

EPHESIANS - Ephesians 6

Message 106

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Scripture: Luke 18:1-7

INTRO: In the closing section to the letter of Ephesians, Paul opens a huge window into the unseen world for us. What we see here is what happens behind the scenes of so much of what takes place in the world. We have a huge enemy, who is also the enemy of God. And he has destroyed and will yet destroy much of mankind.

He hates God, Jesus Christ, Israel, and Christians. He will do all he can to destroy as many Christians as he can. And in this passage we are taught how to stand against this almost almighty force. Paul has instructed the believer to put on the whole armor of God. We have looked at those; the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel shoes, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

And now we come to the last part of this section and it says, beginning in verse 18:

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-

19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

These 3 verses give the context in which the believer is to take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. Whenever we get ready to do battle with the evil one, it must be done in the context of prayer.

It is interesting to me that prayer is not likened to any piece of the soldier's equipment. And I have wondered if the reason is that there is nothing in the Christian soldier's armor that could picture prayer.

Now before we get into the text, observe that verses 17-20 are

one sentence. When I had diagrammed the book I had stopped at the end of verse 17, thinking the rest was quite straightforward. But as I set out to get the thought flow, I found myself in a very complicated passage. Exegetical commentaries are scarce and my abilities are limited.

So I hope I can catch the thought flow while expounding on the whole sentence. I make every effort to deal with every word in a passage in the sense it is given. So let me comment first on how I see the flow of this passage from verse 17 and beginning in verse 8.

The sentence begins in verse 17. Because to take the helmet and the sword of the Spirit is a command, the subject is "you" understood. So it is "You take the helmet" etc. Now the first words of verse 18, in the original are, "through all prayer and supplication." Our versions give that later in the sentence. I believe that these first words tell us how to put on the helmet of salvation and how to take up the sword of the Spirit. It is through prayer.

Let me read verse 17 together with verse 18 like that:

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 through all prayer and supplication...

Young's literal translation stands in favor of translating verse 18 like that. Ellicott's commentary says, and I quote: "It is by prayer that all the heavenly armor is put on." (VIII:59). I do not know if it applies to all of the armor, but grammatically it certainly connects to taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

g) Prayer

-In general

The subject of verses 18-20 is prayer. Last year in our Bible study time we studied the word *grace*. This year we are studying *mercy*. There are long words that are shorter in meaning. Then there are short words that are longer in meaning.

These two words are as complicated as any I have studied. But there is a common denominator in both grace and mercy that is also found in prayer. It is this: Whenever any of these words is used there is always one who is in need of something, and there is another who can supply that need. In Christianity, the one who prays, prays to the one who can supply that need. There is no use asking someone for something they cannot provide. Prayer then, indicates our dependence on another. That is troublesome to our human nature, but it puts us and God in our rightful positions. We are needy and He is able to provide our needs.

Prayer is both amazing, and to me at least, mysterious in many ways. Think of this: Jesus spent time in prayer. He would go off alone somewhere and pray. Ponder that. Then think of this. You and I will likely never be able to talk to our premier. Some of us would have some questions for him. Some of us would have some requests from him. But there are too many things on his plate to consider someone like us, unless it might get him a lot of votes.

But think now of this. God is in that holy city, the New Jerusalem, in heaven. He is the Creator of the universe. He is in authority over the entire universe. And in that city, the New Jerusalem, there is a temple that He built by Himself. And that temple has a holy place and it has a most holy place. And God dwells in that most holy place, and it is the most holy place in existence anywhere. And seated at His right hand is the Lord Jesus Christ. And now consider this: you and I, if we are spiritually in good standing, can come into His presence

at any time we wish. And the way we come is by prayer.

Turn to Hebrews 4. We'll read verses 14-16. It says:

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

A key thought in the word translated "boldly" is freely. We may not enter brashly or in pride. We do not get a hearing if we come like that. But we can come freely. His ears are open to the cries of His people.

Now note when we come. It is in a time of need. And how do we come to the throne of grace? There is only one way, and that is by prayer. But we would not be able to come to God like that if it was not for Jesus Christ. He allows us entrance to God. He is our High Priest, and He is our mediator.

