

Being Bold in the Battle

Ephesians 6:14-23

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After one of the services last weekend, Lindsey Laud, who teaches first grade at Quad Cities Christian School, shared with me that the students in kindergarten through fifth grade have been reciting a statement about the Armor of God every morning. I was struck by something she said: “*We want them to begin every day by putting on the armor of God.*” Her daughter Everly did it for me on the spot, complete with motions. Since many of our Edgewood families partner with QCCS, I asked Lindsey if she could gather some of the young disciples together so we could record a video of them reciting this creed.

Here are the words:

*I put on the helmet of salvation...to protect my mind and thoughts.
I put on the breastplate of righteousness...to help me know and do what's right.
I put on the belt of truth...so I remember God's Word is what is true.
I put on the Good News shoes...so I can tell others about Jesus wherever I go.
I hold up my Shield of Faith...to stop the fiery darts from the dumb devil.
And I use my Sword of the Spirit...which is the WORD OF GOD!*

Play Video.

We studied Ephesians 6:10-13 last weekend and learned how important it is to *stand against Satan in the strength of the Lord*. We're standing upon ground already won for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. We operate from a position of victory as 1 Corinthians 15:57 says: “***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***” The command to stand is used four times.

- Verse 11: “***stand against the schemes of the devil.***”
- Verse 13: “***able to withstand in the evil day.***”
- Verse 13: “***stand firm.***”
- Verse 14: “***stand therefore.***”

Because we are at war with invisible spiritual powers who are seeking to take us out, verse 11 exhorts us to “***put on the whole armor of God.***” Verse 13 commands

us to ***“take up the whole armor of God.”*** This makes me think of what General Eisenhower wrote to the “Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Forces” right before the invasion of Normandy 80 years ago this week: *“Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well-trained, well-equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.”*

Let’s turn to Ephesians 6:14-17 where we’ll discover how to take up and put on God’s armor: ***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.***

For our main idea, let’s be challenged by what our children have reminded us to do: *Begin every day by putting on the armor of God.*

Paul’s passion was to communicate that we are soldiers in an unseen war. Searching for a spiritual metaphor, a Roman soldier unwittingly sat for his portrait, very possibly the one to whom Paul was chained. We’re reminded to put on the ***“whole”*** armor of God so we are protected from every attack that may come our way. Pity the soldier who goes into battle unprepared. Paul lists the pieces of armor in the exact order they would be put on.

1. Fasten the belt of truth. The first metaphor is found in the front half of verse 14: ***“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...”*** A soldier’s belt was not used to hold his pants up but was used to tuck in his tunic so he wouldn’t trip up in battle. Without his belt, a soldier could not move quickly. The word ***“fastened”*** means, *“to wrap around, to gird.”* We see this in Exodus 12:11 when God prepared the Israelites to leave Egypt during the first Passover: ***“In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.”***

Just as the belt was the starting point for the soldier’s armor and pulled in all the loose ends, truth must be at the foundation of a believer’s life, tying everything together. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed: ***“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”*** We must hold to the inerrancy and authority of God’s Word as we navigate the stormy seas in society, regardless of how much our culture capsizes. *If God says it, that settles it. We must be convictional about sin and compassionate*

toward sinners. *We will not compromise on truth, nor will we clobber those for whom Christ died.*

Jesus called Himself truth in John 14:6: ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.”*** A soldier’s belt was used much like a tool belt with various weapons like his sword, and pieces of the armor, attached to it. Jesus must be at the center of our lives, and we must be known as people who tell the truth by living out the truth consistently and without compromise.

When you put on the belt of truth, you’re reminding yourself what you already know to be true. So, here’s a question: Have you cinched yourself tightly with God’s truth?

2. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. A soldier’s breastplate covered vital central organs like the heart and lungs. It attached at the neck and went down to the thighs. Often made out of metal, or chain mail, it was designed to ward off deadly sword thrusts, much like an ancient bulletproof vest.

Notice the second half of verse 14: ***“...and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”*** This metaphor refers to our positional righteousness and to righteous living put in practice.

- **Our positional righteousness.** Philippians 3:9 says our righteousness comes ***“through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”*** When we put our faith in Christ through the new birth, we are forever made right with God. Theologians call this imputed righteousness. Jesus took our rottenness and in exchange, gave us His righteousness.
- **Our practical righteousness.** We’re also called to pursue a life of right living, where we focus on becoming holy in all we do. Theologians call this sanctification.

