

Pray at All Times

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Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 10th of June 2001. The preacher is Steve Brown.

His sermon is entitled Pray at All Times and is from Ephesians chapter 6 verses 18 to 24. Could you imagine being in an episode of Survivor? Could you imagine being one of those contestants? There you are on an island or in the outback with a handful of people. And these people aren't to be trusted. They're against you and they'll stab you in the back if they can. And you're all alone, you're all by yourself. No one to turn to, no one to help, no real friends. Battling to stay alive in a dog-eat-dog contest. Battling to be the one not voted out.

[1 : 10] Battling to come out on top. Little wonder really why this type of TV rates so well, is it? It's easy to see why people watch this stuff. Because it simply reflects their own lives, just in a more condensed, intense and shorter version.

Sometimes I feel like I'm in an episode of Survivor. I feel like I'm all alone. I'm all by myself. No one to turn to, no one to help, no real friends. Sometimes I feel like I'm battling to stay alive in a dog-eat-dog contest. Battling to be the one not voted out.

Battling to come out on top. Tonight I doubt that I'm the only one that feels like this. Probably all of us have felt like this.

Does it seem to be like your life is sometimes an episode of Survivor? You versus the rest. Do you sometimes feel all alone, by yourself?

[2 : 29] No one to turn to, no one to help, no real friends. Battling to earn money. Battling to pay off that mortgage. Battling to pass your exams.

Battling to enjoy school. Do you need to find a way out sometimes? Does it sometimes feel like you want to take a holiday from life?

I'm sure it does. Does Christianity just seem like an episode of Survivor? You versus the rest. Do you feel all alone, all by yourself, no one to turn to?

No real friends. No one to help. Battling to read your Bible. Battling to turn away from your sin. Battling to witness to your friends.

Battling to love the people you work with. Do you need to find a way out sometimes? Do you sometimes feel like a holiday from Christianity?

[3 : 31] Does church just seem like an episode of Survivor? You versus the rest.

All alone, by yourself. No one to turn to. No one to help. No real friends. Battling to enjoy worship and the music we play.

Battling to be inspired by the sermons week in, week out. Battling to go to Bible study on that cold Wednesday night. Battling to understand where you fit into this church.

Do you need to find a way out sometimes? Do you sometimes feel like taking a holiday from the church? I wonder tonight if you feel like this because tonight our passage provides a little help for us, I think.

A way out for struggling Christians. A way out for hurting Christians. A way out for frustrated Christians. Ephesians 6.18.

[4 : 40] I'm going to read with me. Ephesians 7.18. It says this. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. you see Paul tells us that prayer is the way out prayer is the way out of this up and down life that we live in prayer is the way out of the struggle and the hurt and the frustration that we sometimes encounter prayer is that holiday that we need when life Christianity and church get tough you see prayer makes us

refreshed and enthusiastic about our life you're battling to earn money pray about it you're battling to pay off the mortgage pray about it you're battling to pass exams and enjoy school pray about it prayer makes us refreshed and enthusiastic about Christianity if you're battling to read your Bible or turn away from sin or to witness to our friends or to love the people we work with pray about it prayer makes us refreshed and enthusiastic about church we're battling to enjoy worship and the music we sing or to be inspired by the sermons week in week out or to go to Bible study on that cold Wednesday night or to understand where you're fitting to this church pray about it because prayer is the way out and it's the way out of this life that sometimes seems like an episode of Survivor you might say to me okay we get the point prayer is the way out but what type of prayer do we pray? when do we pray? in what position do we pray? what is our formula for prayer? do we follow that acronym? you know the one acts adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication one's been going around for a while do we follow that?

what is our formula for prayer? well I don't have any answers for you tonight but Paul does he gives us a formula for prayer let's have a look Ephesians 6.18 pray in the spirit at all times in every prayer supplication when I was about 20 years of age life for me was a battle Christianity was a major battle and church was just a huge struggle I struggled a lot with church and Christianity I felt alone by myself I didn't feel like I could turn to anyone didn't seem to be anyone to help me who knew the answers and I didn't have any real friends that I could trust at church I didn't feel like I fitted in at church

I struggled to be inspired by the sermons and I was frustrated I was hurt I was a confused Christian I was sick of Christianity I was sick of the church and I was ready to toss the towel in call it a day and take a holiday from Christianity permanently when I felt like this when things felt like they couldn't get any worse I prayed and I prayed in the spirit one day I started praying and I prayed something like this God please change me every part of my life complete the work you've started in me pretty simple prayer it's actually Philippians 1.6 and at the time I didn't know that and from that time onwards things started to change for me life was still up and down sometimes life was still an episode of Survivor

