

Main Idea: According to Ephesians 6:14-17, we have two responsibilities with regards to our armor. The first is knowing what we have. The second is using what we have.

- I. Responsibility #1: Knowing what we have
 - A. God's armor involves a person (10).
 - B. God's armor involves a purpose (11-13).
 - C. God's armor involves parts (14-17).
 - D. God's armor involves prayer and perseverance (18).
- II. Responsibility #2: Using what we have
 - A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a).
 - B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b).
 - C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15).
 - 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).
 1. A Christian is someone who has been saved.
 2. A strong Christian is someone who thinks like a saved person.
 - F. We must take the sword of the Spirit (17b).
 1. The sword is our only offensive weapon.
 2. The sword is God's Word.
 3. The sword is effective only if we use it.

The Point of It All: We have armor because we have a mission.

The Bible uses many images to communicate what the Christian life is like. The Christian life is like a runner in a race (1 Cor 9:24). It's like a child in a family (1 Peter 2:1-2). It's like tree bearing fruit (Psalm 1:3; John 15:5). It's like a farmer working for a harvest (James 5:7-8). And there are others, one of which we're considering in our current series. It's like a soldier in a war. According to Ephesians 6, the Christian life is a battle. Standing is the goal. And the armor of God is our Lord's gift to us that makes it possible to stand in this battle, rather than fall. We've come to part three in our series entitled, “*The Christian and the Armor of God.*”

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

In my desk I have something that's worth little that I value greatly. It's a sermon outline written by my grandfather one hundred years ago in the 1920s. He was an itinerant preacher in West Virginia. He later told me as an 80 year old man, “God called me to preach when I was a young man. I regret I eventually ran from his calling, like Jonah, and stopped preaching. Don't you ever do that.”

He entitled this particular sermon, “The Armour of God.” Here's what he wrote.

-Text: Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:11.

-Scripture: 6:1-14. Ephesians.

None here but what loves peace.

None among us but what knows something of the horrors of war. We none want war.

No nation would go to war, lest first they

Count the cost

Prepare navy

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

² For a previous look at this passage, see the series on “Living with a Warfare Mentality” at WBC in 2003, as well as “The Armor of God” in 2013.

Recruit and train army

Arm them with the best guns, swords, gas masks and all equipment known to man to overcome enemy and protect men.

Have you accepted God as your Savior? If you have you have enlisted for greatest war every fought. If you have enlisted you must prepare:

A) Put on the whole armour of God

B) You can't be a good soldier unless prepared to meet the enemy

C) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Eph 6:12

You can't battle against these things with: Guns, swords, gases, aeroplanes, battleships or any material of modern warfare.

Christians the world is waiting: one hand to the ear, the other to the eyes.

Brothers and sisters, many things have changed since my grandfather penned those words in the 1920s. But this hasn't changed. We are in a battle, and we can't battle our spiritual enemy with guns, swords, gases, and aeroplanes, nor with fighter jets or nuclear bombs, for that matter. We must appropriate the *armor of God*.

This morning, we're going to see that we have two responsibilities with regards to our armor, according to Ephesians 6:14-17.

I. Responsibility #1: Knowing what we have

When it comes to armor, we have what we need, and we need what we have. Our gracious God has not left us deficient. In a moment we'll be looking at the various pieces of armor, but to appreciate our spiritual protection we must keep in mind the big picture. There are four truths we need to know about God's armor, as spelled out in Ephesians 6.

A. God's armor involves a person (10). Notice verse 10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." Our strength is found where? In the *Lord*. The armor is Christ. The armor is complete.

Twice in this section Paul exhorts us to, "Put on the full armor of God." This is not some mechanical exercise, nor should it be reduced to some sort of moral checklist. It's highly personal for it involves a person, namely Jesus Christ. To put on the armor is to put on Christ, to consciously choose to depend on our powerful Savior as we seek to fulfill the mission He has given us.

B. God's armor involves a purpose (11-13). "Put on the full armor of God **so that** [here's the purpose] you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." We need God's armor so that as we seek to fulfill our mission, we can stand.

