

The Christian Life
Part 6c
The Armor and The War

Eph 6:10-20

- 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
- 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- 12 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.
- 13 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.
- 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
- 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
- 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
- 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
- 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
- 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. KJV

Introduction:

I am struck again as I look at the first three verses of this text: “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” “put on the whole armor of God,” “the wiles of the devil,” “for we wrestle...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

We are in a war, an all out battle for mastery, a conflict in which there will be no negotiated peace except on our enemy’s terms.

The battle line is not where you think that it is. It is not a culture war, even though cultural conflict is involved. It is not a war over our schools, even though there is spiritual struggle going on there. It is not a political war even though there are elements of spiritual struggle involved in our political situation. It is not even a battle for the church even though the church is greatly affected, for good or for bad, by the outcome of this battle.

First and foremost, in your life and in mine, this is a battle for the spiritual integrity of our souls. This is the spot of the most intense conflict because it is the hinge point upon which everything else swings.

One of the great failures, I am convinced, of Christianity in our day is that we have carried the focus of the battle to external things. We have fought evil in the public arenas of our world but we have neglected the souls of our people. The enemy has engaged us in the arena of the world and managed to keep us busy which he did an 'end run' and defeated us at a much more important battle line.

You have probably heard the expression, "won the battle but lost the war." It seems to me that this is exactly what the church has done in our day.

If the souls of the saints are overrun by the evil one, their resistance to him on other matters cannot continue. If, however, the saints, "stand, and having done all, stand," the church, the kingdom of God, the influence of the gospel in the world, will prosper, thrive, and remain strong.

But there are no victories to be won that do not begin in the souls of the saints. The primary battle line must hold before advancement can be made on any of the other fronts.

And, what is the nature of this essential battle line? What are its elements? What issues are involved? Just and only this, the issue that Jesus made essential while on earth and in His earthly ministry.

Mark 8:34-38

- 34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
- 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
- 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. KJV

The battle, the real battle, the most important battle, is fought and won or lost on the believer's commitment to follow Christ at all costs, to be godly, to be holy from the core of his being.

When the battle here is lost the believer cannot 'stand.' He has no footing, he is at odds with his General and working at cross purposes to the entire endeavor of God's kingdom. Such a soldier is of little if any value to the cause of Christ. He is defeated before he begins.

The abiding question, no matter where a believer thinks or feels or believes that he/she is on the path of spiritual progress, the abiding question is "am I purposed to be holy?" "Will I follow Christ?" "Will I do whatever it takes to stand in the evil day?"

These are the questions that you and I must face as we contemplate the battle and the armor that we need.

We talked last week about the ‘whole armor,’ ‘the truth,’ and the breastplate of righteousness.’ Today we come to v.15.

I. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”

This verse has often given me reason to stop and contemplate. What exactly did Paul have in his mind here? What word picture was he creating? How was it heard by those saints at Ephesus who first heard this letter read?

We have a sort of a double struggle here: (1) Paul is obviously speaking of something real and literal, but (2) he is using an allegory to bring our minds to this place. He is starting with the shoes that he had often seen Roman soldiers put on and off, then, he is carrying this image into the spiritual battle of the saints of God with the powers of darkness, and, finally, he is urging them to do something useful, helpful, and necessary in that battle.

One of the things obvious to me concerning shoes is that, for most of our day, our shoes are the closest contact that we have with the world. Another obvious matter is that one primary reason for wearing shoes is so that we will not be injured by what we encounter in the world. The rougher the climate we will be in, the more rugged the shoes that we put on. For example, most of the time we do not go deer hunting or duck hunting in house shoes or sneakers. We are likely to encounter rough terrain, sharp objects and maybe even snakes. We want something on our feet to protect them in case of such events.

Another thing that I notice here is that Paul does not say, “having your feet shod with the gospel.” Instead, he says, “put on, as if shoes, the *preparation* which the gospel gives you.” And, the word “preparation” appeared early in the Christian message concerning the gospel.

