

PUT ON THE GOSPEL ARMOR

Devotional for August 26, 2018 based upon Ephesians 6: 10-20

One person said, "When I became a follower of Jesus, I thought that everything would be smooth sailing and that nothing would rock my boat. Since then I have found that becoming a Christian is actually like enlisting in the army. There is a battle going on."

Yes, according to the Bible, there is a battle going on. There is an entire spiritual world that would like to bring you down. Satan is a real being, who has been roaming the earth since the Garden of Eden. And he is effective. So what kind of a position does that put us in? According to Ephesians 6, we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle against all the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Spiritual warfare is going on all around us. You do not need to look very far to see it. Our enemy is real, powerful, deadly, dangerous, and devious. But, thank God, his power is limited and he is defeated. When our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, He won the decisive, turning point battle against Satan. But now, like a mortally wounded animal, which knows that it is dying, Satan wants to take us down as he goes down.

Because we have an enemy, we have been given armor. But it is critical that we wear that armor. Paul was in a Roman prison at the time of his writing. He was at least being guarded by, if not actually chained to, a Roman soldier. I can see him looking at the various pieces of the soldier's armor as he is writing his letter to the church at Ephesus, telling them about what God has given them to put on.

First, the BELT OF TRUTH. Truth is like a belt that holds everything else in place. Put on the belt of truth. Read and believe God's truth. Decide today that whenever you speak, you will speak only the truth.

Second, the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Like a bullet-proof vest, the breastplate protected the body from the neck to the thighs. Most importantly, it protected the heart. In the same way, righteous living will protect your heart and heart-values. It will save your reputation and keep you from the consequences of sin. The breastplate stands for uprightness, integrity, and character.

Third, the SHOES OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. In battle you need a good pair of shoes to keep you balanced and confident and able to move quickly. So a soldier put on a good pair of boots, to assure him of a good grip. The Roman soldier's shoes also made him able to march over the toughest of terrain. The Gospel of peace will make us able to endure the roughest circumstances of life.

Fourth, the SHIELD OF FAITH. The Roman soldier covered his shield with animal hide, which could put out flaming arrows before they could destroy his shield. In the same way, we need a faith which even Satan - with all his flaming darts of accusations and doubts – cannot destroy.

Fifth, the HELMET OF SALVATION. Who would be foolish enough to go into battle without a helmet to protect the head, brain, and central nervous system? So why would anyone go to war against Satan without the helmet of salvation to protect their thought life?

Sixth, the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD. With the sword of the Spirit, we can keep Satan at bay, just like Jesus did. Every time Satan tempted Jesus, He responded with the exact same answer, "Devil, it is written!" He kept on hitting him – and hitting him hard – with the same three words, "It is written! It is written! It is written!" until, bloody and beaten, Satan had to flee. If you know and use the Bible as the Word of God, Satan will flee from you too.

But notice something. The armor will do us no good if we do not put it on. And we need to put it on and learn to use it before we need it. It is much more difficult to put on your armor after the battle begins.

After they shoot the gun, it is too late to put on the bullet-proof vest. In the same way, after Satan stabs you in your heart values, it is too late to put on the breastplate of righteousness. After you smash your toe on the circumstances of life, it is too late to put on the shoes of the Gospel. After Satan shoots a flaming arrow of despair at you, it is too late to pick up the shield of faith. After Satan knocks you in the head with a club of doubt, it is too late to put on the helmet of salvation. And after Satan starts swinging at you, it is too late to figure out how to use the Sword of the Spirit. Put on your armor today, and learn how to use the weapons today – before another temptation comes or another tragedy strikes.

And then one more thing. Even with our armor on, we still need an ally. So Paul concludes this passage by telling us that the Lord Himself is our ally and we have access to Him and His power through prayer.

It's not just the armor. It's also who is on our side, as well as whose side we are on. Whose side are you on? Are you fighting in the battle, or have you gone AWOL, hoping that someone else will fight the battle for you?

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