

## Armed for battle!

### Ephesians 6:13-17

**Ephesians 6:13–20 (ESV)** — **13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

#### Sermon introduction:

Human warfare has killed millions. Consider the five deadliest battles in world history.

Coming in at number five, is the battle of Gettysburg in 1863—46,000 casualties.

Number four is the battle of Cannae (CANY) in 216 BC—60,000 casualties.

Number three the battle of the Somme in 1916 (WWI)—68,000 casualties (in one day).

Number two is the battle of Leipzig in 1813—84,000 casualties.

Coming in at number one, is the battle of Stalingrad in 1942-43—nearly 2 million casualties.

As deadly as these battles were, there is another battle that has caused far more casualties than all the battles of world history combined.

It is the battle raging all around us in the spiritual realm. It is Satan's battle against humanity. He has decimated billions of lives (literally). Some of you were very aware of this battle this week! Why has he killed so many? He is an incredibly fierce foe!

Yet, in Ephesians 6, Paul's tells us not once, but four times to stand our ground against Satan and his demonic host. If Paul tells us that we must stand firm against Satan, he obviously believes that we can stand firm against Satan.

***But how in the world are we supposed to stand firm against Satan, our mighty foe? The answer is found in Ephesians 6:13-20. We stand firm by putting on the armor of God!***

Before we look at this armor in detail, it is important for us to realize where this armor comes from!

Paul calls this the armor the armor of God. In other words, it is God's armor, which means that we are called to be strong in *his* might (6:10-11). You may feel weak, tired, tempted, and helpless. Yet, you can be very strong, when you rely on God's armor.

With that said, let's look in detail at the six pieces of armor God gives us to effectively stand firm against the devil.

**First, the belt of truth!**

**Ephesians 6:13–14 (ESV) — 13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,

The Roman soldier wore a loose-fitting tunic. Since combat in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was mostly hand to hand combat, a loose tunic was a potential problem. A loose tunic may get in the way of your sword, which could be a deadly hindrance. The belt was essential to cinch up the loosely hanging material around one's waist. Furthermore, the belt was thick and provided some protecting for the stomach. Finally, the belt held the soldier's sword.

Fastening one's belt was the last step, maybe the most important step, in preparation for battle.

### **Illustration:**

The year was 1994. It was the fall of my senior year of high school. The place was the locker room at Heart Field. It was Friday night. I can still hear the music (Pearl Jam) and sense the excitement and tension in the room.

We all showed up a few hours before the football game to get our gear on.

Why a few hours? It took a while...

Lots of the guys would start by having their ankles taped. Then they would put their football pants on, then their cleats. Then they would put even more tape over their cleats to provide them with even more ankle support.

Next, they put their shoulder pads on...

Finally, and most importantly they put their helmets on.

The helmet protected the most vital part of the body, the head.

We were not ready to step onto the field until our helmets were securely fastened to our heads.

When our helmets were on, we were finally ready to take the field of battle.

### **Application:**

For the Roman soldier, putting on a war belt was the final step of preparation. With the belt on, one was ready for battle. Without a belt firmly strapped around the waist, the soldier may be doomed.

Paul describes our belt as the belt of truth. When we have the truth of God's Word in our minds and on our hearts, we are ready for battle.

This truth is capital T truth, the eternal truths of God's Holy Word.

The truth of God's word holds all the other armor in place.

Without truth we will be decimated in battle.

Why is the belt of truth so essential? Because Satan constantly lies. He is called the father of lies (John 8:44). He is constantly distorting the truth of God's Word (Gen. 3:1, Luke 4:9-10). We must counter him with the truth of God's Word.

With the belt of truth securely fastened around us, we are ready for Satan.

*First, the belt of truth!*

**Second, the breastplate of righteousness!**

**Ephesians 6:14 (ESV) — 14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

The Roman Soldier's breastplate was made of extremely tough leather. Craftsman would often sew fragments of animal horns or hooves into the leather breastplate to add strength. The breastplates of the most important warriors (i.e., generals) were made with chain mail.

Whatever the breastplate was made out of it was designed to protect the heart and the other vital organs from deadly sword thrusts, spear thrusts, and arrows.