What makes standing so difficult? It's the character and capacity of our opponent. According to verses 12-13, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, **so that** when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

There's the purpose again. We need the armor so we can *stand*.³ As Charles Wesley put it in his second verse of *Soldiers of Christ, Arise*:

*Stand then in his great might,
with all his strength endued;*

³ Paul elaborates in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

*but take, to arm you for the fight,
the panoply of God.
Leave no unguarded place,
no weakness of the soul;
take ev'ry virtue, ev'ry grace,
and fortify the whole.*

C. God's armor involves parts (14-17). What are they? Paul mentions six pieces of armor in verses 14-17: a belt, a breastplate, some boots, a shield, a helmet, and a sword. The armor is a unit, but it involves variety. Specific pieces of armor protect specific parts of the soldier's body. We have what we need, and we need it all.

D. God's armor involves prayer and perseverance (18). This is next week's message, the Lord willing. We're challenged with the need for prayer at the beginning of verse 18, and the need for perseverance at the end, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

So to put it simply, when it comes to spiritual armor, we have all we need. But it's not in us, but in Him. We are weak, but He isn't. He is a strong, mighty Warrior-King. And He has given us access to His help 24/7. So we must pray, and persist in prayer.

We can't overemphasize this. We won't stand in the battle until we grasp the truth that we have what we need, not in ourselves, but in Christ. And what we have, we need, meaning, we must appropriate all the armor. More specifically, we must appropriate all the armor *all the time*, and do it together, for this is a corporate assignment.

This is the point of verse 1 in Wesley's beloved hymn:

*Soldiers of Christ, arise,
and put your armor on,
strong in the strength which God supplies
thro' his eternal Son.
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
and in his mighty pow'r,
who in the strength of Jesus trusts
is more than conqueror.*

We can't be flippant and passive if we're going to stand in this spiritual battle.

Lanny Bassham, Olympic gold-medallist in small-bore rifle competition in 1976, shared these thoughts regarding what concentration does for his marksmanship:

"Our sport is controlled non-movement. We are shooting from 50 meters--over half a football field--at a bull's eye three-quarters the size of a dime. If the angle of error at the point of the barrel is more than .005 of a millimeter (that is five one-thousandths), you drop into the next circle and lose a point. So we have to learn how to make everything stop. I stop my breathing. I stop my digestion by not eating for 12 hours before the competition. I train by running to keep my pulse around 60, so I have a full second between beats--I have gotten it lower, but found that the stroke-volume increased so much that each beat really jolted me. You do all of this and you have the technical control. But you have to have some years of experience in reading conditions: the wind, the mirage. Then you have the other 80% of the problems--the mind.⁴

⁴ *Sports Illustrated*, August 2, 1976, pp. 31-35, quoted in *How to Profit from Bible Reading*, I. L. Jensen, Moody Press, p. 80.

If this is necessary for an athlete preparing for a competition, it's even more necessary for a soldier preparing for a battle. The stakes are certainly higher. Fellow soldiers of Christ, standing involves knowing what we have. Do you know what you have?

Some of us know what we have in the bank, and we check our phone app multiple times a day. We make sure that we know. Some of us know the tools we have in the shop. We inventory them, and study them, to make sure we know what we have. And so I ask you, my fellow soldier of Christ, do you know what you have?

Why not start right here? Memorize these verses. Then on a daily basis, put on these six pieces of armor. Then study them. Read the Owner's Manual every day to find out what you have. Study truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. Read a good book, like David Powlison's, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles*, or John MacArthur's, *How to Meet the Enemy*.

The point is this. If we know Christ, we have what we need, but we need what we have. Spiritual survival starts right here. We need to know something about our spiritual armor, hence our first responsibility. Knowing what we have.

II. Responsibility #2: Using what we have

We talked about how to use the first three pieces last time. Let's take another look at them briefly, and then focus on how to use the final three pieces of armor.

A. We must wear the belt of truth (14a). "Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist."⁵ Someone else wore this belt of truth. The Messiah did, and this image comes from the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 11:5. The Lord made it clear to Isaiah that when the Messiah comes to earth, He's going to come as a soldier on a fighting mission, a shoot from the stump of Jesse (1), with the Spirit of the LORD resting on him (2), and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth (4), and righteousness and faithfulness shall be his belt (5).

And He has come. His name is Jesus. He is the One who put on that belt of truth, conquered the enemy, and rescued the hostages.

Now we, the people He has rescued, are called to do the same. Fasten on the belt. What belt? What is our belt as Christians? Paul says our belt is the same as our Savior's.

