

The prayer warrior

Jim Smith

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jimsmithgahna@yahoo.co.uk

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Introduction

In the 21st century, prayer seems to be less of a priority than it used to be. Prayer meetings are poorly attended, God's people seem to have little idea of how to pray seriously and especially how to fight in prayer. Our enemy has never made such a mistake.

At every opportunity he "comes in like a flood" (Isaiah 59:19), and "rips open pregnant women." (2 Kings 8:11-12). He threatens (Acts 9:1) and murders. (Mathew 2:16) Apostle Paul warned powerfully of the violence and oppression of the enemy (Ephesians 6:12) and the beast of Revelation 13 killed and enslaved. (Revelation 13:16-17) his work can be described in these words – "The thief comes to kill and steal and destroy." (John 10:10)

Prayer warriors are needed to stand against this tide of evil which is constantly battering God's creation. The Lord needs those who, as Gideon found, kept constantly alert against the attacks of the enemy. (Judges 7)

What kind of person is a prayer warrior? It is someone who sees the attacks of the enemy as tearing down the name of Jesus and is jealous for the name of the Lord. It is someone who sees this as defilement (David in 1 Samuel 17:45-47). It is someone who wants to rise up and stand for the name of the Lord and to protect that name.

What is a prayer warrior like - what is the character as the behaviour?

1. The Lord's battle

David - the battle is the Lord's. (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

The prayer battle is a tough battle and needs a strong spiritual focus to survive. Here is how David saw it -

* **The battle was the Lord's battle and not his battle.** This understanding will stop prayer warriors becoming downhearted and defeatist. The prayer warrior is not the commanding officer and has not chosen this battle. The Lord has chosen it and he has placed his warriors in the right place at the right time to fight. If God's people keep this in minds - that they are soldiers and not the commander - they will find the battle easier to fight.

* **The power in the battle** - the power to fight, the power to overcome, the power to continue until the end - comes from the Lord. His name gives his soldiers the authority to be in the battle, to fight and to win.

* **There is no question of losing** - It does not matter how hard and long the battle may be, there is no question of defeat. The occasional encounter may be lost, but the outcome is assured. In the name of Jesus victory belongs to the Lord.

* **It is going to be a long hard battle** - and giving up is not an option. The prayer warriors have to endure and endure and endure. it is a ceaseless and relentless battle where there is no rest until victory, already assured, is established.

* **It is going to be tough** - The Lord gives the toughest assignments to those who are tough enough to face them. The harder it gets the more warriors should rejoice that the Lord would give such challenges. It is an honour to serve in the tough frontline.

2. The Lord's battle fought the Lord's way Gethsemane. (Mark 14:13-14)

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." (Mark 14:32-34)

The Lord's command to his warriors is to be vigilant and to pray.

Vigilant – Nehemiah 4:13-14

One of the Lord's final commands to his disciples, before Gethsemane and Calvary was "watch," which can also be translated "vigilant."

Nehemiah was in a very difficult position. He was trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem with lots of external opposition. This opposition would not hesitate to attack and kill. Yet those building the wall were fully occupied with their task. His precaution was one of vigilance -

"I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." (Nehemiah 4:13-14)

The people had to work, but at the same time they had to be vigilant so that they could pause their daily work and fight. The Lord needs vigilant prayer warriors. Gideon found the same. When his army came down to drink, most of the soldiers laid aside their weapons and put their heads in the water. Some put one hand in the water to drink and held their sword in the other. They were vigilant warriors, and they were the ones the Lord would use.

Anyone who wants to be a prayer warrior must be vigilant at all times, because the enemy goes around like a lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Pray – 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.

Prayer warriors are prepared to go to the deep places of intercession, to identify with the sufferings of Jesus, to take them into themselves, and then offer them to the Father as a pleading for the needs of the world. Jesus said, "I when I am lifted up." He lifted his sufferings to the Father. Prayer warriors must do the same. It's a very tough challenge. It's a very tough battle.

3. The struggle. "Get behind me Satan." Mark 8:33

Jesus then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Satan has been defeated at Calvary but he will not accept his defeat and so he continues to fight. It's a losing battle but that loss will not be confirmed until the Lord's return. In the meantime, the prayer warriors have to fight a very dangerous enemy.

*** "The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy." (John 10:10)**

With the dark powers it is war to the death. The enemy wants to steal faith, to kill all hope and to destroy all future blessing. There is no goodness in him and no mercy. Prayer warriors have to know this. There can be no yielding, no discussion and no compromise. It is war to the death and he is the one who is going to die eternally. Prayer warriors will pay a high price for this but it is one that has to be paid.

*** "The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed." (Revelation 13:15)**

The dark powers will never give up. Having been thrown out of heaven Satan wants to return. The only way he can do this is by destroying God's people. He will try to kill all those who stand in his way, and any he does not kill he will put in chains. Prayer warriors need to be aware that each fight will only lead to another one until the Lord returns. It is a ceaseless battle to the death. Prayer warriors who cannot accept this would be best to stay away from the battle.

