

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-7-14 PM NOTES
"THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE"
EPHESIANS 6:17b-24
#29 (Final) in Series, "The Christian's Wealth, Walk, and Warfare"

Review:

I. The Armor (vv. 14-17)

- A. The Belt of Truth (v. 14a)
- B. The Breastplate of Righteousness (v. 14b)
- C. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (v. 15)
- D. The Shield of Faith (v. 16)
- E. The Helmet of Salvation (v. 17a)

F. The Sword of the Spirit (v. 17b)

1. The Symbolism of the Sword

Logos—The complete Word of God

Rhema—A specific utterance or passage from the Word of God (*logos*)

Nehemiah 8:10b (NKJV) "... the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV) "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose."

2. The Source of the Sword

3. The Sufficiency of the Sword

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

4. The Strategy for Using the Sword

James 1:21b (KJV) "...receive with meekness the **engrafted** word..."

James 1:19-20 (NKJV) "¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

2 Corinthians 10:5b (NKJV) "...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

II. The Prayer (v. 18-24)

"We cannot all argue, but we can all pray; we cannot all be leaders, but we can all be 'pleaders'; we cannot all be mighty in rhetoric, but we can all be prevalent in prayer. I would sooner see you eloquent with God than with men." —Charles Spurgeon

A. The Time of Prayer (v. 18a)

Luke 21:36a (NKJV) "Watch therefore, and pray always..."

Acts 6:4 (NKJV) "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Romans 12:12b (ESV) "... be constant in prayer."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV) "pray without ceasing."

Psalms 55:17 (NIV) "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice."

B. The Types of Prayer (v. 18b)

"The use of both words points to the idea that we are to be involved in all kinds of prayer, every form of prayer that is appropriate...We may pray publically or privately; in loud cries, in soft whispers, or silently; deliberately and planned or spontaneously; while sitting, standing, kneeling or even lying down; at home or in church; while working or while traveling; with hands folded or raised; with eyes open or closed; with head bowed or erect." —John MacArthur

Romans 8:26 (HCSB) "In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings."

"Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father and putting that desire in our hearts to return it in the form of a request to Him." —Adrian Rogers

C. The Tenacity of Prayer (v. 18c)

Luke 18:1 (NKJV) "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart."

D. The Target of Prayer (vv. 18d-20)

1. The Saints (Saved Ones) (v. 18d)

Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV) "³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

1 Samuel 12:23 (NKJV) "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."

2. God's Servants (vv. 19-20)

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV) "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

III. The Encouragement (vv. 21-24)

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-7-14 PM

“THE CHRISTIAN’S WARFARE”

EPHESIANS 6:17b-24

#29 (Final) in Series, “The Christian’s Wealth, Walk, and Warfare”

When we lived in Columbus, Ohio, our oldest two children were enrolled in a small Christian school. They came home singing a song they learned at school that went like this: “Read your Bible and pray every day, and grow, grow, grow. Don’t read your Bible forget to pray and shrink, shrink, shrink.” Your response to that children’s song may be that it is quite oversimplified because there is more to maturing as a believer in Christ than reading your Bible and praying. Well maybe so, but I know this – you will not grow apart from a regular, daily intake of God’s Word and you will not grow apart from a maturing prayer life where the word is prayed in for your own life and prayed outward in intercession for others. Maybe the children had it right after all. In this final message in our study of Ephesians we are looking at the last piece of armor – the sword of the Spirit, and then we will be looking at how prayer is the means God has chosen to put on the armor and carry out the fight.

Let’s take a moment to review where we have been over the last few weeks in relation to spiritual warfare. After some introductory remarks about who our true enemy really is (Satan and his demons and not flesh and blood people), we began to look piece by piece at the armor God has given us.

I. The Armor (V14-17)

A. The Belt of Truth (V14a)

B. The Breastplate of Righteousness (V14b)

C. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (V15)

D. The Shield of Faith (V16)

E. The Helmet of Salvation (V17a)

In this message, we look at the last piece of armor.

