

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:10-18

Session 75: The Armor of God, part 1

Before we read the passage in Ephesians 6 which we are about to study, I want to ask you a very important question. Let me set it up.

For saints who want to learn the Bible, and be edified by it, there is a critical part of the process of Bible study which is largely overlooked and underestimated. I think the main reason for that is because when we do it, oftentimes it does not yield great results.

And why is that? I am convinced that it is because we don't know how to do it properly. Can you guess what I am referring to? What do you think?

Let me give you a hint: normally, it is the very first thing we do before we actually begin to study a verse or verses. Here it is: Read the scriptures. Don't tune me out!!! Bible reading is a bigger part of Bible study than most people think.

Reading is the foundation for understanding, and understanding always precedes application. Bible reading is exactly what Paul taught Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, **give attendance to reading**, to exhortation, to doctrine.

See that word "attendance?" Here is what it means:

Oxford English Dictionary (OED): **attendance** - 1. c1374–1790 - † The action or condition of applying one's mind or observant faculties to something;
 2. c1400–1674 - † The action or condition of turning one's energies to; **assiduous** effort;

What is "assiduous?"

Of the four meanings in the OED, only one of them was prior to 1611.

OED: **assiduous** – "of actions: unremitting, persistent, constant."

Putting it all together, when Paul says to his young protégé Timothy, “give attendance to reading,” he is saying; 1) apply your mind to what you are reading so as to observe things in the text, and 2) let this action of reading be “assiduous,” unrelenting, constant, unremitting.

Now, briefly, we need to talk about how to read properly. Obviously, we all know how to read. What I am talking about is the instances and structure of our reading.

For now, I am trying to exhort us all to be engaged in daily Bible reading; not just Bible reading, but specifically the passages we are studying on Sundays and Tuesdays. It is not enough that we have read Ephesians 6 in the past, for we must actively engage our minds with the passage in the days we are studying it as an assembly, if we are to get the most out of it.

That means that we should be reading Ephesians 6:10-18 at least once, every single day, at least until we have finished studying the passage. Seeing that it only takes 1 minute and 15 seconds to read those 9 verses, I am not sure that qualifies as “assiduously” reading. What would be even better is reading these verses once in the morning and again in the evening.

By the time the next Bible class comes along, we will have read this passage 14 times in 7 days. Start on Sunday night, pray all week long, and end on the next Sunday morning. If you can work on memorizing a verse or verses, so much the better because you won’t need to have the verses in front of your eyes in order to think about them, you can call them up from memory.

It helps the edification process even more if you can pray Ephesians 6:10-18. You can begin by simply changing the pronouns of the verses to reflect the information in the verses as your own sentiment, something you are saying back to God.

But you can also deepen the way you pray the scripture, by putting the words of scripture into your own words and defining the things in the scripture in details of your prayer.

For example, you can pray Ephesians 6:10 like this:

Imagine that Paul is sitting in front of you and he has just said to you, “Finally my brother/sister, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

You might answer: “I will be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

If you imagine this is God talking to you, you might pray, “Heavenly Father, I will be strong in You, and in the power of Your might.”

But, to take that prayer to the next level, think about what the phrases in verse 10 mean, and then spell that out in your prayer, using your words. In other words, what does it mean to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might?”

My journal entry:

For example, when I did this, my prayer started like this: “Heavenly Father, I will find my strength in you because I need spiritual strength that only You can furnish. Thank you Father that I can rely on your power and Your might, when the PoE turns it gaze toward me. As I wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this world, I pray it will be in the power of Your might and not in my flesh...”.

Reading and then praying the scriptures we study on Sundays and Tuesdays is an important part of the edification process. That means that instead of just taking 1½ minutes to read verses 10-18, we could take another two minutes to pray what we are reading.

Warning! Don’t rush through the reading to get to the prayer. Something is being done in us in each step of the process, so make sure you have wrung all the water out of your “reading” wash cloth before you move to the prayer portion of the process.

To do this, read slowly and carefully observing words being repeated or other patterns in the passage. If there are words you are unfamiliar with, stop and look them up and then write the meaning in the margin of your Bible. Repeat the reading process with the proper meaning now in your thinking. When you are finished reading, ask yourself these questions:

- Did my mind wander while I was reading? If it did, read it again.

