

What to Wear to War

Part II

The Gospels

Ephesians 6:10-18

Introduction

Turn in your Bible to Ephesians chapter 6. We will continue the discussion of the armor of God that we began in our last session.

S. L. Marshall writes in his book *Men Against Fire*, about the events of World War II. He especially recounts the day that is referred to as the Omaha beachhead advancement. He took all the statistics from that advancement and came up with startling facts. It is interesting that he writes,

Only five infantry companies on Omaha beachhead, June 6, 1944, were tactically effective. In these companies, one fifth of the men fired their weapons during the day-long advancement from the waters edge to the first row of villages.

The best showing of the most aggressive companies, after he tallied up all the facts and figures, was,

Only one out of every four men even fired their weapon.

As I read this, I thought of the Christian army and wondered how many of us are actively involved in firing the weaponry that we have. I imagine that part of the problem is that we are not exactly sure what that weaponry is.

I hope this series will give us a better comprehension of the weaponry available to us. I also hope it will help us move from just sheer knowledge of what the weaponry is to the activating of that weaponry in a way that will surely fire at the enemy of our souls and the church – the underworld of Satan.

Review

In our last session, we covered the beginning of Ephesians 6:10-18, and then had to stop because of time. Let us briefly review that discussion.

Look at Ephesians 6:10-11a.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

Put on . . .

The tense of “put on” means to literally, “put on once for all”. Do not put it on like a uniform before a game, but rather, put it on and leave it on for life.

Paul continues, in Ephesians 6:11a,

Put on the full armor of God, . . .

In other words, “Put on the armor that is sourced in God.” God made it and it will work, so put it on.

Put it on, as Ephesians 6:11b says,

. . . so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

This means, “so that you will be able to ‘take a strategic position’ against the schemes of the devil.”

Continue to Ephesians 6:12a.

For our struggle . . .

For our “wrestling,” which is a word taken from the athletic world in which the opponent who lost was executed. Continue to Ephesians 6:12-13a.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, . . .

Because we are involved in war, even though we may not have realized it until getting to Ephesians chapter 6, we should, as Ephesians 6:13 says,

. . . take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

The implication is that it is possible to not resist; it is possible for you and I to not stand firm. So the exhortation and the begging of this apostle is to robe ourselves with the armor of God.

We briefly covered the first two pieces of the armor of God.

1. The first piece of the armor of God is the belt of truth.

We read in Ephesians 6:14a,

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, . . .

This is the foundational piece that looked more like an apron made from leather. This is foundational because it was central – everything else was basically, attached to this apron. The sword found its sheath in this apron.

Paul is saying that the foundational piece of weaponry for us, as believers, is truth.

Jesus Christ prayed for believers, as recorded in John 17:17, saying,

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

This is foundational.

2. The second piece of the armor of God is the breastplate of righteousness.

In Ephesians 6:14, we also read,

Stand firm therefore, . . . having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

This is the righteousness of Christ.

I have often heard that we only have weaponry for the front of our bodies. However, the breastplate, in the Roman world, literally covered them all the way around so that they were protected, not only from the front, but from the rear as well. This means that Satan can fire from the back, as well as from the front.

We are to go into battle, not on the basis of our righteousness; not self-confident in ourselves, but confident in the righteousness of Christ.

We briefly covered the way Satan works. He comes and may tempt or lure you into sin. You will say, “Oh, I have sinned; I’ve failed,” and you go to God and pray. Then Satan lures you a second time, and a third, until finally, he gets you to a point at which you say, “Okay, God, I promise I’ll never do that again.”

This is exactly what Satan wants to hear. The moment you sin again in this area, he comes to you and says, “God will forgive you, but He won’t forget how unreliable you are.”

Then, when you go into battle, you will be conscious of the fact that you are unreliable.

However, we go into battle clothed in the righteousness of Who? Christ. We fight from that vantage point.

Our Defense and Offense Against Satan

Now let us look at the other pieces of the armor of God, the weaponry to defend against Satan and the underworld.

