

Sermon 28: Focused on Scripture and the Finish Line: Ephesians 6:10-17

Text: Ephesians 6:10-17 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

Introduction:

- **Preparation 1: Prepare your mind to face conflict: 6:14** "Stand having your loins girt about with truth..."
 - We need a stabilizing standard when we face Satan's assaults.
 - We must live consistently with what we believe.
- **Preparation 2: Live like the person you are in Christ: 6:14** "Having on the breastplate of righteousness..."
 - We must rest our comfort in who we are in Him.
 - We must live like the people we are in Him, or Satan will exploit the ground we give.
- **Preparation 3: Strengthen your assurance with a full understanding of the gospel: 6:15** "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace..."
 - We have peace with God through Christ's death on the cross.
 - We must keep our eyes fixed on His work alone.
- **Preparation 4: Embrace the collective strength of the church: 6:16** "Taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked..."
 - We must remember that growth happens in community.
 - We must contribute to the growth of others and draw encouragement from them when our faith is tested.

Summary: As we stand, we must fill our minds with scripture and fix our eyes on the finished line.

Interrogative: How do we do this?

Preparation 5: Fix your eyes on the finished line: 6:17 "Take the helmet of salvation..."

- **We must have a heavenward focus:**
 - **Parallel Passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:8** "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation..."
 - **In Ephesians:**
 - **Ephesians 1:11-12** "We have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory..."
 - **Ephesians 1:13-14** "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..."
 - **Ephesians 1:17-18** "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints..."
 - **Ephesians 2:5-7** "By grace ye are saved...That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus..."
- **Paul's illustration: The helmet of salvation**
 - When Paul wrote this letter, Roman legionnaires were using an iron-style helmet.
 - These helmets provided protection against downward slashes and blows and provided protection for the back of the neck and the cheeks.
 - They were designed to protect in close quarter combat while soldiers held their positions in formation.
 - As you stand in formation, and the battle becomes intense, stand your ground, looking forward to your future inheritance and the glory that awaits you.
- **This heavenward focus is practical:**
 - **Example 1: When you face sin, ponder your future hope:**
 - **1 John 3:2-3** "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure..."
 - **Titus 2:12-13** "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ..."
 - **Example 2: When you face injustice, ponder your future hope: 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8** "It is a righteous thing with God

to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

- **Example 3: When you suffer, ponder your future hope**
 - **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal..."
 - **Romans 8:18** "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us..."
- **Example 4: When your faith is tested, ponder your future hope: 1 Peter 1:3-7** "His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time...Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..."

Preparation 6: Fill your heart with scripture: 6:17 "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

- **We must have a renewed mind:**
 - **Ephesians 4:17-23** "Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the **vanity of their mind**, Having the **understanding darkened**, being alienated from the life of God through the **ignorance** that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But **ye have not so learned** Christ; If so be that ye have **heard** him, and have been **taught** by him, as the truth is in Jesus. That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be **renewed** in the spirit of your **mind**..."
- **Paul's illustration:** The sword of the Spirit
 - The sword used when Paul wrote these words was the primary sidearm of a Roman legionnaire.

- These swords were short and broad worn on the right side and designed to be drawn for short quick lethal thrusts in close quarter combat.
- A quick thrust of only a few inches to the face, throat, or abdomen could be lethal at close quarters.
- Again, these weapons were meant to be used in formation at close quarters.
- When the battle becomes most intense, and Satan's lies bare down upon your soul, stand in formation armed with God's word and allow the Holy Spirit to fight for you through Scripture.
- **God's word empowers us in practical situations:**
 - **Example 1: When you face temptation, it pushes back against Satan's lies: Hebrews 4:15** Christ "Was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin..."
 - **Matthew 4:4** "He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God..."
 - **Matthew 4:7** "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God..."
 - **Matthew 4:10** "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve..."
 - **Example 2: When your conscience has been defiled by sin, it cleanses: Psalm 119:9-11** "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee..."
 - **Example 3: When your heart feels barren and empty, it makes you fruitful and resilient: Psalm 1:2-3** "His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper..."
 - **Example 4: When your faith is shaken, it stabilizes you:**
 - **Psalm 119:165** "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them..."
 - **Hebrews 6:18-19** "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast..."
 - **Matthew 7:24-25** "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man,

which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

- **Example 5: When your mind is cluttered with fleshly enslavements and empty pursuits, it transforms you: Romans 12:2** "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Application:

- **To the unbeliever:**

- This broken world is the best you will get.
- The grave is not the end, but rather the beginning of your eternal existence.
- Turn to Christ while there is time and flee from the judgment you are guaranteed to face outside of Christ.

- **To the believer:**

- **Don't miss the collective nature of standing:** We need other Christians, and they need us.
- **As you stand keep your eyes fixed on the big picture:**
 - **When you struggle with sin:** It does not yet appear what you will be, but when he appears, you will be like him; for you will see him as he is.
 - **When you face unjust circumstances:** There will be a day when God will punish all who refuse to embrace the gospel.
 - **When you face painful circumstances:** Your light affliction, is for a moment, and works for you a far greater, eternal weight of glory.
 - **When your faith is tested:** The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, will be found unto praise and honor and glory at Christ's appearing.
- **As you stand fill your mind with Scripture:**
 - Read is every day and worship God through it.
 - Let it read you.
 - Ponder it throughout the day.
 - Write down what you are learning as you read it.
 - Talk to others about how God is using it in your life.
- **As you stand, embrace Scripture's power in deep trouble:**
 - Rest in it as you combat temptation.
 - Rest in it when you need cleansing of conscience.
 - Rest in it when your heart feels barren and empty.
 - Rest in it when your faith is shaken.
 - Rest in it when your mind is cluttered empty.