained there with the king of Persia. Now I am come to make you understand what shall befall your people in the latter days, for yet the vision is for many days." Therefore, for 21 days the angel could not get through with God's message which was intended for Daniel, until a superior angel in the form of Michael the archangel came along and broke the bottleneck in order to let the message get through.

I think you can apply the same thing to everything else that Satan does. What the Lord says is, "This is what I want you to do," including with your money; your time; and, everything else. Satan sends the demon out after you in the midst of this conflict in order to stifle your following through. He wants to stifle the expression on your part and to keep you from doing what the Lord has designed you to be the instrument to perform. So money does not come through. Services do not come through. Time is not dedicated.

One of the most beautiful things that Satan does is to keep you from giving your money to the right place. This is part of his stratagems because he is so smart. Because you know about this now, you can be a little on your guard. What Satan will have to do is not try to keep you from giving your money to the Lord's work. He will keep you from giving it to the right place. He will create rat holes for you to put your money into. He will cause you to be putting your money into Christian endeavors apart from the particular ministry that he has designed your money to go to. Many a Christian is squandering his internal reward because he is putting his money into the wrong area of the Lord's work. He will keep you from exercising your spiritual gift in the right place.

Do you realize that if you exercise your spiritual gift in the wrong church, you have lost eternal rewards that you will never see? If you put in your time in the wrong area of the Lord's work, it is squandered. So it's a pretty serious thing when you decide, "Here is where my money goes. Here's where my time goes. Here's where my gifts are to be exercised." And if you are the emotional type, which is the way Satan primarily works today, he will give your emotions such a kick that you'll even be able to blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ and have an exciting time doing it. I hear people doing exactly that--blaspheming the Lord in the process of having such a warm experience of Christian fellowship. You're not having Christian fellowship at all. Satan has taken your old sin nature and caused you to have a good emotional regurgitation.

Like the Scripture says, "A dog returns to his vomit, and he says, 'How good it is.'" He doesn't realize what it is he has turned to. There's a lot of emotional regurgitation going on in Christian circles, and believers are wallowing in it and saying, "Isn't this wonderful what the Lord is doing for us?" Beware that Satan does not bottleneck something that God has designated you as His channel to deliver. Beware that you do not misdirect what God has made it possible for you to have decisions over in the way of time; money; your life; and, your abilities--that they go where they should go. Respect the power of Satan's realm, and do not drift through life without all prayer. That's the thing. You're in combat, and it is prayer that's going to protect us from this kind of capacity.

**Principles of Prayer**

So here are a few guiding principles as a general summary concerning the tactics of prayer, in order to try to button this down, as to how we should go about using prayer.

1. **Uninhibited Asking**

There is, first of all, a principle that you find in Luke 11:5-8. We call this the principle of uninhibited asking. This is a parable on the occasion when the disciples requested the Lord to teach them to pray. The man in the parable that the Lord used to illustrate how they should pray did not hesitate to press upon a friend a need that he had, but at a time which was very inopportune for his friend. Luke 11:5: "Which of you shall have a friend that shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, 'Friend, lend me 3 loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.' And he from within shall answer and say, 'Trouble me not. The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give you anything.' I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs."

This man got through because of his importunity. The Greek word for "importunity" is "anaida." The word means "shamelessness" or "impudence." The man got through because of his gall; that is, because of his own inhibited asking. He didn't care that it was midnight. He didn't care that the man had gone to bed early, and everybody was sound asleep. He came up, and he began pounding on that door, and said, "I've just had some visitors come through. I need some bread." He was shameless enough to ask for it. The result was that he got it. The point of this is that if shameless persistence can obtain a favor from a neighbor, then certainly bold prayer will receive our Father's answer. For this reason, Luke 11:9-10 literally are saying, "Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep On Knocking." The point is uninhibited asking.

1. **Continual Asking**

There's a second principle which is illustrated in Luke 18:1-8. This is about a widow who had a request that she placed to an arrogant judge: "He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men are always to pray and not to faint." He said, "There was in the city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him saying, 'Avenge me of my adversary.' And he would not for a while, but afterward he said unto himself, 'Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she will weary me.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him though He bear long with him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?'"