**Illustration:**

I recently listened to the "Fellowship of the Ring." Those of you who have read Tolkien's classic will remember that Bilbo Baggins passed on to his successor, Frodo, a finely wrought coat of delicately woven mail which was secretly made under the mountains by the dwarves. It resembles silver but is stronger and lighter than steel. It was made from an incredibly rare material called Mithril. One shirt composed of Mithril was worth billions of dollars literally (in human money).

Why was the Mithril so expensive? Because it was incredibly effective at protecting the one who wore it. On more than one occasion Frodo was stabbed with a spear by a foe much larger and stronger than him, yet he walked away alive. It was virtually impossible for a sword or spear to penetrate a breastplate of Mithril.

**Application:**

Yet the apostle Paul is not telling us to put on Mithril.

He is telling us to put on something far, far, far stronger. It is a breastplate forged not in the mountains of the dwarves but in the halls of heaven.

We are given the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

We desperately need this righteousness (Romans 3:10-12).

This righteousness will protect us from the spears, swords, and arrows of Satan himself.

This righteousness is the very righteousness of Jesus Christ that is given to us the moment we believe the gospel.

This means that we are considered righteous even though we are not (2 Cor. 5:21).

We can't earn this righteousness; it is given to us freely!!!

How does this help us against Satan? He will constantly tell us that we are unrighteous... the word devil means accuser or slanderer in the Greek.

It is already on us. It was placed on us at conversion. "having put on the breastplate..." Every Christian is covered with this breastplate.

*But it does not stop here. There is more armor...*

*First, the belt of truth.*

*Second, the breastplate of righteousness.*

**Third, the boots of the gospel.**

**Ephesians 6:15 (ESV) — 15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

When you see the word “shoes” in verse 15, don’t think of a pair of Vans, or some Airforce ones, or some Yeezy’s. Rather think of a war boot, worn by a member of Delta force, since this is more like what Paul had in mind.

This Roman boot was called the caliga or half-boot. It was a leather boot with a heavily nail-studded sole which gave the Roman soldier superior traction.

These boots functioned like today’s football, soccer, or baseball cleats. These shoes prevent athletes from sliding around on the playing field. The Roman boots prevented the soldier from sliding on the battlefield.

Since, first century combat consisted primarily of hand-to-hand combat, on muddy fields, these boots were critical for success (staying alive) in battle. They kept the soldier from losing traction, which may lead to sudden death.

### **Application:**

Paul tells the saints in Ephesus that their gospel shoes are critical for battling the evil one.

The NEB translates verse 15 with these words, “Let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you a firm footing.”

We must put on our feet the gospel of peace! What does this mean exactly?

When we are clear on the gospel, we will not slip and fall when Satan pushes against us. The gospel gives us great traction in a world full of condemnation, fear, and failure.

Furthermore, it is called the gospel of peace. If you have peace with God, no matter what happens to you, you will not be moved!!! Why? Because your greatest problem has been solved.

The gospel of peace brings great stability.

*This brings us to the next piece of equipment...*

### **Fourth, the shield of faith!**

**Ephesians 6:16 (ESV) — 16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

The Roman shield referred to in verse 16 was a large shield. It was typically at least four feet tall and two and a half feet wide. It was like a door, which is why the Greek word for door comes from this word for shield. It was so large that a man could duck behind it and be protected from javelins, spears, and arrows.

The Roman shield was made with two layers of laminated wood, covered first with linen and then with hide, and then bound top and bottom with iron. (Hughes)

The shield was often dipped in water before battle to extinguish any arrows dipped in pitch and set ablaze. During fierce battles the shields often looked like they had been attacked by Porcupines.

## **Application:**

When we are doing really well spiritually, Satan shoots even more flaming arrows at us.

These arrows often take the form of a subtle whisper.

“You have been really good recently... why not sin a little.”

“No one will know.”

“It will feel good.”

“You are God’s servant; you deserve some sinful pleasure.” It turns out that this is what Ravi Z. told his victims. He said, “I serve God so much, and I have made so many sacrifices, that I deserve a little pleasure.”

Or Satan will whisper,

“If this is so wrong, why did God make me this way? Why did he give me this desire?”

It is just a little lie...

It is just a little lust...

You can handle three more drinks...

“No one will notice that this money is missing...”

When this happens, we must lift up the shield of faith.

In other words, we must forsake Satan lies, and believe—really believe—God’s promises! Both his promises to bless and his promises to discipline.

