

## THE CHUCH AT WAR – KNOW YOUR ARMOUR

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

**October 23, 2022**

Today we are continuing my second message on Paul's final section of his letter to the **Ephesians** – this last section (Ephesians 6:10-20) deals with the important topic of Spiritual Warfare. Last Sunday the first message was on **Ephesians 6:10-12**, and where we needed to begin was in “*KNOWING YOUR ENEMY*,” because whether we like it or not, every Christian is engaged in a very real spiritual battle between two opposing kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And those least in the know will be the first casualties, so we need to know our enemy and how he operates, and thankfully Paul provides us here with a self-defence course in Spiritual Warfare.

The problem for many believers is that they fear Satan and his demonic army – so they stay away from this subject of spiritual warfare, but that is the wrong approach and will cause many to fall victim to the devil's schemes. Instead, when we know who we are IN CHRIST, we will come to realize that the ultimate victory has already been won for us by Christ on the cross and we have nothing to fear. The crucial fact we need to know is this: “*As believers in Christ, we do not fight **FOR** victory; we fight **FROM** victory. In Christ's power we are invincible.*” There is no doubt how the battle will turn out, Satan and his demons are a defeated foe, but they are still dangerous, and a serious threat, and they are getting more-and-more aggressive and dangerous because their time on this earth is getting shorter-and-shorter. So, even though we know the victory is won, we never-ever let down our guard, and never-ever head out our door without first getting dressed by putting on our armour!

**Ephesians 6:10-20** is the central teaching in the entire New Testament on spiritual warfare, and last week we looked at Paul's two commands: “*Be strong in the Lord*,” and “*Put on the full armour of God.*” Then in verse 12 Paul reminds us that we may think our issues are with the difficult daily situations we face, or the struggles we have with those around us, but the real issue is taking place behind the scenes in the supernatural realm, because of the invisible war that is taking place all around us. As Paul reminds us: “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” So, Paul doesn't want us to be fooled and start fighting the wrong enemy; instead, we

need to be fully aware of Satan's schemes and be on the defensive, as the Apostle Peter reminded us in **1 Peter 5:8**, ***“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*** The devil comes to kill, steal, and destroy. He's the greatest mass murderer, who is behind suicide, drug-related deaths, murder, war, and terrorism. He's the thief who comes stealing our health and robbing us of our God-given potential. He's the destroyer of relationships, marriages, families, and friendships. The devil is a master schemer, using deception, camouflage, and trickery to trap his victims into taking the bait, often masquerading as an angel of light to confuse us and catch us off guard. So, we must put on our armour to stand our ground and not give him any more territory and start taking territory back that he has stolen from us!

From the time we wake up in the morning until our head hits the pillow at night, we are engaged in combat – in a war not easily won, in which the casualty count can be very high, and without God's help we will lose every time. And if you enter the battlefield alone and un-equipped, there's no guarantees of victory, but if you enter in His power, there's hope because you are guaranteed to win as the Apostle John said in **1 John 4:4**, ***“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*** Life is a battlefield and there's a force at work in this world that doesn't want you to succeed in any way, especially to live for Jesus and reach others with the love of Christ.

Our enemy might be defeated, but he is still strong; however, our Saviour Jesus is stronger still, and you can resist the devil by putting on the full armour of God which Paul describes in **verses 13 to 17**. The title of today's message is ***“KNOW YOUR ARMOUR,”*** and we will be looking at five pieces of armour that we put on that are defensive, protecting us from the devil's attack. And you will notice that all of this armour protects us from a frontal attack, as we face the enemy, we don't retreat, we don't turn and run in fear. And here's how he starts off this section on preparing us to walk in His strength, in **verse 13**, ***“Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to STAND your ground, and after you have done everything, to STAND.”*** What is the day of evil? Paul was talking about any day you wake up to evil around you as the day of evil. If you wake up and you're sick, evil had tried to penetrate your day. If you wake up and you've got a problem in your finances, evil had tried to interrupt

your day. Any day you wake up and find evil trying to get in your day and ruin it, you don't have to take it, because you have received divine power and divine weaponry to stand. Paul uses the word "*stand*" twice in this word to emphasize that a soldier committed to serving his Lord is committed to remain standing regardless how fierce the battle rages around them!

