

AM Ephesians 6:10-18 The Christian life is a battle

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Date: 27 August 2023

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[0 : 00] Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, chapter 6, beginning to read at verse 10, and that in your pew Bible is page 1178.

Page 1178. Page 11.

And in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all, to stand firm.

[1 : 41] Stand there, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

And take the helmet of salvation, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying at all times in the spirit, with all prayers and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

Amen. And may God bless to us this reading of his word. I seem to have missed, not got the order correct.

[2 : 56] I think we've already sung, have we? Maybe not. Are we still to sing Psalm 144? We've sung Psalm 144, yes?

Yes. Yes, okay. So we're on to the word. Bless you. Thank you. Once you retire, you're not doing this job all the time.

And therefore, it takes a while to get your mind back in gear. It's nice to be retired, but it's, you know, when I was in Fort William, it was a sermon every Sunday morning, a sermon every Sunday evening, a prayer meeting every Wednesday.

And you're in it, and you're doing it all the time. But once you retire, you find that you're not doing these things in the same way that you did before you retired. So the title of our sermon this morning is, The Christian Life is a Battle.

And we've already touched on that. I love the introduction. I love the greeting that Paul gives to these believers in Ephesus in Ephesians 1, verse 2.

[4 : 02] He said, Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. And that will be my sentiment to you this morning. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul writes that we as believers are in a battle against the evil one. So this morning, we're going to ask and seek to answer the following questions.

If we're in a battle, what is the context and nature of the battle? Who is the enemy? What are his strategies? And what resources do we have for defense, attack, and ultimate victory?

So what is the context and nature of the battle? Jesus taught, and many passages of Scripture affirm, that we're involved in a cosmic battle.

The realm in which spiritual blessings are received is also the location of an ongoing battle between good and evil. There's absolutely no room for apathy.

[5 : 17] Having come to faith in the Lord Jesus, we're in the front line of this battle, and we need to walk in a way that is worthy of our calling in Christ. I remember when I was baptized, I was baptized

in 1987, January 1987.

And as I came up out of the waters of baptism, I never felt cleaner. And I was just so full of joy in the Lord, that having come to faith, I was aged 34 at the time, so full of joy in the Lord.

And it was just the most amazing feeling. And then a week passed, and another week passed, and the world started to crowd in again. And the attacks came, in a very real way, from the enemy.

And I remember going along to our minister at the time, a chap called Raymond Arnold, and said to him, you know, this is what's happening. And he said, David, yes, of course it's happening.

Because now you're spiritually aware, now you're awake, now you know what's going on, and you have a better idea of who the enemy is. And so then we prayed together, we talked about how to defend ourselves against the attacks of the evil one.

[6 : 33] And we prayed together. And I thank God for Raymond on that occasion. So we need to be able to keep our feet, and to stand against the devil's schemes.

He needs, the devil needs to be detected, and resisted. And this battle's going on all the time, whether we're aware of it or not. It manifests itself, often in the ordinary routines of life.

As believers, we're being sanctified, as we grow to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ. But the evil one, the devil seeks to defeat us, in the daily routines of life.

So we need to be very careful, not to give him a foothold. Ephesians 4, 27. We need to be conscious of his strategies. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were not attempting extraordinary spiritual work for God, when the devil, the serpent, and this is a quote, tracked them down, and tripped them up.

It was in the everyday, mundane activities, that the devil made his attack. This couple had the very best, of all of God's basic provision for them.

[7 : 48] And yet the devil, set them at odds with God, and at odds with each other. If you read Genesis 3, one following. So we need to be aware, in our marriages, in our parent-child relationships, our daily working, and daily living environments, we need to realize, that we're not just, dealing with flesh, and blood.

Rather, we need to recognize, we're dealing with rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers, for evil. We must be aware, that the battle, that rages within, and without, we must be aware of it.

We can't switch on our television sets. I'll read the newspaper, without being aware. Although we sin as sin, saved by grace, and this is another quote, from a well-known, commentator.

He writes, there's still, a Trojan horse of sin, within us. Which the devil seeks, to use to bring us down. Sometimes we have, opportunities to sin, but we lack, any inner compulsion, to pursue, that opportunity.

At other times, we can experience, an inner compulsion, but opportunity, is not there. And we're, providentially, protected, by God. But when temptation, opportunity, and desire, coincide, then it's all we can do, to stand.

[9 : 20] The devil knows, our weaknesses. Indeed, if we are to stand, we need to stand firm, in our faith. It is in God's strength, and his strength alone, that we're able to stand.

