

"To See the Strength God Gives us Against the Enemy"

Ephesians 6:10-20

There are two ways we could approach this message. In 2 Cor. 2:11 Paul says about the enemy, Satan

For we are not unaware of his schemes.

And we could have went to various passages to see what his schemes are to attack us and that could have been very depressing. However, we can also look at Eph. 6:10-20 and study the equipment God gives us for spiritual warfare and why, which will help us understand his strategies and learn how to be prepared at the same time. This way we emphasize our spiritual strength and advantage over the enemy. Because we don't want to make the mistake of ignoring him on one end of the pendulum or being preoccupied with him on the other hand.

Every New Testament writer mentions Satan or the devil at least once. Satan is mentioned 32 times in the New Testament while devil is also used 32 times, so about twice a book. Not a huge amount but everyone is aware of him. And that's a good balance to have.

Why does Paul talk about spiritual warfare and our armour in Eph. 6? In Eph. 1-3 Paul gives us a treasure trove of God's promised blessings to us who believe Jesus as our Saviour. We're saved, sealed, forgiven, redeemed, chosen, predestined, adopted, all by His grace. We are united with Jewish believers into one new body. We have the privilege to pray and trust God to do far more than we can ask or imagine.

Then in Ch. 4-6 Paul gets practical and discusses how we should walk with God in our relationships. Relationships in the church with one another in Ch. 4. He recognizes the reality of the ongoing battle between our new nature in Christ and our old sinful nature from 5:1-21 and then he applies that to our marital relationships (5:22-33), our children (6:1-4) and in our jobs (6:5-9). All of which Satan would love nothing more than disrupt and cause us to have bad testimonies in all of them. So he finishes by telling us how to keep our relationships with God, church, spouse, children and work healthy by telling us what we have available to us and how to be ready for the enemy when he tries to take us down.

Paul was in prison and guarded by Roman soldiers. We know he uses Roman soldier imagery because of the specific words he used to describe the shield and sword as we'll see. But Paul also quotes and makes allusion to verses in Isaiah which describe God and the Messiah with armour on, because God is our divine Warrior who goes to battle for us.

"Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His mighty power ... Put on the full armor of God ... take up the full armor of God." Paul wants to make sure we understand that

God Has Enabled Us to Stand Firm against the Enemy's Strategies (6:10-13)

It's God's armor, God's power, God's strength "so that we will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil". The phrase 'be able' means we have the power. It's

God's strength that makes us strong (6:10)

There's a great passage from Isaiah 40 that reminds us of this;

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.

³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly,

³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength;

They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

God has no shortage of strength. He doesn't need power naps to restore a busy morning! We get weary, tired and stumble but God supplies strength to those who wait – patient to trust God's provision and timing and resources – on the Lord. God provides spiritual strength because

We battle against a spiritual enemy (vv.11b-12)

“Stand firm” doesn't mean we are passive in this battle but it also means we don't chase after him either. ‘Stand firm’ can mean remain in your position but in battle terminology it may refer to the one who stands at the end because that's how you know who's won a battle; whose left standing.

This is a spiritual battle, one that's not visible in front of us, nor can we see the enemy but we can see the damage he causes in the world and even sadly between believers. Remember, Paul is talking to believers about the work of Satan. The devil wants nothing more for us to be disobedient, unforgiving and out of fellowship with one another, so we need to put on God's armor to not allow the spiritual forces of darkness to dim our witness.

Paul commanded us in 4:25,

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

It's not our job to defeat Satan – he already is defeated. That's they key to standing firm in this battle,

To resist him who is defeated (v.13)

¹³ 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 stand

Since it's a spiritual battle and we have God's armor available then we have what we need to resist the enemy; a defeated enemy. Remember Heb. 2:14-15,

¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Satan's trump card is death, but Jesus destroyed his power over death when He rose from the dead. Now any who believe in Jesus have victory over death. Jesus Himself said the night before He died in talking about the coming Holy Spirit,

⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

That's what Jesus did for us. He still is around. He still can do a lot of damage but he stands condemned. He will be thrown in the lake of fire. He cannot win. However, he's still fighting and we still need to resist him because he is a powerful and deceitful foe.

God has enabled us to stand firm against the enemy's strategies,

But we are Responsible to Use His Equipment **(6:14-20)**

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ 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.

Now he describes what we need through the metaphor of a soldier's armor because he wants to convey the seriousness of this battle. Roman soldiers were everywhere. You feared them. The Romans had made advances in equipment technology for their day far beyond others; that's why they ruled the world for so long. Paul's audience was well aware of this. But Paul will also quote and allude to passages in Isaiah where God or the Messiah are also described with spiritual armor. Paul begins with the soldier's belt. Why? The belt holds everything in place so that the soldier is able to use all his equipment. By calling it the belt of truth Paul says the believer has

To know and apply the truth of God (v.14a)

Since the belt held everything in place I believe Paul is saying all our life must be modelled with truth. We must live out the Word of God. We must filter everything we see and hear through God's Word. We must make truthful decisions that show who we are. This is the first quote from Isaiah, specifically Is. 11:5. Isaiah 11 is a prophecy about the Messiah and His rule. We read in Is. 11:3,

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴ but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

Paul refers to Jesus' character here in Isaiah 11:5 and describes how He assesses life with righteousness and faithfulness; two synonyms referring to consistent integrity and truth. Our greatest defense is a life lived with integrity, honesty and commitment to truth. Paul will specifically show how we use the Word of God later but for now he says like a belt that holds all the armor together, so a life lived with integrity will keep you prepared for the enemy's attacks.

