Session 3
God's Provision for Spiritual Warfare
(Ephesians 6:14–20) Pastor Greg Hauser

Background thoughts:

- Paul uses the phrase "in the heavenly places" (Greek "*en tois epouraniois*," literally "in the heavenlies") five times in Ephesians (1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12), and only in this NT letter.
  - God's blessing (1:3); Christ's throne (1:20); Union with Christ (2:6). We fight ***from*** victory, not ***for*** victory; Displays wisdom (3:10); Continuing conflict (6:12).
- Paul uses the verb "walk" seven times in Ephesians (2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15) to trace a single, comprehensive movement: from our old, sinful ways to our new walk in Christ expressed in a worthy, distinct, loving, and wise manner.
  - Our former walk: dead in sin (2:2); Our new walk: created for good works (2:10); Walk worthy of your calling (4:1); Don't walk like the Gentiles (4:17); Walk in love (5:1–2); Walk as children of light (5:8); Walk wisely, redeeming the time (5:15–16).
- Believers share a heavenly citizenship in the church (2:19–21; Phil 3:20) and are members of God's one household built on Christ Jesus, the cornerstone.
  - You are not spiritually dead. You are not a heavenly guest, but a citizen. You are not fighting alone or from above.
- Paul's use of "the armor of God" in Ephesians 6 is not an original metaphor. He develops this imagery throughout the letter and echoes Isaiah's depictions of God and the Messiah as a divine warrior Who clothes Himself in righteousness, salvation, and zeal to rescue His people. Key OT texts include Isaiah 11:4–5; 49:2; 52:7; and 59:17.

God commands us to put on His armor, blessings from the heavenlies, as part of our new identity in Christ and walk with Him. The verbs used in these verses convey:

- Divine source "in the Lord" / human response: you must actively deploy and live in God's strength. By God's grace, you are a prepared believer who is properly clothed, equipped, and ready to stand firm.
- Decisive and continual: call for a clear, definite commitment and an ongoing dependence and vigilance.
- Defensive stability as the main goal: hold your ground in Christ, no retreat or wavering.

1. Our Needed Armor (vv. 14–17)

These verses equip the believer to stand firm clothed in God's belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shod with the gospel of peace, helmet of faith, and sword of the Spirit. These pieces represent "the whole armor **of God**."

- "Having girded your loins with the truth" (v. 14a).
  - Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: The Roman soldier wore a tough leather belt ("cingulum") that held the breastplate together, supported the sword, and enabled rapid mobility by tucking in the soldier's lengthy tunic ("girding the loins"). Fastening the belt represents the soldier's first action before entering battle.
    - The Spiritual Meaning: Nothing provides more protection than God's Word. This represents God's objective truth contained in the Bible.
  - Using It.
    - Constantly learn the truth: you can't deploy the belt on truth you don't know. You must persistently learn and grow in your understanding of God's Word (John 8:32; 17:17).
    - Cinch the belt tight: take the objective truth of Scripture and apply it to your specific personal circumstances. Right theology leads to right orthopraxy.

  Ephesians uses "truth" in both a **doctrinal** sense (the gospel, the word of truth) and an **ethical** sense (honesty, integrity, rejecting falsehood). In 6:14, Paul expresses this as the **belt** that holds everything together: a life anchored in God's truth and marked by personal holiness and integrity.

- "Having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (v. 14b).
  Note 1 Thess 5:8, "having put on the breastplate of faith and love."
  - Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: A Roman soldier's breastplate ("thorax") was designed to protect the body's most vulnerable areas. It covered all the vital organs. It was the primary protection for the heart, lungs, intestines, front and back.

- The Spiritual Meaning: This represents the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We can't rely on our own righteousness. It must be God's; otherwise, it would be a suicide mission. Believers are declared righteous and must walk in a worthy manner (Eph 4:24; 1Cor 1:30).

o Using It.
- Be sure you have it! Stand on the blood of the Lamb.
- Because Christ's righteousness is perfect, any weapon of accusation hurled at it will simply bounce off harmlessly.

Ephesians first establishes that believers are **declared right with God** by grace (positional righteousness), then calls them to **live righteously** (practical righteousness). In 6:14, righteousness becomes a **breastplate**: both our right standing in Christ and our Spirit-enabled holy conduct protect the heart from accusation, sin, and shame.

- "Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (v. 15).
  - o Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: A soldier's footwear is one of the most critical, yet underappreciated, pieces of military equipment. Roman military sandals, known as *caligae*, were heavy-duty leather boots with hollow-headed iron cleats (hobnails).
    - The Spiritual Meaning: The Christian soldier's footwear provides the "preparation" (or readiness) of "the gospel of peace." The Gospel communicates God's unchangeable, divine message centering on the work of Jesus Christ. It addresses our greatest problem, our crimes against God and His holy wrath (Romans 1:15–18), and resolves it through the shedding of Christ's blood.
  - o Using It.
    - Fully embrace the gospel and evangelize yourself daily.