King David, who was described, as a man after God's own heart, experienced, one notable situation, where temptation, opportunity, and desire, coincided.

2 Samuel 11, verses 1 to 4. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose, from his couch, and was walking, on the roof, of the king's house, that he saw, from the roof, a woman bathing, and the woman, was very beautiful.

And David sent, and inquired, about the woman, and one said, is that not Bethsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite? So David sent messengers, and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.

We can't rely, on our own resources, to defeat the devil. David had time, to kill. David should have been, with the army, fighting, for Israel.

[10 : 37] They had time, on his hands, and that's, can be a dangerous thing. We can only stand, in the Lord, wearing the armoury, provides.

But before we, consider the armour, let's consider, the enemy, of our souls. So who is the enemy, and what, are his strengths? Reconnaissance, is one of the most, important elements, of warfare.

I've seen a few, shots from Ukraine, recently, where the reporter, has followed, followed them, gaining reconnaissance. They're using drones, these days, which thankfully, helpfully, keeps people, a little safer, than there would have been, if it had been, people going into, these places.

But no doubt, it happens. So knowing your enemy, and taking time, to learn as much as possible, about the enemy, before you meet him, is a good thing. God's military intelligence, aids our victory, over sin.

The devil, possesses, supernatural powers. We do not wrestle, against flesh and blood, Paul writes. This is a personal battle, and it's against, a foe, who, Revelation 12, 4, is capable, of bringing down, a third of the stars, of heaven, by a sweep, of his tail.

[11:56] An enemy, who's wounded, great men and women, of the faith, in the past. His plan is to, sift us like wheat, and to devour us. Luke 22, 31.

The devil, is capable, of transforming himself, into an apparent, angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11, 14. He employs, an organized strategy, which is cosmic, and spiritual.

He's active, in this present darkness. I don't know, if you've ever read, C.S. Lewis's, The Screwtape Letters, but that really, gives you an insight, into what's going on, in the mind, of the evil one, and his attacks, on believers.

Satan, hates God, and he hates, all who love God. He hates, our enjoyment of God. He's a deceiver, an accuser, a liar, in fact he's the father of lies, and he's a blackmailer.

There is only one way, to stand against, the spiritual forces of evil, in order to win. Revelation 12, verse 11. They, that is the saints in glory, they conquered him, that is the devil, by the blood of the lamb, and by the word, of their testimony, for they loved not, their lives, even unto death.

[13:19] These saints in glory, exhibited unreserved, faithfulness for Christ. As believers, were soldiers, enlisted in the king's army, the church militant.

In Christ alone, we stand. So what resources, do we have for defense, and victory? victory. If we're to be victorious, not only do we need to know, our enemy, but we need to know, how the resources, available to us, work, so that we can stand, firm in our faith.

It's not enough, just to know, about these resources, we need to know, how to use them. Many of you know that, perhaps you don't actually, that my hobby, is climbing, and hill walking, which I have, a real passion for.

But I couldn't, do my hobby, I know there's electronic things now, sat-nav, and all this stuff. But the best way, to be safe, out in the mountains, of Scotland, is to know, first of all, how to use a compass, and secondly, how to read a map.

We need to know, and use these two things, in conjunction, not only in good visibility, when all the landmarks, are visible, but also in bad visibility, in zero visibility.

[14:50] So providing you know, where you are, quite literally, and in this case, the analogy would be, that you have a personal faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ, then, by taking an accurate compass, bearing, you can get to, where you would like to be.

Knowing, about the armor of God, will not keep you safe, from the devil's schemes. You need to know, how to appropriate, the armor's protection. In Ephesians 6, Paul is concerned, for the Christian stability.

Notice that the word, stand, appears four times, in verses 11 to 14. Why, is he concerned, about the Christian stability? I believe, it's because, wobbly Christians, Christians, who have no assurance, of their faith in Christ, they've got no firm, foothold, and no assurance, of the salvation, are easy prey, for the devil.

Paul desires, that believers, become strong, and stable, that they're enabled, to stand firm, against the devil's schemes. hands, the expression, the whole armor of God, came from the Greek word, panoplia, which refers, to the full armor, of an heavily armed soldier.

And I'll refer you again, to those little handouts, in the vestibule, if you'd like to take one. So you can work through, these pieces of armor, on a daily basis, weekly basis, you can pray through them, which you might find helpful.

[16:23] God's armor, is divine in nature, God himself, the Lord of hosts, is depicted, as a warrior, fighting to vindicate, his people. He puts on righteousness, as a breastplate, and the helmet of salvation, upon his head.

