

Are We Prepared?

Today we come to the end of a very wonderful journey through the book of Ephesians.

For 3 chapters Paul reminded us of who God says we are.

... **now** for the last 3 chapters Paul has been telling us how to *live out* being who God says we are.

In this very last segment Paul deals with **what I believe** is the most sensitive and alarming issue.

... Paul warns us that at times **we will be under attack**, and we need to be both **cautious and prepared**.

... but not just cautious and prepared ... **hopeful and certain** that victory can and will be ours.

During the Korean War as enemy forces advanced, Baker Company was cut off from the rest of their unit.

For several hours no word was heard, even though headquarters repeatedly tried to communicate with the missing troops.

Finally, a faint signal was received. Straining to hear, the corpsman asked, "Baker Company, do you read me?"

"This is Baker Company," came the reply.

"What is your situation?" asked the corpsman. **"The enemy is to the east of us, the enemy is to the west of us, the enemy is to the north of us, the enemy is to the south of us."**

... *Then after a brief pause, the sergeant from Baker Company added with determination,*

... "So, the enemy is not going to get away from us now!"

Although surrounded on every side the Baker Company was thinking of victory, not defeat.

Paul wants us to be the same way.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Eph. 6:10-13)

1. Identify the TRUE ENEMY

Our tendency, when trouble and conflict comes into our lives, is to play the blame game

... so Paul tells us where the real blame lies ... THE DEVIL AND HIS SCHEMES.

Thomas Brooks (a puritan pastor in the 1600's) wrote a book entitled "**Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices.**"

In that book he lists 70 devices the devil uses to attack us—here are 7 of them.

- a. **He shows you the bait and hides the hook.** (He has you look at the short-term pleasures & hides the long-term misery)
- b. **He gets you rationalize sin as virtue.** (I'm not greedy, just thrifty. I'm not really nosy, just concerned.)
- c. **By showing you the sins of Christian leaders.** (So, you say to yourself, he/she did it too, nobody's really that pure)
- d. **Go ahead and do it, God will forgive you, that's His job.**
- e. **By making us bitter over suffering.** (I am suffering, and I don't deserve this. Nobody knows how hard I work, how many sacrifices I make. After all I've done for people, this happens.)
- f. **By showing Christians how many bad people seem to be having great lives.**

- g. **By getting you to compare one part of your life to another part.** (I'm very good over here. I teach Sunday School, I preach to all this people ... so God's going to overlook)

[But Here is the most devastating one ... it is Device IV point number 3]

"One device Satan uses to destroy the saints is by working Christians to first find one another strange then to divide, and then to make them bitter and jealous, and then they will bite and devour one another."

In other words, if Satan can cause us to forget who the true enemy is ... then he can divide us from one another

... divide families, divide churches, divide friends.

Never forget that the true enemy is **not flesh and blood** but Satan and his forces ... that is the first thing we must do to be prepared against any attack.

... the second thing is that we need to make sure that **we don't misjudge evil.**

2. Don't MISJUDGE Evil

Paul tells us to put on armor so that we will be able to stand firm against the devil's schemes ...

The word "schemes" is the word strategies ... or devices.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that he didn't want them to be "*ignorant of Satan's devices.*"

There are two errors we must try to avoid when it comes to evil ...

- **Don't UNDERESTIMATE the forces of evil**

This is when you think nothing is the devil ... you think the whole idea of the devil doing anything is silly.

“Oh, I believe the devil exists, but he doesn’t really play a role in my life... ”

In other words, we tend to marginalize the influence of evil in our lives.

Paul says we “**wrestle**” that is **not fighting with a battalion or shooting arrows** across the battlefield to the other side ... this is on the ground, in the dirt, hand to hand combat.

... this is the most desperate kind of fighting!

And Paul says we are wrestling against: Rulers, Authorities, Cosmic powers, Forces of evil

The second error to avoid is ...

- **Don’t OVERESTIMATE the forces of evil**

This is when you think everything is the devil ... there is a devil under every rock, inside every sickness and problem ...

You attribute all problems, failures, and all sins to the devil.

... there is a lying demon (cursing, fornicating, envy, gossip, stomachache, headache)

There are some people who have an unhealthy interest and obsession with the devil.

He is evil ... but he is not God.

Furthermore, Paul doesn’t just tell us to stand against the devil ...

... **Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of HIS might.**

We are to stand & hold the line for God on the battlefield.