All sin is rooted in unbelief!!! We sin because we don’t really believe what God says about sin and righteousness.

We must take up the shield of faith to extinguish Satan’s arrows.

*But there is more...*

## **Fifth, the helmet of salvation!**

**Ephesians 6:17 (ESV) — 17 and take the helmet of salvation,**

Roman military helmets were made from hardened leather or metal. The helmet covered the head, the back of the neck, and the cheeks. When the helmet was placed on the soldier’s head, only the eyes, nose, and mouth were exposed.

### **Illustration:**

Nobody wore helmets when I was a kid (biking, skateboarding, skiing, rollerblading, played football, etc...)! Sledding on Christmas day!!!

This was foolish. Why should kids wear helmets when they bike, skateboard, ski, and rollerblade? Because our heads are crucial. Our heads house our brains and our brains run our bodies. When our heads hit the concrete without helmets the results can be deadly.

On the other hand, helmets provide safety and confidence.

One author writes,

“A helmet is a confidence-builder. Put a football helmet on an eight-year-old and he will typically swell with overweening confidence and turn into a sixty-pound kamikaze attack — at least until he’s been knocked down a few times. Nevertheless, a good helmet is valid ground for confidence. Properly worn and used, it affords remarkable protection. This was especially true on the field of ancient war, where the sky was filled with arrows and javelins, and swords and axes were hacking and chopping.” (Hughes)

### **Application:**

Paul tells us to put on the helmet of salvation.

Since Paul is speaking to Christians, he is not telling them to attain salvation, or to get saved by doing something, or believing something. They are already saved!

By metaphorically putting on a helmet, they are remembering that they *are* protected, and they *are* saved.

Why would Paul tell us to remember that we are saved? Because Satan seeks to destroy our assurance of salvation with the weapons of doubt, discouragement, and despair.

By putting on the helmet of salvation, we are reminding ourselves of what God has done in Christ to save us. In other words, we are preaching the gospel to ourselves.

If we are saved, there is ultimately nothing that Satan can do to harm us.

Paul writes elsewhere,

**Philippians 1:6 (ESV) — 6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

See also John 6:37–39; 10:28, 29; Rom. 5:10; 8:31–39; 1 Pet. 1:3–5.

*There is one more critical piece of equipment...*

### **Sixth, the sword of the Spirit!**

**Ephesians 6:17–20 (ESV) — 17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

The sword is the only offensive weapon listed in Ephesians 6. The Greek word for sword in verse 17 refers to a small straight Roman sword, typically 12-18 inches in length. It was used for stabbing and hacking.

As the sword was the soldier’s only weapon, so God’s Word is our only weapon. It is the only weapon that we need. It is infinitely more powerful than all of Satan’s weapons.

**Hebrews 4:12 (ESV) — 12** 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.

Jesus Christ used the sword of the Spirit to defeat Satan in the wilderness.

**Matthew 4:2–11 (ESV)** — 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Each time Jesus said, “It is written..., it is written..., it is written.”

The man Christ Jesus defeated Satan with the Scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Application:

If we are going to use the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) effectively. We must know the Word of God intimately. There is only one way to know the Word of God intimately. We must read the Bible again and again and again with prayer and meditation.

What is your Bible reading plan? You must have a plan.

Have modest goals. Start by meditating on a paragraph of scripture each week.

If we are going to defeat Satan, we must utilize the sword of the Spirit.

**Conclusion:**

John Bunyan wrote the Pilgrim’s progress in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the most popular books of all time. It is a beautiful allegory of the Christian life.

He also wrote an allegory called *The Holy War*.

But many folks don’t know the full title... here is the full title.

*The Holy War made by King Shaddai upon Diabolus for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World or the Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul.*

Why read the book when you have read the title...

Here is the point, Bunyan clearly understood that we are involved in a deadly battle. The stakes are incredibly high. No battle has taken out more people than this battle.

If we rely on our own resources to defeat Satan we are doomed.

Fortunately, God in Christ has given us everything we need to defeat the evil one.

**Ephesians 6:14–17 (ESV)** — **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

On this side of heaven, we must wear the armor of God, but when Christ returns in all of his glory the battle will be over, and we will exchange the armor of God for the robes of eternal glory. Let's pray...