F. The Sword of the Spirit (V17b)

The Sword of the Spirit is the only piece of armor that is used both defensively and offensively; all of the other pieces of the armor emphasize only the defensive action of standing firm against the methods of the Devil and refusing to give an inch of the ground won for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. The sword was used to deflect the blows of the enemy as well as inflict damage on the enemy and his nefarious work.

1. The Symbolism of the Sword

The Scripture tells us clearly that the Roman Soldier’s sword symbolizes, illustrates, the Word of God. Let’s look closely at the soldier’s “sword”. The Roman soldiers had two kinds of swords. First there was a long sword of about 40 inches (a broad sword). There is another Greek word used for that kind of sword. The word used in our text refers to a much shorter knife or dagger of about 6-18 inches. This was the weapon used for close in hand to hand combat. This sword was very precise in its use.

Just as there are two words for sword, there are two Greek words that are translated “Word” in the New Testament. First, there is the Greek word *logos* that refers to the complete Word of God. The *logos* is comprised of 66 books that form a great unity and all together gives us the perfect and complete and sufficient Word of God. The word used in verse 17 that is translated “word” is not *logos*; it is *rhema*. *Rhema* refers to a specific utterance from God’s Word. It is a specific command or portion of the *logos*. When the Devil and his demons attack, we don’t just hold up the Bible to win the victory. We pull from Scripture a specific portion of Scripture that applies to the attack against us. The perfect example is Jesus when He was tempted in the wilderness by the Devil. With each temptation, Jesus used the *rhema* against him. Jesus didn’t say something general like, “this whole book deals with what your (the devil’s) outcome is. You are a defeated foe.” Jesus simply quoted specific passages from the *logos*, the whole Old Testament. When He was tempted to turn stones into bread after fasting for a lengthy time, He answered with Deuteronomy 8:3. When he was tempted jump from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus answered with Deuteronomy 6:16. When He was tempted to fall down and worship Satan, He answered with

Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. When Jesus was attacked by the Devil, He used nothing in His defense that you and I do not have. He battled and won with the Word of God. When you are being attacked by the enemy and sense that you are being pulled into discouragement, you take the sword of the Spirit, the *rhema* of God and confess **Nehemiah 8:10b (NKJV)** "...the joy of the Lord is your strength." **Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)** "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" You might remind yourself of **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)** "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." You confess, "Lord, You are using this disappointing circumstance, even this painful trial I am going through for my good – to conform me to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29)."

2. The Source of the Sword

It is the sword **of the Spirit**. This is saying that it is the sword given by the Spirit. The Scriptures – every *rhema* of Scripture was inspired by the Spirit. This book is not a collection of wise sayings and observations by wise men. It is a book that in every part was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Because of the Bible's divine origin, nothing or no one can overpower it or destroy it or render it ineffective in serving the purpose it was inspired for.

3. The Sufficiency of the Sword

The Word of God is the only offensive weapon we need to come against the enemy. We don't need formulas, incantations, exorcists, or "deliverance experts". We have the Word of God! It is described in **Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)** "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God is sufficient to take men and women from darkness to light, from death to life, and from residents of the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. It is sufficient to turn sorrow into joy, fear into courage, and despair into hope. Don't ever try to add anything to the Word. There is no spiritual attack that the sword of the Spirit cannot defeat.

4. The Strategy for Using the Sword

Saying nice things about the Word of God doesn't help us in spiritual warfare. The Word of God has to become a part of our thinking processes. In James 1:21 the terminology is used of engrafting the Word of God. **James 1:21b (KJV)** "...receive with meekness the engrafted word..." I know that I harp on this all the time, but do you have a plan of engrafting the Word into your heart? Are you reading it, studying it, listening to it when it is being taught, memorizing it, meditating on it – all done in such a way that the Word of God becomes ingrained into your thinking and so that it determines the way you view the world and every circumstance and need? Here is what will happen. As you are engrafting the Word into your mind, the Spirit will bring up specific passages to you when you are tempted, when you are facing a dilemma, and when you are mistreated. For instance, something inconsiderate is done or someone didn't follow through with what was promised and you feel the anger rising, and just at that time the Spirit brings to your mind **James 1:19-20 (NKJV)** "¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." You will find your thought life going to an area that it should not go and to your mind comes **2 Corinthians 10:5b (NKJV)** "...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ". This ought to be a normal occurrence happening multiple times every day. If you are internalizing the sword of the Spirit, those thoughts begin to settle down and make themselves at home in your life until they start controlling your mind and take you captive.