*** 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. (Ephesians 6:12)**

Prayer warriors have to fight in an environment which is hostile. The rulers, authorities and powers of this Dark World are against all that Christians stand for. Little help can be expected from them. Prayer warriors must accept this hostile environment. It would often stretch to members of the churches, family and friends.

Prayer warriors are called to confront a very dangerous foe. This is a very costly privilege.

4. Deep commitment. 1 Samuel 1:9-17

Hannah

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

A prayer warrior has to have a very deep commitment to the battle. Hannah can teach some very valuable lessons here.

1. A background of suffering

Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?" (1:8)

Hannah had to make her prayer and intercession from within her suffering and this is often the case for those who want to enter into very deep prayer. The prayer warrior works against the background of suffering. Serious fighting intercession usually comes from a background of deep brokenness. This is why so few enter this pathway.

2. Battle is in the body

"I am a woman who is deeply troubled."

Prayer warriors often find but the battle takes place in the physical body. Hannah had to pray from within her physical suffering and grief. She could not leave those to one side to make her prayer. She had to pray from within them. Prayer warriors have to pray from within the physical sufferings of their lives. It would be nice to think that these could be left to one side while praying but it doesn't work that way. This physical side to the struggle is hard to understand. It was clearly the way of the Lord. He spoke to his people from within the cross not from beside it.

3. Ridicule

Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. (1:6)

The suffering and sacrifice of prayer warfare are easily misunderstood, ignored, ridiculed and mocked. There is no defence against these attitudes. The only comfort is this - Jesus was mocked as well.

4. Victory

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She said, "May your servant find favour in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. (1:17-18)

The prayer warrior will succeed in gaining what he or she is fighting for but will not necessarily see the victory. The victory may be far away, or even in the next generation. Hannah was blessed because she saw the victory of her intercession. It will not always be this way. prayer warriors have to have the courage to believe that no prayer or sacrifice is wasted.

5. Risks must be taken. 1 Samuel 14: 1-14

Jonathan

One day Jonathan son of Saul said to his young armour-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side." But he did not tell his father.

Jonathan said to his young armour-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few." "Do all that you have in mind," his armour-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

Jonathan said, "Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands."

So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. "Look!" said the Philistines. "The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in." The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson."

So Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, "Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel."

Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armour-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.

Prayer warriors have to take risks. This is not a safe environment in which to pray. This is not "Our Father" prayer but battle prayer against a dangerous enemy. Risks will have to be taken. There is a balance between risk and folly. The experienced prayer warrior must know how to judge risk, or they will run into trouble. Here are some things to consider.

*** Risk - Spirit inspired**

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John16:13)

When evaluating risk, the Holy Spirit is the best advisor. Time spent waiting on him will show whether or not the risk should be taken. Once the Spirit is given clarity the battle can proceed. Even if it seems to be going badly there is the inner confidence that the Spirit is called and the Spirit will overcome.

*** Courage - comes from the Lord**

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (Matthew 14:27)

Prayer warriors need courage. It is no easy thing to fight against the principalities and powers of this dark age and of the heavenly places. There needs to be an inner courage to take the risk, to face the enemy and overcome in the power of the Lord. This courage comes from the Lord. Prayer warriors are fighting a spiritual battle and so need their strength and courage, their guidance and support from the heavenly places not from the human heart.

*** Angels can help**

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. (Luke 22:43)

A spiritual battle needs spiritual help. Jesus told Pilate that he could call down legions of angels and in Gethsemane an Angel came and strengthen him. Prayer warriors need to know that angelic help is at hand, know how to call on that help and learn to recognise the presence of that help.

*** Expect to pay**

Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:60)

Prayer warriors must remember that there is a price to pay in this spiritual war. It shows itself in depression, tiredness, sickness, financial problems and work problems. In every way the enemy is trying to push back, and he will use every means at his disposal. This is how it is and there is no point in complaining. The cost has to be accepted as part of the privilege of being in the battle.

*** Expect to win**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

Speaking for myself, I have no doubt whatsoever that the enemy will be defeated. My heart is set firmly towards victory which the Lord has already obtained, in which I live and one day I will see established when he returns. I have this inner conviction - I am the victor. I am the one who overcomes because my master has overcome before me. It is this inner certainty which will eventually break the enemy and allow God's people to welcome the Lord back.

6. Ready at all times. Acts 12:5

The church.

Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. (Acts 12:5)

Peter was in prison, and the next day he would certainly have been executed. It was time for urgent prayer. Yet so often God's people do not respond to the Spirit's promptings, and if the church in Acts had not done that, Peter would have died. What are the principles of urgent prayer?