- Encapsulate what you just read into a single sentence. If you can't, read it again and try to encapsulate it one more time. If you can't, try again tomorrow.

If you want to expand the reading process to be more productive, try writing the passage down and underlining or circling words, phrases or patterns that catch your attention.

Let me give you an example of how this works for me. As I was reading and rereading the passage, I kept noticing that some form of the word “stand” kept showing up in the passage, and I also noticed that there were words that accompanied each use of the word “stand.”

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **stand** against the wiles of the devil.¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand**.¹⁴ **Stand** therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

In Ephesians 6:11-14, some form of the word “stand” shows up four times.

Verse 11 – stand against

Verse 13 – withstand

Verse 13 – having done all, to stand

Verse 14 – stand therefore

Because of the “therefore” which points us back to previous mention of stand, I took it out of the equation because it was repetitive. That left me with three ways that we are to “stand.”

I wrote down those three forms of “stand” and asked myself if there was any difference between them. So, I wrote them down and began to research the terms.

For “stand against,” I looked the phrase up in the OED and found this: OED: stand against - **To compete against in a contest.**

I looked to see if there was any reference to “competing in a contest” in the passage, and I found verse 12.

Ephesians 6:12 For **we wrestle** not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

I already knew that in spiritual warfare (SW), this wrestling is over doctrine, and not territory or stuff like that, which led me to think, “Hey, the first phase of the PoE is to “attack the message.” That is the attack against the doctrine. This fits? That made me look at the next two ways in which we stand to see if they fit, and they did.

This led me to connect the phases of attack with the PoE with the three ways in which we stand. When it came to attack the messenger, what form of “stand” was being used? Withstand! It was a perfect match! Okay, you get the idea.

Eventually, as I was reading and rereading the whole passage, I thought I noticed a three-fold division of the pieces of armor. The first three pieces were: having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. This eventually led to a lot more, but it was easy to connect this with “standing against” the wiles of the devil.

The second part was a single piece of armor, the shield of faith. And what was the second attack? Attack the messenger. What else would you need to “withstand” if not a shield? It all made sense and fell into place. This all got started by reading!

Once you have exhausted your “reading” part of the process, now couple it with prayer. This process is even more effectual if we write our prayer down and keep a journal of some of our prayers. (And just to complete this process; listening again to the video is often helpful, for we will often hear things we missed the first time. Reading the notes also helps to root the lesson in our thinking. We won’t watch the video every day or read the notes every day, but once we have done it and then re-enforced it at least once, we should be reading the verses every day.)

What we may not realize is that by giving attendance to reading, we are laying the foundation for this to be more than just an intellectual exercise in the accumulation of knowledge. Reading is an integral part of the edification process, where we develop our ability to understand doctrine directly from the scripture itself.

Look, it is my job to explain the doctrine so that we all understand it, but I am not infallible. Even if I was, just taking my word for it is not enough. You have to “own” the doctrine for yourself, or, as Paul said, “let every man be persuaded in his own mind.” Reading, I mean really reading, is the start of that process whereby you can hear what I say, look at the passage, and see it for yourself.

To wind this up, let me say that what we are after is to immerse ourselves in every passage we study, so that it becomes part of our thinking. The more we read the passage with careful thought, the more we will get out of the session when we meet together as a church. Then, taking what we learn in Bible class, we continue to read and think, read and notice, read and pray, read and write, so that the truth contained in the passage is not just something we heard the preacher say, but the scripture itself has now cemented itself into our thinking and we have become persuaded in our own mind of the truth.

Now, that is no guarantee that your understanding is correct, but this really improves your chances. Plus, even if your conclusion is wrong, you came to it honestly, which means when you learn more, you are more likely to correct your wrong thinking.

So, endeavor to give attendance to reading, specific reading, preferably, reading that which the whole assembly is engaged in studying so that everything you are doing is pointing at the same things and headed in the same direction.

Now, with all that being said, let's read the passage which we will be studying together.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; ¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

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