

## Wheelersburg Baptist Church 2/9/03 Brad Brandt

### Ephesians 6:14-17 "How to Survive in Spiritual Warfare—part 2" \*\*

Main Idea: According to Ephesians 6:14-17, God has provided us with spiritual armor. If we are going to survive in spiritual warfare two things are essential.

I. We need to know something about our spiritual armor.

A. We have what we need.

1. The armor is Christ.

2. The armor is complete.

B. We need what we have.

1. We must appropriate all the armor.

2. We must appropriate all the armor all the time.

II. We need to do something with our spiritual armor.

A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a).

1. A person puts on the belt of truth when he affirms that Jesus is the truth.

2. A person puts on the belt of truth when he resolves to walk in integrity.

B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b).

1. We need positional righteousness.

2. We need practical righteousness.

C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15).

1. The gospel protects us.

2. The gospel prepares us for action.

D. We must raise the faith shield (16).

1. The Christian life begins by faith.

2. The Christian life must be lived by faith day by day.

E. We must take the helmet of salvation (17a).

F. We must take the sword of the Spirit (17b).

The Bottom Line: You can be on the winning side.

There we were at 8,000 feet altitude in Yellowstone Park. Granted, it was the end of June but it gets cold at night even in early summer at that height. At least it did for us. We were camping there, Sherry, the girls, and I. But we were ready. We had our equipment tucked away inside our pop up camper, including an electric heater. The elements wouldn't bother us. We were ready come what may.

And then we discovered one little hitch. There was no electricity at the camp site. An electric heater does a wonderful job *if* you have power. Without power it is simply a box that takes up space.

None of us will ever forget taking down the camper with sleet snapping against our faces. We had to cut our five night stay down to two nights in Yellowstone. We just couldn't stay warm, all because we didn't have the right equipment.

It's frustrating to try to do something when you don't have the right resources. The failure to plan can cause problems. What you don't know can hurt you.

Quite frankly, that's why many Christians are frustrated in living the Christian life. They ignore their resources, and they're paying quite a price for it. The sad thing is this. It need not be so.

The truth is, although we are at war and although we have a vicious enemy, we can stand. How do I know?

According to Ephesians 6:14-17, God has provided us with spiritual armor. We began to examine this armor last time. Verses 10-13 tell us to stand. Verses 14-18 tell us how. If we are going to survive in spiritual warfare two things are essential.

### I. We need to know something about our spiritual armor.

Specifically, we need to know two vital truths.

A. We have what we need. Verse 11, "Put on the *full* armor of God." Verse 13, "Put on the *full* armor of God." Let that word sink in. We have available to us the *full* armor of God.

What do you need armor for? You need armor if you are at war. We are. We are in a battle. You and I are under attack. We have an enemy. A fierce, cunning, powerful enemy.

How can we survive? Ephesians 6 tells us. Ephesians 6 is our warfare manual. According to Ephesians 6:10-13, we must fulfill three responsibilities if we're going to survive the attacks of the evil one. We must *depend*, namely, depend on the Lord and on His power (10). We must *discern*, that is, we must recognize the armor of God and the attack of the devil (11-12). Finally, we must *defend* (13). Our mission isn't offensive, but defensive.

But how can we be prepared for the battle? What must we do day by day if we are to stand when so many are falling?

We'll see this morning in Ephesians 6:14-17. God has given us the spiritual equipment we need to stand for Him in the midst of raging spiritual warfare. And those who stand are those who grasp this vital truth. We have what we need. We have available to us the *full* armor of God.

Just what is this armor? Simply put...

1. *The armor is Christ.* In a moment we'll look at the six pieces of armor one by one: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and so on. As we'll see these six virtues or qualities belong to Christ. To put on the armor is to put on Christ. Using a clothing analogy Paul communicated the same truth in Romans 13:14, "Rather, *clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ*, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Keep this in mind. The weapons we have are not moral qualities but divine realities. If you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are defenseless. You are fair game for the enemy. But if you know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have all you need for the battle. The armor is Christ Himself. What's more...

2. *The armor is complete.* Again, it's the *full* armor. There is no chink in the armor that Christ has provided for His people. You have what it takes.

The soldier's first article of faith is summed up nowhere more eloquently than in an 1865 letter from William Tecumseh Sherman to U.S. Grant: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come--if alive." This is the unwritten, unspoken but unbreakable contract of the battlefield: You will leave no one, dead or alive, in the hands of the enemy.

Let this sink in, fellow soldiers. We have what we need. Every day is a battle. Every day involves dangerous struggle. But if we know Christ, we have all we need. We need to know that if we're going to survive. And this, too.

B. We need what we have. We have what we need, but we also need what we have. What does that mean? Two things...

1. *We must appropriate all the armor.* "Put on the *full* armor of God." The *full* armor is needed. You do not have what it takes in your own strength to stand in this battle. You do have what it takes, but it's not something within you. It's external. It's something you must put on. And you must put it *all* on.

