

LESSON NINE

**THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD (2)
&
THE APPLICATION BY PRAYER**

Scripture Reading:

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,

Eph. 6:12 For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.

Eph. 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Eph. 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness

Eph. 6:15 And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace;

Eph. 6:16 Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Eph. 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Eph. 6:20 For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Questions:

Section 1

1. What is the difference between 'put on' and 'take up'?
2. What should we have faith in?
3. What are the 'flaming darts'? How do we use the shield to defend these darts?

Section 2

1. What is the relationship between the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith?
2. What is the common misunderstanding of verse 17?
3. How do we use the sword to kill the enemy?

Section 3

1. What is the way to apply the six items of the whole armour of God? What does it look like to attempt to use the armour of God without praying?
2. What is the main faculty that we should use to pray and petition? What condition must the parts of our soul be in for us to pray effectively?

Section 4

1. How does being watchful unto our prayer life relate to time? Discuss ways you can be watchful with your time to help your prayer life.
2. In Eph. 6:19 for what did Paul request the believers to pray regarding? Thus, today, what should we be praying for and what should we be preaching?
3. If there is time, please pray with your group based on Eph. 6:19-20.

[Section 1]

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD (2)

In the foregoing message we considered the first three items of the armor of God: the girdle, the breastplate, and the shoes. The girdle is related to truth, the breastplate is related to righteousness, and the shoes are related to peace. We have seen that truth is God expressed in our living as our standard, pattern, and principle. Righteousness is Christ in our enjoyment and experience as the covering of our conscience. If we have truth in our living, we shall certainly have righteousness as our covering. The Bible reveals that righteousness issues in peace. This is peace both with God and with man. It is the very peace Christ accomplished on the cross for us. Therefore, to have the girdle, the breastplate, and the shoes is to have truth, righteousness, and peace. When we live out God in our daily living, we are covered with Christ as our righteousness, and we have peace as our firm foundation. Then we are prepared to fight against the enemy.

I. THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Verse 16 says, "With all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one." We need truth to gird our loins, righteousness to cover our conscience, peace as the standing for our feet, and faith to shield our entire being. If we live by God as truth, we have righteousness (4:24), and righteousness issues in peace (Heb. 12:11; Isa. 32:17). With all these, we can easily have faith as a shield against the flaming darts of the evil one. Christ is the Author and Perfecter of such faith (Heb. 12:2). For us to stand firmly in the battle we need to be equipped with these four items of God's armor.

The shield of faith is not something that we put on, but something that we take up in order to protect ourselves against the attacks of the enemy. Faith comes after truth, righteousness, and peace. If we have truth in our living, righteousness as our covering, and peace as our standing, we shall spontaneously have faith. This faith is a safeguard against the fiery darts, the attacks, of the enemy.

We need now to consider the shield of faith in detail. We certainly are not to have faith in our own ability, strength, merit, or virtue. Our faith must be in God (Mark 11:22). God is real, living, present, and available. We need to have faith in Him.

We also should have faith in God's heart. Every Christian must know both God and the heart of

God. God's heart toward us is always good. No matter what may happen to us or what kind of sufferings we may undergo, we must always believe in the goodness of God's heart. God has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us to suffer loss.

Along with faith in God's heart, we should have faith in God's faithfulness. We may change, but God does not change. As James 1:17 says, there is no shadow of turning with Him. Furthermore, He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), but is always faithful to His word.

God is not only faithful, but also able. Therefore, we need to have faith in God's ability. In 3:20 Paul declares that God "is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think."

Still another aspect of our faith is faith in God's word. God is bound to fulfill all that He has spoken. The more He speaks, the more responsible He becomes to fulfill His own word. We can tell Him, "God, You have spoken, and Your written Word is in our hand. Lord, You are bound to fulfill Your word." Hallelujah for God's faithful word!

We also need to have faith in God's will. Because God is a God of purpose, He has a will. His will with respect to us is always positive. Hence, no matter what befalls us, we should care not for our happiness or our environment, but for God's will. Our environment may change, but God's will never changes.

