

Ephesians 6:10-20 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 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, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Announcements:

1. Member Meeting: Today
2. September 5th, Family Service
3. Kid's Volunteer Thank You: Donuts and coffee after service 9/12

Ephesians 6:10-20 | Armor of God

After having zeroed in on the smallest details of the Christian life in our own families and jobs, and relationships, Paul now zooms out to give us the big picture of the Christian life, and the picture is war. If you've ever tried to implement a change in an organization, or personally change amidst your family, then you understand the resistance that you've faced. Edwin Friedman recognizes this principle in his leadership classic, *A Failure of Nerve*. He writes:

Eventually I came to see that this "resistance," as it is usually called, is more than a reaction to novelty; it is part and parcel of the systemic process of leadership. Sabotage is not merely something to be avoided or wished away; instead, it comes with the territory of leading, whether the "territory" is a family or an organization (Friedman, 12).

So many Christians are taken out of their faith right away because they don't realize that when they become a Christian they enter a war and gain real enemies. They are the rocky soil that sprouts up quickly but then is taken out by the sun, or the seeds that are choked out by thorns. They had no root, and were not able to stand in the midst of battle. Before you were a Christian, your only enemy was God, who desired your flourishing. You hated him, and of course thought he was out to get you. But when you became a Christian, you switched teams, and your enemies became evil, cruel, and ruthless. Paul shows us the war we are in, and calls us to engage with the armor of God, and then teaches us how to put the armor on.

1. The War

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Paul's "finally" is better translated as, henceforth. From now on, act like this. You'll notice throughout this whole passage, the balance of the Christian life as something which God creates in us and in which we participate with him. It is not that we are left to our own devices, or that we are mere objects of God's labor, but that he accomplishes his purposes in us as we seek him. All our growth finds its results in him. Our resources to draw on are not our own, but God's, and you must draw on them.

Paul calls us to put on God's armor, so that we may stand against the Devil's schemes. That's right Christian, listen up, your enemy is the devil and he has schemes, strategies. The Devil has a battle plan against you. I think if this was only ten years ago, most people would scoff at the claim that a spiritual intelligence bent on evil, wages war in the world. But I don't think that seems so implausible now. As time marches on, I think it is safe to say that the movements of culture seem to be less like rationalistic march of scientific progress, and not even like the reasonable maneuvering of self-interested actors, but more like the expressions of strange personalities.

But what are the devil's schemes and how do they work? Well, most simply put, he plays you. I heard this wonderful analogy from Tim Keller, which I'll twist a bit for my purposes. Zach has a guitar called a resonator. And when he plays another guitar and hits a note that matches the resonator, you'll see the strings on the resonator begin to vibrate and the guitar begins to sing. This is the way Satan schemes work. He matches the pitch of the strings that are already in our sinful hearts, and begins to make them sing.

The Devil is not a creator, he cannot use what isn't already there. Which means there is no such claim as a simple, the devil made me do it! He is always participating with the evil you carry in your own heart. The Devil's schemes are intimate, we wrestle up close.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Paul chooses this word wrestle, it is a word which means hand to hand combat. Paul is not saying there is no physical component to our enemies. Remember Paul had been stoned, beaten, and slandered by people. Don't be so naive as to think there are no human's so allied with darkness as to be counted enemies. But ultimately their evil is a mere

participation in the greater evil of these spiritual authorities and cosmic powers. So consider, as you see the waves of change, what tune might the devil be playing? Fear, self-sufficiency, pride, greed, false promises of fulfillment, hopelessness?

2. The Armor

Ephesians 6:13 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.

In light of this reality, of the cosmic wickedness which we are up against, Paul calls us to put on armor for this spiritual battle, and it is the armor of God. It is this armor that allows you to stand firm when the schemes of the devil try to play you. Remember, you have switched teams, that means Christian you get a whole set of armor, better than Wayne Enterprises, it is the very armor of God. It is God's armor for you to take up and stand.

Paul gives us an index of the armor, remember he was writing under the constant watch of a Roman soldier. It was someone dressed like this who held him captive, might he have thought although it was invisible, what a better armor he himself wore?

Ephesians 6:14-15 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.

Belt of Truth: This was the center of the soldiers wardrobe. It held his sword and held up his cloak so that he could run. This center of our movement which holds the whole armor together is Truth. Why would it be truth? Well the enemy is the deceiver and the accuser. His intentions are to try to get you to live in lies.

This is painful analogy, but I think must be said, Satan's lies are like that of a predatory groomer. Someone manipulating the mind of another so that they feel as though they are coming to him willingly. Which is why you must be fixed on the truth. Don't tell lies, and when you find lies in your heart expose them. Which often means disbelieving yourself.

Breastplate of Righteousness: Covering all your most important organs is the breastplate of Righteousness. We've replaced righteousness with authenticity. Righteousness is always negative when we speak. But in Paul's writing we know that the righteousness with which we are covered is not our own, but Christ's. What can the accuser say about you? You are a sinner, not worth saving, broken beyond repair. You might certainly agree with him. But the righteousness you place over your heart is not your own but Christ's righteousness. You participate in his integrity. You're justified.

Shoes, readiness of the gospel of peace: The devil cannot take you from the hand of your savior. But he can stop your movement for his kingdom. It is the peace of God which keeps us moving forward. Not trapped in anxiety and indecisiveness, but knowing because

of all that Christ has done that there is peace. And it is peace that we proclaim to the world, peace to those who are far off and peace to those who are near. Our peace marches forward.

Ephesians 6:16-17 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,

Shield of Faith: What is it that puts out the flaming arrows of Satan. Faith. We have learned to have hearts that trust the Lord. That trust he is good. That trust him with our lives and happiness and futures. The Lord is a good father who desires goodness for us, and is not seeking to hurt us but to save us even at great cost to himself, and it is to this person that we entrust ourselves. Satan would have you never entrust yourself to God and therefore never trust anyone.

Helmet of Salvation: Upon our heads, fixed gloriously, but for battle is our salvation. The Helmet's purpose was not simply to protect but also to adorn and intimidate. That means it also inspired confidence in the soldier. You lift your head. Now what are we adorned with, but the salvation of the Lord. We can't be defeated. Our God saves. Hold your head up Christian, and pursue the righteousness of Christ which comes by faith. Trust that the Lord is mighty to save.

Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God: What is our offensive weapon? The word of God. His promises towards us, his commands for us, these tear through the lies of our enemies in the heavenly places, as the word cuts wicked out of tune chords in our hearts so that the singing of the devil no longer resonates.

2. How to put it on

Ephesians 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

How do we put it on? We pray. Did you know that this whole list is an exhortation towards prayer. There are two ways that you grow in your faith, suffering and prayer. And prayer takes perseverance, you have to learn how to do it. Most of us treat prayer like an expensive restaurant, one bad experience and you never go back. Prayer takes perseverance and practice. Failure and recommitment. Sit with the Lord, and pray. And we put this on one another. You know when you're SCUBA diving, out here in CO. You put each other's tanks on, they're too heavy. You put each other's armor on.

Ephesians 6:19-20 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

And Paul prays for you to put it on him as well. Let him wield the sword well. He says it clearly, let him speak boldly. Let him share the gospel, even when it is costly in the moment, as he shares with soldiers let him remember his true armor. Oh congregation, please pray for me.

When Charles Spurgeon was asked about the secret of his ministry he simply replied. “My people pray for me.” Might I be able to say that?