

- Remember that Christ purchased and proclaimed the gospel of peace. E. 2:14-18
- You prepare yourself to announce the gospel that promotes peace. E. 3:6-10; 6:19

Cmp. Isa. 52:7-10; Rom. 10:15 beautiful feet/'Your God reigns' Isa. 40:9-11 Col.4:6

4. Putting on faith. 6:16 *take up the shield of faith*

Faith is essentially relying on God. It is appropriating the promises of God to your circumstances; laying hold of God's resources in the midst of attacks.

Faith is referred to in 3 important ways for your defense in Ephesians:

1. Saving faith. 1:13, 15; 2:8; 3:12 Actively trust God's word about you, Jesus and God.
2. Living faith. 3:17; 1:19 Obediently rely on God's promises in daily life.
3. Revealed faith. 4:5, 13 The body of revealed truth that is the basis of our faith.

5. Putting on Salvation. 6:17 *and take the helmet of salvation*

Salvation is the helmet the church must put on. Eph. 2:5-6, 8 indicates that the saved person has been rescued, raised, transferred, seated – all by grace. The helmet protects our confidence, that sense of hopeful anticipation that we are secure all the way through to the day of redemption. 4:30

This morning we complete our study of becoming strong in the Lord by looking at the final piece of armor and the admonition to pray.

The Word and prayer . . . two essential components to enjoying and growing your relationship with God. At your best, you connect to God with joy through his word and prayer. At your worst, you don't pray and seldom spend time in the Bible. Anyone who has ever walked with God in a way that has reflected God's grace calling on their life knows the importance of the word and prayer.

6. Putting on God's Word. 6:17 *'and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'*

God's words are compared to a sword, a sharp and effective weapon in the close confines of doing battle with the enemy of your soul. Scriptures teach us that the words of God found in the Bible are powerful to light our pathway in darkness, to expose the deepest thoughts of our hearts and to train us in changing the hardest sinful habits. Here, we are taught that the Bible is a necessary weapon to defeat and stop the solicitations from the evil one to follow after our own way.

Note first that your Bible is called the sword *of the Spirit*. This is important to understand and rely on in our use of the scriptures. Whether you are reading, memorizing, studying, listening to or meditating on God's words, it is crucial to remember the comprehensive involvement of the Holy Spirit in any ministry or use of the Bible. The Spirit of God takes the word of God and magnifies the Son of God in our lives. Here's how . . .

- The Holy Spirit is the source of God's words to you. E.3:5; 2Tim.3:16; 2Peter1:21
- The Holy Spirit is the supplier of God's words to you. Reminds/Convinces

Jn14:25-26

- The Holy Spirit empowers God's words for you. Sayings, message, statement

Heb.4:12 E:5:26

Note the example of Jesus in using the word as a weapon to stand against temptation:

Matt. 4:1-10 (809) After Jesus public baptism and identification as God's Son, the Holy Spirit leads him to a place of testing where Satan directly attacks his relationship with the Father.

You must learn to use the Word of God in the same manner as Jesus when these key tests come your way:

- The test of satisfaction without submission. 4:3-4

'if you are the Son of God . . . ' Not a direct challenge to doubt your relationship with the Father but rather redefine it the way that fits your life and circumstances.

Surely you have the right to be satisfied and your needs cared for. Mt 27:40

God's words – Deut. 8:2-3 Purposes of God higher than personal satisfaction.

- The test of safety without trust. 4:5-7

'if you are the Son of God . . . ' Not a direct challenge that God does not care for you but rather a challenge that you demand and define the care he provides on your terms.

Psalm 91:11-12 quoted by the devil.

God's words – Deut. 6:16; Ex 17:1-7 Is the Lord among us or not?

- The test of glory without suffering. 4:8-10

'all these I will give you . . . ' Not a direct challenge to your future joy but rather a challenge that you can experience joy without painful obedience. The lie that states that there are shortcuts available to glory.

God's words – Deut. 6:13; Ex 23:20-33

Psalm 119:105-112

7. Putting on prayer. 6:18-20

While prayer is not listed as a separate piece of armor it certainly is a huge part of your deliberate preparation to glorify God in the midst of the enemy's assaults. Satan and his armies are doing all they can do to stop you from praying, keep you from praying and keep you comfortable while you don't pray. Praying in the Spirit means to pray submitting your desires to the will of your Father.

Jesus commands us to pray. Jesus teaches us to pray. Jesus prayed. Without obedient, believing prayer, God has ordained that nothing of eternal value is gained. The most impotent and irrelevant life you could possibly live is one where you are convinced that prayer is unimportant. Your reasons for not praying certainly cannot be so compelling that you would continue to risk the wellbeing of your eternal soul in the daily war against evil powers.

In this passage we are commanded to pray as a complete strategy to oppose the evil one.

The word 'all' is repeated four times in this call to believing prayer. Conversing with God and turning your heart towards him as he reveals himself in his words is to be done in the comprehensive manner described in these verses.

- Pray at all times. opportunity 1:10; 5:16
- Pray all kinds of prayers. All prayer and supplication – 4 terms for prayer
- Pray with all perseverance. Alert, watch Lk.21:36; Mk 14:38; 13:32-37
- Pray for all the saints. All kinds of people E 1:16; 3:14; 1Tim 2:1

Vs. 19-20 illustrate with Paul's life the importance of praying for the spread of the gospel as each of us speak it boldly into our worlds/spheres of influence. He does not ask for prayer to be released from prison but that his circumstances will be used for the furtherance of the gospel.

Stay awake! Keep alert! Pray!

The devil deceives you into nonpraying or routine praying by getting you to think the wrong things as we saw in the temptation of Jesus.

Summary/Conclusion

The word and prayer

How have the forces of evil deceived you into a habitual approach to life that minimizes or completely excludes a growing, vibrant experience of the word and prayer? You must repent and act obediently now. You must not go another day into the battle that will lead your soul to hell without the protection and weapons supplied by God.

Consider the issues of submission, values, time and pride as they relate to your attitude about the word and prayer. Humble yourself today and cry out to God and his church for help.

Study Questions

1. Read together Ephesians 6:10-20. What observations, unusual or repeated terms or questions does the reading bring to your attention?
2. Have group members share their experiences in growing personal awareness of resisting the opposition of evil in their lives, marriages, families. What are the practical efforts being used to strengthen yourself in the Lord?
3. Review the 4 statements from the introduction that describe spiritual warfare. What parts would you like to state differently or strengthen/clarify the wording? Why?
4. Review the notes regarding the example of Jesus using the scriptures to battle Satan. What do you relate to the most from Jesus' experience and responses? What's your take away from this?

5. Share with the group your current practices regarding connecting with Gods words each week. What did you actually do in the past seven days to expose yourself to God's word? If appropriate, offer to help struggling group members grow in their practice of quality and quantity time in God's word. Psalm 1
6. Same questions as #5 except change by inserting 'prayer' for 'God's word.' Share your biggest challenge regarding you praying effectively?
7. Review the watch and pray passages in Luke 21:36 and Mark 13:32-37; 14:38. What can you do for each other in your group to help encourage alertness and perseverance in prayer?
8. What are you going to do, use or remember from this study?