You children, sometimes you want something from your parents. Maybe you want to watch a movie. So you decide which one of you has the biggest chance of getting from your mom and dad what you want, and that one becomes your mediator. And sometimes you are afraid to ask your parents for something. But you want it enough to take the chance. But we never

have to take a chance with God. We can come boldly.

When we, as Christian soldiers, have our entire armor on, and we pick up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, we stand in entire dependence on God. The instruction to always pray indicates that we are entirely dependent on God.

But there is another matter to consider. When you set yourself to prayer you will meet God's enemy. What is more difficult or tiring than prayer? I have found that only when I am in dire need, does prayer become a sweet relief. Generally it is a burden because it is a battle. Every effort of the enemy will keep me from prayer or from praying long. If ever there was warfare it is in prayer. And if I see the structure of this sentence right, we put on the helmet of salvation and we take up the sword of the Spirit through prayer.

So we want to consider our text now. As I see verse 18 it continues like this from verse 17:

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 through all prayer and supplication...

Now those who work with this text wonder how prayer is connected to the armor of the Christian. Some think it is one more piece of armor. Some think you put every piece on by prayer. If the text is as I have suggested, then we take the helmet when we pray and we use the sword when we pray. I wonder if that is why the Word of God is referred to as the *rheema*, not the

logos.

So consider now the word translated "prayer." It is the word *proseuchomai*. The preposition *pros* means toward. And the word *euchomai*, generally has the idea of a wish and this word came to mean to pray. To express one's wishes towards God. This is a general word for prayer.

I propose that whenever we pray we put on our helmet of salvation and we pick up the sword of the Spirit. Today we can pick up a cel phone and call almost anywhere in the world. But we cannot communicate with God like that. Prayer is how we communicate with Him.

It may seem like an elementary question, but let me ask, just why do we pray? Well, we generally pray because we are in need of something or we desire something and we have this hope that by praying we will receive what we requested. There are other reasons as well, but this is generally why we pray. But that raises a very big question. Does God take notice? Psalm 34:15 says, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry." Let me add that it seems to me that any true answer to prayer is a miracle.

A while ago my wife sent me this clip of something Charles Spurgeon had said. He is a Calvinist and so that means all things are predestined and that raises the question: If everything is predestined, why pray? I have pondered that as well. Here is what he said:

"Predestination embraceth the great and the little, and reacheth unto all things; the question is wherefore pray? Might it not as logically be asked wherefore breathe, eat, move or do anything? We have an answer which satisfies us,

namely that our prayers are in the predestination, and that God has as much ordained his people's prayers as anything else, and when we pray we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts."

That is the illogical logic of Calvinism. If God has ordained every prayer I pray, it seems to me He has done a poor job of ordaining my prayers. And if I do not pray as I ought, it is His fault not mine. When most of us consider our prayer life, do we feel ready to boast? But if God ordained my prayers, then I should not pray more than I do and what I pray is exactly what I should pray. I can't change any of that, it has all been ordained.

But why do we pray? Well, we pray for a number of reasons, but generally we are in need of something and so we ask God for those things. We believe it is possible for God to change circumstances if it is His will when we ask. We pray because we believe God can grant those desires. We pray because we believe it can bring about a change in what might otherwise happen.

Listen to Psalm 78:40-41:

40 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert!

41 Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel.

God wanted to do big things, but Israel, by their unbelief, limited Him. Think of that. Man's actions can limit God as to what He can do. I recommend that by obedience and prayer, man can bring about change as to what God will do.

Prayer is such a heavy subject that I confess there is much that is beyond me. Yet it seems to me that any real answer to prayer is a miracle. You can ponder that and I will happily sit at your feet to learn if you would have answers for me. But this I believe in: God hears the prayers of true believers and God answers when it is His will to do so.

Well, in our text the word for prayer is a general word that includes communing with God in asking, desiring, thanking, worshipping etc.

-at all times

Now our verse tells us to pray at all times and we ask, what is meant by these words? We are helped to understand the meaning of what is meant by a study of the original words translated "all times." There are two words for time in the NT. One is *chronos*, from which we get *chronology*; and the other is *Kairos*, which has more the idea of the word *seasons*. This is very helpful. There are many times that are seasons of prayer. We may have set seasons of prayer. Say in the morning, or in the evening, or at meals etc. or prayer meeting. But we come to seasons of prayer especially when some need suddenly presents itself to us. We may be requested to please pray for such and such a need because of whatever the case may be, and we have entered a season of prayer.