Isaiah 59, 17. Still today, the armor, and weapons, are God's, but now, he shares them, with us. We're called, to put on the armor, take up the weapons, and go to war, against the powers, of evil. And Paul details, six pieces, of a soldier's equipment, and we'll work through them, very briefly, with the children, but we'll do so, in a little bit more detail, for ourselves. The belt, the belt of truth, is usually made of leather, belonged to a soldier's underwear, rather than his armor.

It would have gathered up, his tunic, and would have held, his sword. As he buckled it on, he would have been given, it would have given him, a sense of hidden strength, and confidence.

So the belt of truth, must be fastened on, verse 14. God looks for truth, he looks for integrity, in our inner beings, because without this, we're open, to the blackmail, of the devil.

[17 : 44] We're exposed, to his ability, to accuse us, of hypocrisy. Only truth, can dispel, can dispel the devil's lies, and set us free. If we resort, to deceitfulness, I believe, we play right, into the devil's hands.

He's an expert, at deceit, but he hates, transparent truth. The devil, loves darkness, light, causes him, to flee.

For our spiritual, and mental well-being, honesty about ourselves, and with others, is indispensable. We need to couple, doctrinal truth, with sincerity, of heart.

Integrity, and honesty, seem to be, in short supply, these days, at all levels, of society. The belt of truth, must be fastened on.

And the breastplate, of righteousness, must be worn, at all times, verse 14. The breastplate, covered the soldiers, vital organs, particularly, the heart, and lungs, and protected him, from a fatal wound.

[19 : 01] Paul makes, an analogy, with this, in righteousness. When we come, to faith in Jesus, we are covered, by the imputed, righteousness, of Christ. We are justified, restored, and forgiven.

When God, looks at us, he sees us through, the righteousness, of the Lord Jesus. I find that, absolutely, amazing. The Christian's, righteousness, is based on, the right relationship, with God, through Christ.

This righteousness, is a strong, breastplate, to protect us, from the accuser. The Christian's, breastplate, also refers, to the righteousness, of conduct, and character, which helps us, to withstand temptation.

Pardon, for past sins, and integrity, of character, belong together, in a justified life. Together, they make, an impenetrable, piece of armor.

The third piece, feet fitted, with the readiness, that comes, from the gospel, of peace. As we've already said, Roman legionnaires, used to wear, a half boot, called a caliga.

[20 : 18] It left the toes, free, had heavy studded soles, and was tight, to the ankles, and up to the shin, with leather straps. These boots, were good, for long marches, but were also good, for taking, a solid stance.

We need to take, we need to have, a strong foothold, a secure grounding, in the word of God, so that we can be of service, in the spread of the gospel, rather than be an endurance, to it.

A secure grounding, in the gospel, means that we're able, to be prepared, to make a defense, of the gospel, to anyone who asks, 1 Peter 3 15. Peter writes, but in your hearts, honor Christ, the Lord, as holy.

Always be prepared, to make a defense, to anyone who asks you, for the reason, for the hope, that you have. Yet do it, with gentleness, and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are, slandered, those who revile, your good behavior, in Christ, may be put, to shame.

we may be asked, to move quickly, ready, in and out of season, to share the message, of the gospel, to Timothy Thor 2.

[21 : 33] The more we understand, of the gospel of peace, the more secure, we will be, and more enthusiastically, will we communicate, this message to others. 2 Corinthians 5, 14 to 21.

I don't know about you, but I love to read, the Bible. It's just a passion, and I hope it's yours, that you're soaked, in the word of God, that it's there, in your heart, and in your mind, so that you have, this confidence.

And then the shield of faith, with which to extinguish, the arrows of the evil one. Like I said before, the shield of the Roman soldier, was like a door, in proportion. It was covered with leather, many layers of wood.

When the enemy, fired showers of arrows, towards the soldiers, they would raise their shields, together, and form a solid wall, or unit of defense, that protected their lives.

We, as believers, have moments of doubt. Both John Bunyan, and Charles Spurgeon, described times, when they experienced, onslaughts of unworthy thoughts, coming at them uninvited.

[22 : 52] Others have described, how the sudden memory, of a past sin, seems to have lit a match, that was thrown, onto dry tinder. Panic, and guilt, overwhelm the believer, causing us, to lose our

footing, and doubt, our salvation.

And the devil, seeks to sow, seeds of doubt, in order to obscure, the love, of our heavenly father. It is all the, it is at these times, that the shield of faith, should be raised.

And if you've got, Christian friends, ask them to raise, their shield with you. And pray together, on these occasions. Knowing the nature, and grace of God, we know that nothing, in us, saves us.