There is the armor. How do you put it on?

II. The Prayer (V18-24)

"Ephesians begins by lifting us up into the heavenlies and ends by pulling us down to our knees." [John MacArthur]. When we pray, we are not getting ready for warfare; prayer is the main place where spiritual warfare is carried out. Primarily, the warfare is prayer! There is an animal called a gnu that when attacked, it falls to its knees and fights from its knees. Oh that we would be known as a people who fight from their knees. Charles Spurgeon told his congregation in London, "We cannot all argue, but we can all

pray; we cannot all be leaders, but we can all be ‘pleaders’; we cannot all be mighty in rhetoric, but we can all be prevalent in prayer. I would sooner see you eloquent with God than with men.”

Let me point out the flow of this passage. First, we make a commitment to stand on the ground that Jesus has secured for us on the cross – to stand against the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (verse 10-12). What’s next? We “take up the whole armor of God” (v13). Alright, we are committed to the fight to stand against the wicked one and his army and we’ve put on the armor; now what? **Ephesians 6:18 (NKJV)** “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”. Now we pray! Prayer isn’t the only place the warfare takes place, but it is the primary place. The battle takes place in an attitude and atmosphere of prayer. We cannot add to what Jesus has given us, but it is in prayer that we activate and advance in what Jesus has given.

There is a wealth of glorious truth in these closing verses of Ephesians.

A. The Time of Prayer (V18a)

Multiple times in Scripture we are admonished to pray always. **Luke 21:36a (NKJV)** “Watch therefore, and pray always...” **Acts 6:4 (NKJV)** “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” **Romans 12:12b (ESV)** “...be constant in prayer.” **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)** “pray without ceasing”. What does that mean? It means that we are to live in constant communion with God. It doesn’t mean that we are constantly verbally praying. It means that when we are tempted, we pray. When we see a need, we pray for the person with the need. When we are called on to speak to something or to make a decision, we pray for wisdom. When we see someone hurting, we pray for them. When we are around a lost or backslidden friend, we pray for them and pray about speaking truth to them. I think you get the idea. Someone said that we should live in such constant communion with God that if we were suddenly killed or died of “natural causes” we would just finish our conversation in heaven. **Psalms 55:17 (NIV)** “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.” Since the battle rages all through the day, we must stay in an atmosphere of prayer throughout the day. This continual prayer is really what is meant by constant fellowship with God. Sometimes when I am alone, I carry on this fellowship out loud. I make sure no one is around so they don’t call the guys with the white coats to come and take me away. But the primary focus of this continual prayer is the battle that we are in.

B. The Types of Prayer (V18b)

There are two types of prayer referred to here. First there is “prayer”. This is the word for general requests. The second type is “supplication”. This word is translated “petition” in the NASB. These are the specific requests. John MacArthur gives a good summary of what is meant by, “with all prayer and supplication”. “The use of both words points to the idea that we are to be involved in all kinds of prayer, every form of prayer that is appropriate... We may pray publically or privately; in loud cries, in soft whispers, or silently; deliberately and planned or spontaneously; while sitting, standing, kneeling or even lying down; at home or in church; while working or while traveling; with hands folded or raised; with eyes open or closed; with head bowed or erect.” [*The MacArthur Commentary, Ephesians*, page 379].