*** Listen to the Voice of the Spirit**

The Lord told Ananias, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." (Acts 9:11-12)

When the Lord spoke to Ananias, it was a prompting to respond. He was surprised, knowing what a risk he would take. However, he did respond to what the Spirit was saying. Prayer warriors like Ananias must be sensitive to the voice of the spirit and respond when the need is there. Sometimes delay could be fatal.

*** Obey quickly - even if the need is not obvious**

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. (Luke 24:30-33)

The two disciples on the walk to Emmaus had no intention of returning to Jerusalem in the dark, however the compulsion of the Spirit within them compelled them to return, facing the risk of robbers on the way because they felt strongly the need to respond. The same must be true for the prayer warrior. When prompted by the spirit it is not the time to argue or question but to obey, and to obey quickly.

*** Urgent is short. Don't be distracted from the main battle for too long**

"Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!" (Nehemiah 4:30)

Sometimes prayer warriors must step aside from the main battle to deal with some urgent issue. The spirit will indicate when this is necessary and what must be done. However the prayer warrior's task is to fight. It is easy to be distracted but when the trumpet sounds for battle the prayer warrior must return as quickly as possible to the frontline.

7. Determination – Philippians 3:12-14

Apostle Paul

Saint Bernadette of Lourdes believed this - “Never give up. Never give in.” She lived a hard and suffering-filled life but never gave up this principle. Apostle Paul would have agreed with her when he wrote -

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

Prayer warriors must have a commitment to never giving up in the struggle, and never giving in to despair, frustration or fatigue. At any time the battle may flare up and the warriors have to be ready to fight, however tired or weary they may be.

The enemy can raise up great powers against the warriors. He will try to dominate as he did through Nebuchadnezzar, to impose fear as he did through Goliath, and to kill, steal and destroy. Ultimately he will use these great powers to control and destroy God’s creation. How do prayer warriors press on without giving up?

1. Fix our eyes on the Lord

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” (Hebrews 12.2)

Prayer warriors must fix their eyes on the Lord and then their courage will rise. Peter took his eyes from the Lord, looked at the waves on which he was walking and his courage failed him. Prayer warriors cannot afford to make this mistake.

2. Draw on the strength of the sacrifice

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. (Hebrews 7:27)

The strength of warfare prayer is to be found in the sacrifice of Jesus. As the warriors go to battle they must draw strength from the sacrifice of the cross.

3. Victory

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

The prayer warriors are fighting a battle which has already been won. Knowing this brings confidence, courage and strength. At the same time it demoralises the enemy.

4. Never give up, never give in

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. (Hebrews 12:28)

The Kingdom for which the prayer warriors fight can never be shaken. No matter what happens the Kingdom will endure. Never give up. Never give in.

8. Weapons. John 1:35-36

Jesus

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35)

The blood of the lamb has incredible power. It breaks the enemy, breaks every scheme, overcomes all unforgiven blood, and sets people free.

"But when the Messiah arrived, high priest of the superior things of this new covenant, he bypassed the old tent and its trappings in this created world and went straight into heaven's "tent"—the true Holy Place—once and for all. He also bypassed the sacrifices consisting of goat and calf blood, instead using his own blood as the price to set us free once and for all. If that animal blood and the other rituals of purification were effective in cleaning up certain matters of our religion and behaviour, think how much more the blood of Christ cleans up our whole lives, inside and out. Through the Spirit, Christ offered himself as an unblemished sacrifice, freeing us from all those dead-end efforts to make ourselves respectable, so that we can live all out for God." (Hebrews 9:11-15)

Whatever weapons were available before the crucifixion, none have the power of the blood shed at the cross. It was the better blood than the blood of Abel and it continues to equip and empower God's people to break the enemy and establish the Kingdom. These verses should be written in the hearts of every prayer warrior -

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21)

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

"but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:19)

9. An eternal vision

Acts 7:54-60

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:54-60)

Nothing equips soldiers better than a vision of what they are fighting for and this is true for prayer warriors. The battle is to establish the victory of Jesus, who standing at the right hand of God is the triumphant one, who has won by his death and resurrection and will come again to establish his Kingdom forever.

This vision must be deeply in the heart of every prayer warrior. This is what the battle is all about - establishing the Kingdom of Jesus eternally.

Here is a the vision the Lord gave me of the final destination of his people. It has sustained me for years –

I came at last, after all my journeying, to the heavenly banquet and I saw the food laid out there. Love beyond any love I had ever known. Life in total and complete fullness. Everything I had ever desired to be in the Lord was there for me to enjoy. Forgiveness flowed like liquid gold and all my failures and frustrations were washed away from me.

Then, into the space flowed joy which exhilarated and excited me to worship. My soul ate the fruit of satisfaction. But there was one food which excited me more than any other. It was almost beyond my understanding. It was my future destiny to serve in the newness that the Lord would bring to his servants beyond the last days. But when I tried to describe it, no words would come. I sat down with the heavenly host and enjoyed the fruits of the sacrifice. We rejoiced and exalted him who lives for ever and ever.