

Protected Living  
March 20, 2016

Scene: Emmanuel Christian Bookstore. The bookstore manager is checking in a box of books when the phone rings. He answers it and the audience hears his side of the conversation.

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"Hello, you've reached the Emmanuel Christian Bookstore."

"Yes, sir, we're open until 6 p.m. If you tell me what you need, I can set it aside for you."

"You need some protection. Well, we have book covers for your Bible. Uh, what kind of protection are you looking for?"

"You're looking for armor. Do you mean like a suit of armor that a knight wears?"

"You think so, but you aren't sure. I'm sorry, sir, we, we don't sell armor here. We have mostly books. We do have some Christian t-shirts, but no armor."

"Yes, I'm familiar with Ephesians 6 in the Bible."

"Oh, you're looking for the armor of God. Well sir, I believe that is just a figure of speech. The armor of God isn't physical armor. All the armor you need is in your Bible."

"Uh, no sir, tearing out the pages and clipping them to your clothes won't protect you from the devil."

"Yes, I realize it says to put on the armor. But the armor of God is a spiritual thing, not a physical thing. So you don't put it on like you put on your clothes. Instead, you are supposed to pray it on."

"Yes, sir, you pray on the armor of God."

"Well, what I mean is that the armor of God is the promises God makes to us about salvation."

"That's right. The promises of God protect us, like armor, from the lies of the devil. So you see, you can't buy the armor of God. You already have it in your Bible."

"Yes, sir, that's right. Now you've got it. Is there anything else I can do for you today?"

"You are looking for an ark. Well, I'm sorry, we don't sell those either. But I may Noah guy who can help you."

"Yes, I've got time for a joke."

"Where did Noah keep the bees on the ark? I give up, sir, where did Noah keep the bees on the ark?"

"In the ark hives. Yes, sir. That's a funny one. Okay, well you have a blessed day, sir. Goodbye."

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In our modern world are all kinds of electronic communications. Between cell phones, tablets, and personal computers we have access almost anywhere for phone calls, texting, email, voice mail, and more. Using this technology you can send messages to thousands of people for almost no cost. It is not wonder, then, that con artists are using this technology so much. They are out to steal your money and/or your identity if they can. They use lies to trick you into giving them what they want.

But, there is an even sneakier liar out there who does not rely on technology at all. He is out to steal you joy in the Lord. I am speaking of the devil.

Now I can understand if you don't believe in a literal devil, if you think of him as a red guy with horns, a long tail, and maybe hooves for feet. While the devil is presented as real in the Bible, he is never presented as appearing in that form to people. After all, he is out to trick us. If a red, horned man showed up on your doorstep, you would certainly not stay and listen to what he has to say. He wouldn't get anywhere with you showing up like that. Being a spiritual creature, he is usually invisible to us.

Evidently most Americans believe in a devil, but not as many believe in the devil. According to a 2013 Associated Press poll, 80% of Americans believe in angels. But another poll that year showed that only 55% of people believe in the devil. Christians should believe in both. The Christian concept of the devil is that he used to be an angel. The word angel means messenger. Angels are spiritual beings that God created to be His messengers. The devil used to be one of God's messengers until he went rogue and became one of the bad guys. So if you believe in angels you ought to believe in the devil too. He's just an angel that rebelled against God.

Now, as the enemy of God, the devil is also the enemy of all Christians. He can't harm you physically, but he can disrupt your faith in God if you are not protected against his lies. That protection, and how to use it, is our subject this morning.

If you will turn with me to the sixth chapter of Ephesians, we need to learn about the protection God has for us against the lies of the devil.

**Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armor 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 [continue to] stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

You have an enemy, who is intent on disrupting your faith in God. The devil is smarter than you are. He is more devious than any human enemy. He is more powerful than you are. So don't get cocky. But with the armor of God we can be prepared against the devil's schemes. He is trying to get you to doubt God's word. He is trying to make of you a weak Christian. He is trying to make you into a joyless Christian.

Now, the devil doesn't use emails or phone. He doesn't speak to our ears or eyes. He is a spirit and evidently can speak to our spirit, inside. Here are a few examples of what He whispers. Paul calls them flaming arrows.

- God is not pleased with you. You are NOT on good terms with God.
- God won't forgive your big sins.
- You can't be good enough to be saved, so you might as well quit trying.
- You are not a Christian. If you were a Christian, you would not keep sinning.

It is lies like these that the devil whispers to your spirit, hoping you will believe them and ignore the promises of God.

Let's look now at the armor of God. Paul is using the picture of a Roman soldier's armor as an illustration. He reminds us of three of God's promises that we must continually reaffirm to be protected against the devils lies.