The elite law enforcement group known as the Texas Rangers have a powerful motto: ***“You can’t stop a man in the right who just keeps on coming.”*** The believer who has been made righteous and lives righteously knows he is in the right so he can face anything without fear as we read in Proverbs 28:1: ***“The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”***

Don’t compromise your convictions, fellow Christian. If you do, you will be very vulnerable against the enemy. Make sure you have been declared righteous through the new birth. Martin Lloyd-Jones said it well: ***“The devil aims to fuel our***

doubts by bringing up past sins and present iniquities. Christians must apply the breastplate of righteousness and protect themselves at every angle by looking to Jesus Christ on the cross.”

3. Put on the shoes of the gospel of peace. As the kids reminded us, we’re to put on our *good news shoes* according to verse 15: ***“And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.”*** The shoes worn by Roman soldiers had nails driven through the soles to give them traction on any surface. This would help them to stand against the onslaught of the enemy, much like football cleats help a player gain traction.

The gospel brings us peace *with* God and also gives us the peace *of* God. When we build our lives on the gospel, we can navigate over any terrain. Romans 10:15 tells us to be ready at all times to share this gospel of peace with others: ***“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”***

Many today have not experienced peace with God and therefore don’t have the peace of God. This past week, I had the joy of going for a walk with one of our granddaughters. As we were walking, we stopped at an intersection, and she began waving to drivers as they drove by. She was thrilled when someone would return the wave. We did this on two different days and on the second day, she received over 50 waves, along with about eight people who beeped their horns.

While the vast majority of drivers did return her wave, some didn’t wave at all. This troubled her, so she asked, *“Popsy, why did that person not wave to me?”* I told her that maybe they didn’t see her, and that maybe some were having a bad day and needed some encouragement. I urged her to keep trying to cheer people up, so she started jumping up and down and waving with both hands. Sure enough, about 10 drivers in a row waved back! I told her she was helping people have a good day and shared Proverbs 17:22 with her: ***“A happy heart is good medicine.”***

Do you have a readiness to share the good news of great joy with grumpy people?

Begin every day by putting on the armor of God.

4. Take up the shield of faith. A warrior’s shield was oblong, 2 ½ feet wide and four feet tall, about the size of a refrigerator door. A man could put his entire body behind it. It was made out of wood and overlaid with linen and leather. It was often soaked in water to quench the enemy’s flaming arrows and javelins. Psalms

120:4 captures this idea: ***“A warrior’s sharp arrows with glowing coals of the broom tree.”***

This metaphor is magnified in verse 16: ***“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.”*** The phrase, ***“in all circumstances”*** means, ***“overall, in everything.”*** The ***“flaming darts of the evil one”*** are launched from a distance as strong temptations and sinful thoughts come upon us suddenly. The word ***“extinguish”*** means, ***“to quench or dampen.”***

One pastor writes: ***“These specially prepared spears were lit before being launched and were designed to spread flammable liquid on the enemy. Sin seeks to pierce your defenses and inflame lust, pride, anger, contempt, or any number of sinful reactions...when temptations to sin hit their mark, they can set our minds and hearts ablaze with wicked thoughts and desires.”*** That’s why we need to take up the shield of faith on a daily basis. 1 John 5:4 says, ***“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”***

Roman shields were designed to interlock and form a solid wall against the enemy on the front line. The soldiers behind the first row would hold their shields above their heads to protect from spiritual scud missiles raining down on them. Don’t miss the point. We are designed to be in community with one another. Because of this, we were challenged last weekend to march in tight formation with other believers. If you isolate, you will become an easy target for the evil one.

5. Take the helmet of salvation. The fifth imperative is found in verse 17: ***“And take the helmet of salvation...”*** According to Kent Hughes, the Roman military helmet was made of metal and had a band to protect the forehead along with plates for the cheeks and the neck. When the helmet was strapped in place, it exposed little besides the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Satan uses weapons of doubt and discouragement that lodge in our heads to get us to believe we can lose our salvation. We must hold on to 1 John 5:13, which is one of the verses we emphasize in our Intentional Discipleship ministry: ***“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”*** If you are saved by the Savior, you are eternally secure in your salvation. The helmet of salvation gives us confidence that no matter what happens, we will experience ultimate victory in Christ.

