

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/19/92
Ephesians 6:14-17 "The Armor of God"

Intro: "Who's afraid of the big, bad devil? Frankly I am! That is, I have a healthy regard for him. I suspect that anyone who understands who he is and what he's up to does, too. Even the mighty archangel, Michael, does not trifle with the devil."

These are the words of Bill Rudd, Pastor in Muskegon, MI, taken from an article entitled, "Be Sober, Be Vigilant."

Quote: Newsweek wrote an article back in August 1982 entitled, "Giving the Devil His Due." This secular magazine made the observation that by 1950 only "the most persistently literal-minded" still believed in the devil. But then this observation was made, "As the second millennium approaches, interest in the devil is rising among the credulous and curious alike."

We are in a battle. You and I are under attack. We have an enemy. A fierce, cunning, powerful enemy.

Illust:

Q: How can we survive?

That's the question we asked and God's Word answered last week.

Eph 6 is our Warfare Manual. According to Ephesians 6:10-13, we are responsible to do 3 things if we're going to survive the attacks of the evil one:

- I. Depend (10)
 - A. On the Lord
 - B. On His Power
- II. Detect (11-12)
 - A. The Armor of God
 - B. The Attack of the devil
- III. Defend (13)

Illust:

Sing: I Jn 4:4 "Greater is He that is in thee"

Another question: How can I be prepared for the battle? What must you do day by day if you are to stand when so many are falling?

We'll see this morning in Eph 6:14-17. God has given us the spiritual equipment we need to stand for Him in the midst of raging spiritual warfare.

Proposition: According to Ephesians 6:14-17, God has provided us with 6 pieces of spiritual armor which we must utilize if we're going to stand in battle.

- I. The Belt of Truth (14)
- II. The Breastplate of Righteousness (14)
- III. Gospel of Peace Boots (15)
- IV. Faith Shield (16)
- V. Salvation's Helmet (17)
- VI. The Spirit's Sword (18)

Setting:

Eph 4-6 Our Walk

Eph 6:10-21 Walk on Guard against the Evil One--Our Battle Instructions:

v 10 Be strong

v 11 Put on the whole armor of God

v 13 Take unto you the whole armor that. . . STAND

Key: We must not underestimate our enemy! V 12 is clear. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We're up against demonic forces. Listen. Satan is not omnipresent or omnipotent. He's not divine. He's a created being, a fallen angel. But Satan has at his disposal forces that are highly organized and extremely active. They are powerful (Mk 5:2-4), intelligent (Acts 16:16), and deceptive. They promote false doctrine and religions, often inhabit bodies, inflict illness, hinder Christian workers (I Th 2:18), oppose the spread of the gospel, and are able to work miracles.

II Cor 11:14-15 "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed. . ."

You say, "Well I'm a Christian. I'm safe in Jesus' arms. Satan can't touch me."

Illust: (Tim Warren's article) Even believer's can be enticed by the Evil One. Even believers can be duped by the devil so that they act as if they were his subjects. Satan incited David into sinning against God's command (I Chr 21:1). Satan deceived Peter into denying the necessity of Christ's sacrifice (Mt 16:21-23). Satan filled the hearts of Annanias and Saphira to lie (Acts 5).

II Tim 2:24-26 "recover themselves out of the snare of the devil"

We have a great enemy. But remember. We have a great Savior! And when He came to the earth 2000 years ago, and went to the cross. do you know what He did?

Col 2:14-15 ". . . nailing it to the cross, having spoiled principalities. . ."

Since Christ won the victory, what must we do?

1. Make sure we are IN HIM. Do you have a personal relationship?
2. Stand in Him. We do not fight FOR victory, but FROM victory.

V 14 "Stand therefore"

Q: But how? How do we prepare ourselves so we can stand in Christ?

A: Paul tells us in vv 14-17.

The word "stand" is a command. It's followed by a series of participles which tell us HOW we are to stand. How can we prepare ourselves for battle? BY putting on the armor, the whole armor of God, one piece at a time.

I. The Belt of Truth (14)

V 14 "Stand. . . having your loins girded. . ."

I mentioned last week that when Paul wrote Ephesians, he was a prisoner in Rome. In chains (v 20). It's possible he was actually chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Paul identifies the six main pieces of a Roman soldier's equipment: the belt, the breastplate, the boots, the shield, the helmet, and the sword. He tells us each of those picture a spiritual resource available to us in Christ.

Piece #1--the Belt of Truth. The soldier's belt was usually made of leather. He put it on first. Actually it was an undergarment, and not a piece of armor. Yet it was essential. The belt held his sword. The belt wrapped around the soldier's waist in order to draw up his tunic and keep it from dangling down to his feet. He couldn't go to battle if his garment was loose fitting.