### **1. Reaffirm your belief in Jesus as God's truth.**

Earlier in Paul's letter he recognized that they had accepted God's truth of Jesus.

**Ephesians 1:13 (NIV)** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

The gospel, the good news, is about Jesus. Jesus is the truth of God for our salvation from sin. Forgiveness of sin IS available through Jesus and only Jesus. There is no other name by which we can be saved. However, the devil wants to trick you into ignoring the truth about Jesus. Even after you have become a Christian, you may have doubts about being saved. I did, especially as I struggled with sin in me. There IS a path to salvation, and it is Jesus. Start every day reaffirming your belief in Jesus as God's truth about salvation.

### **2. Reaffirm your belief in the gift of righteousness.**

We need righteousness to live in heaven. **Righteousness means having a right relationship with God.**

By nature, we are all sinners. Sinners are not right with God, nor can they earn righteousness. There is no hope of us getting to heaven unless someone gives us a righteousness that someone else has earned. This is exactly what God offers to us in Jesus. This promise is stated this way in 2 Corinthians 5.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)** For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

When you put your faith in Jesus' death for your sins, God applies your sins to Jesus and applies Jesus' righteousness to you. This is a gift from God. You did nothing to earn this righteousness. Jesus earned this righteousness. But God gives it to you as a gift. He does so because He loves you.

The devil wants you to doubt this promise of righteousness. If the devil can trick you into believing that you do not have Jesus' righteousness, you will lose the joy of your salvation and walk around worried about death and going to hell.

Do not let him mislead you. When you start your day reaffirm your belief in the gift of righteousness that God promises us.

### **3. Reaffirm your belief in your good relationship with God.**

I hate going barefoot. And so my feet are soft instead of tough. When I go barefoot, any rough object will slow me down and distract me. But even a tough foot needs protection from sharp, hard rocks, especially when you are going into battle. A soldier won't get very far, very well, if he does not have adequate foot protection. A soldier is not ready for battle without foot protection on his feet. Paul compares this protection to being ready to live your day of spiritual warfare. You can start your day with the confidence of being in a good relationship with God.

Has your best friend ever been angry at you? Remember how you felt when your friend was angry at you? You felt sad, sorry for whatever you did that caused the problem. You may have felt worried that your friend would no longer be your friend. You were afraid the relationship was broken and would not be fixed.

That is what the devil wants you to fear about your relationship with God. The devil will try to convince you that God is angry with you, is opposed to you, is working against you. The devil wants you to feel like there is this big, unfixable problem between you and God. Then you will live your day depressed and afraid.

But this is a lie of the devil. Look at this promise from God in Romans 5.

**Romans 5:1 (NLT)** Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

It says that we have peace with God. What is this peace based on? Is it based on our goodness? No. Is it based on our lack of sin? No. Is it based on anything we do? No.

This promise is based on what Jesus did. What Jesus did was perfect and complete. Jesus left nothing undone. There is nothing left for you to do for peace with God except to believe that you have it in Jesus. You don't have to fear being in conflict with God. There is no ill will between you and God. There are no hard feelings. You are not just being tolerated by God. You are being embraced. **Jesus has paid the price of reconciliation.** That big word reconciliation means to patch things up with your friend. When you talk about what happened and ask forgiveness from each other and forgive each other, you hug or shake hands and are friends again. You are reconciled. Well we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. We have peace with God. Every day reaffirm your belief in this reconciliation between you and God.

So these are three key promises of God that we need to re-affirm each day in preparation for the lies of the devil. There is more to do, but start by putting on your armor.

Paul then says to take up the shield of faith. Now the first three pieces of the armor of God, you wear. You don't wear a shield on your body. You may connect it to your arm. But it doesn't just sit there like a watch on your wrist. You do something with a shield. You maneuver it. How do you maneuver your faith in the promises of God? You do so by drawing the conclusion based on the facts of God's promises.

**Faith says, "Yes, I believe Jesus is the truth of God. He has given me His righteousness and a relationship of peace with God. Therefore, I am secure in Jesus."**

When doubts enter your mind, beat them back out with this faith. Every morning as you prepare for your day, put on the armor of God so you will be ready for the devil's lies. Reaffirm your belief in these basic promises from God about your salvation. Do not let the devil, or anyone else, cause you to doubt God's promises.

#### Invitation

All of these promises are available to everyone here. They are available in Jesus. Today, won't you believe? Won't you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord? This must be a personal decision for yourself. Don't let what someone else chooses decide for you. Don't refuse God's offer because a friend or relative refuses. Don't accept because a friend or relative accepts. Do it because you want to be saved from your sins.

You know you are a sinner and you need a Savior. Receive Jesus as your savior.

Turn your life over to Jesus as your Lord and you will leave here today a Christian.