Our belt is truth. The Christian life begins when we admit that Jesus is the truth, as He claimed, but putting on the belt of truth goes a step further. To put on truth is to allow the One who is truth to be seen through us. It involves a resolve to speak as He spoke and walk as He walked, in integrity and honesty and clarity.

Truth is to characterize us. Every day we must affirm that we will speak and practice the truth, as our Savior did. "Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is our head," said Paul back in 4:15.

B. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness (14b). This comes from Isaiah 59:17. Who else arms Himself this way? God does.⁶ Why? Because when He looked at His world, He saw that truth was lacking, and it displeased Him (15). He also saw that there was no man, no one to intercede and fix this problem (16). So "His own arm brought him salvation," says verse 16.

This is another Messianic prophecy. When the Messiah comes, He will come as a warrior on a mission, says Isaiah, to rescue His people, and destroy those who resist. What will He look like? You won't miss Him, says Isaiah. Just look for the One wearing

⁵ The soldier put on his belt first. Actually it was an undergarment, and not a piece of armor. Yet it was essential. He wrapped the belt around his 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.

⁶ Observation by David Powlison, p. 28.

righteousness as a breastplate. Verse 17 says, “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”

To put it simply, the world has gone wrong, but when the Messiah comes, He will make things right. And one of the ways He does it is by sharing what He has with His people. We too, we know have repented and put our trust in Jesus, are now privileged to wear what He wore, a “breastplate of righteousness.”

What is righteousness? Again, it’s not so much *what*, but *who*. Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to put on Christ. It’s to acknowledge that our right standing before God is based on what Christ did at the cross, not on what we do. To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to trust in Christ and then let Him live His righteous life through us. It’s to live the right kind of life in a world filled with people who are living the wrong way, by His grace, and for His glory.

C. We must wear the gospel of peace boots (15).⁷ This picture comes from Isaiah 52:7. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

Whose feet are beautiful? According to Isaiah 52, these feet belong to the Lord Himself who will come in person, saying, “Here I am (verse 6). I have come to bring salvation.” And how will He do it? Isaiah gives that prophecy in the very next chapter, Isaiah 53. There He says that the One with beautiful feet will become a Lamb that will rescue sinners by dying for them.

And once He rescues us, He gives us a new pair of shoes. Actually, they’re not new. They are His shoes, the same ones He wore. Gospel shoes.

Think of it this way. What do our feet do for us? They take us places. What are we as Christ-followers to take with us wherever we go? We are to take the good news that produces peace, first, peace with God, and then, peace with people. We are to take the gospel wherever we go, and we do that by wearing the gospel of peace boots.

Why do we wear these gospel boots? We wear them because others need the gospel, and we are to share it with them. But there’s another reason. We need the gospel too. Yes, *Christians* need the gospel. We need to put it on daily by reviewing the amazing account of what Christ did for us. It’s this message that protects us, from error, from pride, from complacency, from anxiety and fear. This gospel produces peace, and we need it, just like our unsaved neighbors need it.

So we put it on daily. We put it on so we can share it with each other, and the lost. We proclaim that God is holy and worthy, and also that we are sinners who have rebelled against Him and deserve His just wrath. But we also proclaim that the One who is holy has sent His Son, His only begotten Son, to become a substitute, to live the righteous life we all fail to live, and to die the death we deserve to die, to conquer the foes we could never conquer, including sin, death, and the devil. Now, whoever calls upon the One whom God has sent shall be saved. This is the good news. This is the gospel.

Have you believed it? If so, put it on your feet, as your Savior did, and take it wherever you go.

In verse 16 Paul moves to a fourth piece of armor. The NIV says, “In addition to all this,” that is, in addition to putting on the first three pieces of armor, we need to do the following. The ESV says, “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.”

⁷ The Roman soldier wore a battle boot, a leather sandal with hob nails on the bottom, tied up with leather straps around the ankles and shins.

D. We must raise the faith shield (16). Why do we need a shield? Because as we march through the world with the gospel of peace, there's an enemy who doesn't want this message to go forth. And he's shooting at us. What kind of ammunition does he use? Flaming darts, says Paul.

