

The Saints Standing in God's Armor
Ephesians 6:14-17
Reading: Isaiah 40:29-31

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

Let's return to Paul's final section of his letter to the Ephesians: 6:10-20.

Last words are important words and Paul decides to leave his readers (incl. us!) with a strategy for spiritual warfare.

His tone is *forceful...urgent*. The apostle calls us to *be strong*, to *put on*, to *take up (3X)*, & to *stand firm*.

He identifies our *enemy*: the *Devil* & his *spiritual forces*.

Paul opens our *arsenal*: the *armor of God*.

This morning we continue to *unpack* Paul's *strategy* for *spiritual conflict*.

Instructions for taking up God's armor. We'll examine:

The uniform of transforming truth (14).

The breastplate of a righteous life.

The boots of gospel assurance (15).

The shield of saving faith (16).

The helmet of salvation (17).

The sword of God's promises.

Your armor begins with the uniform of transforming truth.

1. The first **four** *pieces* of God's armor (14-16) are the basis for *standing firm*: you *put them on* & you *wear them constantly*. ...**pause**...
2. *Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins w/ truth.*
 - a. The *first* piece of armor that Paul has in mind suggests **two** other parts of a *soldier's uniform*. So we begin with a picture of the soldier's *belt & tunic & sword*.
 - b. The Roman soldier wore a loose *tunic* over his *armor*. It was just a big square of fabric with *holes* for his arms & head.
 - c. And he carried a *short sword*, designed for hand-to-hand combat.
 - d. He needed a way to *carry* his sword and to *secure* his tunic when it came time to *move* & to *fight*.
 - e. So around his waist (*loins*) he wore a "*belt*." (That's the *main* item in v.14). **To** his belt he strapped his *sword* and **in** his belt he tucked his *tunic* when he needed to move *quickly* & *unencumbered*.
 - i. The *belt* was leather and was actually more like an *apron* that extended down over his *thighs*, to protect his upper legs.
 - ii. Kind of like ***weaponized*** *basketball shorts*!
 - f. The *action* Paul presses on the soldier of Christ is to *prepare* for battle by ***girding*** *himself around* w/ this central part of his armor – *the belt of truth*.

3. The *belt* is a picture of *readiness & truth*, or more specifically of *truthfulness*.
 - a. For the Christian, that means a *genuine, sincere* life that is *devoted* to Christ. And *devoted* because it is *truly transformed!*
 - b. Your *transformation* is only possible because of the *power* of God's *truth* at work in your life. First to *save* but then inevitably to *change* you.
 - i. **Rom 12:2** – *And do not be conformed to the world but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good & acceptable & perfect.*
4. This(lit.) *central* piece of the *uniform*, picturing a *sincerely truth-changed* life, is the *first* piece that Paul pulls out of the *armory*....
 - a. ... Because that's where you *start!* Again, the idea of *readiness* or *preparation* help color Paul's *picture*.
 - b. You are **prepared** to *stand firm* against the Enemy when your life has been (is being) *transformed* by the power of *God's truth*.
 - c. But if you are **not** the real deal, if you are just here this morning *playing church*, Satan will *eat you for lunch* before you can *stumble out of his path!*
 - d. So beloved, *take inventory* – *check your equipment!* Elsewhere Paul writes (2 Cor 13): **Test yourselves to see if you *are* in the faith; examine yourselves!**
 - i. Are you *true*...?
 - ii. Are you the *real deal*...?

Get ready, good soldier; gird yourself with a life that is the real deal!

And then put on the breastplate of a righteous life.

1. *Stand firm therefore ... having put on the breastplate of **righteousness**.*
 - a. The soldier's *torso*, his *heart & vital organs*, were protected by a *leather shirt* (or one made of *metal mesh* – “*mail*”).
 - b. To that shirt were fastened slices of *animal hooves* or *metal plates* (perhaps of *bronze*). We're not exactly talking about *Kevlar*, here!
 - c. The *breastplate's* job was to protect your *body* – *inside & out*.

2. *Soldier of Christ*, the apostle writes that your *breastplate* is fashioned of *righteousness* – **your** *righteousness*. The **NT** teaches Christians *righteousness* in **two** ways:
 - a. *First*, when you trusted Christ's *death & resurrection* as the sole basis for your *forgiveness & salvation & eternal life*, God *forgave* your sins & *reckoned/imputed* the perfect *righteousness* of Christ to your *moral account*.
 - i. **Rom 1:16,17**(Paul) – *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it [gospel] the righteousness [from] God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*
 - ii. This is a legal (*forensic*) *righteousness* fully accounted to every Christian when they are *saved*.

