

Prepared – Properly Equipped, part 2

When you think back a few weeks, perhaps you will remember we began looking at one of the most encouraging passages from the teachings of Apostle Paul. Ephesians 6 is a chapter filled with encouraging words geared at instructing every believer to embrace and accept the call to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Paul wanted the church in Ephesus to recognize and be on guard against a very present enemy. In teaching the Ephesians about their enemy, Paul has also reminded us about our enemy. He has also encouraged us to take the necessary steps to be prepared to face this enemy. Let's go back and read **Ephesians 6:10-20** and then we'll look together at the rest of the Armor of God.

To bring everyone back up to speed, let's review what we discussed a few weeks ago. Verse 11 let's us know that fending off the schemes of the devil requires us to put on the whole armor of God. Just one piece, or a few pieces, is not sufficient for the task at hand. Paul says, we must, "put on the whole" thing! Paul reminds us also the whole armor of God is what's required when we decide to take a stand against our great enemy. We begin by putting on the "Belt of Truth." That is the Word of God. With it fastened to the center of our armor, in the middle, at the core, we can trust the truth of the Bible to hold everything else in place. We can know then that God has provided us, through His Word, every ability to detect and decipher every lie of the enemy.

Satan is not shy about his intentions. He's coming after your heart. How do you protect your heart? With a breastplate of course. The second article of our armor is the "Breastplate of Righteousness." With it, our vital organs are protected. With the righteousness of Christ, we are protected against the unrighteous acts of our enemy. Salvation is our security and our surety of this truth. Only the believer can don this breastplate, but when our heart is susceptible to the evils of this world, our protection is found in the righteousness that only comes from Christ Jesus.

Gospel Shoes of Peace – Ephesians 6:15 speaks of putting on a pair of shoes. Not just any shoe will do. We are at war. We are doing battle every day. Therefore, a good pair of shoes is necessary. In Biblical times, real war took place on foot, doing hand-to-hand combat. The terrain was often rocky. Large boulders and barbed spikes often surrounded the enemy's fortress. All these things, put in place, to slow a soldier down. Similarly, Satan puts obstacle after obstacle along our path. He wants to hinder your progress as a believer. He wants to slow down your growth as a follower of Christ. He wants to stop us from spreading the "Good News." The peace of the Gospel is our protection against this. When we fit our feet with these special shoes. Shoes made of the "Gospel of Peace," we

can easily navigate over and around every one of Satan's obstacles. If we consider Romans 5:1, we can better understand why sharing the Gospel of Jesus is so important.

Read Romans 5:1. And, when we also consider 1 Peter 3:15, we can understand the importance of putting on a good pair of shoes as we go to battle. **Read 1 Peter 3:15.** The gospel of peace is our protection, reminding us that it is by grace that souls are saved, to include our own.

The Shield of Faith – One of the most powerful flaming darts of Satan is “doubt.” Humanism teaches that “doubt” is essential to life. Buddhism suggests that “doubt” is natural, and we should question everything in search of our own light. These however are teachings of skeptics and false religions who “doubt” the authenticity of God. The Bible teaches us that “doubt” is a great tool of Satan and is used to make us lack confidence in God and in His Word. It is used to make us question God's authority in our life and think that His judgement is unlikely. The smallest seed of doubt can grow the largest plant of unfaithfulness. This is the danger associated with this fiery dart. Our protection against this dart, as well as many others, is faith. Paul says, “in all circumstances take up the shield of faith.” You've heard the saying, “oil and water do not mix?” Well, doubt and faith do not either. When we keep a good grip on our shield of faith and we hold it high, it works to deflect doubt. It works to deflect fear, pride, temptation, unbelief; all the flaming darts our enemy has in his arsenal. The Shield of Faith is a particularly important piece of God's armor. **Hebrews 11:1** says this about faith. “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*” God has proven Himself faithful, true, and able. Because of this, we can have all confidence in His ability to protect us. With Christ, faith in Him is what is essential to life. Jesus said, there is no other light aside from Him and no one comes to the Father except through Him. On down in **Hebrews 11, verse 6** says, “And without faith it is impossible to please him (God), for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Helmet of Salvation – All thought and knowledge exist in the mind, which is found in the head. Without the helmet of salvation to protect our minds, we are susceptible and unprotected against false truths and will often sin against God. For those who reject God and His plan of salvation, the result is eternity in hell. It is salvation through Christ that sets us free from sin and free from the judgement against those sins. Jesus said, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” (**John 8:31-32**) Paul teaches us that believers will “have the mind of Christ.” (**1 Corinthians 2:16**) and that we can “*destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey*

Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5) The “Helmet of Salvation” is something we cannot survive without.

Sword of the Spirit – Up to this point, Paul has explained the articles of the armor necessary for defense. Now, he gives us the only item used for attack. As mentioned before, Jesus countered every attack of Satan in the desert with Scripture. In doing this, He set for us the perfect example on how to use the “Sword of the Spirit.” Do not attack the enemy on your own. Instead, attack when God allows and armed with His Word. Borrowing again from Hebrews, we see this concerning our sword. *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12) God has not left alone for this war. He has provided all we need to defend ourselves and has given us the most powerful weapon for attacking our enemy. Satan’s tactics have not changed, nor has God’s weapon against those tactics. Will you trust that weapon today? Will you put your faith in God’s Word?

Prayer – Every soldier understands the value of communication. If God is the commander of our life, as He should be, then we must be willing to keep the lines of communication with Him open. How do we do this? Paul says here in **Ephesians 6:18**, *“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”* Soldier of Christ – pray all the time, all types of prayers, make requests for your brothers and sisters in Christ, make requests for yourself, lift prayers of thanksgiving, lift prayers of praise, lift prayers of confession, lift prayers asking for transformation, for forgiveness, for protection. Paul says, pray them all, all the time. Why? Because the enemy does not like it when we talk to the Father. He knows that God is where our strength comes from. He knows that God is our source for help in times of trouble.

God - through His Word, through His Son, and through His Spirit, has promised to protect us and help us win the battles. Will you allow Him to do that for you today? Will you trust your life with Him? Will you trust His hands and His armor to protect you? If so, then come forward today during our time of invitation.