-in the Spirit

A further word is added then that this prayer is to be in the Spirit. The question is, does it refer to our spirit, or the Holy Spirit? Man has a spirit. It is that which keeps him alive, so

Scripture says the body without the spirit is dead. Death happens when man's spirit is separated from his body. But we also communicate with God through our Spirit, and God communicates with us through our spirit. So the question is, does this refer to the Holy Spirit or man's spirit?

Well, our text has capitalized the word *Spirit*, which means the translators interpreted this to mean the Holy Spirit. I tend to agree with that because even praying to false gods is done in the realm of the human spirit. There is communion from the human spirit with false gods. But if the wording here is the Holy Spirit, one cannot pray to a false god in that way.

That naturally brings us to the next question: what is praying in the Holy Spirit? I think it will help us to understand first what it is not. Certainly praying in the Holy Spirit cannot be praying to some false god, so this disqualifies the majority of mankind's prayers.

But professing Christians may pray, but not be praying in the Spirit. Turn to Mark 12. I would say there are many prayers that are not in the Holy Spirit.

We begin in verse 38:

*38 Then He said to them in His teaching,
"Beware of the scribes, who desire to go
around in long robes, love greetings in
the marketplaces,*

*39 "the best seats in the synagogues,
and the best places at feasts,*

40 "who devour widows' houses, and for a

pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

What is praying in pretense? Turn to Acts 27. Paul is on the way to Rome on a ship as a prisoner. And they ran into a storm and day after day and night after night they fought the storm and we pick up the story in verse 27:

27 Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.

28 And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.

29 Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,

The sailors wanted to escape the ship on a life boat, and so they acted as if they were putting out anchors, but they were letting down a skiff to escape in. The KJV says they let down the skiff under color. The word is the same as how Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees prayed. They were making it look like one thing, when in fact it is another. It is possible for a Christian to pray a very nice prayer in order to make it look as though he or she is a very good

Christian. That is not praying in the Holy Spirit.

The prayers of the Scribes and Pharisees standing on the street corners wishing to be seen by people, is certainly not prayer in the Spirit.

In Matthew 6:7 Jesus said:

7 "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."

But for many years it has not only been the heathen who think they will be heard because they make long prayers. Here is part of the instructions for saying the Catholic Rosary step by step:

1. While holding the Crucifix in the hand, make the **Sign of the Cross**.

Then instructions are given on what they should say. Step two:

2. Recite the **Apostles' Creed**.

Here they recite the Apostles Creed. Step 3:

3. On the three small beads recite the **Hail Mary** for an increase in the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love...

This goes on and on and this is nothing but vain repetitions. This is not praying in the Holy Spirit.

Such praying is not in the Spirit. It is praying like the heathen. That means another large part of mankind's prayer is not true prayer.

But it might strike closer to home than that. A Christian may pray in public trying to sound very spiritual, when in

fact his or her life does not line up. Surely that is not prayer in the Spirit.

It is a struggle for new Christians and those not used to praying in public to think they are not able to pray like they should. The reason is this, they think they are not able to articulate impressive prayers. But it is not impressive prayers that impress God. **I thank you that I am not...I have sometimes been blessed by some of the most simple, honest prayers, of new Christians. If one is praying so as to impress the others listening, that is not praying in the Holy Spirit.

I might add further that one cannot be living in known sin and pray in the Spirit. Psalm 66:18 says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." How could the Holy Spirit have part in all these kinds of prayers? The most common name for God's Spirit is the Holy Spirit. In order for the Holy Spirit to have part in our prayers, we need to be holy.

I believe praying in the Holy Spirit is not some special kind of praying. It is honest, sincere communing with God that flows out of a godly life. There is no pretense, just honest, humble praying. There are times when mature but honest, humble Christians struggle for words. There are times when words do not come.

Listen to these verses from Romans 8:26-27:

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

There are numerous times when we pray and we just cannot find words. We struggle and we do our best. And it is a great encouragement to realize that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be put into words.

The Christian's daily life is most crucial when it comes to prayer. One cannot live a carnal life or in sin or even with little regard for the Lord, and then pray in the Holy Spirit.