3. The third piece of the armor of God is the shoes of the gospel of peace.

Look at Ephesians 6:15.

and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The shoes of the gospel of peace allow balance

In fighting with a sword, in that day, balance was imperative. If the soldier lost his footing when engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, he was dead. So they needed to have on a pair of shoes that would give them good footing.

I am sure you have seen basketball players that wear exactly the right kind of tennis shoe that may cost \$150.00 or \$200.00. You have probably seen track runners who are wearing just the right kind of shoe. Football players on natural turf are going to wear cleats; on Astroturf, they are going to wear a certain kind of shoe that will give them the right kind of traction. Boxers put rosin on the bottom of their feet. In battle, secure footing is critical.

I learned this the hard way. Would you like to hear a story about the fight that I lost? Okay, you are sitting on the edge of your seat! I remember the sixth grade for no other reason than that was the year I got in a fight – my only fight – with Keith Mullins. Keith was the biggest guy in my class. In sixth grade, he was shaving, which should tell you something. I was one of the smallest guys in the class and this fight was like David against Goliath – except this one did not have a biblical ending.

Keith and I were out on the playground, during a short recess that the fifth, sixth, and seventh grade classes had. We were out there standing around and, of course, the guys were acting as cool as they possibly could, which I am sure was a riot. Suddenly, Keith decided he would pick on me. He had a football

in his hand and he threw it at me, hitting me right in the face.

Everyone, of course, then looked at me. I had a reputation to protect.

I was a fool! I ran at Keith and we locked arms. At that moment, my feet began slipping out from underneath me. He got on top of me and began pummeling me with his fists.

If you have ever been in this spot, you know that you no longer care about your reputation. I wished that a seventh grade girl would come help me and pull him off!

I can still remember being underneath Keith, as he was hitting me with his fists. Our teacher, Miss Longnecker, who was single and wished she could marry to change her last name, came over and grabbed Keith and pulled him off me.

Now, I do not think I felt a punch, but unfortunately, over the course of the day, my eye began to swell. This was not because of his punches, which could not have hurt a flea, but because of the football that Keith threw that hit me in the eye. Believe me, it was the football! By the next day, I came back to school with the biggest “shiner”. My classmates did not believe me either, as I tried to explain. This fight was silly.

We are, I believe, like these two young boys, Keith and me, not even aware of anything more than a sandlot squabble. I think we probably feel like this war we are in is something that someone, sooner or later, will come along and help us out.

This is not squabbling; this is not some recess fight that is over in about thirty seconds – this is *war!* We must have footing that is secure. We cannot dare be underneath. So Paul says,

. . . shod your feet with . . . the gospel of peace;

Now, a lot of people believe that this is in reference to the Gospel and, I think, they miss the point. “Gospel,” in the original, simply means, “good news”. Paul is saying, “Put on the shoes of the good news of peace.”

In other words, “Put on the shoes of peace, which is the good news.”

What is the peace that Paul is talking about? Romans 5:1 tells us,

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul makes this a little clearer in I Corinthians 15:1, 3-4.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand .

..

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

This verse tells us that we are standing in certain facts, which is the good news – it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ladies and gentlemen, when we go into battle, we go with this primary undergirding factor, that our Captain died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was resurrected. He is alive!

Why is this foundational? Because if our Captain is dead, why fight? If He is no longer living, we are already defeated. We go into battle understanding that He is alive. We fight from the vantage point then, of victory! Satan fights from the vantage point of defeat. As a result, our foundation is peace.

The shoes of the gospel of peace allow mobility

These shoes allowed balance, but this verse also implied, secondly, they allowed mobility. We are advancing, which is the only reason we need traction. We do not need traction in retreating because then, we are just running. If we are going to advance; if we are climbing; if we are taking steps forward, we need cleats; we need traction.

So these shoes are implying mobility. *We are on the move!* We need shoes in which to do this! We do it from a vantage point of victory. We fight and war on the foundation of peace.

I read of a soldier in Vietnam who was receiving cross letters from his wife. She was writing and complaining to him and haranguing him about this and that. Finally, he wrote a letter back with one sentence. He said, “Stop sending me those nagging letters and let me enjoy this war in peace.”