Furthermore, we must have faith in God's sovereignty. Because God is sovereign, God could never make a mistake. Under His sovereignty, even our mistakes work for good. If God did not sovereignly allow us to make mistakes, we could not possibly make them. (However, this does not mean that we should deliberately make mistakes.) When we are wrong, we need to repent. But there is no need for us to regret, for that means we are lacking in faith. After we repent for a mistake or shortcoming, we must still exercise faith in God's sovereignty. We could not have made that mistake if He had not sovereignly allowed us to do so. Hence, there is no need for regret.

We all need to have a full faith in God, in God's heart, in God's faithfulness, in God's ability, in God's word, in God's will, and in God's sovereignty. If we have such a faith, Satan's flaming darts will not be able to damage us.

The flaming darts are Satan's temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, lies, and attacks. Flaming darts were used by warriors in the

apostle's time, and the apostle used this as an illustration of Satan's attacks on us. Every temptation is a deceit, a false promise. The flaming darts include the Devil's proposals that come to us. As we are waking up in the morning, often Satan will make proposals to us. For this reason, we need to get into the Word the first thing in the morning. If we are not in the Word, we shall have no covering against the Devil's proposals. Doubts and questions are also flaming darts of Satan. Have you ever noticed that a question mark looks very much like a serpent? It was Satan who asked Eve, "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). When the Devil questions us in this way, our response should be to flee, without even talking to him. Many times Satan attacks us with lies. But the shield of faith also guards us against these flaming darts.

The Devil's flaming darts come as thoughts injected into our mind. These thoughts may seem to be our own thoughts, but they are actually Satan's. I used to believe that such thoughts were my own. Later I began to realize that they came from Satan. I discovered this after such thoughts persisted in coming after I had decided not to entertain them. I saw that these thoughts were not mine, but Satan's. Prior to that time, my practice was to confess all these thoughts to the Lord. Now I refuse to confess them. However, some may think that even though these thoughts come from Satan, they are injected into us because we are evil. Do not believe this. Rather, you should say, "Lord, I am fallen, but I am under Your cleansing. Satan, this thought is yours, and you must bear the responsibility for it. I will not share this responsibility." Nevertheless, due to an overly sensitive conscience some continually confess things that are caused by Satan. Never confess thoughts injected into you by Satan in his subtlety.

In order to have the faith to be defended against Satan's flaming darts, we need a proper spirit with a conscience void of offense. However, faith is not mainly in our spirit nor in our conscience, but in our will, the strongest part of our heart. The New Testament says that we believe with our heart (Rom. 10:10). According to our experience, this faith in our heart is related mainly to the exercise of our will. No one with a will like a jellyfish can have strong faith. In James 1:6 we are told that he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind. Such a person has a vacillating will. Hence, if we would have faith, we need to exercise our will.

[Section 2]

II. THE HELMET OF SALVATION

In the first part of verse 17 Paul goes on to say, "And receive the helmet of salvation." This is for covering our mind, our mentality, against the negative thoughts directed at us by the evil one. Such a helmet, such a covering, is God's salvation. Satan injects into our mind threats, worries, anxieties, and other weakening thoughts. God's salvation is the covering we take up against all these. Such a salvation is the saving Christ we experience in our daily life (John 16:33).

Satan's darts come to us through our mind. Therefore, just as our conscience needs the breastplate of righteousness and our will needs the shield of faith, so our mind needs the helmet of salvation. We need truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and then salvation. Righteousness issues in peace, and peace gives us the ground to have faith. Then faith brings in salvation. Do not separate the helmet of salvation from the shield of faith. The shield protects the front of our being, but the helmet protects our head. The shield and the helmet work together.

III. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

In verse 17 Paul also speaks of "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." Among the six items of God's armor, this is the only one for attacking the enemy. With the sword we cut the enemy to pieces. However, we do not take up the sword first. Rather, we must firstly put on the girdle, the breastplate, and the shoes, and then take up the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. Then, when we are entirely protected and have salvation as our portion, we may receive the sword of the Spirit.