You see, Satan will attack at your point of vulnerability. "But," you say, "I've put on most of the armor. There's just one little habit I want to hold on to. I'll be okay." Or maybe for you it's an attitude, "I have great relationships with people. What's wrong if I have one person I'm not willing to forgive? It's just one person."

Look at Ephesians 4:26-27, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." To excuse one small sin is like a soldier saying as he heads into battle, "But I've only left one part of my body unprotected." How big of an opening does a flaming arrow need?

Listen. We have what we need. God has given it to us. But we must appropriate it, *all* of it.

2. *We must appropriate all the armor all the time.* We must not underestimate our enemy. Verse 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 (Mark 5:2-4), intelligent (Acts 16:16), and deceptive. They promote false doctrine and religions, can inhabit bodies, inflict illness, hinder Christian workers (I Thes 2:18), oppose the spread of the gospel, and are able to work miracles.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 gives us a vivid description of how he works. "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

You say, "Well I'm a Christian. I'm safe in Jesus' arms. Satan can't touch me." Be careful. Take a close look at what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, *who has taken them captive to do his will.*"

Yes, even believers can be enticed and 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). He deceived Peter into denying the necessity of Christ's sacrifice (Matt 16:21-23). He filled the hearts of Ananias and Saphira to lie (Acts 5).

We have a great enemy. But remember. We have a greater Savior! And when He came to the earth 2000 years ago and went to the cross, do you know what He did? Colossians 2:15 says, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Jesus Christ defeated Satan at the cross. Since that's true, what must we do? First, make sure we are IN HIM. Do you know Him personally? Then secondly, stand in Him. As I mentioned last time, we do not fight *for* victory, but *from* victory.

If you are serious about survival, you need to know something about our spiritual armor. We have all we need. We need all we have. But it takes more than mere knowledge. Something else is vital.

## II. We need to do something with our spiritual armor.

Practically speaking, how do we prepare ourselves so we can stand in Christ? Paul tells us in verses 14-17. We need to *do* something. We need to take specific action with regards to the armor we have.

This is critical to see. Each piece of armor is something we *have*. But each piece of armor is also something

we must *appropriate*.

A welder exposes himself to dangerous light every time he does his work. That's why he has a shield. But the shield will do him no good unless he what? He must use it. That's what we need to do with the armor of God. *Use* it. How? Let's find out. We'll look at the first pieces of armor this week and the rest next time.

A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a). "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist." 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 mentioned last week that when Paul wrote Ephesians, he was a prisoner in Rome. According to verse 20 he was in chains. 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.

Notice the first piece he mentions, 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.

Football players don't wear loose fitting 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. What is our belt as Christians? Paul says 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. Ultimately, it refers to the person of Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life," He said (John 14:6).

How do you on the belt of truth? It involves two actions.

1. *A person puts on the belt of truth when he affirms that Jesus is the truth.* That happens at conversion. It also needs to happen in our lives every day.

Satan is a liar. One of his primary tactics is deception. We need to affirm that Jesus is the truth.

The word "truth" also carries with it the sense of integrity and sincerity, even the idea of dependability and faithfulness. Thus, a second action...

2. *A person puts on the belt of truth when he resolves to walk in integrity.* At all costs, Christians must be honest and truthful, not shady, not unethical in their dealings. Why? Because 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.

Charles Hodge observed, "Let not anyone imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle of spider webs. They give way at the first onset."

Which raises a problem. There is 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."

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

Here's where it starts. You'll never, never stand against the powerful forces of Satan unless you affirm that Jesus is the truth and resolve to walk in truth and integrity every day.

Remember, you have what you need, and you need what you have. Put on Christ, who is the truth. And choose to walk in His steps. When you're closing that business deal. When you're doing your homework at school. When you're doing your tax return. Put on the belt of truth, and then you'll be able to stand against the wiles of the evil one.

How can you stand in the battle? You begin by putting on the belt of truth.

B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b). "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place."

Satan is the accuser (Rev 12:10). He loves to accuse God's people. "You call yourself a Christian. There's no way you can be a Christian, not after what you just did," he whispers. How do we withstand his accusations? By putting 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.

Think about this. 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 without his breastplate. Why? What did this piece of armor protect? It covered the heart and the rest of the vital organs. A person can be in great shape, but an arrow through the heart signifies the end.

What is our breastplate? Paul says we must put on the breastplate of *righteousness* (lit. "breastplate which is righteousness"). Which raises the question, what is biblical righteousness? Basically, there are two kinds in the Bible (and we need both).

1. *We need positional righteousness*. Positional righteousness is a right relationship with God. We enter this world as sinners cut off from God. We need to be reconciled to God, made right with God. The Bible calls that justification.