David Powlison points out, "The shield is the one piece of weaponry that Paul did not pull from Isaiah. It is the only piece that intends to communicate a protective role as we face counterattacks of lies and hostilities."⁸

The Roman 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? This image comes from the Psalms. What is the shield there? Again, it is the Lord Himself. Listen to Psalm 18:1-3, "I love you, O Lord, my strength.² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.³ I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies."

Let's be clear. Faith isn't our shield, not really. Faith doesn't have protective power. It's the Lord who has the power, and the Lord is our shield. Faith is simply the means He uses to share His power with us.

But by His design, faith is very important, in two ways.

1. *The Christian life begins by faith.* How does a person become a Christian? By living a good life? No. By being baptized or going through confirmation classes? No. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, so no one can boast (Eph 2:8-9)." But once saved, faith doesn't leave.

2. *The Christian life must be lived by faith day by day.* Paul's not talking about saving faith in verse 16, but what we might call *living* faith.⁹ And raising this living-faith shield is a community project. It's something we do together, as a church.

It's worth noting that the edges of first century Roman shields were made to interlock. So an entire line of soldiers would hook their shields together and march into the enemy like a solid wall. And so, Christian soldiers, we're not to fight this battle alone. We need each other.

And why specifically do we need this shield of faith? In the NIV verse 16 says we 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.

The ESV refers to them as "flaming darts". You've probably seen it in the movies. In 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 flaming darts originate? Verse 16 says they come from the "evil one." [KJV "the wicked," that is, the wicked one, Satan].

So the devil is like an archer on a wall shooting at us. We musn't be surprised when he attacks. We know he will. But if we raise the shield of faith, we'll be okay.

What are Satan's darts? Notice the word "all," as in "*all* the flaming darts of the evil one." This indicates Satan has a variety of missiles in his arsenal.

⁸ David Powlison, p. 30.

⁹ John talked about this living faith in 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."

One is *doubt*. “You’ve messed up way too many times,” whispers the evil one. “You’ll never be a good Christian like those other people at church.”

Another fiery dart is *vanity*. “If only other people appreciated you. That’s why you’re not getting along with them. It’s their fault.”

Another is *disappointment*. “After all you’ve done for the Lord, life should be better than this, shouldn’t it?”

Another is *fear*, a big time fiery dart in this pandemic. “The government is going to get you, if the virus doesn’t get you first. You better just pull back and think of yourself for awhile.”

Another is *lust*. “You deserve a little pleasure today, don’t you?”

Another is *deception*. “No one has ever suffered like you, and here’s why. The God of the Bible is unjust, and you can’t trust him.”

And there are many other darts, including seduction, selfishness, greed, covetousness, and hateful thoughts.

Several years ago I was in my study on a winter morning and took a break and looked out the window. It was snowing. The ground was bare, but 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, of course, over the course of time, something happened. Before long I didn’t see the individual flakes anymore, just a blanket of snow.

That’s the way Satan’s fiery darts work. He throws a thought at us. Nothing big, so it seems. But instead of raising the faith shield to that thought, we hold on to it. And then a subsequent thought sticks to the first, and then another, and another.

The Bible has much to say about Satan. His name appears 49 times in the Bible (not counting the appearances of his other titles).

⇒1 Chronicles 21:1 says Satan duped David into sinning.

⇒ Job 1:6-7 says Satan inflicted Job.

⇒ Luke 22:31 indicates that Satan wanted to destroy Peter, but thankfully, Jesus said in verse 32, “But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

⇒ Satan manipulated the believers Ananias and Saphira, according to Acts 5:3.

⇒ 1 Thessalonians 2:18 indicates that Satan tries to hinder ministers of the gospel.

No question about it. Satan is powerful and his attack is vicious. But when we raise the faith shield, there’s nothing he can do. As James puts it, “Submit yourselves therefore to God [i.e. raise the faith shield]. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).”

Brothers and sisters, Christ conquered our enemy when He went to the cross. He defeated Satan for us when He shed His blood, died as our substitute, and rose from the grave. And when He returns to the earth, as He will soon, He will cast Satan and his wicked hosts into the lake of fire.

John said in 1 John 5:4, “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” We are called to live by faith. Faith is being confident of what you cannot see, according to Hebrews 11:1. When we have the shield of faith in place we will live with a different perspective.

