



Spiritual Warfare

The Point: We are to put on the full spiritual armor of God so that we will be able to win the spiritual war we are in.

Ephesians 6:10-24

Small Group Questions:

1. "The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
2. Why does the believer need the strength of the Lord? Isn't the believer supposed to "work out his salvation?"
3. What are some of the enemy's schemes that Paul refers to in verse 11?
4. In what ways do you experience the battle Paul talks about?
5. How is each of the pieces of armor helpful to you in standing against the devil's schemes?
6. Which one of the pieces of armor or weapons do you need to pay more attention to? Explain.
7. What have you learned from this study of Ephesians that has affected you the most?
8. What will you do differently as a result of this study?



Sermon Notes:

INTRODUCTION

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:10-24

Sooner or later, every follower of Jesus will discover that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground. We daily face an enemy that is far stronger than we are. Anyone that tells you life is easy isn't being honest with you. Anyone that tells you the Christian life is easy isn't being honest with you. It is hard, it is difficult, it is filled with struggle...I feel it's a simple life (God makes His ways pretty clear to us) and it is a life filled with great joy...but to quote my good friend Yoda "Easy it is not."



We have an enemy, a very real enemy. We need to know who he is, where he is, what he is or we will have a very difficult time defeating him. Satan, meaning literally “adversary”, is the enemy of God. He is called tempter, murderer and liar. He is compared to a lion, a serpent, and an angel of light and “god of this age.” He is strong, wise and subtle. He is cunning and crafty and we cannot afford to be ignorant of him and his ways. He masquerades and deceives and he wants to defeat us. Our battle is not against mere human beings. It is against something far more powerful than you and me put together.

We are involved in a battle against a formidable enemy whether we like it or not. We are not mere spectators at a game...

...and our very joy and usefulness are at stake in this battle. The good news we have no need to fear Him...

It's why Paul introduces his final subject by urging the Ephesian believers to be strong in the Lord. When it comes to spiritual warfare, to living life, we cannot be sufficiently strong by ourselves. If we are going to have adequate strength for the daily spiritual battles, those times that try us in life, it must be the Lord's strength. It must come from God. Only He has the mighty power sufficient to win the spiritual battles against our enemy.

And Paul here tells us the way we are strong in the Lord is to put on the full armor of God. The implication of these verses we will study today is that when we have on God's armor (and I will explain what this is if the term “God's Armor” is strange and new to you), we have the ability to stand firm against those forces that would seek to knock us off God's path and take us away from God's truth.

Paul takes the common elements of battle worn by a Roman Soldier and gives a spiritual application to each one. Paul, even as he is writing these words, would have most likely been chained to a Roman Soldier and since the readers would have been familiar with a soldier's equipment, It would give the readers a wonderful visual of how God's armor works in our lives.

and because our enemy's power is far superior to ours, we cannot rely upon mere human resources or our own will power but must take up the full armor of God. By telling us to stand firm he is giving us a picture, that we as believers in Jesus are like soldiers holding fast to their battle line against the enemies charge.

Paul's ultimate point is not how we fight to achieve our victory but that our victory has already been secured by Jesus for us...we fight from victory...The spirit of God enable us, by faith and trust, to realize God's victory over these things in our life.

If we, like a soldier, are going to stand firm or stand our ground we have to be properly equipped for the battle.



THE BELT OF TRUTH

“Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness.” Ephesians 6:14

Paul begins to describe each and every part of the armor we are to wear. The belt of truth pictures the large leather belt the Roman soldier wore. In the ancient world, the common form of dress would have been a robe. Can you imagine a soldier trying to move quickly in battle while his legs were getting caught up in a flowing robe? It wouldn’t work. When it was time to go into battle the soldier would gather up all the flowing parts of his robe and pull it tightly around his waist with his belt. The belt also held other weapons and kept other parts of the armor in place. Paul is saying the first thing we need to do is get ready to move into battle. To put on the belt of truth can be understood as accepting and knowing the truth and choosing to follow it. It is God’s truth that holds everything else in place.