This widow was at first ignored by the arrogant judge. Her repeated call for justice finally secured her desire. Unless the Holy Spirit leads a Christian otherwise, a Christian should persist in a certain prayer request. If it's a legitimate prayer request, you should continue to ask the Lord. I don't care how hopeless the situation may be or how desperate it may seem, unless the Lord very definitely says, "Don't pray for this anymore," and very definitely impresses your mind that this is not in His will, then you should continue to pray and wait for His timing and His answer. Verse 1 says that men ought always to pray. Verse 8 says that when the Lord returns, this prayer persistence will not be widespread. So principle number one is uninhibited asking. Principal number two is continually asking.

1. **Asking in Faith**

Next is asking in faith which we find in Mark 11:22-24: "And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be removed, and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass, he shall have whatever he says. Therefore, I say unto you: Whatever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them."

It is the essence of God (the character of God) that assures us of His faithfulness in responding to our prayers. He has said that he will listen to us if we pray on praying ground. If we pray in the name of his Son, which means in the will of God, He will respond. The Holy Spirit therefore leads us to the proper requests, so we may expect to see returns. You should not pray in the way that your little child sits and blows soap bubbles--something that you're going to see floating away, and you expect to see burst and never see again. There are a lot of Christians who approach God with the soap bubble technique. Their prayers are just a bunch of soap bubbles they're blowing out. They expect them to see them float away and burst, and never be seen again. That is praying without faith. This is believing that prayer is the tactic of the Christian in the angelic warfare--taking God seriously.

1. **Asking in Unanimity**

The next principle is asking in unanimity. There is great value in a group of Christians sharing together and coming to a common conviction of an item of prayer that they mutually uphold to the Lord. Matthew 18:19: "Again I say to you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall, ask and it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven." There is power in Christians praying in a common confident agreement. The word "agree" here in Matthew 18:19 is the Greek word "sumphoneo." Obviously, you see that we get our English word "symphony" from this. "Sumphoneo" means "no discordant voice" in the local church prayer life to jar the harmony. This unanimity is the product of God the Holy Spirit and people responding to the Word.

If a church as a whole is responding to the Word of God; has a unanimity; and, there is one character who is causing a discord, I'll tell you what God is going to do with that character. He's going to jerk him out of the orchestra. Churches who are on the beam doing the Lord's work and that have a vital working prayer meeting time, are churches that are putting believers in a position where they can find themselves removed. This is because God says that if you agree, He is not going to tolerate some character who keeps playing discords in the orchestra. He is going to pull him out and send him into some other church where he can play the discords to his heart's content, where nobody is playing in harmony anyhow, and nobody will disturb him.

This is what bothers me. If I find members who come from other churches to my church, right away I'm suspicious of that person. He should come on no other reason except that, "Here I am learning the Word of God." If a person can say, "I've been looking for the truth, and now I have found the truth," that is the leading of the Spirit of God. If he's coming because he doesn't like the preacher over there; he doesn't like some personalities over there; or, he doesn't like something else over there, then I am suspicious of him because he may have come from a church that is really doing the Lord's work, but he was a discordant player in the symphony, and the Lord jerked him out. I hate to see people like that coming here. It's kind of a personal humiliation to me to think that the Lord would give me a joker who can't play in harmony and who can't play in tune. I have a band here, and I know what it is to have some guy who can't play in tune, let alone to have to have it within the context of our ministry here.

**James 5:16**

There is one other thing. There is a verse over in James 5:16, which is not too well translated, but which is a great verse for explaining this business of prayer as our tactic in battle. Let's look at that now. James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The meaning of this text is better conveyed if you'll take a pencil and cross the words "fervent" out. "Fervent," in this translation, is very misleading. What it does in effect is it gives you the impression that somehow highly emotional prayer gains points with God.

However, I want to tell you that God is not one bit impressed by your emotional, deep, sincerely expressed prayer. God is not impressed by that at all. You don't find any place in the Bible that says that if you'll get in there and really emote with the Lord, He will listen to you. That's his majesty the devil giving you his course on prayer. Most Christians have fallen for that principle. Our circumstances and our needs may indeed be so desperate that our prayers do become very fervent, and we do become very emotionally involved with our praying. That's okay. But if you think that the way to approach God in prayer to get answers is to show him how emotional you can be about it, you're very sadly mistaken.

In the Greek Bible, the first word in this sentence which constitutes the latter part of verse 16 is the word "much," which in the Greek is "polus." In our English translation, "much" is the last word in this sentence. Once more I remind you that in Greek, the first word in the sentence is a word in a place of emphasis. When the Greek writer wants to stress a word, he puts it first in the sentence. To put a word last in the sentence is a secondary emphasis, but to put it first is a point of emphasis. So the first thing he puts in this sentence is the word "much" because he wants to stress that a certain kind of prayer by a certain kind of person produces fantastic unbelievable results every time. The word here means "to have a great deal accomplished."

