

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

PREVAILING THROUGH PRAYER!

Read Ephesians 6:18-24

Introduction

The armour of God, found in Ephesians 6:10-18, is made up of the following six items: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit.

As we studied last week, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. The Bible often illustrates the Christian life as a battle against sin and Satan. We are soldiers of Christ in a spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4). As Scripture says, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness” (Ephesians 6:12). That’s why the apostle Paul encourages Christians to “put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (verse 11).

Our Armour

Truth

Truth is the belt that holds all the other pieces of the armour in place. There are two ways in which truth is a part of the armour of God.

First, it refers to the truths of Scripture as opposed to the lies of Satan. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (verse 32). The great truths of the Bible—the love of God, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the Second Coming, forgiveness of sin, grace, and power to live for Jesus—these truths set us free from Satan’s lies.

The second way that truth serves as a belt, holding together the full armour of God, is our personal commitment to truth—to living a life that is upright, transparent, and without deceit. Integrity and honesty are vital to your Christian life. People should know that they can depend on you to be a person of truth and principle.

Righteousness

Christ’s righteousness protects you against all of Satan’s accusations and charges. This righteousness is not made up of the good deeds you do. The Bible is clear that none of us are righteous in ourselves (Romans 3:10). The breastplate of righteousness is entirely the righteousness of Jesus which He gives us freely when we accept Him as our Saviour (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Philippians 3:9). It is Christ’s righteousness—not our own righteousness—that covers and protects us.

Gospel

Soldiers marching into battle must have comfortable shoes. As soldiers of Christ, we must put on “gospel shoes” that will allow us to march wherever our Lord leads. The apostle John says, “*He who says he abides in Him [Jesus] ought himself also to walk just as He [Jesus] walked*” (1 John 2:6). Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, . . . and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). Satan will try to place obstacles in our path, but in Jesus’ strength we can walk forward, following our Lord, obeying Him, and advancing the gospel.

Faith

In listing the different pieces of the armour of God, Paul says, “Above all, . . . [take] the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (**Ephesians 6:16**). When Satan attacks with doubts, the shield of faith turns aside the blow. When temptations come, faith keeps us steadfast in following Jesus. We can withstand all the devil’s fiery darts because we know whom we have believed (2 Timothy 3:12).

This faith is not something that comes from within us. It is God’s gift to us. He gives each of us a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). Then as we walk with Him, that faith grows and develops until it becomes a shield, protecting us and allowing us to live a victorious life in Christ. This was Paul’s experience. He said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (**Galatians 2:20**). And at the end of that life of faith, he declared, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (**2 Timothy 4:7**). That can be your experience as well, as you use the shield of faith to turn aside everything Satan hurls at you.

Salvation

The helmet protects the head—perhaps the most vital part of the body since it is the seat of thought and the mind. When we have a sure knowledge of our salvation, we will not be moved by Satan’s deceptions. When we are certain that we are in Christ with our sins forgiven, we will have a peace that nothing can disturb.

Can we be certain of our salvation? Can we be sure? Yes. “If we confess our sins, He [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (**1 John 1:9**). “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life” (**1 John 5:11, 12**).

The Word and the Spirit

God’s Word—the Bible—is described as “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus used this as a weapon when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. To each of Satan’s efforts to lead Him into sin, Jesus replied, “it is written. . . “and proceeded to quote Scripture to destroy Satan’s temptations. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). That is why it is so powerful. That is why it is so important that we study the Bible and become familiar with its truths and its power. David wrote, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (**Psalms 119:105**). The sword of God’s Word both protects us and destroys our enemy—the devil and his temptations.

Praying always with all prayer

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (v18)

The idea is all kinds of prayer or prayer upon prayer. We should use every kind of prayer we can think of. Group prayer, individual prayer, silent prayer, shouting prayer, walking prayer, kneeling prayer, eloquent prayer, groaning prayer, constant prayer, fervent prayer – just pray. If you've found that intercessory prayer isn't easy, that it is labour, struggle, then you share this experience with the Apostle Paul. Verse 18 AMP tells us to “With all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times [on every occasion and in every season] in the Spirit...”

We can say that it is through prayer that spiritual strength and the armour of God go to work. In theory, the prayerless Christian can be strong and wearing all the armour; but never accomplishes anything because he fails to go into battle through prayer.

Apostle Paul ends this verse focusing on who we should be praying for – “*all the saints*”. We can battle spiritually not only on our own behalf, but also on the behalf of others. The soldier isn’t only concerned for his or her own safety. He feels an instinct to protect and to battle on behalf of others.

What's the difference between the “perseverance” and “supplication”? The first word uses the generic word for prayer to God. The second word, "requests" (NIV), or "supplications" (KJV, NRSV, ESS) is a bit more specific: "urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God -- seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty." Notice the repetition in verse 18a of the word "all," giving emphasis to the command to pray "on all occasions" with "all kinds" of prayer. A very strong command indeed!

Paul Requests Prayer for Himself

“... 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (vv19-20)

If prayer weren't really that important, Paul wouldn't urge it so strongly. But he longs for their prayers for him, knowing that through the prayers of the saints, God empowers him in his ministry. Specifically, he asks them to pray for him for "fearlessness" (NIV), "boldness" (ESV, KJV, NRSV) -- "a state of boldness and confidence, courage, confidence, boldness, frankness, especially in the presence of persons of high rank."

This same kind of courage is found in Peter and John (Acts 4:13), a boldness that causes their imprisonment. After their release, they pray:

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word." (Acts 4:28).

If Paul must ask for prayer that he might be faithful to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), how much more should we pray for one another to, not only survive and hold our own, but to be fearless in the face of opposition. We must help one another through prayer! Our natural tendency is to avoid pain and persecution, but when we are going through our most difficult struggles, people watch us most closely to see whether our faith is real, or if we are just "fair-weather Christians." God give us boldness rather than a wimpy faith!

I am an ambassador in chains: Of course, the ancient Greek word for chains meant a prisoner’s shackles. But it could also be used for the gold adornment worn around the neck and wrists of the wealthy and powerful. On special occasions, ambassadors wore such chains to show the riches, power, and dignity of the government they represented. Paul considers his prisoner’s chains to actually be the glorious adornment of an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion to the letter.

“But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.” (vv21-22)

Tychicus was an associate of Paul’s mentioned in other letters (Acts 20:4, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12). Tychicus seems to have been often used by Paul as a messenger. He brings not only the letter

to the Ephesians, but also a personal report of how the Apostle is doing to "encourage" the believers there. Notice that Tychicus is not an outstanding preacher or fiery evangelist. But he is "a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord" (Colossians 4:7). You may not be outstanding, but you can be faithful, and you can be one who loves and is loved.

Closing Benediction

"Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." (vv23-24)

Paul began the letter with "grace and peace" and so he closes it. One of the best-known verses in this great letter is probably the classic statement of what grace really is:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The wonder of God's work through Jesus Christ is his fully free gift of salvation -- undeserved and unlimited grace -- in exchange for heartfelt faith. Amazing!

However, the word used most in this benediction is love -- undying love: "Love with faith from God" (Ephesians 6:23) and "love [for] our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love" (Ephesians 6:24).

May your love be undying love for the One who died for you -- our Lord Jesus Christ.