[9:19] Survivor but God acted on his word in Philippians 1.6 you see in that passage it says I'm confident of this that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ you see that's praying in the spirit using God's own word in your prayer using God's own promises in your prayer you see God can't ignore that he can't ignore his own words he can't ignore his own spirit praying in the spirit is using God's word to guide your prayers I suppose you could say that the Bible is the ultimate prayer book we have green prayer books they're good they help us to guide our worship but the ultimate prayer book will always be the Bible you see prayer is the way out isn't it of this life that sometimes seems like an episode of Survivor prayer is the holiday that we need sometimes when life, church and Christianity get tough but you know you're not the only one you're not the only one that experiences this up and down life are you?

you're not the only one in the episode of Survivor just have a look around and you'll see people here that go through that episode of Survivor as well they've been through the ups and downs our passage says this pray in the spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication to that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints see sometimes we feel like we're in an episode of Survivor we're all alone all by ourselves no one to turn to no one to help no real friends just battling away by ourselves but it's not like that is it?

you're not the only one other people are in that position too you see if you're battling to enjoy worship and the music that we play it affects us all not just you let's pray for all the saints here that are involved in worship and music if you're battling to pass exams or enjoy school it affects us all it's not just you let's pray for all the saints who go to school if you're battling to go to Bible study on that cold Wednesday night it affects us all not just you let's pray for all the Bible study leaders and all the saints who go to these Bible studies if you're battling to understand where you fit into this church it affects us all not just you let's pray for all the saints at this church that we will be welcoming you see in the church it's one in all in in the church we're one you're not alone you're not by yourself there are brothers and sisters to help to sympathise with you and to pray with to be unified with you don't have to battle away by yourself sure let's pray in the spirit for ourselves but let's pray in the spirit for all the saints let us be a unified church

Ephesians 18 also says this to that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints you see in this verse there's something great to encourage us to pray in the spirit there is a

fantastic reason in this verse why we ought to pray in the spirit for each other there's a great motivation why we ought to persevere in our prayers and supplication because our passage tells us to keep alert to be on our guard to be ready for the return of Christ that's what it's alluding to you see we can look forward to that day when he comes back and he gives the resounding yes to all our prayers we can persevere because that day all our prayers will be answered and our perseverance in our prayers and supplication will be rewarded answered with a resounding yes isn't that great encouragement that Jesus is going to come back and our prayers will be answered so let's persevere in our prayers so far we've been told one pray in the spirit at all times let's pray the bible number two persevere in prayer for all the saints let's have unity and pray in expectation of Jesus return there's one more thing that God wants us to pray for it's something that's really close to his heart it's really important to him you see

God wants us to pray for his gospel he wants us to pray in the spirit for the work of the gospel let's look at verses 19 to 22 pray also for me so that when I speak a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains pray that I may declare it boldly as I must speak so that you may also know how I am and what I am doing Tychicus will tell you everything he's a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord I'm sending him to you for this very purpose to let you know how we are and to encourage your hearts you see prayer in the spirit unifies all the saints all of us and prayer in the spirit unifies us with the work of the gospel

[16:40] God really wants us to pray for the work of his gospel God wants us to pray that the gospel would be proclaimed clearly and boldly and to be made known to the world God wants us to pray for our ambassadors whose job is day in day out to do that whose vocation it is let's pray for Paul here for his work that he would be bold in communicating the gospel that he would be clear in communicating the mystery of the gospel let's be united with him and his work through our prayers let's be united with the work of the gospel through our prayers so far we've been told pray in the spirit at all times let's pray the bible it changes our life number two persevere in prayer for all the saints let's have unity and expect

Jesus' return number three let's pray for the gospel to be made known in boldness and clarity finally sometimes you might feel like you're an episode survivor you might feel like one of those contestants isolated by yourself all alone no one to turn to no one to help no real friends battling to stay alive in a dog eat dog contest battling to be the one not voted out to come out on top but tonight we're seeing in this passage in Ephesians that it doesn't have to be like this for us Christians does it we can pray in the spirit for ourselves we can pray in the spirit for all the saints and we can pray in the spirit for the gospel let's yers and bless go to