

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Part 2

Ephesians 6:16-17

Intro: I think that it is impossible to say that one passage of Scripture is greater than another, or greater than all of the rest of Scripture, because different passages meet our needs in different ways and at different times. We all could probably take up the time this morning telling how God has blessed us in special ways at various times in our lives, as we faced special needs in our lives. But this passage on our warfare with the Devil certainly would be numbered among the most important Scriptures. I say this because we all have to face the Devil. He is the Enemy, not just of some of the Lord's people, but of each and every one of us. The fact that he is unseen, makes it difficult to say that in a given situation that it is the Devil who is after us. He is not omnipresent. That is, he is a created being, and, like us, can only be at one place at one time. But he, and what to us would be a countless number of evil "principalities and powers," are constantly active to turn us away from the Lord, to draw us into sin, and hinder us in this warfare that Paul was describing here in Ephesians 6:1-20, but especially through verse 18.

The verb "wrestle" in verse 12 which was used by Paul to describe our conflict with the forces of evil, is not used anywhere else in the NT. The Devil and his demonic forces like to isolate us because that is how he can do his most damaging work. We learn from the book of Job that the Devil often attacks godly people like Job was because of the good influence they have upon others. Scripture tells us how the Devil singled out even our Lord for his vicious attacks. The Devil would have known that our Lord as the Son of God could not sin, but he did not know what effect it had had upon our Lord to become a Man. And so the Devil tempted Him, obviously hoping to put an end to our Lord's redemptive mission. The word "wrestle" speaks of the kind of contact that two wrestlers have with each other. The difference is that we have an armor, and we have a sword, and we have a shield, and our order from our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ, is for us "to stand." And we can be sure that the Lord has given us the teaching that we have in Ephesians throughout the whole epistle, but leading to this last passage, so that we will know that God has made ample, sufficient provision for us to be victorious over all of the forces of evil. And let me emphasize what I have said before, Ephesians 6:10-20 tells us the only way we can be victorious. God has provided each one of us with the only armor by

which we can be victorious over the Devil and his evil forces, the demons. But we need to put it on, keep it on, and be prepared to use it. And I hope that you have seen that each piece of the armor has something to do with the book that you hold in your hand right now: your Bible!

We have talked about the belt of truth around our waists. We have talked about “the breastplate of righteousness.” And we have talked about our footwear – “the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” This morning I want to discuss with you the last three parts of the armor:

- 1) “The shield of faith” in verse 16.
- 2) “The helmet of salvation” in the first part of verse 17.
- 3) “The sword of the Spirit” in the last part of verse 17.

Let us begin with

I. “THE SHIELD OF FAITH” (Eph. 6:16).

Faith is a word of major importance for us Christians. We are saved by faith. We live by faith. We know that without faith it is impossible to please God. And yet faith is not something that we are capable of producing. We are told in our Bibles that Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith. We are also told that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Right here in Ephesians we are told that faith is a gift, a gift from God.

But we also need to ask the question, Faith in what, or faith in whom? If I say that I have faith, I am acknowledging that I am not sufficient for myself. We have faith in God, in the living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is believing, trusting. We have faith in the Holy Spirit. And we have faith in the Bible. We believe that it is the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said in the first chapter of 2 Corinthians that the Lord had put him through a lot of trials so that he would learn not to trust in himself. See 2 Cor. 1:9.

At the beginning of this month, I, along with some of you, began reading through the book of Proverbs again. On Thursday of this week, the 3rd, I read the third chapter of Proverbs. I came to those two verses I committed to memory many years ago, and this is what I read:

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. And then this is what I read in verse 7:

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

We all have a natural inclination to trust in ourselves, but that is the best way to fail. When the Apostle Paul was on that ship which was taking him to Rome as a prisoner, perhaps you remember how they ran into a storm, and it looked like they were all going to die. In those early days of the Church, God spoke to His people in ways that He no longer does because the Bible is completed. An angel appeared to Paul and told him that no person was going to die in the storm. And when Paul spoke to the men on board ship, this is what he told them: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). Paul spoke a language that those sailors did not understand when he said, "Sir, . . . I believe God."

Faith is our shield. It is faith in God that protects us from the Devil and the demons. And that is why the Devil shoots those fiery darts at us to break down our faith in God.

From my reading I learned that a soldier's shield in those days was about 2 feet wide and 4 feet long. It was big. Our faith is supported by God's Word. God never has given us a promise in His Word that He has not kept. So to take the shield of faith is to take your Bible, read it and believe it. God will not fail you. The worst thing any of us can do is to trust in ourselves; the best thing is to trust God. Don't neglect the reading of the Bible. That is where your faith will be strengthened. And don't stay away from church where your faith will be strengthened by hearing the Word of God. I hope that we all have our shield of faith in hand this morning.

What is next?

II. "THE HELMET OF SALVATION" (Eph. 6:17a).

Now you don't need me to tell you what a helmet is. In those days soldiers wore helmets. Even today a helmet is a very necessary part of our men and women who are in combat. Neither do you need me to tell you what part of the body the helmet is worn. It is worn on the head.