- b. But *second*, as a result of being *born again* you then begin to grow in *expressed righteousness*. Bible teachers often call this the *Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification*, i.e. real Christians *grow in righteousness*.
- i. *Expressed righteousness* is only possible (of course) because of what Jesus did for you.
 - ii. It is your resulting *daily, growing righteousness* that Paul seems to have in mind.
 - iii. Your ability to *stand your ground & defend your position* on the *spiritual battlefield* is *strengthened* as you pull around yourself a life of *personal holiness*.
 1. In Paul's *first century culture*, the **organs** (viscera) were viewed as the source of *emotions*.
 2. The **heart** was held to be the *command center* for all that you are: *thoughts & will*. The *real you*...
 3. Satan want's to *pierce your heart & take you out of the game*.
 - iv. But what can the Deceiver & Accuser *effectively fire* at you if you are *confident* & your neighbor is *convinced* that your life has been *conspicuously & radically transformed* because you've been *inducted* into the *Army of the Cross*?
3. Beloved, if you want this *protection* then you must *pursue holiness*.
- a. The Apostle Peter wrote (1 Pt 1:13-16): *Therefore, **prepare** your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy** yourselves also in all your **behavior**; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*

Stand firm, church; iron-clad yourself with the strong assurance of a righteous life.

If you want to stand firm, you need solid footing: strap on the boots of gospel assurance.

1. **V.15-** *and having shod your feet w/ the preparation of the **gospel of peace**.*
 - a. How many pairs of *shoes* are in your *closet*...? These days you can dress your feet in anything from *golf-shoes* to *Guccis*!
 - b. Paul has a special, *military grade sandal* in mind, called **χαλιγαιε**
 - c. They were secured by leather straps that were laced up to mid-shin. In the winter you could stuff them with cloth or fur.
 - d. The *soles* were fashioned of multiple layers of *leather*, with a total thickness of perhaps **three-quarters** of an *inch*.
 - e. Then the *soles* were *studded* w/ several hollow, *hob-nails*. The purpose was to allow the soldier to *plant* his feet and **not** be *pushed around*.
 - i. Kind of like *studded snow tires* or *crampons* on *climbing boots*

2. These *no-nonsense, studded sandals* are a picture of *spiritual stability* that comes as a *result* of having *embraced* the *gospel of peace*.
 - a. I've always read **v.15** quickly & assumed it meant that **spiritual warfare** includes *getting up* on your feet and *running out* to share the *gospel*.... I.e. *evangelism*.
 - b. But that's probably **not** what Paul had in mind...! His entire *strategy* is *standing & holding & defense*. These *boots aren't made for walking*, they were *issued* to allow you to *stand firm & hold ground*.
 - c. So what is this *reference* to the *gospel of peace*?
 - d. Paul's point is that when the Devil tries to push you out of formation by questioning whether you are at peace w/God, you can stand firm because you know *exactly* what the *gospel promises*!

- i. **Rm 5:1** – *Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace w/God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - ii. When Satan *pushes & pushes*, you can look to Christ & lift your voice & sing the “*Battle Hymn of the Elect*”: “*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood & righteousness! I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name! On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!*”
3. Beloved, in Paul’s *spiritual warfare strategy*, the point for this morning is *not* you preaching the gospel to your *neighbor* but you preaching the gospel to your *own soul*.
- a. So that you can *hold your position* against the *attacks & accusations & insidious questions* of the *Liar*.
 - b. The question, then, is: *do you know Jesus?*
 - i. Jesus *died in the place of sinners* – offering His *bloody death* as the *ransom* for your all *sins*.
 - ii. But not only to *pay* for all your *sins*, but w/ that, to also give you a *new heart & life*.
 - iii. His *resurrection* proves that His *offer* is true!
 - iv. His promise of *eternal life* is *unshakable!*
 - c. *Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of God?*

Stand firm, Christian; plant your feet & be as unshakeable as the promises of the gospel!

***** Conclude Part 1 Here *****

Then take up the shield of faith. Read v.16.