To borrow a definition from our Hebrews series a few years ago, “Faith is trusting in the person of God and acting on the promises of God regardless how I feel.”

In his book, *Through the Fire*, Joe Stowell wrote, “I think of David Livingstone, the pioneer missionary to Africa, who walked over 29,000 miles. His wife died early in their ministry and he faced stiff opposition from his Scottish brethren. He ministered half

blind. His kind of perseverance spurs me on. As I run, I remember the words in his diary: ‘Send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever me from any tie but the tie that binds me to Your service and to Your heart.’”¹⁰

There’s a man who had the shield of faith in place. David Livingstone also said, “People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply acknowledging a great debt we owe to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny? It is emphatically no sacrifice. Rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, danger, foregoing the common conveniences of this life--these may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing compared with the glory which shall later be revealed in and through us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk, when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.”

How could David Livingstone do such great things for God? Did he have access to resources that we don’t. No. We have the same armor he did. And he used it. Are we?

The Bible exhorts us to *put on the full armor of God*. Put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace boots, and the faith shield. Are we ready for battle yet? Not quite.

E. We must take the helmet of salvation (17a). Paul once again is taking this image from Isaiah. The situation is bleak in Isaiah. The people are sinful, heading for destruction, and they can’t. But in His mercy, the Lord announces He Himself will solve their problem. He will come in person as a warrior, and this is what He will be wearing. According to Isaiah 59:17, “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head.”¹¹

We now are told in Ephesians 6:17, “And take the helmet of salvation.” So we are to do what the Lord did. In fact, He is sharing His helmet with us. Put on your helmet, Paul says (using an imperative verb form that indicates we are to take this piece of armor, put it on, and leave it on).

The Roman soldier's helmet was made of a tough metal-like bronze or iron. It was obviously heavy. The inside was lined with sponge or felt to make it bearable to wear. Nothing short of a blow from an axe or hammer could penetrate the helmet.

Why does a soldier need a helmet? Obviously, to protect his *head*. Why do we need a helmet? For the same reason.

Friends, your most vulnerable target as a Christian is your mind, and Satan knows that, which is why he attacks your thinking with all the ammunition he can muster.

So how can we protect our minds? Paul says we must put on the helmet of salvation.¹² In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 he puts it this way, “Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

What exactly does Paul mean when he says to “take the helmet of salvation”? Keep in mind he’s writing to Christians. He’s not telling his readers that they need to “get saved.” They’ve already been saved, by the Spirit’s gracious work of regeneration, as

¹⁰ Joseph Stowell, [Through The Fire](#), Victor Books, 1988, p. 150.

¹¹ Observation by David Powlison, p. 33.

¹² We see this image elsewhere in Isaiah 59:17, “He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.”

evidenced by their repentance and faith. This is a call for saved people to *think* like saved people.

The Bible is very clear about this, and so must we be.

1. *A Christian is someone who has been saved.* A saved person is one who has admitted he was lost as a sinner and condemned to suffer God's wrath. A saved person is one who accepted the teaching of the Bible that Jesus Christ lived and died in our place, taking God's wrath for us. A saved person is one who has placed his full confidence and trust in Jesus Christ. That's a saved person.

So what does it mean to take the helmet of salvation? Simply this. A saved person needs to learn to think like a saved person! Indeed...

2. *A strong Christian is someone who thinks like a saved person.* This is vital. Christians are supposed to think differently than non-Christians, and Christians who are successful in overcoming the evil one do think differently. They think differently about their goals in life, about money, fame, entertainment, about *everything*.¹³

So when we put on the helmet of salvation, what we're doing is this. We are making a decision that we are going to think differently than we used to, by God's help. We're choosing to think like a saved person.

We are living in a pagan world. We are being bombarded continually with vile, godless thoughts. So every day we need to put on the helmet of salvation and choose to think like a saved person.

Take entertainment, for example. Just because the critics are saying it's a good movie is not ample reason for us to watch it. In fact, dads and moms, when we see an advertisement for a movie with a questionable plot, we have a wonderful opportunity to engage our kids. To say, "Son, there was a time when I thought that kind of story line was funny. But then God saved me, at the cost of His own Son's life. What do you think He would think of that movie?"