The one ingredient that makes all prayer pleasing to God is that it is “in the Spirit”. Let me say right up front that this has nothing to do with speaking in an unknown tongue or having some ecstatic experience. To pray in the Spirit is to pray in agreement with and guided by the Spirit. Someone described it as praying “in concert with the Spirit”. We are told in **Romans 8:26 (HCSB)** “In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings.” To pray in the Spirit is to pray in union and unison with what the Holy Spirit desires for us to pray. Adrian Rogers gives a good summary description of what it means to pray in the Spirit. “Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father and putting that desire in our hearts to return it in the form of a request to Him.”

C. The Tenacity of Prayer (V18c)

The word “watchful” literally means to keep awake. The word “perseverance” means to keep on without giving up, to refuse to quit. Most of us are really horrible at persevering in prayer. Jesus told a parable in Luke 18:1-7 concerning a widow who kept coming to an unjust judge until she finally wore

him down and he gave her what she asked of him. He was not teaching that we continue asking until we wear God down; this was a parable of contrast. The point is that if an unjust judge would give her what she needed, how much more would our holy loving God in His time give us what we need from Him. The point of the parable is that we must be tenacious in prayer. **Luke 18:1 (NKJV)** “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart”. I shudder to think how many times I may have been so close and gave up.

Why does God delay in answering prayer that is “in the Spirit”? Why doesn’t He just go ahead and answer immediately? I don’t claim to know all of the mysteries of prayer, but I think that the main reason He delays is to build our faith. Faith is like a muscle. It grows when we work out. As we continue trusting God even when the answer we seek has not yet come, it builds our confidence in His as we choose to trust Him even when we see no visible evidence that He is at work.

D. The Target of the Prayer (V18d-20)

1. The Saints (V18d)

Saints are the saved ones. While it is good and needful to pray for lost sinners, it seems that most of the prayers in Scripture are for the saints. The reason is clear. It is only the saints that are involved in this spiritual warfare that we’ve been looking at for all these weeks. It is the saints that the Devil is targeting with His fiery arrows and errors. While it certainly is not inappropriate to pray for ourselves in the battle, our priority ought to be prayer for other believers. **Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV)** “³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Are you aware that it is actually a sin to not pray for other believers? **1 Samuel 12:23 (NKJV)** “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you...”

2. God’s Servants (V19-20)

Pray for those special servants of God that serve on the front lines in spiritual leadership. Allow me to be personal here. Pray for the Pastors and ministry directors of our church. Pray for the missionaries. Satan and his demon hoards attack every Christian who is serious about obeying the Lord, but our enemy knows that when someone in leadership falls, the consequences, the fallout is greater. Pray for our families – especially the leaders who have children still in their home.

Notice what the special burden of Paul’s heart was. His burden was not that he could get out of prison or get more tasty food while incarcerated for preaching the Gospel. His burden was for boldness to speak what he ought to speak and to focus on the Gospel. Even imprisoned, he saw himself as God’s ambassador to the lost. He expounded on that in **2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)** “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” Something I would like to know is how many of those soldiers that Paul was chained to was led to Christ? I feel confident that everyone of them heard it!

If the mighty Apostle Paul knew that he needed the prayers of the saints, how much more do we? Don’t hesitate to ask others to pray for you when you are under attack. From Paul’s example, the focus of our request should be that we would be faithful ambassadors who speak the Gospel boldly and not that our circumstances be more comfortable.

Again, we are to pray for the lost. There are multiple examples of that in the New Testament, but it is not the focus of this passage. The difference here is that he is focusing on spiritual warfare against the devil and his demons that Christians experience.

III. The Encouragement (V21-24)

Paul closes out the letter we call Ephesians by encouraging them that he is OK by sending a fellow worker named Tychicus to give them more details and to assure them that he is OK. There is no necessity to analyze Paul’s encouraging benediction to these Ephesians. His encouragement is built around God’s peace and grace.

CONCLUSION

The Apostle Paul has to be one of the most selfless men who ever lived. I have been enriched by his life. I long to be a man of prayer like he was. I long to be a totally selfless person as he was, I long to be driven to share the Gospel as he did, and I long to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity as he did.