The Invisible War - **wk 4 – Freedom in Prayer**

**We are in a series about the unseen world, spiritual war, and prayer.**

**Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. There is a battle going on**

**From the opening to the closing pages of Scripture – this spiritual battle – is between a real enemy and you!**

**This year has been a year joy and tremendous trials for many of you. There is a real enemy, but our God is greater than it all!**

**Eph 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then…**

**If you are a follower of Jesus, we can stand because we have already won! (Napoleon – later in life looked at a map in frustration – “if it wasn’t for that one red dot, I could rule the world” – British empire. Satan is like him – looking at the cross – if it wasn’t for that one red dot – I would have had ‘em! Stand on that red dot!!)**

**Paul then gives the armor (last week). All given by Christ to combat the enemy! We walk in Truth, Righteousness, Readiness, Peace, Faith, Salvation, God’s Word – and Prayer!**

**Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19 Also pray for me - (I need your prayers!) that when I speak, God will give me words so that I can tell the secret truth about the Good News without fear. 20 I have the work of speaking for that Good News, and that is what I am doing now, here in prison. Pray that when I tell people the Good News, I will speak without fear as I should.**

**One of the greatest gifts and most neglected privileges- Prayer**

**Thousands of books, devotionals, and bible studies.**

**We’ve turned it into formulas, forms, and methods.**

**Few things stir sleep or guilt like the word prayer for many**

**We’re called to, encouraged to, charged to, and commanded to - pray**

**Probably the most important opportunity we have been given in this life (even above God’s word).**

**Yet possibly the #1 most neglected spiritual tool. It has power to break us and heals us – Yet we see it as a last resort.**

**Listen! We need to get this - our spiritual life depends on it - our family depends on it – our world depends on it – our church depends on it!**

**PRAYER - Boot Camp Basics**

**\* Prayer is a family privilege**

**Lu 11:2, 1 Pe 3:12, Pr 28:9, 15:8, Jo 16:23-24** **Mat 6:9, Gal 4:6, Heb 4:16, Eph 3:12**

**Luke 11:2 - Our Father Holy is your name… How do we get to that place – John 1:12 - …to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – It is because of that position - Gal 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”**

**God responds to relationship – not rituals, rites, and routines. In Christ - you can pray with confidence – as his child, you have access – like a child to their parents.**

**Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

**Police do not have the power to stop a car – but they do have the authority. They can stand in front of a car and tell it to stop, because they have delegated authority based on the position, mission, & relationship with the city.**

**Most people are looking for power – what they really need is authority. As a child of God – you have authority in your prayer life – not yours but God’s, it is his power!**

**God has given you his power and his authority to conquer the enemy – but there is only one way to get it. It is not a formula, pattern, outline, or skill – there is only one way to access it – JESUS CHRIST.**

**\* Prayer isn't just something we do, it's someone we're with**

**Prayer is a conversation. Its basic definition is – “Talking to God”**

**That’s it – it’s not meditation, reflection, or thinking about God. It can be audible or silent, private, public, formal or informal**

**Prayer is communication with G-O-D – nothing deeper than that!**

**Guy praying w/ bad English - lady tried to correct him – I was not talking to you!**

**Psalm 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works. (Psalm 65:4)**

**Prayer is not just a posture or point in time – it is a place. A place with a person - In that place we speak, appeal, cry out and submit – but it begins with being in His presence.**

**James 4:8 - Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you…**

**How do you get to that place? if you are a follower of Jesus - the great thing is, that place is everywhere you are.**

**It is realizing and finding our self in the presence of God.**

**Some of you give great prayers to a puny God – a miniature micro God. You don’t know who you are really talking to. Some would rather to talk to people than to God. You spend hours w/ people and minutes w/ God.**

**\* Prayer in the Bible emphasizes our prayers, not just my prayers**

**Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2, Acts 2:42**

**A lot of prayer is solitary, pressing in & getting alone (Jesus modeled), but prayer is most often emphasized as a group event.**

**We live in a culture of hyper individualism. They lived together, ate together, worshiped together, and prayed together.**

