

# WHO AM I?

Ephesians



## PRAY TO BATTLE; PRAY TO BLESS

Ephesians 6:18-24

### INTRODUCTION

An 11-year-old girl and her 8-year-old brother bickered and fought over the slightest thing. Their father was surprised when the girl made an artistic card for her brother's birthday. Inside she wrote, "Happy birthday to my nine-year-old brother. I am so glad to have a brother to love. So God gave me you. P.S. Don't read this out loud or I will twist your head off." (Adapted from Reader's Digest [Jan., 1999], p. 78.)

Perhaps you've felt that way at times about some of your brothers and sisters in the Lord. But we're family, so through all the irritations and misunderstandings, we should care deeply for one another and it should show to the watching world. A Greek writer named Lucian, who lived from about A.D. 120-200, said of the early Christians, "It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it into their heads that they are all brethren." (Cited by Irving L. Jensen, 1 & 2 Thessalonians [Moody Press], p. 52.)

Up to this point, Ephesians has not been a very personal letter. Perhaps this was because Paul intended for it to be circulated among several of the churches in Asia Minor. But now, this brief conclusion oozes with his evident care for these Christians. It's all the more pronounced when you stop and think about Paul's circumstances. He was in prison in Rome, chained to a guard. He was getting up in years and his health was probably not great. From Philippians, written during the same imprisonment, we learn that fellow Christians in Rome were attacking Paul. We would understand if Paul sent out an appeal for prayer for his own needs.

But instead, these verses do not contain a hint about his difficulties. As we saw last time, the apostle's only prayer request was that he would be bold in proclaiming the gospel. When it comes to saying farewell, Paul's focus is his concern for these Christians and their needs. Paul knew that they were concerned about him and his imprisonment (see 3:13). So he sent Tychicus to tell them about his situation and to comfort their hearts (6:21-22). Then Paul concludes with a benediction, which is really a prayer, reflecting again his love and care for these brothers and sisters in Christ. These verses teach us that...

**Caring, godly relationships among believers are at the heart of God's purpose for the church.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Sermon by Steven Cole. Found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-63-caring-church-ephesians-621-24>

## OPEN IT

1. **Who was your childhood best friend? What brought you close?**

## READ IT

**Ephesians 6:18-24**

## EXPLORE IT

2. **What four characteristics of healthy prayer does Paul list that each start with the word “all” in the ESV? (v. 18)**
3. **Despite all his present discomfort, what is the specific prayer request Paul shares? (vv. 19-20)**
4. **Why did Paul send Tychicus to Ephesus? (vv. 21-22)**
5. **In his two-verse benediction, what four good things does Paul pray for on behalf of his readers? (vv. 23-24)**
6. **How does Paul describe Christians with the final 10 words of his epistle to the Ephesians in the ESV?**

# APPLY IT

## ***This Is How We Fight Our Battles***

During World War Two, an officer was briefing his men on how to take a certain objective. He demonstrated to them the manner in which they needed to hug the ground so as to stay below enemy fire. He said in conclusion, "If you advance on your knees, you will always be safe."

That's what Paul tells us in our text. In 6:10-13, Paul gave us the explanation for the fight: we must be strong in the Lord because we are engaged in a spiritual battle with the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. In 6:14-17, Paul told us the equipment for the fight: the full armor of God, which enables us to stand firm against this powerful enemy. He mentioned the belt of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; the boots of the preparation of the gospel of peace; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; and, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Now (6:18-20), Paul describes the effecting of the fight, that is, how to fight the enemy, namely, "We fight for God against the enemy through prayer."<sup>2</sup>

- 7. What are some of the battles you face in an average month, whether spiritual, physical, relational, or vocational? Have you found any effective ways to fight those battles? If so, what are they?**

- 8. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 26:41. What kind of phrases should appear in our prayer life if we are expecting temptation to come our way?**

---

<sup>2</sup> Sermon by Steven Cole. Found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-62-how-fight-god-ephesians-618-20>

9. **What in the life of Paul models living on mission with the gospel rather than hiding away? Are you willing to pray what he says in verses 19-20? Why or why not?**

*Pray for Me and I'll Pray for You*

[Believers should] develop a prayer ministry of praying God's blessing on people. In the previous section, Paul urged his readers to "pray in the spirit at all times with every kind of prayer and request" (6:18). We can praise God through worshipful prayer, intercede for people with specific requests according to their needs, and invoke God's blessing on people. It is this latter kind of prayer that Paul is engaging in here. These prayers of blessing at the end of Paul's letters are much more than a formality or a nice conclusion. Paul understands himself to be calling on God to bring his favor, help, and assistance to these believers. The dual benediction at the end of Ephesians is a demonstration of Paul's love for them as well.<sup>3</sup>

10. **What are your top three prayer requests for yourself that you often come back to? Is there one new daring request God may want you and those praying for you to focus on over the next 3 months?**

---

<sup>3</sup> Arnold, Clinton E. Ephesians. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Zondervan Academic. 2010. 484-485.

11. How would your Christian walk look if you weren't connected with any other believers?

12. Name one specific way you've been encouraged by another believer over the last year. Have you reciprocated the encouragement to anyone else?

***Love Isn't Love 'til You Give It Away***

Ministry is relational and can be done effectively only through a team approach. Paul is in no sense a “rugged individualist” or a “lone ranger.” He always had a team of people around him. It is sometimes easy for readers to lose a sense of this because of the popular Christian emphasis on the man Paul and his theology. Yet when we probe deeply into his letters and Luke's narrative of his ministry in the second half of Acts, we get a different picture. Paul never traveled alone and always worked with a team.<sup>4</sup>

13. We don't know much about the beloved and faithful Tychicus (see also Acts 20:4, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Colossians 4:7), but he was used by God in a big way to get this inspired epistle to the Ephesians and to us. What can we learn from his example about saying yes to service opportunities?

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 483-484.

14. Paul closes out the book with a prayer of blessing for the Ephesians. Have you seen any of these four components exhibited within church life: Peace, Love, Faith, Grace? How could you extend one of those to someone this week?

15. As we conclude our series, “Who Am I?,” what is one key insight you’ve gleaned from our discussion times together? Is there anything you’d like to research or discuss more?