

The STRONG Christian 3
Strong in Warfare: the Prayer Warrior.

The Strong Christian is able to take the pressure. The pressure is always internal organisation and external opposition, which is the pressure of alternate views (Mtt 5:11-12; 10:16-26). The Christian will always come under attack. So we are involved in a warfare. If we think that we are not in a battle then we have been defeated already. But our battle is not against flesh and blood (people) and if we are fighting people, as distinct from what they represent, then we are fighting the wrong thing. Our warfare is a spiritual warfare. We are fighting against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness and against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12). I need to be schooled in spiritual awareness. This is not only a moral universe (where the ultimate issue is between good and evil) but a spirit universe where the ultimate issue is between the spirit of good and evil (God and Satan). This is the Biblical view of Reality. The secular, materialist view of reality is that everything is ultimately Matter. Matter, in its various forms, either exists or it does not exist and the conditions of its existence are purely material, never moral. To the materialist, morality (or moral choice) is a purely personal, humanoid choice superimposed on the facts of matter. Matter is an evolutionary invention. If matter disappears then we (and everything) disappear. Matter must contain all that we are capable of. But God is beyond matter. Indeed, He is the creator of it. So as Christians, we are committed to a world beyond this world and to a source of morality beyond human imagination and purely material diversity.

Joshua.

We need to understand what it means to be a warrior, because we have a battle on our hands. We have to get used to warfare imagery. A warrior in the OT is Joshua. Joshua was the assistant to Moses and the general in charge of the Occupation of Canaan. Some events in Joshua's life are as follows:

Ex	17:8-16	Joshua fights Amalek
	24:13	Moses' assistant on the mountain of God
	32:17	Hears noise in the camp worshipping idols
	33:11	Stayed in the tabernacle
Num	13:8	Spy in Canaan
	14:26-31	Not judged with other spies
	27:18	Has the Spirit in him
	34:17	To divide the inheritance of Canaan
Deut	1:38	Encourages Joshua to lead
	31:23	Joshua to lead people into Canaan
	34:9	Full of spirit of wisdom
Josh	1:2	Moses my servant is dead
	1:3	Promise
	1:6-9	Be strong. Go up and possess the land
	5:13-15	The Commander of the Lord's army
	24:15	Choose you this day whom you will serve.

Joshua, as a warrior, knew the Spirit of God. Therefore, he was a servant and warrior for God. In Joshua's life there is a combination of obedience, submission, reliability and responsibility. He served revelation. He was familiar with the Place (Tabernacle) and Word of the Lord.

Jesus on Prayer.

Mtt 6:5-15 The Lord's Prayer (Compare (Lk 11:2-4))

26:41	Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation
Mk 11:22-26	Praying: Believe and forgive (release)
13:33	Watch and pray
Lk 6:12	Jesus prays all night
6:28	Pray for your persecutors
10:2	Pray to the Lord of the Harvest
18:1-8	The Importunate widow. Do not give up.
18:9-14	Pharisee and tax collector at prayer
21:36	Pray that you are worthy to escape
Jn 14:16	Jesus prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit
17:9,15,20	Jesus prays for His followers.

Prayer is Asking God for Something.

Asking God for something means that we have to seek God rather than ourselves. Jesus promises that God is the provider (Mtt 6:25-34). We are not to rely on ourselves. Self-provision is independence from God. Those that will not ask (beg) God can make a fetish of their independent religious character, where they style their own religious bravery as an autonomy from God. They have 'come of age'. I am too grown up to ask God for anything. However, God is our Father and He wants us to come to Him about anything. The more we cry out for God, the more we forsake ourselves as the answer. In praying we go out on a limb to reach God and assert His relevance. Jesus says to ask: Mtt 7:7, 21:22; Lk 11:13; Jn 14:13; 15:7,16; 16:23,24.

Dake lists 12 things asked for in Scripture (Dake NT, p23)

1. Help of God (2Chron 20:4)
2. Things to come (Is 45:11)
3. The old paths (Jer 6:16)
4. Spiritual rain (Zech 10:1)
5. Needs and wants (Mtt 6:8, Ps 23;1; 34:9-10; 84:11)
6. Good things (Mtt 7:7-11)
7. Anything (Mtt 18:19; Jn 14:14; 1Jn 5:14)
8. Whatsoever (Mtt 21:22; Jn 14:13; 15:16; 16:23; 1Jn 3:22; 5:14, 15,16)
9. The Holy Spirit (Lk 11:9-13)
10. What you will (Jn 15:7, Mk 11:34)
11. Wisdom (James 1:5-8)
12. Life (1Jn 5:16).

The Prayer Warrior.

Paul tells us to put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand (Eph 6:13). There is nothing in the Christian life that says that we will never come under attack. In fact, we are warned that we will be persecuted as we hold spiritual ground in our lives and the lives of others. The whole armour of God consists of the following. The imagery is of Roman soldier getting dressed:

1. The first and basic garment is the belt of truth. Basic to our Christian life is speaking and promoting the truth. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1Tim 3:15). Jesus Christ is the Truth (Jn 14:6). Christians are truth seekers. This is not our (personal, subjective) truth but God's (eternal, objective) truth. Part of Christian transparency is to always speak the truth and to be known for doing so.
2. The second piece of armour is the breastplate of justice or righteousness. Righteousness is to do the right thing. We protect our heart (and other vital organs) by consistently

doing (or longing to do) the right thing. This stops the fragmentation of our conscience and the resulting powerlessness.

