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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT--AND ALWAYS PRAYING

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 79
EPHESIANS 6:17-18

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EPHESIANS 6:17-18 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

We have studied the helmet of salvation and we began the study of "The sword of the spirit." The word for sword here is the accusative singular of "machaira." This was a short sword, about 18 inches long, and could be used effectively in combat. It was not too heavy and could be thrust without causing the soldier to lose his balance and without throwing his whole body open and vulnerable to attack. The long heavy swords used by so many of the ancient nations was never an effective fighting instrument. When the Romans invented the two-edged "machaira" they were able to sweep every force they confronted and this little sword, more than any other implement of their warfare, made them invincible and victorious. This sword was short, about 18 inches long, well balanced and had a hand guard on it so the soldier's hand wouldn't easily slip.

An ancient book entitled "The Military Machine Of The Romans" tells of the effective use of the "machaira" and how the Roman soldier was taught to thrust the short two-edged sword into the body of the enemy. Because of the bone structure of the body, people could not easily be killed by a slashing sword, but people could be easily killed by thrusting the sword into the vital parts of the body of the enemy. The Roman soldiers were taught just how to thrust the "machaira" and bring instant death. Because of this, this amazing sword became the most feared weapon in the ancient world. While other nations were trying to use their big unwieldy swords and did a lot of hacking, the Romans conquered the world on the point of the "machaira."

EPHESIANS 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" Look briefly at the kinds of swords used in ancient times. The "RAMPHAIA" was invented by the Thracians and was from four to six feet long and had double handles on it. It was never really effective in combat. The "ZXZIPHOS" was a thin sword and the points broke off very easily. The "AKINAKES" sword, a dress sword, was worn by generals and other high military officials but was never effectively used in battle. The Persians wore these swords as a part of their dress uniforms. This verse says, "The sword from the spirit". The word for spirit is "pneuma" and it refers to God the Holy Spirit. The word for "Which" is "hos" and is a nominative, neuter singular. This verse says "which is" and it is a present, active, indicative and that means it will always be this way. In other words, the sword from the Spirit will always be the Word of God.

Now this ought to say something to us. The sword from the Spirit is not our methods, or our techniques or our schemes to accomplish something great for God. Think of how many churches and Christian workers and whole denominations have tried to come up with some plan that will accomplish the thing God says can only be accomplished by the Word of God. Abandoning the Word of God and substituting man-made methods has been the greatest error of the modern church. But let us remember God ordained that by what the world calls "the foolishness of preaching" his kingdom would go forward in the world.

A very specific word

When you come to that interesting word we translate "The Word of God" it is usually "logos." But that is not the word here. The "word of God" here is "rema" and it means the word that is sent forth into the souls of men. So it is "the word sent forth" and the word is "from God."

Notice These Principles

1. Just as the "machaira" was the offensive weapon of the Roman soldier, so the "word from God" is the offensive weapon of the Christian. It must be transferred from the Bible into the mind of the believer so he can have it on the launching pad, ready for use at all times. This is why "rema" and not "logos" is used in this verse. The "rema" is the word sent forth, the word in action, the word on the offensive in the Christian warfare.
2. No believer can effectively take the offensive until he possesses maximum doctrine in his soul.
3. Bible doctrine becomes alive in the mind of the believer by daily taking in doctrine. "From the Spirit" refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the believer which leads to the working of grace in the soul of the believer.
4. Just recently we studied Revelation 12:9 which is the Bible's most accurate description of the Devil and his methods. Man stands helpless before the Devil and Satan and cannot defeat him in his own strength. Only doctrine in the soul of the believer is a strong enough force to confront the Devil. No other ammunition works on Satan but the Word of God. This is the meaning of that word "rema."
5. Only by means of offensive action by using the Word of God can victory be gained here in the Devil's world.
6. The tactical victory in this spiritual battle is the working of the Word of God in the soul and this always results in super grace status for the believer. Bible doctrine in the soul keeps you from being off balance in the offensive battle against Satan.

The Romans had a saying, "Fortune favors the brave." They meant by this that the soldier had to be brave enough to go on the offensive. We are seeing this again in the football games being played this fall. A good defense is absolutely necessary, but football games are won by the team going on the offensive. The defense can hold off a football team just so long, but when a team goes on the offensive, this is the point where games are won. Joe Paterno of Penn State said two years ago that if he had had an offense to balance his defense, they would have been the national champion. The Christian can go on the offensive effectively if he uses the sword from the Spirit.

Before the time of Alexander the Great took over the armies of Greece, many of the soldiers wore beards. When Alexander the Great came along, he demanded that his soldiers be clean shaven. The greek word for beard is "pogan." Alexander the Great found that in close hand to hand fighting the beards could be caught and the head bent back, thereby, making the throat vulnerable for the thrust of the enemy sword. Each soldier of Alexander the Great carried a little short sharp knife-sword with which he shaved every morning. Gillette would have liked Alexander the Great very much.

They shaved every morning. Please notice that this is a perfect analogy to rebound. The soldier shaved every morning, but the beard grew out and had to be shaved the next morning. This is the way sin is in the life of the Christian. The old sin nature produces sin in the life and it must be dealt with every day. Each morning the Christian takes 1 John 1:9 and names his sin to God, gets back in fellowship and picks himself up and moves on in the Christian warfare.