In verse 17 the antecedent of the word "which" is Spirit, not sword. This indicates that the Spirit is the word of God, both of which are Christ (2 Cor. 3:17; Rev. 19:13). If I were writing this verse, I would say, "the sword of the word of God." But Paul speaks of "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." Is the sword here the sword of the Spirit or the sword of the word? Most readers consider that Paul was saying that the sword is the word and that the Spirit wields the sword. I understood the verse this way for years. I thought that it was the Spirit, not I, who used the sword. In other words, according to this understanding, the sword is the word, and the One who uses the sword to slay the enemy is the Spirit. From my youth I was taught that the Spirit helps us to use the word of God as the sword. But this is not the meaning here. The correct meaning is that the Spirit is the sword itself, not the one who uses the sword. The Word of God is also a sword. The

sword is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Word. Here we have three that are one: the sword, the Spirit, and the Word.

My main burden in this message is on this matter. The Word is the Bible. But if this Word is only printed letters, it is neither the Spirit nor the sword. The Greek for word in verse 17 is *rhema*, the instant word spoken at the moment by the Spirit in any situation. When the *logos*, the constant word in the Bible, becomes the instant *rhema*, this *rhema* will be the Spirit. This *rhema*, which becomes the Spirit, is the sword that cuts the enemy to pieces. For example, we may read a particular verse again and again, only to have it remain the *logos*, a word in letters. Such a word cannot kill anything. But one day this verse becomes the *rhema* to us, the present, instant, living speaking. At that time this *rhema* becomes the Spirit. For this reason, in John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." Here the Greek text also uses *rhema*. The instant, present word is the Spirit. This kind of word is the sword. Therefore, the sword, the Spirit, and the word are three that are one. Furthermore, we, not the Spirit, are the ones to use this sword to kill the enemy.

In our Christian experience, the Word and the Spirit must always be one. It is an utter falsehood to say that we take the Spirit without taking the Word. Without taking the Word, we cannot have the Spirit. In my experience, I receive the Spirit mostly through the Word. As I contact the Word in a living way, it becomes the Spirit to me. However, some take the Bible without the Spirit. This also is wrong. Those who wish to grow flowers need both the seeds and the life contained in the seeds. It is impossible to separate the life within the seeds from the seeds themselves. In order to have the life, we must take the seeds. The relationship between the Word and the Spirit is like that between the seeds and the life. We must have both. The Lord Jesus is both the Spirit and the Word. He is not the Spirit without being the Word, nor the Word without being the Spirit.

Because He is both the Word and the Spirit, He created us with a mind to understand and a spirit to receive. When we come to the Bible, we should exercise both our mind and our spirit. We exercise our mind by reading and our spirit by praying. Since we need both to read and to pray, we should pray-read the Word. I can testify that through pray-reading my spirit becomes strong and ready to devour the enemy. I not only exercise my spirit, but I also exercise my mind to consider the Word. For example, I may ask why grace and truth are mentioned in chapter four, whereas love and light are mentioned in chapter

five. I also pray concerning this. The more my spirit is strengthened by pray-reading the Word, the more eager I am to use the sword of the Spirit to slay the enemy. In my speaking I have a sword with which to cut the enemy to pieces.

With the whole armor of God we have truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. Finally, we have the *rhema*, the Spirit, the sword. This is our offensive weapon to use in attacking the enemy. When we have the whole armor of God, including the sword, we are not only protected but also prepared to wrestle against the enemy. By having truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation we are equipped, qualified, strengthened, and empowered to use the sword in spiritual warfare. Then the enemy is subject to the cutting of our sword, and he is slaughtered by us.

As we engage in spiritual warfare against the enemy, we do not use gimmicks, skills, or politics. Our only weapon is the Spirit-Word, which is the sword. We do not employ cunning craftiness—we wield the sword of the Spirit. Our loins are girded with truth, and our conscience is covered by Christ as our righteousness. Then we have peace as our firm foundation. We can boast to the whole universe that we have no problems with God or man, for we are standing on the peace accomplished by Christ on the cross. Furthermore, we are protected by the shield of faith and guarded by the helmet of salvation. Therefore, when we pray-read the Word, every word becomes the *rhema*, the sword that cuts the enemy. In this way the victory is ours. We not only subdue the enemy and defeat him but slay him and even cut him into pieces. This is what it means to fight the spiritual warfare with the whole armor of God. The church must be such an equipped, fighting, and victorious church to slay God's enemy.