Listen to Psalm 15:

1 LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

When we pray, if our prayers go through, we enter the holiest place in existence anywhere. And who may dwell there? I read on:

2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart;

3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

5 He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against

the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

That is the person who prays in the Spirit.

-Being watchful in or with all perseverance

Our verse then goes on like this: "...being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." We begin with the words "being watchful." The word literally is, "being unsleeping," or "sleeplessness." This watchfulness, not being sleepy in prayer is a taxing matter. One cannot be off in Lulu land, and be watchful at the same time.

Then it says our being unsleeping in this matter is to be to this end, and we ask, to what end? I won't burden you with the details but because I translate the verse as I do, the *being watchful* is to the end that in every prayer season, one prays in the Spirit with watchfulness or sleeplessness. Now here is an assignment hard to carry out. What does the word "watchful" indicate to you when it comes to meaningful prayer in the Spirit? The more we get used to praying, the more we have to pay attention to being watchful.

How easy is it to recite very familiar words while one's mind has drifted off somewhere else? I heard a pastor many years ago say something like he had been praying with his wife and of a sudden he caught himself praying about some cows in a field somewhere. His mind was way off track. When our mind wanders off in prayer we cannot be said to be praying in the Spirit or being watchful. May I ask you, do you have any difficulties with

this? Being watchful is a present tense. When we are in a season of prayer we have to be watchful to this end.

Then the praying Christian is to be watchful with all perseverance. In this word translated 'perseverance' a very helpful lesson is to be learned on the subject of prayer. There is in this word the idea of *continual endurance*. Ellicott says, "'Perseverance' implies exertion, holding out against fatigue and difficulty" (VIII:59).

There is in this word the idea of doing something and you are almost worn out and you only wish to quit, but you keep doing what you are doing because it is important. You are doing battle. You would really like to stop doing it because it is taxing and draining, but you keep going.

I was blessed when I read Ellicott's commentary and he pointed out that the verb of this word occurs a number of times with regard to prayer. Turn to Acts 1. You see, prayer is not easy. Many, many times it is a battle. Many times we have to tell ourselves it is important and it must be done. It is one of the easiest things to leave out in life. It takes perseverance or endurance.

In Acts 1, just over 43 days ago, Jesus had been crucified. Three days and three nights later he had been raised from the dead. Then for 40 days He gave irrefutable proof that He was alive. Then He went up the Mount of Olives with His disciples and He instructed them on what they were to do. And then, to their amazement, He lifted off the ground and ascended into heaven. It was a most incredible event.

And so they went back to Jerusalem, as Jesus had instructed them. So look at verses 4-5:

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So after Jesus had ascended back to heaven, they went back to Jerusalem. We'll read verses 12-14:

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Now note verse 14. Look at the word "continued." It says they all continued in prayer and supplication. There are the two words of our text, prayer and supplication. But note it says they "continued." There is the verb form of the word 'perseverance' of our text. They persevered. They endured.

And how long did they persevere? Well, ten days pass and we come Acts 2:1. It says this:

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

They continued in prayer, they did not give up nor were they wearied and did not give up until what the Lord had promised had taken place. Prayer is a difficult and wearying work. And what happened after 10 days is that the Church was born. The Church was born in the midst of an extended prayer meeting. They continued, they endured, and then Pentecost came. And in every season of prayer we are to be watchful with all perseverance or endurance.

Well, that day Peter preached a message and 3,000 people were saved. The Church had just been born and the account of that is recorded in Acts 2:1-41. It was the day of Pentecost. Jews from every nation under heaven were gathered at Jerusalem and it was on that day God poured out the Holy Spirit.

And so we come to Acts 2:42:

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

After the Church was born, the Church persevered in four things: The apostle's doctrine, teaching of the Word, fellowship, communion, and prayers. Once again the word to persevere is used with regard to prayer. All these things the Christian does, holding out against fatigue and desires to quit or to stay home, or do other things. Here are things you just do. It is in the rest of life that it pays off.

We go next to Acts 6:4 and it says:

3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

4 "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Here the office of deacon was put in place so that the pastor could give his time to the continual endurance or perseverance in prayer and ministry of the Word. Again this idea of enduring when it comes to prayer is given. Though it is draining, perseverance is the key.