Our enemy is a liar. So many are led astray by lies, both outside and inside the church, but the believer who is controlled by what is true will defeat falsehood. In the same way that the belt would hold everything together, truth, God’s perfect truth needs to be at the center of our life. It’s why theology, the study of God, is so important. Time and time again in the Bible we are told to hold to what is true because once a lie gets into the life of a person, everything begins to fall apart.

I see this in the lives of our youth way too often... We need truth before we go into the battle...

The breastplate of righteousness pictures the metal armor in the shape of a human torso common to the Roman uniform. This is the piece of metal plates and chains that covered the body from the neck to the waist, in the front and in the back. It’s main purpose was to protect the vital areas of the soldier’s body. Paul is telling us that we protect our vital areas of life with righteousness. Righteousness means “right living” or “right action.” Striving to be like Jesus and live according to his ways of righteous living.

I taught on this last summer in Epic and Quest and one of the things I told the students was that our good choices, choosing to live as God tells us to live, will protect the important and vital areas of our life.

THE SHOES OF PEACE

For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. Ephesians 6:15



The shoes of peace referred to here would be the shoes a soldier wore, shoes that would be very similar to the spikes worn by a baseball player. They would have nails on the bottom of them to ensure sure footing in battle...

(IMPORTANCE OF FOOTWEAR)

In Paul's day, the Roman soldiers wore a special type of leather shoe that had thick soles studded with nails. These special boots were known as Caligae and were worn by all ranks of soldiers, from the legionnaires up to the centurions. Paul would have been familiar with this type of footwear when he wrote the book of Ephesians. They look like a sandal, but they were actually marching boots. The open design of them allowed the soldier to keep his feet cool, and they were specially designed to reduce the likelihood of blisters. They made of heavy leather and had thick soles that were studded with nails. They were also extremely comfortable, which was important because soldiers might march many miles in a day. The shoes were durable and would last for many years with proper care.

Follow this verse, when we have our feet fitted with the gospel of peace, the peace that comes from knowing the truth and trusting God it makes us ready to walk our faith.

There are two words that are often used in the Bible as a picture for life...life is a path and how we live is often referred to as our walk. So we better have the right shoes for walking...The shoes we wear is the peace that comes from God.

(Softball and the French Open)

To put on the shoes can be understood as believing the promises of God in the gospel and counting on them to be true for you. And isn't this what the whole letter to the Ephesians has been about. This certainty that we are loved and saved by God gives us the peace we need to stand firm each and every day.

We have peace with God because of Jesus, a peace that should extend to one another.

"So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
-James 4:7

MESSENGERS...

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!" Isaiah 52:7



THE SHIELD OF FAITH

“In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.”
Ephesians 6:16

The shield of faith pictures the shield the Roman soldier used to deflect blows from the sword, arrows, or the spear of the enemy. Burning arrows were designed to destroy the shields held by Roman soldiers but the shield spoken of here is able to extinguish those arrows. To take up this shield is to be understood as rejecting temptations to doubt, sin, or quit. It's telling you the truth (about God and yourself) and choosing on the basis of the truth to do the right thing or believe what is true.

These shields would have been as large as six to eight feet tall and three to four feet wide, made of wood and covered in tough leather and like I said it would be used to protect from spears and arrows. The other cool thing about these shields is that they were constructed so that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into an enemy like a solid wall (What a beautiful picture of the church). Friends, we are not in this battle alone.

This is more than simply a saving faith but a living faith; a trust in the promises and power of God. Faith and trust is a defensive weapon that protects us from the darts our enemy will fire at our hearts and minds: lies, anti-God thoughts, hateful thoughts about ourselves or one another, doubts...if faith does not deflect and quench these fiery darts thrown at us daily they will destroy us. We never know when these will come our way so we must be ready, walking by faith and standing together...