[Section 3]

THE APPLICATION BY PRAYER

I. PRAYER AS THE APPLICATION OF THE ITEMS OF GOD'S ARMOR

We have seen that the armor of God is composed of six items: the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the firm foundation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. When we are equipped with such a full armor, we can stand against the attack of the enemy and even take the offensive against him. After these items of the armor of God, Paul turns to prayer.

Verse 18 says, "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit, and

watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.” The phrase “by means of all prayer and petition” modifies the word receive in verse 17. By prayer we receive both the helmet of salvation and the word of God. This indicates that we need to receive the word of God by means of all prayer and petition. We need to pray as we are receiving the word of God. We have seen that the whole armor of God is composed of six items. Prayer may be considered the seventh. It is the means by which we apply the other items.

The modifier “by means of all prayer and petition” in verse 18 is related to all six items of the armor covered in verses 14 through 17. It is by means of all prayer and petition that we gird our loins with truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, and have our feet shod with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace. Furthermore, it is by prayer that we take up the shield of faith and receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Whenever we are about to put on the armor or to take up any item of the armor, we need to pray. We cannot and we should not attempt to use any part of God’s armor without prayer. Prayer is the unique way to apply the armor of God. It is prayer that makes the armor available to us in a practical way. For example, we may have the helmet of salvation, but it is prayer that makes this helmet available and prevailing. Therefore, prayer is crucial and vital.

II. PRAYING

In verse 18 Paul speaks not just of one kind of prayer, but of all prayer and petition. Prayer is general, whereas petition is particular. We should pray both in an ordinary way and, when necessary, in an extraordinary way, perhaps giving up sleep or food in order to petition the Lord concerning a certain situation.

A. At Every Time

In verse 18 Paul speaks of “praying at every time.” Some think the phrase “at every time” means simply every time we pray. To others it means all the time. To pray all the time corresponds to Paul’s word in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to pray without ceasing.

B. In Spirit

In verse 18 Paul says specifically that we are to pray in spirit. This refers to our regenerated spirit indwelt by the Spirit of God. It may be considered the mingled spirit—our spirit mingled with God’s Spirit. Whenever we are in our spirit, we are also in the Holy Spirit, for our spirit is one with the

Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Therefore, Paul’s charge to pray in spirit implies that we must also pray in the Spirit of God, for these two spirits are mingled in us.

In prayer, the main faculty we should use is our spirit. If our mind is overactive or if our emotion is not under control, we shall find it difficult to pray. When we pray, our mind should be at rest, and our emotion should be regulated, neither too hot nor too cold. According to my experience, I easily become distracted in prayer when my mind is preoccupied with other things. Likewise, when my emotion is not properly regulated, I find it difficult to utter something from my spirit in prayer. Hence, in order to pray in spirit, we need to be adjusted in our mind and balanced in our emotion. This requires a great deal of inward exercise.

Furthermore, if we would pray at every time in spirit, our will must be strong. A person with a will like a jellyfish cannot pray. It may seem that prayer is easy, but actually it is difficult. It is very easy to talk or read, but it is not easy to pray. This is the reason that prayer requires the exercise of our will.

A Christian must be a praying person. It is a sin not to pray. If you fail to pray for others, the saints or those in your family, you are sinning. However, not many Christians regard the lack of prayer as sin. We need to exercise our will to be people of prayer. For the sake of a proper prayer life, our mind must be sober, our emotion must be regulated, and our will must be strengthened. Then we shall be able to pray at every time in spirit.

[Section 4]

III. WATCHING

A. For This Prayer

In verse 18 Paul goes on to speak of “watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.” This indicates that we need to be watchful, on the alert, for this prayer life. We need to be on guard lest we be robbed of time that should be devoted to prayer. To be watchful in a practical way, many in the churches set aside specific times to pray.

