

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:10-18

Session 83: Notetaker

Fig. 1

What Prayer Is

Prayer is _____

Heavenly Father,

We pray to understand the doctrine we study today.

To see that prayer answered, we will give our full attention to Your word and the explanation of the verses. We realize that our ability to utilize the doctrine is at stake in this. We also know that the Adversary would like to distract us, so that we do not learn. And failing that, he would like to keep this knowledge in our heads, without it getting into our hearts and working in our lives. But we pray to be changed by what we learn, so we can be the sons and daughters You have designed us to be. Amen.

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Session 83: The Armor of God, part 9

Since we have completed our study on the individual pieces of armor, I want to make sure we are thinking about them the right way: that we all know four things. The first three of these we have already taught, so I only want to bring them up as a reminder: 1) that we know exactly what the armor is, 2) that we know the purpose of each piece of armor, 3) that we know how to acquire the armor, and 4) that our armor is not static, but living.

The armor of God consists of **doctrine**. While each piece of armor protects us from specific kinds of attacks, every piece of armor is comprised of doctrine. That means that each piece of the armor of God is doctrine which is designed to **protect** us from a particular kind of attack.

Different kinds of attack, require different kinds of doctrines (hence, different pieces of armor).

For example, we are girding ourselves with truth by learning the doctrines which pertain to the mystery of Christ. What are those doctrines protecting us from? From the various ways that Satan seeks to attack the message. And **where is that battle taking place? In our minds**. So, we gird up the loins of our mind with truth from Paul's epistles.

Ask yourself if you feel like you know the pieces of armor well enough to talk about what kind of doctrine is behind each piece and the kind of attack it is protecting against. If you don't, then you know what you need to work on this week.

Unlike physical armor, the armor of God is not a completed or accomplished thing, but is being continually developed throughout our sonship education. Unlike physical armor, the armor it is not something external to ourselves, but it is meant to be part of who we are. In order for the armor to be available to us, we must first acquire it by **learning the various doctrines** in Paul's epistles.

Therefore, our **armor is strengthened** as we acquire and internalize the doctrine.

In this way, our spiritual armor is very different from physical armor. Physically, pieces of armor are only what they are. For example, a shield is only so thick, so wide, so long. It is static in that it doesn't change.

But our armor is a living armor. Much like we are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice (sacrifices are usually put to death), our armor is a living armor in that it can grow in strength, and in coverage. As we learn and live the doctrine, the protective ability of our armor grows commensurately. The more sure we are of the doctrine, the more insulated we are from the attack. So, the bottom line is to learn the doctrine.

Ephesians 6:17 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;

Because of my overall understanding of what Paul has to say about prayer, I would say that this is something that is meant to be employed in connection with every piece of the armor.

Prayer is a time of intimate fellowship with God.

Prayer is talking to God about what He is doing in this dispensation of grace in which we are living, and even more specifically to the context of Ephesians 6:10-18, about what is going on as we encounter the various phases of the policy of evil.

Prayer is a part of the process of edification whereby we take God's word and make those pieces of armor a practical reality for us. Prayer, done right is edifying in and of itself, but it is also a part of the overall process of edification where the word of God effectually works in us to transform us.

For example, when we study Romans 12 and the forms of doctrine which comprise the sonship decision-making skill of wisdom, those are the doctrines which comprise our breastplate. Prayer should accompany those doctrines.

Actually, from Romans 12:3-15:7, these are all Breastplate of Righteousness doctrines. Every time we learn and obey those doctrines, we are building and strengthening our breastplate of righteousness.

When we study Philippians 4:4-9, we are enhancing our shield of faith so that we can withstand the fiery darts of the personal and ministry attacks against us.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

When we study Romans 8:19-25, that is the initial doctrine which produces our helmet of salvation.

Romans 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

As we continue to study and learn, that helmet gets stronger and we become more adept at wearing it.

Prayer is where we talk to God about His revealed will and our conformity to it.

Prayer is where we talk to God about our discernment regarding the application of His word to our thinking and actions.

Prayer is how we make intelligent requests and supplications.