... We are not to attack the Satan, or advance against him

... we are to stand and hold the territory that Christ has conquered for us.

- Don't underestimate the devil's power or strategies.
- Don't overestimate devil ... be strong in the Lord.

This point comes with a personal warning.

In Greek Mythology there is the legend of Achilles

Achilles was a mythological half human/god who seemed to be invincible.

The Legend goes...when he was a baby his mother, Thetis, dipped him in the river Styx which coated his entire body w/an invincible shield.

However, when she was dipping him, she had to hold him by one of his heels (thus not covering that spot).

It was there that in the course of a great battle during the Trojan War, that Achilles was struck in his heel by an arrow & he got infection and died.

There are 2 particular "Achilles heels" that everyone of us need to be aware of when it comes to dealing with evil.

- Temptation
- Accusation

Let me show how this works its way into our lives.

... all my life I have been infatuated by sound, volume, vibration ...

I used to put mom's big pan on top of the dish drainer and sing "looking for a city" and keep going up the scale until I could make the pan ring.

After we got the piano, I would open up the top, press the right foot pedal and sing a note ... and what would happen is that the string (that matched the note I was singing) would vibrate and make the sound as well.

Now here is what the devil does ...

... the devil sees what you respond to ... he sees what you give into the most easily ... he sees what causes you to stumble into sin ... **and he plucks that string**

... The devil will use temptation (the high notes/pride) and accusation (the low notes/self-loathing) to aggravate what is in you.

Temptation comes when you have too high a view of yourself ... and that causes you to do things you never thought you would do.

Accusation is when you have too low a view of yourself (self-loathing) you are convinced you don't matter so it doesn't matter what you do ... who cares anyway.

Never forget that the true enemy is not flesh and blood but Satan and his forces ...

Don't misjudge evil, the devil is real but **sometimes the attack of evil can from our own unawareness**.

... Sin often comes into our lives because of an **undetected weakness**, an **unexpected opportunity**, and an **unprotected life**.

... Know the true enemy; don't misjudge evil ... and the third thing we must do to be prepared is ...

3. Be Ready to FIGHT

Being ready to fight does not mean that you have to summon some kind of inner strength ...

Notice **Paul doesn't say stand in your free will** ... Paul says, "**Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.**"

- Being strong in the Lord means **Put on the Armor of GOD**



And here is what that armor looks like.

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, ¹⁸ 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, (Eph. 6:14-18)

I'm going to make a statement and I hope you'll understand it ...

What Paul is saying here is that **we are to take what is true of us (in Christ Jesus)** and appropriate it as

- A belt
- Breastplate
- Shoes
- Shield
- Helmet
- Sword
- Prayer

Paul begins by saying that we are to “fasten on the belt of truth”

... We must learn to do what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:16 ... “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ...*”

This **belt of truth** is the foundation for all the other parts of the armor.

In Luke 8 there is an account where Jesus and the disciples are on a boat (Jesus is down in the boat asleep) and a terrible storm comes up ...

... they go and wake up Jesus and ask, "*Master, don't you care that we perish?*"

Jesus gets up and rebukes the storm (it stops) **but then** Jesus rebukes the disciples ...

... he asks them "Where is your faith."

... not "you need faith or more faith" but "where"

Jesus is saying, "*how dare you say I don't care if you perish!* ...

... *You know the truth, ... but you have not allowed the truth to shape your heart ... your thinking, emotions, or actions.*" (*Your first instinct was to panic not trust*)

The "**belt of truth**" is the foundational garment.

Then Paul says we need to put on the **breastplate of righteousness** and **shoes of the preparation of the gospel.**

These 2 things are important even in the routine operations of life.

... you need the **breastplate of righteousness** ... you must always protect your heart in every area of life...

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov. 4:23)

... you need the **shoes of the gospel** always with you, everywhere you are.

Imagine a fully armed soldier. ... He has his sword, his shield, his helmet, his breastplate and his belt... but his feet are completely bare.

... In that case the soldier would be handicapped both in **stability and speed**.

The Roman soldier wore thick leather sandals, attached to his feet with thick straps. On bottom were hobnails, which were sort of like cleats.

- To walk without fear of harm, wound or pain
- To walk with power and confidence.
- To walk over any terrain ... through every circumstance.

Shoes were about stability and mobility.