To watch unto prayer implies that we exercise our will, calm our mind, and regulate our emotion in order to pray properly. It takes a considerable amount of exercise to make our mind, emotion, and will submissive and obedient. Because many do not practice this, their mind is rebellious. When they tell the mind to calm down, it becomes

all the more active. Others have trouble with the emotion. We need to be those who exercise ourselves to such a degree that as soon as we have finished a long conversation we are able to pray. The need for such an exercise is implied in Paul's word about watching unto prayer.

If we do not watch unto our prayer life, we shall lose time. Here and there throughout the day, our time will be wasted. We may lose time because our time is neither scheduled nor controlled. When we are at work, our time may be closely regulated. But when it comes to prayer, many do not schedule their time. As a result, much time which could be devoted to prayer is lost. If we do not redeem our time and grasp every available opportunity, much time will be needlessly lost. Although you may be very busy, do not use this as an excuse for not praying. If you place a high value on your prayer life, you will watch unto it and arrange time for it. No matter how busy you may be, you will still have time to pray.

According to the examples in the Bible, it is better to have more than one time set aside for prayer daily. For example, Daniel prayed three times a day (Dan. 6:10). Also the psalmist spoke of praying in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (Psa. 55:17). If we build up the habit of praying at regular times every day, great blessing will be brought in. This blessing will affect not only our personal lives, but also the church, our neighborhood, and even our nation.

B. In All Perseverance

Paul charges us to watch unto prayer in all perseverance. To keep a prayer life we need all perseverance, a constant, persistent care. If you have set aside a certain time in the morning for prayer, then you need to persistently watch regarding this time. Do not allow any distractions. You may want to take the telephone off the hook for that period of time. If we are not persistent in watching unto prayer, the enemy will send in many distractions.

C. In All Petition

1. Concerning the Saints

In verse 18 Paul also speaks of "petition concerning all the saints." This indicates that we need to pray for the saints. In order to watch unto our prayer life, we need to pray in a particular way. This means that we should pray particularly for our watching unto prayer, that is, pray for our prayer life, for our prayer time. We also need to make petition concerning all the saints. Consider how much time is required to pray for the saints

in your locality and for the saints in other cities and countries.

2. Concerning the Apostle

a. That Utterance May Be Given to Him

In verse 19 Paul continues, "And on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel." The Greek word rendered utterance also means word, speech, expression. Paul was asking the believers to pray that the word would be given to him. He desired to open his mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel. Paul needed both the word and the boldness to declare it.

The mystery of the gospel is Christ and the church for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. Some Christians preach a gospel in which there is no mystery. But Paul declared the mystery of the gospel. This mystery implies the entire New Testament economy. Christ is the mystery of God, and the church is the mystery of Christ. Both Christ and the church are for God's economy, which also is a mystery. All these mysteries are related to the gospel.

I believe that the Lord intends for a gospel preaching atmosphere to be developed in all the local churches. Pray for such an atmosphere to become prevailing. In our gospel meetings we must do more than sing and tell others that Christ can meet their need for satisfaction. On the contrary, we need to give full messages on the high things concerning God's economy. Let us tell the unbelievers of God's eternal intention. Do not underestimate their ability to understand. They may understand much more than you expect. Surely this kind of gospel preaching will draw unbelievers to the Lord.

In our gospel meetings we need to both preach and teach. We should teach in a preaching atmosphere. Surely the saints will want to bring their relatives and friends to this kind of meeting. Our burden is to make known the mystery of the gospel. Pray about this. Pray that the Lord will give us utterance and open our mouths with boldness to teach and to preach the mystery of the gospel. We all need to declare the gospel in this uplifted way.

b. That He May Speak Boldly

In verse 20 Paul goes on to say, "On the behalf of which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Paul was an ambassador on behalf of the gospel. An ambassador is one sent by a particular authority

to contact certain people. Paul considered himself an ambassador sent by God; he was one sent by the highest authority in the universe. However, he was an ambassador in a chain. The Greek word for chain is a term for the coupling chain, a chain which bound the prisoner to his guard. Paul's desire was that in this coupling chain he might speak boldly. Although Paul was chained to the one who guarded him, he nevertheless desired to speak boldly, as he ought to speak.

References:

Life-Study of Ephesians msg. 65 & 66