Illust: Football players don't wear loosefitting clothes. Why not? They don't want to leave the opponent any handles by which they can grab hold

The belt gave the soldier mobility and freedom.

Listen. What is our belt as Christians?

V 14--"Truth." Our belt is truth. Truth is that which is solid and secure, not spongy or unreliable. Absolute truth brings freedom and confidence. The person who tells the truth and lives by the truth experiences freedom in his life.

What is truth? It can refer to the content of the Word of God. A person puts on the belt of truth when he affirms that Jesus Christ is the truth. That's conversion.

The word also carries with it the sense of integrity and sincerity, even the idea of dependability and faithfulness. At all costs, Christians must be honest and truthful, not shady, not unethical in their dealings. Why not? Listen, when we resort to dishonesty and scheming, we are playing the devil's game, and we'll never be able to beat him at his own game. He is a liar, and the father of lies. Jesus Christ is the "way, the truth, and the life."

Problem: There's a great lack of truth in people today, even Christians. Their word means little. You can't count on them. They adopt the world's unethical approach to life--"If it works, do it. If it makes you feel good, go for it."

Illust:

That's pure pragmatism. Paul admonishes us, "Put on the belt of truth."

Listen. Here's where it starts. You'll never, never stand against the powerful forces of Satan unless you put on the belt of truth.

Have you admitted that Jesus is the truth?

Illust:

Tran: How can I stand in the battle? I must begin by putting on the belt of truth.

II. The Breastplate of Righteousness (14)

V 14 "Stand. . . having on the breastplate of righteousness"

One commentator (MacArthur) said it well, "No Roman soldier in his right mind would ever go into a battle without his breastplate." The Romans had different kinds of breastplates. The most common type was a molded metal chest plate that covered the entire torso, from the neck to the top of the thighs, on both his front and back. Obviously the breastplate was critical.

Listen. A soldier could be in great shape, a great warrior, great at hand to hand combat. But he was a fool if he went into battle w/o his breastplate. Why?

What did it protect? The heart and the rest of the vital organs.

Q: What is the our breastplate?

A: V 14 "Righteousness" (lit. "breastplate which is righteousness")

What is biblical righteousness? There are two kinds. First there is positional righteousness--a right relationship with God. The Bible calls that Justification. When a person repents of his/her sin, and believes in Christ, God declares that person to be right with Him. That's where spiritual protection starts. Positional righteousness.

Is 61:10 "I delight greatly in the Lord. . . robe of righteousness"

II Cor 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin. . ."

Q: Is your heart protected by the righteousness of Christ?

Secondly, there's practical righteousness. Moral righteousness.

4:24 "new man created in righteousness. . ."

4:27 "neither give place to the devil"

We obviously need both--positional and practical righteousness. In fact, you can't separate the two. Being righteous is just as important as being declared righteous.

The name "Satan" means adversary. The word "devil" means slanderer. The Evil One loves to attack us by flinging accusations against us, by inflicting us with thoughts of doubt. And he has a heyday with those who fail to put on the breastplate of practical righteousness.

Illust: Christians not living in obedience to Christ

Tragic Problem: I chuckled at first, but the more I reflect, the more I agree with an observation made in MacArthur's book, "The Believer's Armor." The typical breastplate many Christians are putting on today resembles a paper bib more than the breastplate of righteousness in Eph 6! A paper bib may keep baby food off an infant but it won't protect him from a sniper's bullet. What are some examples of Paper Armor? When we substitute programs, techniques, methods in the place of biblical righteousness, we're exchanging the biblical breastplate for a paper bib!

Illust: In the military--they don't say, "Well thanks for coming to boot camp. Since you're here, it would be nice if you'd wear our uniform. And oh, if it wouldn't be too much of an inconvenience, would you like to live in our barracks, eat our food, and take our orders?"

You're expected to do that! So for the Christian.

Challenge: Daily put on the righteousness of Christ.

1. Review your position--Quote II Cor 5:21.

2. Resolve to live according to your position--"Be ye holy. . ." I Pt 1:21

Tran: Are we ready for the battle yet? No. We're a third of the way there!

III. Gospel of Peace Boots (15)

V 15 "Stand. . . and your feet shod. . ."

Some people love shoes! For us shoes are to a large degree a fashion item. Originally shoes were for protection. Like one commentator (Mac) said, "Frankly we don't need that much protection for our feet. Our streets are paved. Our cars, churches, and offices are carpeted. For the most part we aren't walking over rough stones, wading through mud, or strolling across thorny bushes. We need to understand how terrible the terrain was during the time of Christ."

A soldier needed shoes. But not just any shoes would do. The Roman soldier wore a battle boot. It was like a leather sandal with hob nails on the bottom, tied up with leather straps around the ankles and shins (like a studded tire). Why the studs on the bottom? To keep the soldier's feet from slipping! In close, hand to hand combat, sure footing was critical. One slip and you're done.