When we look at these pieces of armour Paul was describing a well equipped Roman Soldier – who was most likely guarding him while he was writing this letter from his prison cell. As well, a Roman soldier would have been very familiar to his audience, so this would have been a powerful word picture to get his point across. The first thing every modern day soldier, who enlists into the military, are taught in basic training, is to know their weapons. They learn by disassembling and reassembling their weapons so often that they become so familiar with them that they can do it in total darkness. It becomes second nature. The sad fact is that there are a lot of believers today who are standing on the battlefield undressed and ill-equipped while spiritual warfare is raging all around them, all because they don't understand their enemy or their armour and as a result are getting beat up physically, emotionally, and spiritually, living in defeat when they don't have to be. The church is God's army but are badly wounded and in retreat most of the time because they don't put on their armour and are not familiar with their armour. So, Paul includes these verses as the end of his letter to make sure the church is well equipped to fight, they know the armour has provided them and wear it. Paul says there are six critical pieces of armour or equipment required to achieve victory in the Christian life.

This where Paul now takes us in verses 14-17 – the first and most important piece of equipment Paul speaks about is the **BELT OF TRUTH**, which is our defense against deception. A Roman soldier had a belt, and all the rest of his armour was somehow hooked to that belt, so his belt was critical to the rest of the equipment. The belt was where his sword would hang and his shield would attach, so the belt was central, and a lot depending on it being secure. This first piece of armour is a defense against the enemy's number one tactic, deception, so we need to know the truth of God's Word, which protects us from error. The devil always first attacks the truth of the Gospel because he is a liar and manipulator, who wants us to misinterpret and miss-quote Scripture and believe half-truths. Paul says to tighten the belt of truth, and that means to hang on to the Word of God during times of attack

and not let anything deter us from the truth we have been taught, because God's Word gives us freedom from deception according to Jesus' words to us in **John 8:32**, *"Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."* God's truth holds you together. We see how Satan misquoted Scripture when Jesus was tested in the wilderness. In the same way we need to hold tightly to the truth of God's Word! Don't listen to those false teachers who are twisting the truth of God's Word to fit their agenda to draw you away from the truth! Charles Spurgeon, *"The man whose Bible is falling apart is usually the one whose life isn't."*

Each soldier also wore a loose tunic that went down to their feet, so when the battle cry sounded a soldier would first tuck his tunic into his belt, so that it wouldn't flap around during combat, becoming a tripping hazard. Tucking one's clothing under the belt signified a readiness to work or prepare oneself for service or duty. And like the Roman soldier, if you don't have this belt securing your tunic then you will be tripping over yourself day-after-day, falling for this, and falling for that, falling for whatever happens to be going around at the time, and allowing and accepting things into your life that you have been given spiritual authority over. The secular world is constantly trying to undermine the teachings of the Bible, trying to get Christians to buy into their way of thinking, which is causing division within the Christian community. All of this needless debating our social issues within denominations is the devil's scheme of getting us off track, getting us preoccupied by fighting amongst ourselves rather than spreading the Gospel message to the lost. Satan is seeking to wear out the saints, but God instructs us to hang on firmly to what we know He has promised us. Standing on the truth of God's Word – holds us together!

The second piece of equipment is the **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** – the breastplate is worn over the chest and protects all of the vital organs, especially the heart from arrows and spears. The Roman breastplate was usually made out of bronze, and no one would go into battle without it. What does righteousness mean? According to Paul righteousness means putting into practice what you know is right through right living, through integrity in one's lifestyle and character. Not many of us here may feel righteous, but the good news is that every follower of Christ has been declared righteous according to **Philippians 3:9**, *"Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of*

*faith.*” Like a soldier is completely covered with a breastplate, every believer is completely covered with the perfect righteousness of Christ, so when God looks at us, He looks at us through the filter of Jesus Christ who is completely holy and righteous before His heavenly Father. This means that there is no sin and no condemnation that Satan can use against us to accuse us before our heavenly Father in the courts of heaven. The arrows and spears of accusations against us can’t penetrate our protective breastplate of righteousness and penetrate our heart – our heart belongs to Christ! Our life belongs to Christ once we come to believe!