Go over now to Romans 12:10-12:

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

In the words *continuing steadfastly* we once again have this connection between prayer and persevering.

Now listen to Colossians 4:2:

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

There is our word again, persevering earnestly in prayer. But here we have the further idea of being vigilant in prayer. Our passage said that the prayer warrior must be sleepless, unsleeping. This passage says the prayer warrior must be watchful, awake, vigilante.

-Being watchful with supplication for all the saints

Then further, not only are we to be unsleeping with all perseverance, but with supplication for all the saints. We had the word *supplication* earlier. Here are those prayers for specific things. We meet on Wednesdays to pray and we have a list of specific things we are praying for. We share our burdens of things we want to be prayed for, and in turn we pray for the burdens of others.

In this passage we are told to pray for all the saints. So what does this mean? Well, we cannot literally pray for all the saints. We only know a very small part of them. But we pray for all the things we, as a church, share among ourselves as burdens. We do that personally for family members and others in the church we feel burdened for as well. Then we quite often receive

requests from others.

Now the word "supplication" is the word *deesis* and speaks of specific requests. For example, we may pray for the Christians in Pakistan. They are facing persecution. This past week I got a request to pray for an innocent young Christian convicted and sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan. His name is Shahzad Masih. And now I prayed for a specific Christian with a specific need. One never knows all the details surrounding a situation like that but one can trust God to use one's prayers in such a way as will glorify Him. Then we can be encouraged that the Holy Spirit is our helper. Listen again to Romans 8:26:

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. How feeble and maybe off the mark many of our prayers may be, but the Holy Spirit knows exactly what we really mean, and He will make our request acceptable to God.

Stand up for Jesus, each piece put on
with prayer...

CONCL: Let me close with a story. I don't tell many but it is a good illustration of this message. It comes from Helen Roseveare. My family has heard her on several occasions. She was an English Christian missionary, doctor and an author of a number of books. She worked with Evangelization Crusade in the Congo from 1953 to 1973. She passed away in 2016.

She gives this story:

"One night, in Central Africa, I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward; but in spite of all that we could do, she died leaving us with a tiny, premature baby and a crying, two-year-old daughter. We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive. We had no incubator. We had no electricity to run an incubator, and no special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts.

"A student-midwife went for the box we had for such babies and for the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly, in distress, to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst. Rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. '...and it is our last hot water bottle!' she exclaimed. As in the West, it is no good crying over spilled milk; so, in Central Africa it might be considered no good crying over a burst water bottle. They do not grow on trees, and there are no drugstores down forest pathways. All right,' I said, 'Put the baby as near the fire as you safely can; sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts. Your job is to keep the baby warm.'

"The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with many of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle. The baby could so easily die if it got chilled. I also told them about the two-year-old sister, crying because her mother had died.

"During the prayer time, one ten-year-old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt consciousness of our African children. 'Please, God,' she prayed, 'send us a water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, the baby'll be dead; so, please send it this afternoon.' While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added by way of corollary, '...And while You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know You really love her?' As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, 'Amen?' I just did not believe that God could do this. Oh, yes, I know that He can do everything: The Bible says so, but there are

limits, aren't there? The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost four years at that time, and I had never, ever received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator!

"Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time that I reached home, the car had gone, but there, on the veranda, was a large twenty-two pound parcel! I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone; so, I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some thirty or forty pairs of eyes were focused on the large cardboard box.

"From the top, I lifted out brightly colored, knitted jerseys. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then, there were the knitted bandages for the leprosy patients, and the children began to look a little bored. Next, came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas - - that would make a nice batch of buns for the weekend. As I put my hand in again, I felt the...could it really be? I grasped it, and pulled it out. Yes, 'A brand-new rubber, hot water bottle!' I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had not truly believed that He could. Ruth was in the front row of the children. She rushed forward, crying out, 'If God has sent the bottle, He must have sent the dolly, too!' Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed dolly. Her eyes shone: She had never doubted! Looking up at me, she asked, 'Can I go over with you, Mummy, and give this dolly to that little girl, so she'll know that Jesus really loves her?'

"That parcel had been on the way for five whole months, packed up by my former Sunday School class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting to send a hot water bottle, even to the equator. One of the girls had put in a dolly for an African child -- five months earlier in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year-old to bring it 'That afternoon!'