The first specific piece he mentions is the breastplate of righteousness. A plea for us

To trust in God's righteousness (v.14b)

... not our own. How do we know that's what he's referring to? Because he just quoted Is. 59:17. Let's look at Is. 59 quickly. The context is one of judgment against sin and salvation is only available in God. Look at v.12

¹² For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: ¹³ rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our God, inciting revolt and oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. ¹⁴ So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. ¹⁵ Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. ¹⁶ He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. ¹⁷ He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

God is going to deal with sin. He puts on the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate covers the heart and vital organs. Any arrow to the chest is going to most likely cause serious if not fatal injury. God's righteousness is what we're given at salvation. This is who we are in Christ. We now are declared right by God. The enemy likes nothing better than to make us feel insecure, dumb unworthy of God's love. But Jesus died for us so that we might be declared right by God. Satan is called the accuser. He accused Job of worshipping God only because God blessed him. But God said Job was His servant. Job's confidence wasn't in himself but in God. Never forget whose you are because Satan attacks the heart.

In v.15 Paul tells us how to advance against the enemy;

Be armed and ready to share the gospel (v.15)

The Romans were successful for so long because they invented protective footwear that also had little spikes in the bottom of the shoe. They advanced quickly before their enemy was often ready for them. But Paul's focus of attack isn't to strike the enemy, it's to spread the gospel. He quotes Is. 52:7 here. Ch. 52 is a prophecy about Jerusalem's capture but it will only be temporary because God will return to Zion and the watchmen should wait for the messenger to come and announce this good news:

"For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock," declares the LORD. "And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed. ⁶ Therefore my people will know my name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I." ⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

⁸ Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.

When we share God's good news that peace is available with Him through faith in His promises – specifically eternal life in Jesus – we attack the enemy whose message is one of lies like there is no God or you can't get to God or try harder and you'll get to God; but none of those bring peace. Only faith in Jesus who came and is coming back brings peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Paul exhorts us to

Remain faithful to God and one another (v.16)

All these verbs are in the plural. Yes, he is addressing all believers but here particularly Paul stresses the need to stick together. An army was successful by staying together. The word for shield here refers to the full body length shield that the Romans would use to cover over their heads or surround the cohort of soldiers from flaming arrows. The shields were often covered in leather and soaked before battle. Heavy, yes, but together they formed an almost impenetrable wall.

The unity of the body of believers is crucial to defending the attacks of the enemy. We need each other's mutual encouragement, wisdom and love. If our only contact with other believers is our once a week gathering, we are leaving ourselves vulnerable to the enemy's attacks.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Helmet of salvation is a quote from Is. 59:17, where God puts on the helmet of salvation to deliver His people. Paul uses the helmet, which protects the head,

To remind ourselves of our security (v.17a)

Eph. 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

^{2:6} And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Satan knows that when a believer doubts the security of his/her salvation then they doubt all kinds of promises in God's Word. Doubt in the reliability of God's Word was Satan's first strategy to cause Adam and Eve to take their eyes off God and sin. Sadly, it's still one of his favourite weapons.

Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Tells us to be ready to counter lies with the Word (v.17b)

As Jesus did to Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness. Satan tried to cast doubt on God's goodness. 'If you're the Son of God turn that stone into bread. God wants to meet your needs,

he doesn't want you to go hungry; eat.' Jesus countered with Deut. 8, '*Man does not live by bread alone but every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*' If it was God's will for Jesus to fast and pray God would meet His needs. Satan even used Scripture on Jesus to tempt Him to jump from the top of the temple, because God doesn't want His people to have pain. Again Jesus countered with God's Word '*You don't put the Lord Your God to the test*'

The word for 'sword' here is the soldier's small dagger, not the huge sword that takes both hands to wield. It's a powerful metaphor because I think Paul was just saying, you don't need to slay the dragon; you can keep him at bay with the stinging verses of Scripture that we need to know and bring to mind when tempted.

And Paul wraps this all up in vv.18-20 with the need for

Being alert and ready for battle through prayer (vv.18-20)

¹⁸ *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.*

¹⁹ *Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

Prayer is not mentioned last because it's a last resort! Prayer is mentioned here as something that brings this altogether. We should always be praying for and alert to the need to draw on God's powerful resources and to be aware of the enemy's strategies. And not just ourselves but for "*all the saints*", all of us.

We don't like spending time talking about the devil, but his presence and effectiveness is very real. While he's ultimately a defeated foe he is still causing a lot of damage by spreading his lies wherever he can. If Jesus said the truth is what sets us free, then the need to grow continually in the truth so we can apply it every day cannot be overstated. So yes, if you're a bottom line person the key to all this is 'pray and read your Bible'. But pray strategically and specifically for yourself and each saint to be in the Word daily and with God's people regularly so that you and I have our eyes open to the enemies' schemes and are spiritually prepared to fight back against the temptations to sin against God and one another.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net