Even though we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, Satan will still continue to shoot arrows of accusations against us, trying to condemn us, laughing at us whenever we slip-up, “*You call yourself a Christian?*” As well, when we come under attack, the devil will insinuate that our problems are our fault and give us a generous list of all our weaknesses, wanting us to throw in the towel, thinking we can’t ever measure up or be good enough to be a faithful follower of Christ. So, the breastplate of righteousness is essential when condemnation comes against us, helping us to stand our ground and say, “*Satan, that’s a lie. I’m complete in Christ,*” reminding Satan that you have been forgiven and declared righteous according to **1 John 1:9**, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” Satan’s accusations and the heavy load of guilt and shame he tries to put on us cannot pierce the breastplate of righteousness. The fact remains that in Christ we are righteous and are becoming more Christ-like each-and-every day!

The third piece of equipment are the **SHOES OF PEACE** – the sandals Roman soldiers wore were more like boots than sandals, protecting the foot and lower leg. The sole was very thick and embedded with nails so that in battle they could get good traction on muddy or uneven ground. The Roman soldier’s footwear was similar to cleats that athletes wear today to give them good footage, so if footing is critical in sports, how much more crucial is it in the high-stakes, life-or-death situations in our invisible war. Paul says, “*Put on your feet the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace,*” which means put on the Good News of the Gospel message which will fill us with such peace that we can stand firm, regardless of what is happening around us. In that way we will be unwavering in our faith with a peace that passes all understanding because of what Jesus said in **John 16:33**, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you will have peace. In*

***this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”***

What grounds us is peace, peace with God, no longer being enemies of God, as well as the peace of God that reigns within us, taking away all anxiety, fear, and worry. God wants us to walk in peace. Peaceful people are powerful people! Remaining in peace shows that we trust God – the apostle Peter said we show humility by casting all our cares on God. ***“Humble yourself, therefore, under God’s almighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you”*** (1 Peter 5:6-7). The devil knows if we lose our peace, we will become irrational and make emotional decisions that will only cause more conflict and trouble for us and for those around us!

The fourth piece of equipment is the **SHIELD OF FAITH** – ***“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”*** (verse 16). The Roman shield that Paul was referring to here was not a small shield but the large one they carried that could be linked together to protect an entire row or multiple rows of soldiers, and the layers of its front covering could extinguish the flaming arrows of the enemy, because their enemies would often dip their arrows in pitch and ignited them before firing them. In the same way, Satan fires flaming arrows at us at all times. Some of these arrows are invisible, like temptation, fear, anxiety, depression, and discouragement, and some are visible like people who betray us or come against us in some way or use their hurtful words to attack us. Notice that Paul doesn’t say to just carry the shield of faith, but he says to lift it up, and to me that means we are to be ready to use and release our faith every time the devil attacks us in any way, so we are completely covered overhead as well!

I want to remind us that our problem is not needing more faith – we already have tons of faith, we just have to redirect our faith to the right place. For example: we put a great deal of faith in our medical system. If we are concerned about something, we will go to our family doctor who would send us to a specialist who may have never met and even take off our clothes so the specialist can examine us. The specialist may send us for further tests to other strangers, and then tell you that you have some kind of illness you may have never heard of, and you believe them. Then to treat the illness, they’ll write out a prescription that you can’t read. You’ll take it to a pharmacist to be filled and then take the medicine home and start taking a drug you can’t pronounce but follow the doctor’s instructions faithfully. Now

every step of the way you're putting your faith in someone: the family doctor, the specialist, the pharmacist, and in the drug, which may cause worse side-effects than your medical condition. So, you see, you don't need more faith, you already have tons of faith, the problem is that you need to redirect your faith in the right direction – towards God. For most believers, if a doctor tells you to do something, you will follow their instructions without question faithfully, but when it comes to having faith in God, most of us doubt because we are not using our shield of faith to deflect the lies of Satan!

The problem is that we have been deceived by Satan to not trust God's character, to not believe that He always has our best interests in mind – instead Satan has caused us to trust our medical professionals, our politicians, our educators, plus our leaders in the business community, ahead of God. So, to prevent this from happening Paul says that we need to pick up and lift up the shield of faith and start believing in His promises, and God's Word is filled with His promises. For example: About forty times we read these words throughout the Bible: ***"I'll never leave you nor forsake you."*** Paul also reminds us in **2 Corinthians 1:20**, ***"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ."*** Then David says this in **Psalm 28:7**, ***"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him."*** And there are many-many more examples of God's promises to us, so the way we can extinguish the devil's arrows that not only pierce us, but also can start a destructive fire around us – is to have absolute confidence in God, His promises, His power, His goodness, and His divine will for our lives!

