

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

The Believer's Armor

Ephesians 6:13-17

***Ephesians 6:13-17** 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:*

Introduction

In the last section, Paul encouraged the church at Ephesus to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). I was reading the commentary of Ephesians by Boice (Boice, 2006) concerning the devil and he had this to say:

“When I talk about the devil I try, as I did in the last study, to show that he is finite, and therefore limited, being. He is not an evil counterpart of God. Satan is not omnipotent, as God is. He is not omnipresent, as God is. He is not omniscient, as God is. Consequently, he can only do what God permits. He can only tempt one person in one place at one time, or else operate through those legions of angels, now demons, who fell with him. He does not know the future. At best Satan can make shrewd guesses based on experience.”¹

All that being said, the devil is a strong adversary. When my daughter was very young, I taught her a verse of scripture, complete with body language, which talked about the devil and his power.

***1 Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

Paul exhorted the believers to be ready to face this enemy in all seriousness.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2006) 236

Ephesians 6:13 “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.”

I had a difficult time with this verse considering its placement either in the last message, or this week’s text. It is the conclusion of the previous three verses, and yet, it is the introductory and preparatory verse for the following section on the armor of God. Either way, it is a strong encouragement to prepare for the enemy.

The language that Paul uses in this conclusion to the letter is taken from the military with war like descriptions and jargon. The motto of the United States Coast Guard is “Semper Paratus!” which means “always ready.” This is the condition that Paul wants the believers in Ephesus to understand and act upon: “Always ready!”

Note: God is similarly outfitted with truth (2 Corinthians 6:7), righteousness (Isaiah 11:5, 59:17), Gospel (Isaiah 52:7), salvation (Isaiah 59:17) and sword (Isaiah 59:17)

“*Wherefore*” – because you have such a forbidding and intimidating enemy and with the knowledge that the conflict cannot be avoided, “*take unto you the whole armor of God.*”

The main idea is that the believer is to take up an intimidating and challenging stance against the enemy. No other condition is described. On a side note, Paul does not tell the Christian to attack the enemy. There is no battle plan, instead the believer is to be “on guard” against the enemy. God is in control and He knows what is best for His children.

1 Samuel 17:47 *And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands.*

The believer is to “stand” against the enemy by putting on the “whole armor of God.” There is no place for retreat or sitting idly by when the believer is in the battle. There would be no rest until the foe was suppressed and restrained. Remember the command from God to Moses in conquering the Land of Promise? They were to go in and conquer the land. They were not to stop their conquest until all the foe was vanquished. It did not matter how large the enemy or strength of their fortresses...they were to conquer the land because God had already given them the land.

Joshua 1:3 *Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*

The difference between what Paul is telling the church at Ephesus and what God told the Children of Israel is that the Children of Israel were to attack and would only find safety and peace only when every enemy was slain. Paul tells the Church that they are to guard against the assault of the enemy.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

“Stand therefore” – Resist each and every attack from the wiles of the devil. The believer is encouraged to be prepared for combat. Take up a position and hold it.

Belt - Truth (v. 14)

“...having your loins girt about with truth” – The type of clothing that dominated the East were long, flowing garments. The first thing a worker would do was to “gird the loins”. In much the same manner, the soldier would fasten a belt around his waist. His sword was attached to the belt and the breastplate was held fast to his body by that belt.

Why does the Apostle begin the armor of God with truth? Before there can be trust, truth must be established. A soldier must trust that those in charge know what they are doing. The psalmist described the relationship between trust and truth in God in this way:

Psalms 91:4-5 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. **5** Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Jesus’ teaching the Jews confirmed the relationship of truth and spiritual freedom in the Gospel of John:

John 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; **32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

What is the truth for a believer? That every word in the Bible is true. Every promise from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is true. Without truth, he would not need the armor of God. Faith in Jesus Christ comes by hearing the Word of God and this hearing produces faith. Truth is the essential qualification for being a Christian, and therefore the first requirement of being a soldier of the cross.

Breastplate - Righteousness (v. 14)

“...and having on the breastplate of righteousness” – The word rendered “breastplate” is a piece of armor made of leather or metal that covers both the front and back of the soldier. It is used to protect the vital organs during battle from sword, spear or arrow. The breastplate covers from the neck to the mid

thighs. Some were made of rings, “chain mail”, while others were made of metal plates sewn together much like a fishes scales.

Therefore, righteousness is significant in the protection of the believer. Righteousness covers a many areas. It is used 306 times in the KJV of the bible. In this case it would be the practice of righteousness, holy living, in the life of the believer. It is by righteousness that sinners are justified before God. As the breastplate protects the heart and vital functions of the body, righteousness is the protector of the vital parts of the believer.

Ephesians 6:15 *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

Shoes - Gospel of Peace (v. 15)

“*And your feet shod*” – The feet were just as important as the vital organs protected by the breastplate. For without the use of the feet, the soldier could not get to the battle field, nor could they enter into the battle. In this case Paul is not just talking of shoes, but of armor covering the foot, ankle and shin. The grieves were essential to the armor of a warrior. If the feet or legs are injured, they could not stand, pursue or flee.