Imagine that! However, we, as believers, can say that. We are at war, yet at war in peace.

4. The fourth piece of the armor of God is the shield of faith.

Look at Ephesians 6:16.

in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

This explicitly states that Satan is an aggressor. The translators call it, “the flaming arrows,” “the fiery darts,” or “the blazing missiles”. This refers to the deadly nature of Satan’s attack.

This tactic is as old as warfare. If you were going to besiege a city in ancient days, you would first tip your arrows in some kind of pitch, light them, and then shoot them over the wall, hoping they would start fires. As soon as the arrows would hit, that pitch would splatter and little fires would be started. The objective was to get the soldiers inside the city so consumed with putting out fires that they would be unable to defend their city against the attack.

Satan will fire his arrows; his missiles of doubt; his darts of despair. It might be the arrow of lust or of ambition or of pride. We become so consumed with these arrows that we cannot defend ourselves against the attack of the oncoming missiles. So, we need a shield.

Our shield is actually faith in God. Our shield is not necessarily just faith – it is the object of our faith that is the critical thing. Our faith is in God.

Our faith in God is manifested in three ways

Our faith in God is manifested in three ways. Let me give them briefly.

- Number one, we have faith in God’s person.

David, the psalmist, wrote,

But You, O Lord, are a shield about me . . . (Psalm 3:3a)

- Number two, we have faith in God’s promises.

We believe, by faith, that what He has promised He is capable and powerful enough to perform.

- Number three, we have faith in God’s providence.

. . . all things work together for good . . . (Romans 8:28a)

. . . for our spiritual benefit.

God is behind the scenes, engineering everything.

I was on the phone a couple of days ago, with Charlie Grave, who is a pastor. He is also an agent for a friend of his, Tim Coffman, who is singing at our church next month for our Valentine banquet. Charlie Grave lines up all of the meetings for Tim Coffman. Charlie was supposed to call me back on Friday morning to confirm our date, but he did not call. So, I called him Friday afternoon. We talked a while and I said, “What about these dates?”

Charlie said, “Oh, my calendar is somewhere else.”

Then, he said, “Things are so confusing right now. You see, my son was killed last night.”

Charlie’s son was nine years old. On the night his son was killed, I thought that I had the worst thing in the world going on because my daughter had a fever of 104.6°. At midnight, I was at the drugstore getting medicine for her and thinking, “Oh, my goodness.” At that time, Charlie was losing his son, who had been run over by a car. We must have faith, while in war.

Three things the shield does

Let me tell some things about this shield that I think will help explain how it can help us.

There were two kinds of shields in the Roman army. One was a small round shield. You have probably heard stories and seen the Sunday school pictures of soldiers with this type of shield on their arms. This is the one that our kids play with, made of cardboard.

There is another kind of shield, “thureos,” which is literally, four feet tall and two feet wide. It is called a “wall or door”. This is the word used for the shield of faith in this Ephesians verse.

This shield accomplished three things.

- First, the shield protected the soldier.

When the soldiers were advancing, there were times that the missiles came with such great thickness that they would plant their shields into the ground, get down behind it, and cower until the attack was over.

I like this kind of shield because there are times in our lives when all we can do is plant our shield and hide. We might poke our head out every once in a while, just enough to see what is happening, and then,

duck back down. We hide behind faith in God's providence, His promises, and His person.

It is interesting that this shield was large enough to not only protect the soldier, but it protected his armor as well. It is the shield of faith that protects the belt of truth.

Do you know the reason I believe every word of the word of God is inspired? Do you know the reason I not only believe, but can believe, that the word of God is authoritative and inerrant? It is faith in God that allows me to believe this.

Do you know the reason you and I can believe that Jesus Christ is living and not dead? It is the shield of faith in the word of God that allows us to believe this. We could, in fact, make a point of this for every piece of armor of God.

- Secondly, the shield reflected the sun.

I like this thought. I was studying and researching on the shields and discovered this.