When a person repents of his or her sin and believes in Christ, God declares that person to be right with Him. He does so on the merit of His Son. He gives to the sinner the perfect righteousness of Jesus' perfect life.

That's where spiritual protection starts, with *positional* righteousness. Listen to Isaiah 61:10, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness..."

Would you answer this important question. Has God clothed you with a robe of righteousness? Is your heart protected by the righteousness of Christ?

2. *We need practical righteousness*. We could call that moral righteousness. Again, we have what we need. 2 Corinthians 6:7 says we have "weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left." But what we have we are to put on. Ephesians 4:24 tells us "to put on the new self, created to be like God in true

righteousness and holiness."

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 hay day with those who fail to put on the breastplate of practical righteousness.

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*. He says the typical breastplate many Christians are putting on today resembles a paper bib more than the breastplate of righteousness in Ephesians 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, and methods in the place of biblical righteousness, we're exchanging the biblical breastplate for a paper bib!

Here's something you'll never see happen 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?"

No way. You're expected to do that! So for the Christian. You have all you need, but you need all you have. You need to put on the righteousness of Christ daily. How? Every day you need to review your position. Quote 2 Corinthians 5:21 out loud and affirm its truth. Then resolve to live according to your position. "Be holy as I am holy," God says in 1 Peter 1:21.

Can you say the following words truthfully as the testimony of your life? Here's what Paul trusted in (Philippians 3:8-9): "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a *righteousness of my own* that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the *righteousness that comes from God* and is by faith."

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

C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15). "Stand firm then...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."

Some people love shoes. In our society shoes are to a large degree a fashion item. Originally shoes were for protection. One commentator observed (MacArthur), "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.

What is it that gives the Christian stability in his or her life? Paul tells us in verse 15. We need to have our feet fitted with the "readiness" that comes from something. The term "readiness" is "preparation" in the KJV. It means "made ready or equipped."

What does that mean? Paul says our feet need to be equipped. How? They need to be shod with something. With what? The "gospel of peace."

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! Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

That's why the devil hates the gospel. That's also why we need the gospel. Yes, we believers need the gospel. The gospel does more than just save us. The gospel is part of our armor. The gospel does two things for us.

1. *The gospel protects us.* That's why we cover our feet with it.

Habakkuk 3:19 says, "The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights." Hodge states, "As the Gospel secures our peace with God, and gives the assurance of his favor, it produces that joyful alacrity of mind which is essential to success in the spiritual conflict. All doubt tends to weakness, and despair is death."

2. *The gospel prepares us for action.* Do you know who the most stable Christians generally are? Those that are sharing the gospel of peace with others. Do you know why? 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.

What did Jesus say is to be our #1 task in life if we are His follower? Matthew 28:19-20, His last words, "In your going, make disciples." He left us here to spread the gospel to others.

Are you doing that? Are you *prepared* to do that? Lots of us are not. Why not? Because of sin. Or lack of training. Or wrong priorities ("I don't have time").

Beloved, we need to put on the gospel of peace boots and start marching!

A fourth piece of equipment. We'll touch on it and develop it further next time.

D. We must raise the faith shield (16). "In addition to all this [that is, to the first three pieces of armor], take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." 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? It's the shield of *faith*. Faith is vital.

1. *The Christian life begins by faith.* Ephesians 2:8 says so. But know this...

2. *The Christian life must be lived by faith day by day.* The faith mentioned here in verse 16 is not saving faith as much as living faith. Listen to 1 John 5:4-5, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

Here's an interesting piece of information. The edges of these first century, Roman 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 brothers and

sisters in Christ.

Now, why specifically do you need a shield of faith? Verse 16 says you need it to "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." The KJV refers to them as "fiery darts," a term that can speak of an arrow, a bolt, even a missile.

He calls them "fiery" arrows. 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.

Where do these fiery arrows originate? They come from the "evil one." [KJV "the wicked," that is, The Wicked One. Satan].

Listen. Here's the picture in verse 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 okay.

What are Satan's darts? Paul says they are "flaming." 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.

One of Satan's favorite questions is, "Did God really say that?" That's the tactic he used with Eve in Genesis 3:1, and he does the same today.

Is Satan real to you? 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.

Several years ago I was in my study on a Tuesday morning when 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 Satan's fiery darts work. Sin 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.

Next week we'll take another look at this fourth piece of armor and the following two.

E. We must take the helmet of salvation (17a).

F. We must take the sword of the Spirit (17b).

Until the, dear friend, know this. If you know Christ, you have what you need. But you also need what you have *every day*. Here's why. In the words of Martin Luther:



*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 pow'r 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;  
Lord Sabbath, His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And tho' this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph thro' 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 word above all earthly pow'rs,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours Thro'  
Him who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

The Bottom Line: You can be on the winning side.

Let's use what Christ has provided for us.