Intelligent requests are those which are in accordance with the Mystery program. That means we are asking God for those things which we know He is doing in this dispensation of grace. It also means that we understand that in prayer, we are partnering with our Father to accomplish our requests, and hopefully “our requests” mirror our heavenly Father’s will in this situation. We do the leg work, He does the spiritual work. We carry the gospel, he saves their soul. We communicate the doctrine He produces the character of His Son in them. This is what it means to “labor with God.”

Getting back to the verse, I want us to notice a couple of things: 1) Paul says, “Praying always.”

Ephesians 6:18 **Praying always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

I think we understand what that means, even if we don’t do it. In this context, Paul means for us to be praying through all three phases of the policy of evil’s attack. But prayer is something that should be constant for us, not just when we are under the attack of the policy of evil.

2) Paul says, “Praying always with all prayer.”

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always **with all prayer** and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

What does he mean by “all prayer?” I think he is talking about all the different kinds of prayer that are at our disposal. And each of these kinds of prayers have a purpose behind them.

Let me take us to a verse we will study in the coming weeks.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Here is a repeat of the formula of “prayer and supplication” but this time Paul adds, “with thanksgiving.” Because of the importance of this, I want us to take a prayer of thanksgiving to illustrate the depth of what our prayer life should be.

For example, when we pray a prayer of “thanksgiving” to God for something He has done or provided, that is not just about us being polite, or logging some time in prayer. And it is not just about getting what we wanted; it is more than that.

There is supposed to be a depth of understanding when we pray a prayer of thanksgiving. I have even heard myself pray a prayer of thanksgiving as a rote ritual; “Now Father, we thank you for your word and what it says to us...”

We reel off those prayers like they are nothing more than an obligatory start to a sermon, or the necessary close to a meeting. When they come out of memory and not out of our heart, everyone can hear the difference, including God. Those kinds of prayers don’t work to produce anything in us.

A prayer of thanksgiving should be based on an intelligent (dispensational) understanding of some things, such as:

- Why did God do this particular thing?
- Why do I need it?
- What was God accomplishing by providing this?
- How is this supposed to affect me with regard to God’s plan and purpose?

These are the questions to go through when we are praying a prayer of thanksgiving, for these questions train us in godly thanksgiving. Giving thanks is about God, but it is also about us, in that it is supposed to have an effect on us – the mere act of prayer affects us in our edification, if we do it right.

When you read a verse about giving thanks for this thing or that thing, don't let yourself fall into some gratuitous speech of "thank you." And if you notice that there is not some real intention and intelligence behind what you are thanking God for, then let that send you on a search to answer those questions so you can truly appreciate what God has done and engage in heart-felt thanks to God. We cannot just "go through the motions" of any spiritual discipline, and that is especially true of prayer.

And what I mean by "heart-felt" is that the thing we are thanking God for has made its intended impact on us and we recognize it for the same thing our Father knows it to be.

So, here are the next questions to ask ourselves as we "thank God" in prayer for something:

- How has this thing impacted me?
- How does my Father perceive this thing He has given to me?
- Does it have the same meaning for me?

So, as an experiment, let's answer these questions with regard to our salvation from the debt and penalty of sin; our justification unto eternal life.

When this kind of understanding is in place, our heart-felt prayer of thanksgiving becomes a prayer that builds an intimacy of relationship between us and our heavenly Father. That's one thing. Think about how important that is. I am saying that by engaging in a prayer of thanksgiving, we can increase the relationship between us and our heavenly Father. Think about it. How much relationship do you have with anyone you don't talk to?

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The Most Important Decision

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

I am praying two things today. First, I pray that we have understood the doctrine pertaining to the armor of God in such a way that it impacts the way we deal with the attacks of the policy of evil. And if there is anyone who has a question about something they don't understand, for their sake, I pray they will ask it before we end the session. Secondly, I pray that we have at least caught a glimpse of the depth of prayer that is waiting for us in every facet of our prayer life, and especially as it pertains to putting on the whole armor of God. I pray that our whole church would want that kind of prayer life. Thank you for this time we spend together and I pray it will have real practical use for us in a way that helps the saints and glorifies You. Amen.