The shield was basically made of metal. The soldiers would overlay it with strips of leather. Before they went into battle, they would soak the leather in water so that if a dart would hit it, the water would extinguish the missile. In the center of the shield, was a round piece of brass or bronze. Before going into war, they would polish that brass so that it shone with the brilliance of a mirror. Then, as they walked into battle, they would reflect the light of the sun into the eyes of their enemies and in so doing, distract them.

We could make analogies to this for a while. I thought, "How wonderful that with this shield of faith, we reflect the light of God's Son, Who is the light of the world, into the eyes of our enemy and in so doing, distract him with His person."

Satan hates the name of Christ. He hates the thought of the blood of Christ; the death of Christ; the coming of Christ. So shine His light back, right into Satan's evil eyes, and find protection. Remind him of it verbally – speak out loud. His underlings cannot read your mind, but they can hear. It does us well to speak of Him verbally and audibly.

- Thirdly, the shield unified the army.

The Roman army had this interesting concept and it is the reason they were so victorious. The edges of these shields were beveled so that they could be locked into place. They could actually have a row of men that made up a wall of metal advancing against the enemy army.

Do you want to know how strong your armor is? It is strong enough to defeat the foe. Can you imagine the unity of the believers who lock the shields of faith together? Can you imagine the kind of advancement we could have on this society against the cause of Satan, by moving as a unified wall for the cause of Jesus Christ?

All of this is implied, I think, in this shield.

Let us move on to the next piece of the armor of God.

5. The fifth piece of the armor of God is the helmet of salvation.

Look at Ephesians 6:17a.

And take the helmet of salvation . . .

Now, this is not referring to being saved. Paul is not saying that after you put on the shoes, after you put on the belt, after you put on the breastplate, now get saved.

This cannot be what Paul is talking about. We would not have this armor, if we were not saved. We would not even be in the army, if we were not saved. He must be referring to something else.

The three-fold saving work of God

A helmet obviously protects the head; the mind; the thoughts. Salvation is that which we understand intellectually, and emotionally. It is a propositional truth that there are three parts to salvation.

- There is a past salvation that is called justification.

This is a past work that has been accomplished. We are saved when we invite Christ in; when we receive the gift of eternal life; when He calls us to Himself. We are saved when this occurs. It is accomplished; it is finished.

- There is a present work of salvation that is called sanctification.

This is continuous. Let me say that for every ten people who doubt the past work, whether or not they really are saved, there are a thousand believers who doubt the fact that God is working continuously in their lives right now.

- There is also a future salvation that is called glorification.

This is guaranteed. This is the final part of the three-fold work of salvation.

One of Satan's chief tools is doubt. It was his first weapon against Eve.

Jesus, in fact, warns,

. . . do not be of a doubtful mind. (Luke 12:29b KJV paraphrased)

It is fascinating that this is the only time the word "doubtful" is used in the New Testament. It is the word from which we get our English word, "meteor". It was defined, "to be raised on high; to be in mid-air; to hover; to live in suspense," which is a great definition of doubting.

So put the helmet on. Understand intellectually and cling by that shield of faith that Jesus has done a work and is doing a work, even though we cannot see it. Sometimes we cannot sense it. Sometimes we do not even believe it. Believe that He will one day come again and glorify us, and then, our salvation will be completed and finished.

6. The sixth and final piece of the armor of God is the sword of the Spirit.

Look at Ephesians 6:17b.

And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The text tells us this piece of armor is the word of God. It is the only piece of armor that is offensive, rather than defensive.

The Roman sword was two feet long. It was sharpened on both sides and pointed at the end. The writer of Hebrews refers to this when he says,

For the word of God is . . . sharper than any two-edged sword . . . (Hebrews 4:12a)

The writer was thinking of the atomic bomb of ancient warfare. This was the most powerful thing he could think of. He said the word of God is like this – sharper than any two-edged sword.

It is not only the only piece of armor that is offensive, but it is the only piece of armor that comes in contact with the enemy.

Remember this fact. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" is the only piece of the armor of God capable of advancing against the enemy.

Do you remember when Jesus Christ was tempted? He responded three times, saying,

"It is written . . ."