Illust: B-ball against Botkins--I slipped and we lost the game.

Q: What is it that gives the Christian stability in his/her life?

A: "preparation" = made ready or equipped

What does that mean? Paul says our feet need to be equipped. How? They need to be shod with something. What?

V 15 "The Gospel of Peace"

Ps 121:1 "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He who keepeth . . . not slumber."

Rom 5:1 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. . ."

Listen. The Gospel IS peace. Man was at war with God, but God made peace through Jesus Christ. We are at peace with God. That means we aren't enemies any longer! The devil hates the gospel.

Observation: Do you know who the most stable Christians generally are? Those that are sharing the gospel of peace with others. Do you know why? Listen. If the gospel doesn't mean enough to me that I'm willing and ready to share it with someone else, something's wrong! It means I don't have on the gospel of peace boots!

Key: What did Jesus say is to be our #1 aim in life if we're His follower?

Mt 28:19-20 His last words, "In your going, make disciples. . ."

**Evangelism and Discipleship

Q: Are you prepared to share Jesus Christ with others?

Lots of us are not. Why not? Because of sin. Of lack of training. Of wrong priorities ("I don't have time").

Illust: Lady leaving church last week (Foresta). The Spirit prodded me to ask, "Have you ever come to the place in your life where you received Christ as your Savior?" No. "Would you be interested in learning how?" Yes. WOW!

Tran: Are you prepared for battle? Do you have on the Belt of truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness, and the Gospel of Peace Boots? 4th piece of equipment.

IV. Faith Shield (16)

V 16 "Above all, taking the shield of faith. . ."

"above all" --not that it's more imp't = "besides all these"

What else do we need? "the shield of faith"

The soldier's shield was large, usually about 4' by 2'. It was a big, thick plank of wood. It was covered on the outside with metal and even leather at times. The metal would deflect arrows, while the leather would extinguish the fiery pitch on the arrows.

What is our shield? "faith"

We are saved by faith (Eph 2:8). But the faith mentioned here is not saving faith, as much as living faith. The Christian life begins by faith, and must be lived day by day by faith.

I Jn 5:4

Col 1:23; 2:7

Interesting note: The edges of these shields were made to interlock. An entire line of soldiers could hook their shields together and march into the enemy like a solid wall.

Listen Christian. You are not in the battle alone! You can't succeed alone. You need your brother and sister in Christ.

Q: Why do you need a shield of faith?

V 16 "with which quench the fiery darts of the wicked"

"darts" = an arrow, a bolt, a missile!

"fiery" = In the battles of Roman times, archers would put a cotton material on the tip of their arrows and soak it in pitch, which would burn slowly but was very hot. Before they shot the arrow, they would light it. When the arrow hit its target, the pitch would splatter and start little fires on the clothing of the soldier.

That's why a shield was so vital.

"the wicked" = The Wicked One = Satan

Listen. Here's the picture in v 16--The devil is like an archer on a wall shooting down on us. The implication of is clear. Don't be surprised when you're shot at! It will happen! Just make sure your shield is in place! Then you'll be OK.

What are Satan's darts? Paul says they are "fiery." And when he says "all," he indicates Satan has a variety of missiles in his arsenal: seduction, selfishness, fear, disappointment, lust, greed, vanity, covetousness, doubts, hateful thoughts.

Q: Is Satan real to you?

Illust: Martin Luther is one of the great Christians in the history of the church. He was instrumental in the Reformation of the church in the 16th century. There was a time in his life when his conflict with Satan became so real that it took a physical manifestation for him. In anger over Satan's presence, Luther picked up his inkwell and through it at him. It broke and splattered ink all over his wall. The stain

remained for many years reminding people of how vivid the conflict had been in his life.

Next Week:

V. Salvation's Helmet (17)

V 17 "And take the helmet of salvation"

VI. The Spirit's Sword (18)

V 17 "And take. . . the sword of the Spirit"

Conclusion:

Illust: Something struck me Tuesday morning. I took a break from studying and looked out the window. It was snowing. The ground was bare. Millions of individual snowflakes were falling out of the sky. One at a time they hit the ground. And one at a time they disappeared. It didn't seem like those little flakes were having an impact on anything. They were so small, so seemingly insignificant. But over the course of time, something happens. Before long you don't see the individual flakes anymore. What do you see? A blanket of snow.

That's the way sin is. It starts out seeming so small, so insignificant. Then it escalades, it builds, it blankets our lives.

We have a fierce enemy. Christ conquered that enemy when He went to the Cross. He defeated that enemy for us when He shed His blood and died as our Substitute. When He returns to the earth, He will once and for all cast Satan and his wicked hosts into the lake of fire.

You can be on the winning side. Are you? Are you in Christ.

Prov 30:5 "He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him."

Quote: "A Mighty Fortress"