1. There is a subtle change as we move to **vv.16&17**. The *first three* parts of your armor were *put on*; the *final three* are *taken up*.
 - a. And when you read in **v.16** – “*in addition to all*,” Paul’s point is to *complete* your personal armament w/these *final three* pieces.
 - b. The tone is still *urgent*; as the *enemy* launches his *attack*, you anticipate him by *taking up* your *shield & helmet & sword*.

2. The Roman soldier had **two** types of *shields*.
 - a. The *first* was small & round (2’); he wore it *strapped* to his *left arm*.
 - b. But Paul has a *second*, larger shield in mind. A **θυρεος**, which is derived from the Gr. word for *door*, because of its *size & shape*.
 - i. A **θυρεος** was **2** boards *glued* together – *convex* & about **2.5x4’** It was covered about w/*canvas* or *oiled leather*. The *ends* were *capped* with *metal*. On the front was an *iron fixture* to deflect *arrows* or *sword blows*.
 - ii. Before a *battle* the soldier would *saturate* the canvas covering w/ water to *extinguish* flaming arrows.
 - iii. Then he would position his *shield* in front of him, *strengthening* his defensive posture.
 - c. On *his* part, the attacking enemy’s *arsenal* included *darts*, *arrows* & *spears*.
 - i. *Arrows* could be wrapped in *pitch-soaked cloth*, then *set ablaze* immediately before being fired by an *archer*.
 - ii. When they struck, the *pitch* could *splatter* and *spread* the *stubborn fire*. Kind of like *shrapnel*.
 - iii. Unless...the *fire* was *drown out* by the *water-soaked shields*.

3. And *that's* what Paul wanted to picture! When Satan attacks, your *faith* is like a *shield*.
- a. Paul is *not* primarily referring to “*the faith*” which is another **NT** term for the *gospel*.
 - i. His point is *your personal* (subjective) *faith*, i.e. your faith in *God* and His *promises*.
 - ii. God **loves** *faith* & the Christian life **begins** w/ *faith*!
 1. **Heb 11:1** – *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
 2. **Heb 11:6** – *And w/o faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who **comes to God** must **believe** that He is and that He is a **rewarder** of those who seek Him.*
 - iii. There is **no** *question* or *condition* in Paul's statement. If you *trust* God & *live* God's way, your *faith* will stop the enemy's flaming arrows! Not only *stop* them – *extinguish* them!
 - b. And *that* the Enemy is *Satan*. *He who is in the world*. The *Evil* (or *Vile*) *One*.
 - i. His *arrows* are *all* the *toxic temptations* to sin, of *all* sorts.
 - ii. Pastor **John MacArthur** writes: *Satan's first arrow was leveled at Eve & Adam, questioning the goodness of God. “Hath God **indeed** said...?” ... Every arrow **since then** has been lit by that **first** flaming dart.*
4. Again, the only way to *quench* the Devil's arrows is to *trust* God. The practical *expression* of trust is *obedience* to God's *will*. And the trustworthy *revelation* of God's will is in His *Word*.
- a. **OT: Psa 18:30** - *As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tried; He is a **shield** to all who take refuge in Him.*

Be a good soldier of Christ Jesus! Take up the shield of faith! Hold your ground!

Take up the helmet of salvation (v.17)

1. Paul issues a **second** *command* (17a): “*Take!*” The *grammar & the context* shout *urgency*.
 - a. The Enemy is *threatening*. His *flaming arrows* are *whistling* thru the air & threatening to *pour in* over the tops of our shields!
 - b. *This is **not** a drill! **Grab** you helmet & sword!*
2. The Roman foot-soldier’s *helmet* was a *bronze* outer layer over an *iron* skull-cap lined with *leather/cloth*.
 - a. In first century it also provided some protection to *face, neck & shoulders*.
 - b. It was *hot, heavy, & uncomfortable*. But when the *arrows* poured in & the *sword-swinging* cavalrymen broke into the line, you wanted something to *protect* your head – and *whatever* you had in it!
3. When you combine the Bible’s *warnings* that Satan is an *accuser* w/ this *illustration* (Eph 6) that your *head (mind)* is protected by your *salvation*...
 - a. ... it appear that Satan loves to attack your *gospel confidence*.
 - b. *Fear* can be so *disabling*. The *Schemer* wants to take your mind *off* the battle & *fill* it w/ worry about your salvation,
 - c. The Bible clearly teaches that God wants *every* Christian to be completely *confident* that they *saved & secured*.
 - i. Jesus promised: “*if any one comes to Me I will never turn Him away.*”
 - ii. Apostle John wrote (1 Jn 5): *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*