Matt 3:1-3

- 1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
- 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
KJV

To *prepare* the way of the Lord, to make His paths straight, was to repent of sin, to turn from wickedness to obedience, to believe on the Living God in the way that Abraham believed.

The gospel, then it seems to me, *prepares* us to interact with the world, protects us from being injured by it, and serves as a layer of insulation to keep us safe. By granting us repentance from sin and a real desire to be holy, God makes us ready (another use of the word) to involve ourselves in the battle.

Matt 26:17-19

- 17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that *we prepare* for thee to eat the passover?

- 18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.
- 19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they *made ready* the passover. KJV

Paul appears to be teaching here what Jesus taught us in the Model Prayer: “no person is prepared to meet the world or his enemy on any given day unless he has first given himself to the preparation of repentance from sin and obedience to God, the heart of the gospel message.” “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, forgive us our sins, give us this day our daily bread, deliver us from evil.”

Prepare yourself so that your interactions with the world doesn't hurt you. Renew yourself every day to repentance.

Have you feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

I. **“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”**

Here we are give a more specific look at the armor and the use of it.

The word “devil” is an interesting word, taken from a compound word in the Greek. It is composed of “dia” which is a preposition generally meaning “through” and “ballo” which means “to throw.” “Ballo” is the root of our word “ball.” In our text, Paul speaks of “the wicked” armed with “fiery darts.”

So our picture is of a wicked enemy armed with burning spiritual missiles throwing them at us mercilessly. This is a scenario for which we are neither ready nor prepared. We have nothing here but trust in God, faith, that He will intercept and fend off all such darts, spears, and arrows as we give ourselves to Him.

Every child of God knows exactly what this feels like. We may not be able to draw a picture of the flaming spear or dart but every one of us has been on the receiving end of many of them. We have stepped out to serve God, made a commitment to Him, renewed our purpose on some important matter, or have undertaken something new spiritually. Sometimes we have, for a time, made it a ways down the road. We may have even thought that we have made real spiritual progress. Suddenly, out of the blue, we are blind sided with some new attack or some old temptation. Some ‘fiery dart’ pierces through all of our purposes, determinations and decisions and lays us out defeated and broken and we say to ourselves, “failed again.”

What happened? Somehow we did not take to ourselves ‘the shield of faith.’ Somehow we began to trust either partly to completely in ourselves. We relied on our own strength, we trusted our own purposes and decisions. And we found out that they were, as they always have been, completely insufficient to meet the onslaught of the wicked enemy of the people of God.

Every day that we begin as a child of God, we walk out into a world where we are defenseless unless He defends us. So, every day must begin with a complete and total reliance upon Him. The shield is a part of the armor of the soldier but it is not primarily a weapon. It is a defensive instrument, something to hide behind, to trust to protect us from that which is being hurled against us.

The shield of faith is completely sufficient to defend us against. There is no weapon in Satan's arsenal sufficient to penetrate it. He does not have enough weapons to overwhelm it if he launched them all at once. It is an impenetrable defense and it works every time. Problem is that it doesn't defend us when we decide not to rely upon God and rather choose, either deliberately or unconsciously, to depend upon our own defenses.

Here is something that young Christians sometimes fail to see. Paul's own person defense against sin is just as weak as yours is. He had no special powers of his own. He could do nothing from himself.

Phil 4:12-13

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. KJV

No one but Jesus Christ could ever operate in his own strength.

Here is another thing. The shield of God is just as powerful for you as it was for John who twice defied the attempts of the Romans to murder him. You do not have a cheap version of the shield of faith, you have the very same one that the greatest of the saints have used.

And, finally, this amazing shield is available to the child of God.

“Take to you the whole armor of God”

“Taking the shield of faith”

This was said to ordinary believers at the church at Ephesus.

And, it is said to you.