

Week 49 - Kingdom Warfare
Ephesians 6:10-20
December 7/8

Summary and Goal:

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul writes a letter to the church in Ephesus seeking to equip them to thrive in this world. In this lesson, we will look at Chapter 6 and the "appropriate attire" (armor) that God has provided for us to wear in facing spiritual battles.

Main Passages:

Ephesians 6:10-20

Session Outline:

1. The Belt of Truth (Ephesians 6:14a)
2. The Breastplate of Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14b)
3. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15)
4. The Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6:16)
5. The Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17a)
6. The Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17b)

Session in a Sentence:

Kingdom attire must be fitting for the Kingdom activities in which we participate.

Kingdom Connection:

As the Kingdom of God is being advanced throughout this earth, we will face spiritual opposition from Satan and his forces. But God has given the Church the means for victory in the spiritual warfare we face. When we put on the whole armor of God, we can confidently participate in the spiritual battles ahead, knowing we will be victorious.

INTRODUCTION:

“Your attire must be fitting for your activities.” These are the instructions that Swiss Bank UBS sends its staff. Several years ago, the Bank caught a lot of flack when it published its 44-page dress code document for employees. The whole goal of the dress code document was to make sure that employees were wearing appropriate attire for impressing clients. The guide reached beyond cufflinks and tie knots, invading how employees were to groom themselves. It gave advice on applying lotion after a hot shower and to avoid garlic at lunch so that their breath would be appealing. Additionally, UBS gave great tips that can be found in any fashion magazine:

- “An appropriate remedy to prolong the life of shoes is to replace its heels early.”
- “The tip of your tie should under no circumstances enter your pants.”
- “Your figure should not suffer from the way you wear your underwear.”
- (For Men’s Jackets) “The shoulders should have natural proportions: if the shoulders are too broad you will appear too big with too-small head.”¹

While this may seem invasive and ultra-personal to us, the message they wanted to convey was clear - **your attire must be fitting for your activity.**

In every occupation, we would expect a dress code where the attire coordinates with the activity. We would never expect a firefighter to run into a burning building without his protective clothing. A police officer would never start his day in the field without his gun and a bullet-proof vest. A cattle rancher would never ride his horse without jeans and hard sole shoes or boots. A track athlete would never try to compete in a race wearing combat boots. