

# Ephesians 6:10-20

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[ 0 : 00 ] who are injured. That's war. And I would have to say that in the Christian church, it is exactly that.

And I have seen missionaries coming home from the field, dare I use the expression, shell-shocked, by what they've seen and by what they've experienced out on the mission field.

People who have been at the very cutting edge of this battle and who have seen something of the tactics of the enemy. My friends, we are at war.

When you read of some of these things that are happening, I'm sure you read about that man from Afghanistan. Who was to have been condemned to death because he converted from Islam?

And who now is to seek refuge in another country? We are at war. It's as simple and as plain and as brutal as that.

[ 1 : 19 ] In war, there are casualties. Satan will never easily give up his territory. And Satan will never give up without a fight.

Satan being the prince of the powers of darkness. And I don't know if you've been in situations where you have seen the powers of darkness actually at work.

I can recollect being at a funeral in West Africa. It was a heathen funeral.

But the Christians went to pay their respects to the family of the bereaved. Which was quite normal.

But you can't just go and pay your respects and come straight away.

You've got to spend a certain amount of time. And as we were there, the ceremony was taking place of questioning the corpse.

[ 2 : 38 ] Now you can't question a corpse. But they did. And the corpse was wrapped up in an African mat.

And it was being borne on the heads of four men. And these men were standing in a straight line, facing in one direction.

And the question was being asked, did somebody put sorcery on that man and cause him to die? And as you watched, you saw the four men being dragged around by the corpse.

And I use the word corpse. And the corpse dragged them round until they were pointing at a particular person. Now, humanly speaking, that cannot happen.

But it did. And I would have to say that I was aware of the hair on the back of my neck almost standing on end. I knew that we were in the presence of evil powers.

[ 3 : 56 ] This is the world that we live in. Waken up. This is our world. And in Britain, we are dabbling in things which are leading us into that.

We are at war. And in war, there are casualties. And I'll say that several times before we come to the end of this message.

And I recollect on one occasion meeting a missionary and working indeed with a missionary in West Africa.

And that missionary was knocked out of God's work. And went home. We met up again.

It must have been ten or twelve years later. And that missionary was still shell-shocked by what had happened. There are casualties in war.

[ 5 : 00 ] Satan will never give up easily the territory which he has held for so many years. He will never give up without a fight.

As we read in these verses here in Exodus chapter 17. We read of Moses giving an order to Joshua to take some of our men.

Notice it says some of our men. Not all of our men, but some of our men. Go down into the valley and fight.

Notice the terminology. It's not go on a package tour. It's not go on holiday. It's go and fight. And Joshua in obedience to the word and command indeed.

It was an order. You see that in verse 10. It was an order. And Joshua goes in obedience to Moses' order down into the valley to fight.

[ 6 : 13 ] Moses' order and Moses and Aaron and Hur don't go with them. In fact, they go in the opposite direction.

One goes down and one goes up. One goes down into the valley to fight. One goes up onto the hilltop to fight. There were actually two battles being enacted here.

One, I think, we understand quite easily because it was one army engaging with another army. And that we can quite easily understand.

But the other one isn't so obvious because there was a battle going on on the top of the hill. and that battle had three people in it that we knew.

And those three people were involved in a fight. One went down to fight, one went up to fight, but both went to fight.

[ 7 : 26 ] because we are in a war. When missionaries go out with the gospel, when a minister goes out with the gospel in his church, he is going out with the gospel to fight.

But we don't think of it in these terms. We think of it as a minister standing in the pulpit and preaching, which it is. But it's all part of a battle.

And God is at work in this battle and through this battle accomplishing his purposes. And it must have been a great encouragement to Joshua and to the soldiers down in the valley to snatch a glance up onto the top of the hill and to see Moses with his arms raised to heaven in supplication. Moses praying for them. And I know nothing guaranteed to encourage a servant of God more than the fact of knowing that there are people praying.

and I remember on quite a number of occasions in West Africa on a Saturday evening being upheld because I knew that right across Scotland in various congregations people were praying.

[ 9 : 12 ] We were aware of it. We were conscious of being upheld by the prayers of God's people. Sometimes we wonder when someone makes shipwreck of their Christian life what has gone wrong.

And I'm sure that there are a number of reasons that maybe one of the ones that we don't always think of is that there was nobody praying for them.

Now I had a very privileged upbringing as a young Christian because I was in a youth fellowship in Inverness in the YMCA and there were dozens of young Christians and we encouraged one another.

And when I eventually left that fellowship because I believed it was the right thing to do and went to West Africa as a missionary they stayed at home and they prayed and I knew it.

I knew it. You see it says here that Moses said to Joshua choose some of our men and go and fight.

[ 10 : 45 ] He didn't say choose all of our men. He said choose some of them. God does not call every Christian to be a full time Christian worker.

A minister or a missionary or youth worker or whatever. God doesn't call everyone to do that. But God calls every one of us to be missionaries where we are.

A missionary is one who speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ. One who shares the good news of the gospel. And you don't have to go to Africa or to South America or wherever to become a missionary in that sense of the word.

We are missionaries where God has placed us. But Joshua chose some of the men and went out to fight. We are at war and in war there are casualties.

When I left Inverness in 1967 there was a minister in Inverness who came and who spoke at my valedictory service.

[ 12 : 04 ] And a few years later he made total and complete shipwreck of his life and left the ministry.

There are casualties in a war and he was one of them. I don't know where he is today but there are casualties and unfortunately we have got to accept and expect that there will be casualties.

But Moses promised Joshua that you go down into the valley I will go up onto the top of the hill and I will stand there with the rod of God in my hand.

And that is what he did. He stood there on the top of the hill and he prayed. That the very best of men are only men at the best.

He grew tired and his hands began to droop. And very significantly as his hands began to droop that is when the battle began to go against the army of Israel.

[13:23] And when his hands were upraised the battle went with the army of Israel. It was as if what happened on the mountain top directed what happened down in the valley and in a very real sense it did.

But Moses' hands grew heavy and Aaron and Hur took a stone and they sat Moses down on that stone and then they each held up an arm one on one side one on the other and it said they held his hands steady until sunset.

Now when is sunset? It's at the end of the day isn't it? And this battle that we are engaged in will go on till the end of the day.

This battle is not going to finish tonight. It's not going to finish tomorrow. This battle will go on till the end of the day. But one of the things that we need to bear in mind is that the outcome of this battle has already been decided.

The powers of darkness will be utterly and completely defeated. Indeed, they are already in heaven. But we don't see that outworked here on the earth as yet because Satan was cast out of heaven.

[15:10] And as yet we do not see that victory fully enacted down here on earth. But the day is coming. Maybe sooner than we think.

when this battle will be finished. But it's not finished yet. And in a battle there are casualties. Sometimes many casualties.

But then it came to the point where when his hands drooped and when Aaron and her held up his hands, we see that what Moses could not do on his own, with the help of Aaron and her, he could. Now what does that mean for us today? And I think quite simply it means that there are situations where it takes more than one person to carry the day in prayer.

And that is where the prayer meeting is so absolutely vital. And yet most people don't come to the prayer meeting. I never ever understand that.

[16:29] I can't. If you want the church to grow, you pray. I saw it in Africa. A church which spent 168 hours praying, non-stop.

that must have been about 112 90-minute sessions with no space between.

One group of people moved out of the church as another group of people moved in and they took their place. 90 minutes, 90 minutes, 112 times.

90 minutes. Is it any wonder that that church is growing? But we don't do that. We don't believe in prayer to that extent.

And that is why the church in Europe is going backwards by half a percent every year. There are pockets where the church is growing, but if you take the figures the global figures for Europe, the church is going backwards.

[17:47] For as in every other continent in the world, the church is growing. Praise God. The church is growing and nothing can stop it.

Even though we're in a war, even though there are casualties, even though we have an enemy who is determined to extinguish the church, he cannot.

God. And Moses, Aaron, and her prayed, and they turned the tide in that battle.

That's very significant. They turned the tide in that battle because prayer decided what happened down in the valley. bear in mind that Moses had made a promise to Joshua.

You go down there, I will go up there. And he kept his promise. I've seen missionaries coming home from the foreign field as failures.

[18:59] And I've wondered, maybe they should never have gone in the first place. Maybe they misheard what God said.

Maybe they made a mistake. then I began to think about this particular incident in God's word. And it changed my thinking completely.

Maybe it wasn't the missionary that failed. Maybe it was those who promised to pray but forgot that caused the failure. I think automatically we tend to blame the individual when sometimes it's not the individual who's at fault, but rather the army of people who promised to pray but who forgot.

Or who stopped praying because failure in prayer leads to failure in the battle. We see that here quite clearly.

Failure in prayer meant that the Amalekites were winning over Israel. But why did Moses, Aaron and her go to the top of the hill?

[ 20 : 23 ] Wouldn't it have been better to have gone into the battle with Joshua? No, it wouldn't. Because when they went to the top of the hill they had a kind of bird's eye view of what was happening down in the valley.

They could see where the battle was the hottest and they could concentrate their prayers on that particular side of the battle. And if all of a sudden that changed and over there became a hot spot, they could pray about that, they could see what was going on.

But what does that mean for you and for me today? Quite simple. Many of you know Carina MacLeod.

You know Carina from back on the Isle of Lewis. Carina is working in Brazil. And if I pray, Lord bless Carina MacLeod in Brazil, Amen.

Is that prayer? Not really. Because I have not done my homework. I need to work out who is Carina MacLeod?

[ 21 : 30 ] Where is Carina MacLeod? What is she doing? What are the problems? What are the challenges? What does she want us to pray about? I've got to do my homework and it's becoming easier and easier to do that.

With the internet, with broadband, with email, you can contact almost every missionary in the world. Over 85% of every missionary in every country of the world has got a computer.

And the other 15% are probably thinking about it. So there is no reason why you cannot contact a missionary anywhere in the world.

We've got a missionary from Arbroath, working in Chad. She's working out in the desert. Now you don't find telephones in the desert.

There's none. But she's got a little satellite dish which she opens out, plunks the spike in the sand and points the dish to the sky. And then she plugs in her little phone to the dish.

[ 22 : 43 ] And she can speak to people anywhere in the world. And that is in one of the most remote places in the world. And you can speak to her.

She can speak to you. She can receive emails when she plugs the dish into her computer. She can send emails. Don't ask me how it works. But it does. We have a work missionary prayer meeting every month in our home in Bank Foot.

And we have one lady who comes whose son is working in Turkey. always during the course of the prayer meeting we would say Anne how are things with Douglas and the family.

And she almost inevitably says well I give them a ring at six o'clock. Turkey is not exactly just south of Carlisle.

It's a long long way. And she said I found him this evening and this is what he wants us to pray about. You can do that nowadays. There is no reason for ignorant prayer.

[ 23 : 49 ] None. Apart from our laziness. We're in a battle. And in a battle there are casualties.

And there are often casualties because you and I do not do our homework sufficiently to pray intelligently for missionaries. I know this is difficult to hear.

I know this is difficult to hear. God has given us technology to use. Not to abuse, but to use.

And as we use technology, we can pray intelligently for any missionary situation anywhere in the world. Because the world has become a global village.

Literally. A global village because you can be in contact with any part of the world. I was doing a prayer, a monthly prayer digest.

[ 24 : 57 ] And I was missing information from Mexico. And I thought, how do you get in touch with Mexico? So I did my email. Within the hour, I had everything back that I needed.

to be in touch. Mexico? It's a long way. It's not in Europe. It's North America. It's a long way away. Thousands of miles.

And yet, by email, I was in contact. And they were in contact within the hour. And I had everything that I required. You can do that today. And there is no excuse.

We cannot any longer say, well, I don't know anything about that missionary. Well, you don't know about them because you haven't tried to find out. Moses, Aaron and her went to the top of the hill.

When we do the same sort of thing, by getting information about a missionary, by educating ourselves about their situation, then we can pray intelligently for them.

[ 26 : 01 ] That is the kind of prayer that turns the tide in the battle. because we are in a battle. We are at war. And in war, there are always casualties.

Prayer is work. Two or three weekends ago, we were at the Windmill Christian Center in Arbroath for a prayer weekend, Friday night to Sunday afternoon.

And on the way home on Sunday afternoon, we took another chap back to Perth with us. This other fellow said, I'm tired. And I thought about it and I thought, hmm, so am I.

They said, well, why are we tired? Well, he said, we've been praying almost non-stop since we got to Arbroath. Prayer is work. And someone has said that prayer is the work.

prayer. Because everything stems out from and flows from prayer. Prayer is vital.

[ 27 : 18 ] We read in Ephesians chapter 6 about the various pieces of armor that God has given to the Christian for the battle.

people. It's very stirring stuff. It's not talking about a package tour. It's not talking about going on holiday somewhere to enjoy oneself.

It's talking about going into a battle and being prepared for that battle. And I remember as a young Christian trying to work out what piece of armor covers the soldier's back.

back. Have you ever discovered in Ephesians 6 what piece of armor covers the soldier's back? back. And there's nothing.

There's nothing. God does not expect us to run away. God expects us to be faithful and to carry on faithing the enemy.

[ 28 : 28 ] And several times towards the end of that portion that we read, it's Paul saying, pray for me. Pray that I will have the courage to speak up for the gospel as I should do.

Pray that I will be faithful to the one who has called me. God has given us this weapon of prayer. And prayer is never easy.

I've never really been able to discover for how many years those two elderly ladies up in Lewis prayed before the revival started.

But they prayed for years. And they refused to believe that that situation could not be changed. they believed that God could do it and they held on to God until he did it. It's a bit like that 168 hour non-stop prayer meeting.

[ 29 : 45 ] I wonder when Bonacord Free Church will ever have a prayer meeting like that. I'd love to hear about it. I would certainly come to be part of that.

am I living in my dreams? Or could that one day become a possibility? No church ever prays too much.

But few churches pray enough. Why is it that the prayer meeting is the smallest meeting in any church?

church? Come with me to Korea. There are churches in Korea that almost beggar belief.

They are so big. We have two friends, a family indeed, who are studying at the International Christian College in Glasgow.

[ 30 : 49 ] and one day, his mum and dad came to visit. And the couple asked, could they bring mum and dad up to see us?

We said, sure. Not realizing what we were letting ourselves in for, because they didn't have any English. And the world cup was on.

And they knew certain worlds like penalty. Foul! That sort of thing. And we discovered that this man was an elder in a church in Korea.

And wisely or unwisely, I asked him, how big is the church you go to? Oh, he said, it's just a small church. Yes, I said, but how big is a small church? It's just very small.

Yes, but how big is a very small church? Well, he said, we're only three or four thousand members. I said, three or four thousand. He said, yes, but that's a very small church. He said that our church is with over a hundred thousand members.

[ 31 : 59 ] Yes, he said we have twelve services on a Sunday. Several thousand at each service so that everyone can get in once on the Lord's Day.

There's not time and there's not room for them to get in more than once on the Lord's Day in that particular church because it's not big enough. Now, why has there been such dramatic growth in the church?

Because if you go back over a hundred years, there is next to nothing of Christian life in Korea. And now nine of the world's largest churches are in the city of soul.

And if you look across the skyline of soul in the evening, the thing that stands out most of all are the illuminated crosses on the roofs of churches.

Fascinating. Why? How has that all come about? Because they spend hours and nights up on what they call prayer mountains.

[ 33 : 12 ] Now, we might find the expression strange, but they are there to pray. And that church is growing. And Korean missionaries are flooding out across the world.

They have already sent over 12,000 missionaries from the churches in Korea. Britain has only sent between 10,500 and 11,000 missionaries.

They have already sent well over 12,000. And every candidates course which my own mission has, there are always four Korean candidates on every course.

And they are booked for the next six or seven years. That is a church that is growing because that is a church that prays. Why don't we pray?

Why don't we take seriously the prayer meeting is the powerhouse of our church? Victory at the end here is attributed it would seem in verse 13 to Joshua.

[ 34 : 27 ] It says, so Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword. But what about Moses? It doesn't say anything about Moses. You may become a great praying person, but your glory will never be proclaimed across the housetops.

Prayer is a behind-the-scenes ministry, but an absolutely vital ministry. As vital as petrol is to your car, prayer is to the work of God.

It cannot go on without it. I would plead with you that if you have not considered the weekly prayer meeting as a priority, then do so.

Rather than build the prayer meeting into your program, build your program around it and make the prayer meeting an absolute priority. Nothing, but nothing takes its place.

In 2 Corinthians 10, 4, and 5, we read the weapons that we fight with. These weapons are weapons given to us by God.

[ 35 : 42 ] Weapons that God has given to us, His Word, the sword of the Spirit, the prayer, a weapon which God has given us to use against the enemy, to take the battle into the enemy's territory.

Do you know, and this is right up to date, that there are twice as many Christians, people being converted to Christianity today, as there are people becoming Muslims.

You might find that strange. You might think that because Islam is becoming so aggressive in many parts of the world, that Islam is far outstripping the Christian church.

Wrong! Totally wrong! The very opposite is true. Christianity is mushrooming across the world. Why?

Because Jesus said, I will build my church, and nothing, but nothing, but nothing can stop it. But why is it that in our continent of Europe, we find so little growth, so little of evident blessing on God's work throughout Europe?

[ 37 : 11 ] Why is it that the general cause of the gospel in Europe is going backwards, whereas in every other continent it's going forwards? Maybe we do not take seriously the fact that we are in a battle.

people. I don't know if you were here this morning, but I mentioned this book, which is The End of the Spear, which is a remarkable story about a missionary family who went back to Ecuador, where 50 years previously the man, the father, the husband in this family, his father had been speared to death by the Oka Indians, and he went back to take the gospel to them, a man who went by faith, trusting in God.

A fascinating, absolutely fascinating story. I believe there are still some downstairs, if not talk to me, you can always have that one.

I have one or two more in the car, but read good Christian books. See what God is doing around the world. Don't dare be discouraged. God is at work.

God is building his church, but bear in mind, we are at war. And in war, there have always been and there always will be casualties.

[ 38 : 47 ] And sometimes the casualties are not the ones that we would expect, maybe the ones we would least expect. But because it's war, because our enemy is determined to extinguish the church, there will be warfare right till the end of the day.

But don't be discouraged, because the victory is already assured. The powers of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ have already triumphed over the powers of darkness.

We just have not seen it enacted as yet in this world. If you look at the end of Revelation, in chapter 21 of the book of Revelation, you see the church coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for our husband, complete.

not one person missing. Everyone that God wanted to be there, there. and the door wide open for anyone and everyone to come into the church, because the gospel is for whosoever will, and that's you and that's me, whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life.

When the minister declares the gospel, when the missionary declares the gospel, when the Christian worker declares the gospel, the invitation is to anyone and to everyone to come.

[ 40 : 36 ] And that is the invitation in God's word. We are in a battle. Don't ever forget it. There will be casualties.

There will be victories. There will be setbacks. There will be moves forward. But ultimately, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ will openly triumph in this world.

That is certain. Absolutely certain. Because the church at the end of the book of Revelation is complete.

No one and nothing is missing. Wonderful. Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not be able to stand against it.

May the Lord encourage us. May the Lord give us steel in our backbones. May the Lord give us the courage of our convictions that we will be men of God, women of God, determined to take the gospel to the places where it has never gone before.

[ 41 : 51 ] My friends, we are at war. There will be casualties, but there will be victories as well. Let's pray. Our Father and our God, we thank you for your word.

thank you Lord that your word is the truth. Father, we thank you that you have promised that you will build your church and that the very gates of hell itself will be unable to prevail or stand against it. Lord, we thank you for that encouragement from your word. Help us, Lord, to be encouraged. Help us, Lord, to be encouragers of those who are discouraged.

Help us, Lord, to be men and women who go forward by faith to fight the enemy and to take the gospel into the parts of the world where it as yet has never penetrated.

Grant it, Lord, we pray, and make us willing, each one of us, to go forward and to do the work that you have given us to do no matter what it costs us, no matter how much we may lose compared to this world's standards.

[ 43 : 18 ] Help us to remain faithful to you and faithful to your word. Grant it, we pray, and Lord, we commend this church here in Aberdeen into your hand.

Bless the Bonacord Free Church, we pray. Pray, Lord, that in your own time that there would be a minister who would come and who would take the position of a pastor over the flock here.

Lord, we pray that the man of your choice would be brought in and that that would happen sooner rather than later. Grant it, Lord, we pray, and encourage your people in the meantime to know that you are building your church and that nothing can stop it.

So bless your word and bless your work here in this.