I appreciate what 16-year-old Carma Chavez recently wrote for a speech she gave: *“The helmet of salvation was meant for you as a person to realize a new way of thinking in your life. The enemy is constantly after your mind...salvation provides you the knowledge and ability how to secure your mind from the enemy.”* Carma is in our youth group and serves on the worship team.

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6. Take up the sword of the Spirit. After listing five defensive pieces of armor, the second half of verse 17 exhorts us to take up the only offensive weapon the believer carries: *“...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* This sword, also known as a “slaughter-knife,” was six to eighteen inches long and was sharp on both sides of the blade, so it could cut in all directions.

Hebrews 4:12 describes the Scriptures as sharp and penetrating: *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* The words of Jesus also function as a sharp sword as we read in Revelation 2:16: *“Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

Ephesians 6:17 calls the sword of the Spirit *“the word of God.”* This is not the typical Greek word *logos*, which means, “word” but rather *rhema*, which refers to *“a saying, a portion, or a specific section of Scripture uttered by a living voice.”* In our battle against Satan, we must be familiar with the entire *logos*, so we can choose a particular *rhema* when the need arises.

I think of how Jesus quoted selections from Deuteronomy three times to disarm the devil in Matthew 4:1-11. Each time he used these words, *“It is written.”* In verse 10, He swung the sword of the Spirit to slice and dice Satan: *“Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.’”* Verse 11 tells us what happened as a result: *“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.”*

Nothing disarms and defeats the devil like the Word of God. Kent Hughes gives this challenge: *“If Christ, the Divine Man, in battling Satan while here on earth did so with the sword of the Word, how much more do we frail men and women need to wield the same sword if we are to be victorious?”*

Actually, a soldier's sword functioned as a weapon for both offense and defense. We must use it to defend against error and outright attacks and we must employ it by quoting it frequently. It is not enough to own a sword; we must also know how to use it. In C.S. Lewis's book, *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil writes to a junior devil, saying, "*It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our work is done by keeping things out.*"

- Read it.
- Meditate on it.
- Study it.
- Memorize it.
- Obey it.
- Apply it.
- Share it with others.

We've been given everything we need to successfully war against our adversary. Armor is effective if worn properly but does no good if it's left behind or worn improperly.

I came across these penetrating words from a *Casting Crowns* song called, "Waiting on the Night to Fall."

*He knows you have the answers, but truth lies dusty on your shelf.
And the sword that you could slay him with has become an ornament and
nothin' else.
You could put him back down in his hole in the ground, but he knows you
never will.
He's been around so long, you got used to the smell!*

One more word from Kent Hughes: "*We are at war, and there is a sense in which warfare is to be our occupation, avocation, and preoccupation. We must always be in armor. We must sleep in it and, though wearing it, still put it on daily...soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armor on!*"

I also found these lyrics to a song written many years ago:

*Christian, seek not yet repose,
Hear thy gracious Savior say;
Thou art in the midst of foes:*

[We must] watch and pray.

7. Pray at all times in the Spirit. While not officially part of the armor of God, Ephesians 6:18 exhorts us to pray because prayer is to pervade everything. Prayer is our ultimate secret weapon of warfare: ***“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.”***

We're to pray at all times, using every kind of prayer, keeping alert without giving up. I love how God is calling our people to pray. The Prayer Night for Unreached Nations will meet again this Monday night. Pastor Kyle shared with me that after teaching on fasting in his Sunday Biblical Viewpoints Growth Group, many in this group are now fasting on Fridays and meeting at noon to pray for their prodigal children.

Paul also asked for prayer for himself in verses 19-20 but not for his comfort or even release from prison: ***“And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”*** Paul was in prison as a direct result of preaching the gospel and all he can think about is preaching the gospel some more!