**God’s plan is for us to pray for each other and with one another – how? I can’t pray for each of you, but we can. In your small group you can. Ministry team, life team, men’s group, women’s group – friendships.**

**Over and over – a prayer we often forget is the collective prayer. “Our Father, who are in heaven… give us our daily bread… forgive us as we forgive others… lead us not into temptation…”**

**We pray as part of a family! Agreeing together!**

**\* In Prayer - Our obedience is far more important than our FAITH**

**Zek 7:13, Ps 66:18, Luke 17:5-6, Acts 12:1-17, 1 Sam 15:22, Jer 7:21-23, Gal 6:7**

**Don’t expect your faith to overpower your lack of obedience**

**\*\*Some of you are sweating on a treadmill – but going nowhere! You’re not getting any tread. You want to know why?**

**Proverbs 28:9 If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.**

**You expect the blessings of heaven while you live like hell.**

**Isaiah 59:1 Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. (Amen, I believe that) 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.**

**Some of you are like a child who keep disobeying and still thinks he is going to get whatever he asks if he asks…**

**“Well, I’ll just fast for that.” - while you are living in disobedience.**

**1 Samuel 15:22 Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.**

**Our obedience is a reflection of our faith. From there we pray!**

**EFFECTIVE PRAYERS ARE**

**We see it in this simple verse - Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.**

**(1) Prayers that are - ALIGNED – v 18 - Pray in the Spirit…**

**Eph 6:20, John 14:13-14, Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4, 1 Timothy 2:1-4**

**Pray in the spirit – as opposed to praying in the flesh – this means to pray with his leading and in his will.**

**Listen, God is not a genie that you rub & request to get what you want.**

**1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.**

**Prayer is not God to conforming to your will, but you conforming to his will. It is less about getting and more about aligning.**

**Nothing wrong w/ making requests, he asks us to bring them. But they are preceded by a surrender of alignment to His will.**

**The Lord’s prayer Matt 6:10 – we pray your kingdom come your will be done…**

**When you pray, what’s most often changed and affected is you**

**V18 - …with all kinds of prayers and requests for all the Lord’s people**

**(2) Prayers that are – COMPREHENSIVE - Phil 4:6, James 4:2, 1 Tim 2:1**

**The different kinds of prayers throughout scripture – you may not have known you were doing this… Types of prayers – paper?**

**1 Timothy 2:1 “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.” (4 Gk words for prayer all used here)**

* **Of Praise (declaration of God’s faithfulness, power, & goodness)**

**Matt 6:9, Luke 2:20, 11:2, Acts 13:2-3**

* **Of submission / consecration / confession**

**Matt 26:39, Lk 22, Mk 14, 1 Samuel 1:24-28, 1 John 5:14, Jer 42:3, Ro 1:10**

* **Of Petitions & Requests / aka. supplication (Lifting up your needs)**

**1 Timothy 2:1, Matthew 6:11, Phil 4:19, James 4:3-4. James 1:6**

* **Of Intercession (On behalf of others)**

**Ephesians 1:19-20, John 17, Matthew 17:19-21**

* **Of Spiritual Warfare (Dealing with spiritual attack)**

**Luke 22:41-42, Eph 6:10-11, 2 Thess 3:3, 2 Cor 10:4-5, 1 Pet 5:8-9, Jam 4:7**

* **Of Agreement (Corporate Prayer)**

**Matt 18:18-19, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42**

* **Of Faith (Spirit empowered moments)**

**Mk 11:24, Jam 5:13-16, 1 Cor 13:2, 1 John 5:14**

* **Of Thanksgiving (Count your Blessings)**

**1 Timothy 2:1, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2**

* **Of Communion (All day, all the time – lead by the Spirit)**

**1 Thes 5:17, Eph 6:18, Luke 18:1, Luke 18:1, 21:36, Romans 12:12.**

**All of these prayers require the same thing, you must be praying the word, know the word, and praying in alignment with the word.**

**Ephesians 6:18 …With this in mind - be alert…**

**(3) Prayers that are – PROACTIVE (Colossians 4:2)**

**For some of you, prayer is like the national anthem – you stand for it - it gets you started – but it has little to do with what happens on the field. You start your day with or at a meal but has no bearing on your life**