Now if you think defense is enough and offense is not needed, let us use the analogy of America's military. Our military today, is in Saudi Arabia.

My sons and I were at the airport a few weeks ago, picking up my mother-in-law, who was coming to spend the holidays with us. As we waited, soldiers, dressed in fatigues, disembarked from the same plane that she was on. They made an incredible sight, wearing their fatigues and their boots, with their guns strapped to their sides. We were standing awestruck, as these men filed past us. One of my boys said, "Dad, there's those army men."

One of the men stopped and said, "Boy, we're not army, we're marines."

I said, "I don't know who this kid is – not mine!"

The military is going over there, probably to fight a war. Let us say they have the best tanks; their gas masks do not allow anything to infiltrate; they have bulletproof vests; they have the fastest planes in the country, but there is only one problem – they have no bullets; no bombs; no artillery. The military is just going to be a defensive force.

Ladies and gentlemen, no matter how capable they are, the best defensive force against a weak offensive force will eventually break down – unless there is advancement; unless there is ground gained.

Paul is implying that we are not supposed to say, "Okay, I've got my armor, so fire away – I can take it."

The army of Jesus Christ is advancing; gaining ground. There is an offensive weapon. What is that weapon? It is,

. . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17b)

I think of eighteenth century England – a land of materialism. One scholarly article, written during this time, called it a land of materialism with dim ideals and expiring hopes. It was a period of corruption and callousness; rationalism was in full bloom; immorality was so rampant that bestiality in England was accepted without protest. Members of parliament were often too drunk to carry on the affairs of state. It was into this era that a man was born by the name of John Wesley. He had a firm grip on the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of truth.

There are two terms for "word":

- there is the "logos," which is propositional;
- there is also the "rhema," which is the word that is active; involved; moving.

John Wesley took God's written word and made it the "rhema," or the "active word". In so doing, he made a difference in England.

I think of William Carey, who was born during a time when the church was sterile. The church was immobilized; self-centered. Carey, one day at a meeting, stood and said, "We must reach the heathen."

His fellow pastors and all of the believers shouted him down and said, "God will save the heathen, if they are to be saved."

However, disregarding their words, William Carey went to India as a missionary. We call him today, "The Father of Modern Missions".

Carey was a man who took the "logos" and made it the "rhema". He was a man who took propositional truth that we read and put it into life, made it act, and made it work.

Conclusion

Let us look at the last part of the text, in Ephesians 6:18, as it says,

With all [by means of] prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Ladies and gentlemen, let me remind again that this passage was written to believers; people who were saved. Do you know what the implication of this is? It is possible to be a believer without the armor.

Paul says about the armor to the believer, "Take it up! Put it on!"

Paul says this because it is possible to face the attacks; the warfare of Satan and his forces, ill-equipped and unable to retaliate or resist.

God intends the sword to swing and the church to advance. This will only be done by people who will put on the armor and then do this by means of prayer.

I read a story about a man by the name of Dudley Tyng. Dudley Tyng was preaching in the great revivals in Philadelphia in the mid-1800s. Thousands of people were coming to the meetings. God was doing an incredible work.

Dudley Tyng, on one afternoon during these revival meetings, was home resting. He decided to go out to the barn where they were threshing corn. It was done by a mule being harnessed to a great arm, pulling and turning a wheel. There were a series of wheels that threshed the corn. Dudley was watching and got

a little too close. The sleeve on his jacket got caught in the wheel and his arm was pulled in and severely lacerated. He would die within a few hours from loss of blood and probably infection as well.

Dudley Tyng's father rushed to the young preacher's side, as he was lying in bed. They talked for a moment. Then his father said, "There are thousands of people who will hear the news of your death tonight. Instead of hearing you speak, they will hear the announcement that you have died. Is there any last message that you would like to give these believers?"

Dudley Tyng said, "Yes. Tell them to stand up for Jesus."

George Duffield preached Tyng's funeral and closed his sermon with a poem that he himself had written using the words of Pastor Tyng.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross;

Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss.

From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,

Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed.

Take up the armor of God! Go to war from the vantage point of victory!