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 always wondered why this verse didn't say, "Praying always with all service, or all work, or all human effort." But rather it says, "Praying always with all prayer." This word "praying" is a present, middle, participle from "Proseuchomai" and this means that prayer is to be a constant, daily activity of every Christian. It really means "Praying on every occasion and under every circumstance. This verse says literally, "By means of every prayer and petition, be praying on every occasion in the spirit." There is some kind of a prayer that is suitable on every occasion.

1. Prayer at mealtime.

When a Christian sits down to eat, there should always be a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving. It need not be a long prayer, in fact, a long prayer at mealtime is out of place. It should be a thoughtful expression of thanksgiving to God for his daily care and provision. To pray a long prayer while the food gets cold and minds begin to wander may be worse than no prayer at all. The so-called "Lord's Prayer" which is more correctly called "The Model Prayer" says, "Give us today tomorrow's bread" and it is a very short prayer.

2. Prayer when we enter Bible study.

Each time we open the Word of God we should pause and confess our sins and be sure that we are in fellowship with God so our minds can properly function and so we can take in doctrinal truth. Taking in doctrinal truth into the soul is even more important than taking in physical food for our physical welfare.

3. Prayer as we enter into some new task.

Almost daily as we live the Christian life we are asked to make some new decision or to undertake some difficult new adventure. It is imperative that we ask for God's guidance all the time in every task if we are to be sure that we do not get off on some detour or miss the road completely.

So there are prayers for every occasion. Paul is here reminding us that we are to pray always, about everything, and not allow ourselves to become involved in situations where we cannot pray.

He then says "and watching" and this is a present, active, participle of "agrupneo." This means we are to ever be alert and this comes from having doctrine in the soul. The Christian whose mind is saturated with Bible doctrine will always be the alert Christian. The word for "perseverance" is "proskarteresis" and it means persistent determination. The word for "supplication" is "deesis" and it means intelligent praying based on a knowledge of the facts. "For all saints" is from "peri pas hagios" and it means we are to pray for all fellow Christians all the time. We are here authorized to pray for all of our preachers, and missionaries, and all our fellow Christian friends who are in any way connected with the work of the Lord.

It is not unusual to hear Christian workers say that the thing they need most is prayer support. Missionaries often tell us that though they need our money, they most need our prayer support as they go to their hard place of service.

Our need of prayer.

This verse brings into focus the need of prayer here in our own Immanuel fellowship. As your spiritual teacher, I would urge all of you all the time and in every circumstance to pray for your church and every program in it. Pray daily, pray often, pray intelligently and pray with faith, believing that God is able and willing to answer.

1. Effective praying is based on being attired in the full armour of God. You have to wear the whole armour of God if you expect to be a successful prayer warrior. We have designated this as our motto for 1977--"A people wearing the whole armour of God." The sooner you learn doctrine and dress your mind in truth, the sooner you will be able to pray effectively and intelligently.
2. Prayer should be your most productive ministry. This verse doesn't say, "Praying always with all work" or "Praying always with all service" but it says, "Praying always with all prayer." The effective Christian should always have his most productive ministry in the area of prayer.
3. Prayer is the responsibility of every Church Age believer. Please notice again the words "praying always". This is an injunction that lasts for every day or the entire life of the Christian. As long as the Christian breathes he should pray. As long as we eat, we should pray. As long as we receive blessings from God, we should pray. As long as the sun shines and the rain falls, we should pray. Prayer is a daily test of the alertness of the Christian.
4. The believer is to be on constant alert in the field of prayer. In the army this is called "I.R.F." and it means "Instant reaction force." We are in Christ's army and we should be on "I.R.F." all the time.
5. Keep on keeping on. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." Constant prayer is absolutely essential to victory in Christ's work.

Let us close this study with a look at the prayer habits of Jesus.

1. He prayed at the beginning of his ministry, his baptism.
LUKE 3:21 "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,"
2. He often prayed alone.
MARK 1:35 "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed,"

3. Praying in the wilderness as he forsook the crowds.
LUKE 5:16 "And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."
4. Praying in the mountain--an all-night of prayer.
LUKE 6:12 "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."
5. He prayed alone at night.
MATTHEW 14:23 "And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone."
6. He prayed with the disciples.
LUKE 9:18 "And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?"
7. He was transfigured while praying.
LUKE 9:28-29 "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening."
8. A quick thanksgiving prayer.
LUKE 10:21-22 "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."
9. Lord, teach us to pray!
LUKE 11:1 "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."
10. He prayed at Lazarus' tomb.
JOHN 11:41-43 "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."
11. He prayed when the Greeks tempted him.
JOHN 12:27-28 "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

12. He prayed for Peter by name.
LUKE 22:31-32 "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
13. His great intercessory prayer.
JOHN 17:1 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:"
14. He prayed in Gethsemane.
MATTHEW 26:39 "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."
15. He prayed three times on the cross.
LUKE 23:34 "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."
MATTHEW 27:46 "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
LUKE 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus he gave up the ghost."