The word "much" goes with the word "avails." It avails much, and the Greek word is "ischuo." "Ischuo" means to have power or force so as to be capable of producing something. It's a certain kind of praying that has the force to accomplish much. It is present tense which means it is constantly the case that this prayer will every time accomplish much. It is active. That is, it is inherent in the prayer. It is indicative. It is a statement of reality. So we'll translate this as, "Has much force to produce certain results." What has much force? Prayer. Prayer has much force to produce certain results. The word for "prayer" is our old friend "deesis." This is the subject of the sentence here. Prayer is the thing that avails much. We would say, "Prayer is able to do much." Or prayer has much force.

This word for prayer is the one that expresses the need for mercy; the need for great help; or, the desperate outcry in the midst of the battle. "Deesis" comes from the Greek verb "deomai." When the Greeks in the ancient world spoke to a king, they used the word "deomai." They were asking a favor or mercy--petitions which were addressed to a king. In other words, they were grace appeals. That's why it's a fitting word that we should use this of our appeals to God. Prayer is strictly God acting in grace. They did not use "axioo" which was another Greek word. When a person in the Greek world wanted to talk to a judge in a court, then he used the word for a petition which was described by "axioo" because "axioo" means, "I've got this coming. This is justice, and I'm asking you as a judge to do justice for me." But when you go to a sovereign king, you don't have any rights. Therefore, you cast yourself upon his mercy. You plead for mercy from him, and you plead for his kindness toward you. That's what "deesis" means coming from the verb form "deomai."

This says that a prayer of a desperate pleading before a sovereign God avails much, but there is a qualified statement here. It is a kind of prayer which is able to produce this much. That is that it's the prayer of a righteous man. The Greek word is "dikaios." The Greek does not have the word "man." It is really "person." "Of a righteous person." Righteous here refers, of course, first of all, to one's spiritual relationship to God in salvation. It also involves our relationship to the Lord in temporal fellowship (with known sins confessed). It is related to what we have previously studied on the breastplate of righteousness which expresses right action. It is what 1 Peter 3:12 refers to when Peter says, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." So it is the person who is, first of all, born again who makes this kind of prayer. It is the person who is in solid temporal fellowship who makes this kind of prayer, and who therefore is able to produce great results. So we translate: "The prayer of a righteous person is able to do much."

However, there's one more word. It is translated "effectual fervent." The "fervent" is misleading. It should not be there. It is the word "energeo." "Energeo" comes from another word from (a noun): "energeia." We get our English word "energy" from that, and it is the Greek word for power in action. It is energy in action. Therefore, the verb "energeo" talks about a power which is operational, or a kind of prayer which is productive of great results when you use it--when it is operational. You may be a person who is born again. You may be in perfect temporal fellowship with the Lord. You may be fully dressed in the armor. You may have the Word of God in your hand. But if you do not put prayer into operation, you will accomplish nothing. That's the point.

This is a prayer by a righteous person which accomplishes great things when it is operational. This is not "dunamis." "Dunamis" is potential power such as you have in Romans 1:16: "I'm not ashamed of the power of God." It is potential power. The English word "dynamite" comes from that. It is potential power in that stick of dynamite. This word deals with power in action. It is present middle participle. Present participle indicates that we can translate this with the word "when." It means "when it is in action." It is present--always effective. It is middle--productive in itself. It is participle--a principle stated.

So we'll translate James 5:16 this way: "The prayer of a righteous person is able to do much when it is operational." There it is. That's the meaning of the text. Your Bible is generally throwing in some ideas that are not there in the Greek. This is a great verse. This sums up everything that we've been saying. It deals with the fact that a Christian is in the angelic conflict. He is therefore a victim of undeserved suffering. He has been provided with armor and a weapon to do the battle in the midst of being surrounded by demons angels, and to be victorious. But the tactic that makes for victory is the use of all prayer. James tells us that the pleading prayer for the mercy of God to meet our desperate need at some moment in time, done by a person who is in Christ and in temporal fellowship, is able to do much when it is operational--when it is put to use. Otherwise it does exactly nothing.

In 1 John 5:14-15, we read, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

In Luke 11:1, we have the statement, "Lord teach us to pray."

In Luke 18:1, we read, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." We would close with Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 where Paul says, "Pray without ceasing."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)