3. The third article is sandals of peace. We are to be peacemakers. The gospel creates peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Peacemakers will be called sons of God (Mtt 5:9). We go into a situation and we speak peace and act peacefully.
4. The shield of Faith quenches the fiery darts of the devil. Faith quenches the fire of unbelief and evil. The devil, as a thief, comes to rob, kill and destroy (Jn 10:10). The devil lights fires in our life. Yet it is God who is the consuming fire (Heb 12:29). Jesus will baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mtt 3:11). Fire in the right place is good and a tool of God. Satan lights fires in the wrong place.
5. The helmet of salvation defends the mind by salvation. To be saved is to have a rescued mind. Our mental processes need to be redeemed and protected from the distortions of a pagan culture. This is the battle for the mind. In our patience we need to possess our souls (Lk 21:19). Our mind is a vessel that we should possess (1Thess 4:4), protect and control.
6. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. This is the one offensive weapon. The word of God is a two-edged sword which is living and effective (energetic) that pierces my substance, revealing the very core of my being. It discerns the real me which consists of the thoughts and intents of my heart. The word of God also discerns the thoughts of others, exposing them in a way that they have to deal with. To reject the Word of God is to sidestep God's estimate of our being.

On the basis of this armour we are to always pray and supplicate God in the Spirit, 'being watchful to this end with all perseverance', praying for others (Eph 6:18).

The Real Platform for the Prayer Warrior (Phil 4).

The prayer warrior has a world view. He chooses to live in a specific environment. Philippians chapter 4 contains many verses relevant to our warfare and the stable warrior's world. I have selected seven verses. Every verse contains a universalising word such as 'all', 'everything', 'whatever', 'always', 'everywhere'.

1. (:4) Rejoice in the Lord **always** and again I say rejoice. We can command joy (of the spirit) but not happiness (of the soul) or pleasure (of the body). People would love to command pleasure. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10).

2. (:5) Let your gentleness (reasonableness) be known to **all**. In James 3:17, the wisdom from above is described as pure, peaceable, reasonable and open to discussion (pliant and able to be reasoned with). Those who have the wisdom from above (which can be asked for, James 1:5) are not rigid and arrogant but are able to be reasoned with. Before he was converted, Paul described himself as 'an insolent blasphemer' (1Tim 1:13). Here insolent means overbearing and violent. However, the Lord is at hand. Therefore our issues will be ultimately resolved by God on my obedience.

3. (:6) Be anxious for nothing, but in **everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. These requests are not special religious requests but our genuine and thankful asking about anything at all. No limit is ever placed on what we are to ask for. Jesus said that if we abide in Him and His words abide in us, then we can ask whatever we like and it will be done for us (John 15:7). James says that we do not have because we do not ask (James 4:2,3). I have to make this

basic change from self-engineered provision to God-orchestrated provision. Self engineers a provision I can own and control. Whereas God engineers a provision I can only ever walk in daily and which I can never own or control.

4. (:8) Finally, brethren **whatever** is true, honourable, right (just), pure, lovely and commendable, if there is **anything** excellent or praiseworthy, then think about (concentrate on) that. This is the battle for the mind. Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it will flow the issues of your life (Prov 4:23). I must be careful what I see/hear and place in my heart (meditate upon or fantasise about). Because what I put into my heart creates the issues that I will have to deal with in my life. In this sense I create my own circumstances or problems that I will have to confront. Also the mind deals in images. As people we serve images. We cultivate images: images of art, architecture, fashion, warfare and love. Advertising is imagery. Our culture is increasingly dominated by the visual (plus aural) image through TV. An image is given the right meaning with the right soundtrack. Pagans are dominated by images. The second commandment is that God shall not be worshipped with any graven (carved) image. People worship images. We have to be very careful what images we serve in our life. There is power in an image. We should restrict what images (pictures) we have around the house and our work environment. Let us resolve to choose to have around us imagery that is pure, true, virtuous and godly. Our life will depend on it.

5. (:11) For I have learned in **whatever** state I am, to be content. This is a profound lesson to learn in life. Paul knows how to be humbled and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things he has learned how to be full and how to be hungry. He can experience both abundance and need and not lose his contentment (or contented base) in God. This is a place of spirit victory. Paul's circumstances do not determine his life attitude. In fact, contentment is a discipline. We need to restrain our ingratitude, our wrestling with God and our desire for our own prosperity. We can fight our circumstances and frivolously object to God's provision. The discipline is to resist his own human nature.

6. (:13) I can do **all things** through Christ who strengthens me. This position of strength is based upon Paul's previous claims listed above which include joy, reasonableness, no anxiety, right thinking and the lesson (discipline of) contentment. As we strengthen in the Christian life, the life of Christ strengthens in us. The strength of Christ is the power of faith that enables me to act. Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of faith (Heb 12:2). Faith is the idea of Jesus. Faith launches us beyond belief. Jesus is also the finisher (completer, perfecter) of faith. Faith gets us beyond fantasy. We are encouraged to think great things for God and expect great things from God. We are told that we can move mountains (Mk 11:23).

7. (:19) And my God shall supply **all** your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. As we attempt to do things for Christ, God will supply ALL our needs according to His wealth not ours. This represents our total equipment in God. Armed with these promises in Philippians 4 we shall never lack (Ps 23:1). We need to come under the discipline of God's provision and not seek to provide for ourselves. Providing for ourselves is a form of being pre-occupied with our selves. God's supply is not according to our estimate but according to His riches. Providing for ourselves comes out of a fear of poverty. God's provision is not based on our poverty but upon His wealth. Will you trust what God can do for you?