Only what Christ, has done outside of us, saves us. So we need to trust Jesus, and Jesus alone, for our salvation. His sacrifice, was more than adequate.

So don't be brought down, by the devil, sowing seeds, that cause you to doubt. The helmet of salvation, the helmet protects the head.

[24 : 07] Head wound, can be fatal. The helmet protects, the mind of the believer. Assurance, of our faith. One of the devil's ploys, is to make, us question, whether or not, we're saved.

He attacks the mind. A Christian, who would stand firm, against Satan, must develop a mind, that is well furnished, with the promises, of God's word. Which is able, to make you wise, for salvation, through faith, in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3 15. And then the sword, of the spirit, the word of God. God, all the armor so far, has been for our defense, not attack. There are times, when the best form of defense, is attack.

And we're called, not only to protect ourselves, against the enemy, we're called, to overcome, the enemy. God's written word, is inspired, by the Holy Spirit himself.

It is a sword, which God still uses, to cut through, people's defenses, to prick their, consciences, and to alert them, to their spiritual condition.

[25 : 12] It's a weapon, of evangelism. We have, his, precious word. We have it, in our hands, and we can resist, temptation.

Jesus resists, at temptation, whilst in the wilderness, using, some, rather obscure, Bible references, when you actually, look them up. But Jesus knew, the word of God, and was able to use it, as the devil, sought to tempt him.

So God's word, is sharper, than any, double-edged sword. And if we're going to use, the weapon effectively, we must store up, this word, in our hearts, and in our minds.

We must get to know it, thoroughly. So let's bring these thoughts, together, in a conclusion. God has furnished us, with six pieces, of armour.

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel, the shoes, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit.

[26 : 17] And it's our responsibility, to take up the armour, to put it on, and to use it confidently, against the powers of evil. Being careful, to put it all on, because the devil, and his minions, can attack from every side.

And then, verse 18, and pray at all times, in the spirit, with all prayers, and supplications, make your request, to God. Verse 18, is not an afterthought, by Paul.

prayer, prayer pervades, the whole, of this spiritual warfare. This is not a game. The battle has, eternal consequences.

Some years ago, I was involved in, doing some training, at a Christian event, for workers in the Ukraine, in what's known as, Open Bible, Scripture Union, here. And the event took place, at Vorzli, which is about, 30 kilometres north, of Kiev, which is a campsite, a permanent campsite.

I don't know, what's happened to it, in these days. I know that the villages, of Vorzli, were actually living, in the site, because it was a secure place, after the attack, in the spring of, the year before this, wasn't it?

[27 : 33] So, but the timing, of this seminar, that I was given, was 4pm, in the afternoon. Basically, people had already, had six hours of teaching, and activities, and it was very clear, that they were ready, for a nap.

And I was teaching, on some passages, I was teaching, on this, the same passage, that I'm speaking on, this morning, through a translator, which incidentally, I found really enjoyable, because it gives you, time to think, about what you're saying.

The message, we've shared this morning, is of, the utmost importance. I'm feeling attacked, even as I'm sharing it, if I'm honest. And the second part, of verse 18, left out of the page, to me.

Where it says, we need to be, alert, and awake. And everybody, was dozing off. So I said, we need to be, alert, and awake.

And we do, we need to be, alert, and awake. Because this is not a game. This is not a game. Prayer is not seen, as part of the, armor of God, but it describes, the manner in which, the armor of God, should be put on, and worn.

[28 : 51] And we're going to sing, as we close today, Soldier of Christ, Arise. And Charles Wesley writes, to keep your armor bright, attend with constant, prayer. To keep your armor bright, attend with constant, prayer.

Prayer is foundation. We're to pray in the spirit, at all times, and in all occasions, persevering, being watchful, and awake. We are to pray, for all the saints.

We must never give up, praying, or fall asleep. It is in God's mighty power, that we take our stand. We're exhorted to be strong, in the Lord, and in his mighty power.

The devil, is ultimately, a defeat at foe. Another word of warning is, don't seek to blame everything, on the devil. We have a part, to play in this.

We have a part, in which we, we need to be, making a stand, against the temptations, that come, against us. But the devil, is ultimately, a defeat at foe.

[29 : 55] The victory, has been won, on the cross, by the Lord Jesus Christ. In his death, and subsequent resurrection, that Jesus, has overcome, sin, death, and the devil. And that deserves, an alleluia.

So we need to have no fear, if we know, and trust, the Lord Jesus Christ. But we do need to be aware, and awake.

God bless you. Amen.