The same goes for the music we listen to, or the video games we play. A helmet is designed to keep deadly things out. Brothers and sisters, let's all be careful about what we take into our minds. Let's resolve to think like a saved person. So if Jesus has saved us from something, then we need to think about it the same way He does.

One final piece of armor...

F. We must take the sword of the Spirit (17b). "Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This piece of armor also comes from Isaiah. In Isaiah 49:2 we hear these words from the Servant of the LORD, the Messiah. "He made my mouth like a sharp sword." A few verses later we're told that this One with a "mouth like a sword" will be "a light for the nations" whose "salvation will reach to the ends of the earth" (49:6).

This is Jesus, and now we, the people whom Messiah Jesus has saved, are called to take up this same sword, to work with Him as He makes His salvation known to the nations. So we fight this battle with words, with God's Word.

Let's make three observations regarding our sword.

1. *The sword is our only offensive weapon.* A Roman soldier had two swords. One was the large broad-sword which was more than 3' long. It was double-edged and heavy, and took both hands to use. That's not the word Paul uses in verse 17. The one he references here is the short-sword (6 to 18 inches). It was like a dagger. The soldier

¹³ Paul put it this way in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—*think about such things.*"

carried it in his sheath. He used it for hand to hand combat. Peter used this kind of sword to cut off the soldier's ear (Matt 26:51).

What is the Christian's sword? Paul says clearly, "which is the Word of God."

2. *The sword is God's Word.* Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

As we preach the Word, we are invading enemy territory. Right now, the sword of the Spirit is at work, releasing Satan's victims from the clutches of his wicked grasp.

God's Word is our sword. But its value is not just for preaching. It's sufficient, authoritative, and powerful for living. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

It's the Word that God uses to deliver us from personal sin according to Psalm 119:133, "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." It's also the key to standing when persecution hits according to Revelation 12:11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

So the Word of God is the Spirit's sword. It's what God uses to defend us, defeat the attacking enemy, and deliver others who need help. But of course...

3. *The sword is effective only if we use it.* And this raises a problem. Many of us aren't using the Word as we ought.

It's sort of like the story that Leroy Eims, from the Navigators, told, "One spring our family was driving from Fort Lauderdale to Tampa, Florida. As far as the eye could see, orange trees were loaded with fruit. When we stopped for breakfast, I ordered orange juice with my eggs. "I'm sorry," the waitress said. "I can't bring you orange juice. Our machine is broken." At first I was dumbfounded. We were surrounded by millions of oranges, and I knew they had oranges in the kitchen--orange slices garnished our plates. What was the problem? No juice? Hardly. We were surrounded by thousands of gallons of juice. The problem was they had become dependent on a machine to get it. Christians are sometimes like that. They may be surrounded by Bibles in their homes, but if something should happen to the Sunday morning preaching service, they would have no nourishment for their souls. The problem is not a lack of spiritual food--but that many Christians haven't grown enough to know how to get it for themselves."¹⁴

Do you know how to use your sword, and are you using it? Several years ago, Walter Martin, a cult researcher, made the tragic observation that, in his opinion, a 90-day-wonder from the Jehovah's Witnesses can take apart the typical Christian in 30 minutes. Why? Because far too many Christians don't know the Word like they should. They might hear it on Sundays, but they're not really using it, not personally.

Do you know where to turn in God's Word to deal with discouragement, or to fight off lustful thoughts, or to overcome sinful anger? We have what we need, but we need to use what we have.

Perhaps you're searching. That's why you've been coming to church recently. And when you hear God's Word, it likely encourages you, and you leave pumped up, filled with hope. But then your Bible stays on the shelf and you receive little if any spiritual nourishment for the next six days, only Satan's darts. You don't use the shield of faith that could protect your soul and the helmet of salvation to guard your mind. And so by

¹⁴ Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*.

Thursday you are overwhelmed with feelings of doubt and discouragement, and you're thinking, "Where are you God? What's wrong? Why doesn't Christianity work for me?"

My friend, the problem is not with Christianity. The problem is thinking that *admiring* the sword is the same as *using* it.

We need to know what we have, and then use what we have.

And why? Why has God given us armor? "So we can stand," you say. Yes, but why is standing so important? And here is the answer to that question.

The Point of It All: We have armor because we have a mission.

This is our calling as a church, to know Christ and to make Christ known through the teaching of His Word, locally and worldwide.

Closing Song: #477 "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"