I like what Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones had to say about "the helmet of

salvation.” Here are his words:

The spiritual application of the helmet is obvious; the Apostle is drawing attention to the head, to the mind, the brain, the understanding, the thinking of the Christian (p. 309).

We live in a day in the history of the Church when many professing Christians (and I say “professing Christians” because I can’t understand how a true Christian would say what I am about to say) say that they are not interested in doctrine. They just want the practical teaching. But from my observation these same people don’t show much interest in the practical teaching either. One lady in one of my former pastorates said about me, not to me, but about me, “We have had enough meat and potatoes; what we need is a little dessert.” I don’t know what she meant by that but it came to me as I was dealing with the doctrine of election in my messages. What could the Apostle Paul have meant by the helmet of salvation which goes on the head if he was not talking about the doctrine of salvation, the teaching of salvation? The Devil hates that doctrine as much or more than any other doctrine. He will do anything to keep people from hearing the truth about salvation. He loves to turn his focus upon our faults and failures instead of the unfailing faithfulness of our God of grace. A Christian who is not grounded in the truth of salvation is like a soldier who goes to war without his helmet. He is a ready target for the Devil and his henchmen, or maybe I should coin a word: hench-demons. The Bible is a book about salvation – why we need to be saved, why we can’t save ourselves, how God in eternity past took the initiative in choosing us for salvation, what it required of Christ, and how the Holy Spirit has sought us, convicted us, has drawn us to Christ and has made us new creatures in Christ by the new birth. The Devil is going to true to convince you that none of this is true, but he is a Liar, and the father of lies. My fellow Christian, if the truth of salvation is not very clear and very dear to you, then you don’t have on the helmet of salvation. You had better get it on, and do it quickly. We need to love it because the Devil hates it. And it is only as we know it and love it that we are ready to meet our Enemy.

When Paul wrote earlier to the church at Thessalonica, he mentioned the Christian’s armor, but not as thoroughly as he did here in Ephesians. But let me read to you what he said about our helmet. You will find this quotation in 1 Thess 5:8 where we read, “putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” What did he mean by “the hope of salvation”? Did he mean that we can only hope that

we are saved, but we can't really know? No, he meant that there is a future glorious prospect concerning our salvation which we will not realize fully until we get to heaven. It has to do with the ultimate purpose of our salvation. God has saved us, not just to take us to heaven. That would be glorious enough, but that is not all. God has saved us to make us like His Son in Whom He finds all of His delight. We use the word hope to express a degree of uncertainty. But when God led Paul to write about "the hope of salvation," he was writing about the future prospect of our salvation which is absolutely certain. It is a hope because it is future, but it is as certain as any other promise of God.

But let me go on to the last part of the armor:

III. "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD" (Eph. 6:17b).

Now we have seen that from the beginning of what Paul has written about the armor of God we have been talking about the Word of God. And now we get down to the last part of the armor, one that is extremely important, the sword. But Paul calls it, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Now is there any distinctive difference in Paul's reference to the Word of God here, as compared with His previous references? I believe that there is.

There is a verse in the book of Hebrews which also refers to the Bible, the Word of God, as a sword. Most of you know the verse that I am referring to. It is Hebrews 4:12. And this is what it tells us:

12 For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

God's Word is the sword of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture. Paul may have been the writer of Ephesians, and he believed in and agreed with everything that he wrote, *but the Holy Spirit is the Author*. It is different from any book that has ever been written. It is a living Word. It is a powerful Word. Those of us who know the Lord have had our lives changed by this Word. We have been saved by this Word. We have grown spiritually by this Word. We have seen others transformed by this Word. The Word has brought comfort to our hearts. We have been strengthened time and time again by this Word. The Word

has given us guidance for our lives. The Devil has tried many, many times to destroy this Word, but he has not succeeded, and he never will. Long ago the prophet Isaiah was directed by the same Holy Spirit to tell us this about God's Word:

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (Isa. 55:10-11).

God's Word is living and powerful. Even a sharp sword cannot adequately portray for us the living and life-giving power of God's Word. Nobody is ever saved apart from the Word of God.

But the use of the Word of God as a sword against the Devil is beautifully illustrated in the way in which the Lord Jesus used the Word when He was tempted by the Devil at the very beginning of His ministry. I know that most of you are familiar with the account of the way the Devil sought to get our Lord to sin, and how the Lord responded to him. Please turn with me to Matthew 4. I want to read to you the first eleven verses of that chapter, and I want you to see the Lord's response. **(Read Matthew 4:1-11.)**

The Lord could have originated new Scriptures if He had chosen to do so, but instead He relied on what was already written. The Devil quoted Scripture too, but he was misusing it as all false teachers do. What happened as a result of the Lord's quotation to the Devil? See again verse 11: Then the Devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

Concl: If you and I are to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," we need to read it and re-read it until it is written on our hearts. We need to memorize it. In ministering to others in need, there is nothing better that we can do than read the Word to them. If witnessing to someone who is unsaved, the most powerful witness we can give them is some quotation from Scripture.

We have covered the parts of the armor? Do you have it on? I hope you do. If not, begin today by asking the Lord to help you get it on so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. No other armor will do.