  Chapters 1–2 explain that the gospel is **peace**: peace with God and peace between formerly hostile groups. In 6:15, that gospel becomes footwear: the believer stands firm on the peace Christ made and prepares to carry that same good news into conflict and mission.

- "Taking up the shield of faith" (v. 16).
  - o Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: The Greek word for the shield is *thyreos* (or *thurion*), which derives from the word for "door" (*thyra*). This rectangular, door-like shield measured about 1.2 meters tall by .75 meters wide. It was constructed of two layers of wood glued together, covered first with canvas, then wrapped in calfskin, and bound with iron along the top and bottom edges. In the center was a prominent metal protrusion called an iron "boss."
    - The Spiritual Meaning: This piece of armor is literally the shield of 'the' faith. It does not refer to our subjective, internal feelings of belief or trust. It is the objective body of doctrine revealed by God, the Christian faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).
  - o Using It.
    - Unlike the belt, breastplate, and shoes which are strapped on and stay put, the shield is not attached to us; we must actively grip it and raise it through continuous spiritual effort.

  Faith is the instrument of union with Christ and reception of God's power. In 6:16, faith becomes a **shield**: active trust in God's promises and power that intercepts the enemy's attacks (doubt, fear, temptation, accusation, deception).

- "Take the helmet of salvation" (v. 17a).
  Note 1 Thess 5:8, "a helmet the hope of salvation."
  - o Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: A Roman soldier's helmet (*galea*) was a padded metal bowl, typically forged from bronze or iron.
    - The Spiritual Meaning: Biblical writers located the intellect and thoughts in the *heart*. Therefore, the head represents physical life itself; to lose your head meant to die.
  - o Using It.
    - The Greek verb Paul uses is "take," *dekomai,* which means to gladly receive, approve, or accept something offered. The helmet of salvation is a complete, finished gift held out by God; our response is to eagerly grasp it by faith.

  Ephesians presents salvation as a completed work with ongoing outworking and a future consummation. In 6:17, salvation becomes a **helmet**: the assured hope of final deliverance guards the mind against despair, discouragement, and defeatism. We have assurance. We must persevere in that reality.

- "(Take) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (v. 17b).
  - Understanding It.
    - The Literal Meaning: Paul specifically uses the Greek word *machaira* (a short sword used for close hand-to-hand combat). He doesn't use *rhomphaia* (the massive, clumsy two-handed broadsword).
    - The Spiritual Meaning: The sword is "the Word of God," specifically described as "the sword of the Spirit."
  - Using It.
    - To handle this sharp and powerful weapon without injuring yourself or leaving yourself defenseless, you must commit to a disciplined approach of preparation, practice, and deployment.

  Throughout Ephesians, the "word" is the gospel message and the apostolic teaching that builds the church. In 6:17, that word becomes a **sword**: the Spirit-empowered Scripture and gospel used actively to confront lies, temptations, and spiritual opposition.

Though not called "armor," prayer immediately follows the armor and serves as how the previous instruction is accomplished. The participles "praying" and "being alert" describe how a soldier takes up and prepares for the battle in armor.

2. Our Needed Prayer (vv. 18–20)

These verses show that the believer stands firm through continuous and persistent prayer and bold testimony. In warfare terms: prayer keeps the soldier connected to and strengthened by his King, sustains vigilance, and mobilizes spiritual support across the whole army.

In the middle of spiritual warfare, Paul emphasizes the vital need for prayer "at **all** times" with "**all** prayer and petition," with "**all** perseverance and petition," for "**all** the saints!"

- Be always praying (v. 18a).
  - See also Jude 20. Paul frequently wrote about the necessity of praying at all times or unceasingly (Rom 1:9–10; 12:12; Phil 1:4; 4:6; Col 1:3; 4:2, 12; 1 Tim 2:1–2; 1 Thess 5:17; 2 Thess 1:11).
  - Paul commands believers to pray continually and in every circumstance.
- Be alert when praying (v. 18b).
  - We must stay alert, awake, and aware in the battle.
  - Paul commands believers to be vigilant and persistent in prayer.
- Be praying for bold proclamation (vv. 19–20). Paul finally asks the Ephesians to pray for him. Prayer was not about being released from prison, comfort, or safety, but for boldness in proclaiming the gospel.
  - In Ephesians 3:1–13, Paul tells us that God sent him to announce the gospel to the Gentiles. He was "the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles." He also stated, "the prisoner of the Lord," in 4:1.
  - In Ephesians 6:19–20, Paul continues to follow his calling by proclaiming the gospel under pressure and depending on the church's prayers for boldness to speak as he ought. He was "an ambassador in chains," seeking to obey and honor God while in jail.
  - Paul presents his imprisonment as an ironic setting as an Ambassador of Christ. He asks that he "may speak boldly," and "as I ought to speak." He continues faithfully, openly, and appropriately to his divine commission. He heralds the King's message with the King's authority!
  - "Mystery:" The gospel message that brings unity and peace between believing Jew and Gentile in one body. Developed throughout Ephesians (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19).

Prayer sustains the believer in warfare and Paul while in prison! All through "the might of His strength."

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