The other thing we need to do with our shield of faith – is to link up with other believers. The Roman shield had places on each side where they could be hooked together to make a living wall of defence, so the army could move forward in unison and drive the enemy back. The important point is that the soldiers didn't fight alone, and neither should we, because a Christian out on their own is an easy target for the enemy who roams around like a hungry lion looking to isolate someone so they can be devoured. Christians who isolate themselves don't have a chance against Satan and his demonic army. We need each other, because we often fall down, and need the one beside us to pick us back up. There's strength in numbers!

The fifth piece of equipment is the **HELMET OF SALVATION** – the helmet the Roman soldier wore protected both his head and neck, because the greatest threat of a foot soldier were cavalry soldiers, who would come riding in on horses with long swords trying to take off their heads. Their helmets protected them from blows to the head, protecting the soldier’s brain, so a good soldier never went into battle without his head protected. In the same way, a Christian should never go into spiritual warfare without this helmet of salvation, which protects their mind from doubt. The primary battle takes place in the mind, in our thought life. That’s where Satan can manipulate us most effectively by distorting our thoughts, our emotions, our understanding and beliefs about God and the things of God, and even about our salvation. Then once our minds become distorted, our behaviour is adversely affected, and our relationships suffer. That’s why God is so concerned about our minds and wants them protected by filling them with the things of God rather than the things of this world, according to **2 Corinthians 10:5**, *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* Remember, where you set your mind is important, because the mind set on the flesh gives death, but the mind set on the Spirit gives life and peace. The spiritual battle is won in the mind, so if we don’t take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ’s will for our lives, we will lose the battle every time!

Just as truth, righteousness and peace are found in Jesus – so is our salvation found in Jesus. **Acts 4:12** tells us that salvation is found in no one else but Christ, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”* The helmet of salvation is the certainty that we have deliverance from sin and the promise of eternal life. That being said, there are two kinds of Christians: those who have absolute, total assurance of their salvation, so if you asked them, *“If they were to die today, would they have the assurance of heaven.”* They would answer, *“I have no doubt whatsoever that the moment I die, I will be in the presence of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Then the second kind of Christian, when asked the same question would respond with, *“I hope so,”* being unsure of their salvation. Without the helmet of salvation strapped on to protect our thoughts, we will have doubts about our salvation, our healing, our deliverance, and in all the other areas we are promised victory. But every believer can have absolute assurance of their salvation, being secure in Christ Jesus in all areas of their lives. So, putting on the

helmet of salvation gives us absolute hope, not in our finances, not in the people around us, or our circumstances, but hope in the person of Christ!

I have often wondered why God puts up with Satan and his demonic army – who are causing so much pain and heartache in this world, especially to His most devoted followers. I believe God could easily push a delete button and eliminated Satan and his demonic army if He wanted to, but Satan is still here, and we have to deal with this invisible war. So, I believe the demonic realm is still around for the time being, because God created both angels and humans to have free choice and live by the circumstances of the choices they make. God never wanted a group of robots, but desires to have a loving intimate relationship with His creation, both angels and humans, who will worship Him and enjoy His presence for eternity. Therefore, I believe this short time we have been given on this earth is a testing ground to determine who's a committed follower and who's not. Those that won't worship and obey God here on this earth, won't want to spend eternity with Him in heaven either. So, I believe that Satan and his demonic army must be part of that testing process to help God determine who's on His side and who's not, and where they belong in eternity!

Remember God doesn't leave us unprotected but has provided us with armour that we must put on to stand our ground. And the word *stand* conveys the picture of a Roman soldier standing upright with his head held high, his shoulders thrown back, filled with confidence because of his strength and His protection, covered with armour to withstand the lethal blows of the enemy. So, whenever life hits us with trouble, we don't retreat or slump over in defeat, because we have Christ's power and authority behind us, and we have the blood of Christ, and we have God's Word. We are not victims – we are victors! Our spiritual armour is to be used in a war that has already been won!