... Paul using this as a metaphor ... that we should **appropriate what we are in Christ Jesus** in our daily walk ...

*The **Gospel Peace-shoe** covers our feet, protects our feet, stabilizes our feet, & mobilizes our feet...in the battles of life.*

... the **breastplate of righteousness** and the **shoes of the gospel** are important even in everyday life.

Paul also says we need the **shield of faith** and the **helmet of salvation** these are the most necessary when the battle is raging the hottest.

Faith is called a shield because that is the one thing that Satan is always attacking and trying to tear down.

... he wants us to doubt.

... In the Garden of Eden Satan tactic against Eve was to get her to doubt, “*Has God really said*

The thing that Satan is constantly trying to attack in our lives is our faith in God.

In Paul's day archers of the Roman army would put a cotton-like material on the tip of their arrows & soak it in pitch.

Before they shot the arrow, they would light it. It would burn slowly but it was very hot.

When the arrow hits its target, the pitch would splatter & start little fires on the shield and helmet.

Paul says the **shield of faith** will quench all the fiery darts that hit you, but you also need the **helmet of salvation** for what splashes over that.

The word for DART is the Greek “*belos*” and it means something that is thrown or projected in the general vicinity.

... In other words, this is not a guided missile.

You are in the thick of battle and the air is filled with these projectiles ... they are everywhere.

How does that apply?

You and I are living in an age where the **very environment**, the **philosophical societal air** is permeated with danger ... **all kinds** of wrong and dangerous thinking and beliefs.

... we need our minds, our thoughts, to be protected by the assurance of our salvation in Christ.

Paul says we need to put on this armament

The **belt of truth** is the foundational garment ... it is the basis for everything.

Breastplate of righteousness protects our hearts reminding us of **who we Are** in Christ Jesus.

Shoes of the gospel are our strength and stability; it is the **Joy** we have in Christ Jesus.

Shield of Faith is our **Safety** in Christ Jesus.

Helmet of Salvation guards our mind with the **Assurance of Salvation** that we have in Christ Jesus.

So, how do we put this armor on and be prepared?

That is what the last two elements of this spiritual Armor of God is about ...

First the **Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.**

.... This is different from the belt of truth. Truth (*Alethia*) comes out of the Word of God—i.e. the Bible.

The word here is “*rhema*” and this is referring to the individual scriptures which the Spirit brings to our remembrance in times of need.

... one of the ways you put on this armor is HIDING GOD’S WORD in your heart.

- The second is by, **PRAYING at all times.**

How about that!

... The way you put on the armor of God is **through Bible reading and prayer!**

I know that seems overly simplistic, but that is exactly what this is.

Here is how it works

There is an interesting account in Exodus 15.

The Israelites have escaped from Egypt and across the Red Sea ... and at this point the whole nation of Israel break into an **antiphonal singing.**

(v. 20 Miriam takes a tambourine and leads the women with rhythmic responsive singing.)

(Exod. 15:1-3) "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. 2 "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my

salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him.³
"The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name.

As time moves forward in the history of the nation of Israel we find that Israel becomes also evil

... when that happens, we see God going to war against them ... using Assyria and Babylon for captivity.

You see, God is not a tribal God ... God is a warrior against evil ... even when he finds it among His own people.

God is against evil ... but He is also a God of mercy ...

... by the time we get to the prophets they are talking about a **messiah warrior** who is coming who will destroy all evil from the earth ...

... to finally and fully defeat the enemy of God's people.

... That **Messiah Warrior** is none other than Jesus Christ!

... and He comes as the child of the Virgin Mary

However, UNEXPECTANTLY this Jesus (Messiah Warrior) doesn't defeat the enemy with a sword

... Jesus defeats the enemy with **3 rusty nails and a wooden cross.**

Jesus is the ultimate warrior ...

... So, if Jesus is the ultimate warrior why does **HE tell us** to put on battle armor and fight.

Here is why.

I cannot fly, but when I put myself in an airplane and yield to its power, suddenly, I have the ability to soar into the air.

I cannot run 75 miles per hour, but when I get into my truck and yield to its power, I suddenly have the ability to achieve speeds that I could never achieve on my own.

Inside the airplane, I have the strength of the airplane.

Inside the truck, I have the strength of the truck.

When you and I are inside the armor of God, **we have the strength of God ...**

This is how we become prepared to not only survive but thrive in victory even through the conflicts and battles of life.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Eph. 6:13)