“...*with the preparation of the gospel of peace*” - The apostle appears to have more than just protection in mind. The warrior of God must be ready to use his feet in order to publish the Gospel. Jesus used action words when dealing with the Gospel: go, teach, baptize, and preach (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:27)

Isaiah 52:7 *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*

Romans 10:15 *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

When the Children of Israel were to eat the first Passover meal, they were instructed by Moses to eat the Passover with “*your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand*” (Exodus 12:11). The Apostle is commanding the believers to be ready to stand or leave. The Christian is not to settle into this world but to be prepared, every minute, to stand and present the Gospel, or to go and declare the Gospel.

Ephesians 6:16 *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

“Above all” – not necessarily the most important of all the armor, but there is great benefit and value in the “shield of faith.”

Shield – Faith (v. 16)

“...taking the shield of faith” – The shield was the soldiers primary armor. While designed for protection, it could also be used offensively in the event the warrior does not have sword or spear. The shield was normally made of wood and covered by animal hides. The hides were treated with oils so that the leather became slick and strong and decorated with paint or metal. There were different styles and sizes of shields. The large shield used by the Romans would cover most of the body of the soldier, but was unwieldy in battle. They would often use a smaller shield for close hand-to-hand combat. The shield was held by the left arm and secured by straps where the soldier would insert his arm. The shield could be turned in any direction. The shields design was to protect all other armor.

Paul’s comparison of a shield with faith means that the believer’s primary defense against the wiles of the devil is faith. Satan is a deceiver and will attempt to engage the Christian in order to misinform, mislead, and double cross. The believer’s primary defense against the works of the devil and his schemes is shield of faith.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...John 1:12* *...as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name... John 1:14* *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

The whole of the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews is dedicated to faith. Faith is defined in the first verse:

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

We also see that the Christian cannot please God without faith:

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

As the shield is the protector of all the other armor of a soldier, faith is the protector of the armor of the believer; truth, righteousness, gospel, salvation, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Without

faith, none of these hold any value. Without faith, truth, righteousness, the gospel, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God are just words and hold no specific place in the heart of the person. Faith is the foundation on which these truths are based.

“...wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” - the word quench, means that whatever would be thrown against the shield would be extinguished. Paul is referring to a small missile, which were fashioned by slender pieces of cane, which were either filled with combustible materials, or a combustible material was wound it and set on fire. The object was that whatever the dart hit, the combustible material would increase the damage. These fiery darts took on a variety of devices such as an arrow, short spear, javelin, or even a stone slung by a sling.

Some commentators interpret “fiery darts” as poisoned arrows, which have been called fiery because of the burning of the poison in the body.

Either way, I think we get the point. The wicked intend to inflict as much damage as they can with as many different devices they are able to use.

Faith is the ultimate defense against the fiery darts of the wicked.

***Ephesians 6:17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

Helmet – Salvation (v. 17)

“*And take the helmet of salvation*” – Of course the protection of a helmet on a soldier is understood; it protects a soldier in battle. This is not the first time that Paul has used this analogy of a “helmet of salvation.” In 1 Thessalonians he says:

***1 Thessalonians 5:8** But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

They are the same item: “helmet of the hope of salvation” and “helmet of salvation.” Salvation protects the believer from the wrath of God in the judgments. The assurance of salvation, purchased through the atonement of Jesus on the cross, is a promise that is hoped for. For the believer, we have been saved from our sins, we are being saved on a daily basis as we are delivered from sin and the power of the enemy, and we will be saved when Jesus comes back to take the Christians into eternity.

Sword – Word of God (v.17)

“...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” – The Bible was written in three different languages, over fifteen hundred years, by thirty-nine earthly authors. And yet, the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

There are 413 times that “Thus says the Lord” in the KJV

“God said” occurs 46 times

God spoke through the prophets (2 Samuel 24:11-12; 1 Kings 14:18; Zechariah 7:7)

The Spirit of the Lord spoke through people – 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 22:24; 2 Chronicles 20:14-15)

This is a brief description of the Holy Spirit as the source of the Word of God. (2 Thessalonians 3:1; Colossians 1:25)

Paul uses the word *rhēma* instead of *logos* for “word” to emphasize the act of proclaiming the gospel message (see Rom 10:17; Eph 6:19). This suggests that believers wield the sword of the Spirit as they proclaim the good news to those ensnared by the devil.²

Conclusion

1. The devil is a strong adversary
2. The Christian must be “Semper Paratus” – Always Ready
3. The Christian is to take up an intimidating and challenging stance against the enemy. There is no place to sit idly by or for retreat.
4. The Christian is to put on the whole armor of GOD. It is God’s armor and as such will protect the believer.
5. The armor of the Lord is: truth, righteousness, Gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God.

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² Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Eph 6:17). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.