What protects us is our trust and faith in the living God. (ACCUSATIONS)
So when Paul says here in Ephesians that our faith is like a shield, he is saying that our faith is like a shield, he is saying that our faith is our first line of defense against the spiritual darkness we face as followers of Jesus. Many times, just saying to someone “Hey, I believe in Jesus.” is all it takes.

The world we live in will constantly try to make us doubt and move away from Jesus. The devil does not want us to be dependent on God or to hope in His promises. Raising the shield of faith means that we trust, rely upon, and follow Jesus despite the struggle we might face in life.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

“Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:17



The helmet of salvation pictures the Roman soldier's metal protective headgear. The helmet protects the head and our enemy will do everything within his power to wound our minds.

Remembering that "nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God shown to us in Christ Jesus."

It does not refer simply to salvation in Jesus. 1 Thessalonians speaks of the helmet of the "hope of salvation," which is probably the best idea. Taking the helmet of salvation could be understood as resting our hope in the future and living in this world according to the promises of God and the value system of God's kingdom...

BUT GOD...

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

...and then Paul moves on to our offensive weapon...

The sword of the spirit pictures the soldier's weapon sheathed to his belt and used both for offensive and defensive purposes. A sword would have been used to defend one's self but also to cut through the defenses of the enemy.

Taking up the sword of the spirit, defined here as the word of God, can be understood as using scripture specifically in life's situations to fend off attacks of the enemy and put him to flight. We see an example of this when Jesus is in the wilderness...

"If Jesus didn't think He could handle life without knowing the Scriptures (God's word, The Bible), what makes you think you can?" - Timothy Keller

"A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, at once destroys a temptation or an objection, and subdues the most formidable adversary" - Matthew Henry Commentary

PRAY IN THE SPIRIT

"Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere." Ephesians 6:18

Finally, while preparing for and doing battle, we are to be on the alert and to always keep on praying. We petition, which means simply to ask, God for our needs in the battle, and we pray for one another.

See all these weapons we have looked at are rooted in prayer. It is our most powerful resource. Prayer is to permeate every area and every moment of our lives. One of my favorite verses in the whole Bible is 1 Thessalonians 5:17 which simply says...



“Never stop praying.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

This is a mental attitude of prayerfulness. It is continual personal fellowship with God. It is constantly knowing and realizing that you are in God’s presence throughout each day. Romans 12:12 says “be constant in prayer.” Colossians 4:2 tells us to “Continue steadfastly in prayer...”

All of our warfare, which is every moment of every day, and all of our activity must take place in the context of constant, unceasing prayer. A soldier that is in battle must keep in constant communication with headquarters and the commanding officer. If this is true then we must remain in constant communication with our lord and savior, Jesus. A soldier might have all the other parts of his armor securely in place, but if he is cut off from communication with his commander he will be isolated and vulnerable.

“Prayer must fasten all the other parts of our Christian armor” - Matthew Henry Commentary

UNDERGIRD: to make secure underneath, to form the basis or foundation of

Prayer is the thing friends...We must pray with all kinds of prayer...public, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden...

“Prayer is like bringing a gun to a knife fight.” :-)

APPLICATION

We are in a battle, and it is one we cannot win on our own depending on ourselves. Fortunately, going back to how Paul begins this section, we have the armor of God. It is His armor, not ours. It is found in Him and Him alone, you will not find it in yourself and you cannot create this armor.

Our armor is found in one place...it is found in the one who said “it is finished.”

Jesus is our armor...

“Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ...” Romans 13:14

The ESV tells us to “put on the Lord Jesus...” for He is our armor.

“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” John 14:6

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” 2 Corinthians 5:21



“Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.” Romans 5:1

“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.” Ephesians 2:8

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” Hebrews 4:12

Jesus is the word of God...

“So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.
Romans 10:17

ENDING

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.” Hebrews 12:1-2

He is the one who creates and perfects our armor...If you want to know what the Armor of God looks like...it’s Jesus. He is our truth, He is our righteousness, He is our peace, He is our salvation, He is our hope.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing: For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; His Name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us: The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him.

That name is Jesus...