A family in our church prays for Beth and me on a regular basis and sends encouraging notes to keep preaching the gospel. Someone else was moved to pray Hebrews 4 over us earlier this week. On Thursday this week, I sent a text to the pastoral team requesting prayer for God to give me words to boldly proclaim the gospel to a young man. Here's what I texted: *“I'm meeting with a guy at 4 today. He just told me he's lost and if he were to die, he's going to Hell. Pray Ephesians 6:19 for me.”* Here's what I sent to the staff about an hour later: *“The Holy Spirit adopted this young man through the new birth today!”*

And, speaking of answered prayer, we have a very qualified candidate for our Director of Children's Ministry and three outstanding possibilities for our Administrative Pastor position!

We began with hearing from some of our children about the importance of putting on the armor of God every day. That's a good challenge for each of us. Since most of us aren't going to stand up and do hand motions, I wanted to pass along something called the Warrior's Prayer by Dr. David Jeremiah that Edgewood

member Linnet Craig prays every day. There are copies available at the Welcome Center and at the south entrance.

The Warrior's Prayer – Putting On The Armor of God
(adapted from Dr. David Jeremiah)

Heavenly Father,
Your warrior prepares for battle.
Today I claim victory over Satan by
putting on the whole Armor of God!

I put on the *Girdle of Truth!*
May I forever stand firm in the Truth of
Your Word so I will not be victim to Satan's lies.

I put on the *Breastplate of Righteousness!*
May it guard my heart from evil so I will remain
pure and holy, protected under the blood
of Jesus Christ.

I put on the *Shoes of Peace!*
May I stand firm in the Good News of the Gospel
so Your peace will shine through me and be a
light to all I encounter.

I take up the *Shield of Faith!*
May I be ready for Satan's fiery darts of
doubt, denial, and deceit so I will not
be vulnerable to spiritual threats or defeat.

I put on the *Helmet of Salvation!*
May I keep my mind focused on You so
Satan will not have a stronghold
on my thoughts and emotions.

I take up the *Sword of the Spirit!*
May the two-edged sword of Your Word
be ready in my hands so I can expose
the tempting yet false words of Satan.

By faith, your warrior has put on the
whole Armor of God!
I am prepared to live this day,
with and through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
and with complete spiritual victory! Amen.

Before moving on from the armor of God, let's consider three other connections.

- Edgewood member Bryan LaBerge pointed out that Paul outlines six items in Ephesians 6 and Exodus 28:4 outlines six clothing items of the High Priest: ***“These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash.”***
- We're called to put on the armor God Himself has already worn. The Lord of the Angel Armies is depicted as a warrior fighting to vindicate His people in Isaiah 59:17: ***“He put on righteousness as a breastplate, a helmet of salvation on His head...”*** Isaiah 52:7 describes God as the giver of the good news: ***“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”***
- The armor of God is a picture of the victory of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 11:5, which is a prophecy about the Messiah, we read: ***“Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins.”*** One writer captures it succinctly: *“The focus of spiritual warfare isn't Satan or an imaginary Roman soldier; it's our Savior...too often, spiritual warfare is seen as an individual believer's call to put on armor and fight demonic forces alone, as if this is a test to prove his faith. This couldn't be further from the truth. Spiritual warfare is about God's people joining the Lord in His warfare. He equips and empowers us to accompany Him into enemy territory and further His kingdom purposes.”*

Warren Wiersbe writes: *“In one sense, the ‘whole armor of God’ is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and our peace (Eph. 2:14). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (Gal. 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14).”*

Check this out. When we put on the armor of God, we're putting on the armor the High Priest wore, we're wearing the armor that God Himself has already worn, and we've suited up with the armor the Savior put on to defeat and destroy the devil.

As we prepare for communion, let's ponder what Christ did on the cross according to Colossians 2:15: ***“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.”***

Communion

Let's transition now to communion. As we prepare to participate in our community bought for us by Christ's blood, let's consider these challenges.

1. Look back – ***“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

2. Look in – ***“Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:28)

3. Look up – ***“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*** (Hebrews 1:3)

4. Look around – ***“This is my body, which is for you.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:24)
The **“you”** is plural. We're reminded we are members of the international, intergenerational, multi-ethnic, global body of Christ.

5. Look Forward – ***“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:26)

We practice open communion here. You don't need to be a member of Edgewood to participate, but you do need to be born again.

Commissioning for Camp Timber Bay

Bud Lyford, Randy Bivens, Quentin Waterman, and Terry Hartley will be joining four other guys to pour concrete in a pole barn at Camp Timber Bay, one of our Go Team partners.