4. Briefly, let me suggest that the *helmet of salvation confidence* is forged of these **three** elements:
- a. 1st. Believing the *right gospel*. Do you *understand* the *good news*? That Jesus *died* for your sins in your place? That He was *raised* from the dead on the 3rd day. That the only *response* God wants is for you to *turn* from sin & *trust* Christ?
 - b. 2nd. Living the *right life*. Or perhaps I should say, living a *changed life*. Being *saved* means being made *new*, & being made *new* means being *changed*.
 - c. 3rd. Hearing the *right testimony*. The Bible says when you are God's child then *God's Spirit* assures *your spirit* you now belong to God.
 - d. Consider these **3** elements of *gospel confidence* & **beg** God for *assurance*!

Friend, when the *Accuser & Deceiver & Schemer & Liar* tries to *mess w/ your mind*, the *assurance* that you belong to Christ *protects your head*!

And take up the sword of God's promises.

1. *And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*
2. Roman soldiers carried a short *sword* for close fighting. It was called a *gladius* and was one of *many* types of *swords* on the 1st century battlefield.
 - a. Its *blade* was about **2” wide & 2’ long**, sharpened on both edges & weighing in at upward of **2 lbs.**
 - b. The sword was worn on the *right*, secured by the same *belt* that *girded their loins & secured their tunic* (14).
 - c. And although this text defines a *defensive* strategy of *holding your post*, the *sword* is primarily an *offensive* weapon, the only one in Paul’s *inventory* of spiritual armor.
3. The Christian soldier’s *sword* is the *word of God*. It arms you to *parry* the *thrusts* of the *Evil One* – to *turn Him back*.
 - a. **Heb 4:12** – *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword...*
 - b. But there is a *nuance* in Paul’s orders that is easy to miss.
 - i. When the Scriptures speak of the “*word of God*” the Gr. term for “*word*” is usually **λογος** – the *written word*.
 - ii. But here in **v.17** Paul writes of the **‘ρημα** – the *spoken word*.
 - c. *Careful!* Paul is **not** telling you to turn your Bible into a book of *chants & charms & mantras*. He is **not** calling for *superstitious & mindless spell speaking!*
 - d. The *implication* here is that when Satan *swings* at your soul, you *analyze* his attack & *respond* with specific, targeted *truths & promises* from Scripture. Like *spiritual heat-seeking missiles!*

- e. Our example is Jesus facing the Devil in the *wilderness temptations*:
 - i. **Bread?** *It is written: “Man shall not live by bread alone...”*
 - ii. **Jump?** *It is written: “Thou shalt not put the Lord Thy God...”*
 - iii. **Bow!?! Go Satan!** *For it is written: “Thou shall worship the Lord thy God & serve **Him** only.” ...Go! ...*

- 4. But *think* about that for just a moment.... How well you *know* your Bible?
 - a. When you spot a certain type of spiritual attack on your *radar*...do you know what kind of response to *scramble*?
 - b. Doctrinal attacks on the *deity* of Christ?
 - c. Social issue attacks on the *sanctity of life*?
 - d. Cultural attacks on *biblical marriage*?
 - e. Sensual attacks on *moral fidelity*?
 - f. You can't **mount** the right response, if you can't **find** the right word.

So beloved, be ready...when the Evil attacks, know just how to respond!

Professor Harold Hoehner (*Ephesians*) reminds us that *Ephesians* is a letter about *life in the church*.

So while *spiritual warfare* might sound like an *individual* duty, soldiers generally don't do their best work when they fight *alone*!

In fact, the Roman legions were feared for their highly effective *tactical formations*.

A Roman ***Phalanx*** was a line of foot soldiers, *shoulder to shoulder*, **three deep**. Sometime the line stretched out to a **mile** in length! *Practically unbreakable*!

But what if a *section* of soldiers, somewhere in the middle of the line, *let down their guard*...?

... *Dropped* their shields & swords & decided the helmets were too *heavy & hot & troublesome*? *Sat down* to rest when they were needed to *stand up & fight*?

Where would the *legion* be then?

Beloved, have you *taken up your armor*?

I can assure you that the church is under *attack*! We are *all* a vital part of her defense!

...*pray*...