**I don’t know why there are some things our sovereign God has decided he will not do without prayer. But he does - your prayers matter!**

**Like our kids – when they want some candy, what do you say? Ask. We plan on giving it – but we want them to – ask! Why? Because only in asking are we showing dependence.**

**It is time to be proactive in your prayers.**

**Ephesians 6:18 …and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.**

**(4) Prayers that are - PERSISTENT**

**Luke 11:1-13,18:1-8, Matt 26:36-46, 1 Thess 5:17, 1 Cor 12:7-10, Ps 37:4**

**When it comes to prayer - an instant answer is a rare answer**

**\*Persistence is for our sake, not God’s. Persistence compels us to the true center of prayer, which is not something but someone.**

**\*Persistence deepens our relationship and reliance with God and compels the heart to examine what it really wants most.**

**\*Persistence demands patience, waiting – and trusting!**

**\*Persistence in prayer purges our desires. God uses persistence in prayer to mold and even transform our desires.**

**How long should I pray for something? Keep praying until... You get what you ask for / God changes your mind / God clearly says, "No"**

**Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions…**

**(5) Prayers that are - GRATEFUL**

**Luke 11:1-13, Matt 15:36; 26:26, 27; 1 Tim 2:1, 4:4-5, Phil 4:6, Col 3:15-17, 4:2, James 1:17, 1 Thes 5:16-18, Ps 7:17-18, 28:7, 30:12, Heb 12:28-29, 13:15, 1 Chron 16:34, Jonah 2:9, Ro 1:21**

**In the OT and NT - This is the most talked about prayer of them all.**

**You will never be free in this life until you understand gratitude and thankfulness – everything hinges on this.**

**I cannot stress how important this is!**

**Gratitude unlocks humility and pulverizes pride**

**Gratitude and breaks the chains of addition and depression**

**Gratitude heals a broken heart – release hope**

**Gratitude results in the peace of God and his work**

**Gratitude draws us closer to God - Ungratefulness repels God**

**Gratitude shows the depth of your relationships**

**Gratitude is a reflection of your spiritual maturity**

**(bowl / box) This is the package we bring to God. Every request, every petition, every submission, every cry, every need, every praise, all our communion - is to come to the Father in… Gratitude!**

**Psalm 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.**

**Set the records straight, know this - Gratitude is not about comparing**

**At least it’s not as bad as them! Okay, well how are they to be grateful?**

* **Gratitude – thankfulness for what God has done**

**It is about not forgetting what you’ve been given & where it came from**

**If there is anything good in my life – it is from you God!**

**Water heater, sheets, food, more than one set of clothes, abilities – etc. Maybe you have slipped into thinking, I did this - I deserve this… if it was not the grace of God – you would be broke, destitute, & alone.**

* **Gratitude -** **is about thankfulness for what God is doing**

**God, I see what you are doing! It may seem like it’s going slow, but it’s going! \*\* My marriage, work, school, life, my healing, my heat, my future… I see it – I embrace and am thankful!!**

**Being thankful is choosing to keep our eyes off our self, problems, issues, worries – and looks to what you are doing!**

**Some of you are praying for something - want breakthrough be grateful**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

**Despite what your circumstance says – I will be thankful!!**

* **Gratitude – is about thankfulness for what is to come**

**It is celebrating your present salvation and your future hope!**

**I am thankful that God calls me his own and I have a home far beyond this life. I will see it one day. I may be sick – but this will all pass away – and one thing remains – God’s promises.**

**How can we pray on all occasions? Even when life has hits us in the face? The answer - Pray like this… Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**Look what do you get in return – a guarantee of answered prayer? No – but peace that transcends your circumstance.**

**You may be struggling with hearing or connecting with God – start here - thankfulness and gratitude – this week is thanksgiving!**

**Use the space below to list 8 things you are thankful for, maybe things you rarely think of…**

**Show gratitude – by looking at what we have and those around us… with thankfulness, gratefulness, and helping hands**

**NEXT WEEK – Last on the Invisible War – How to pray!**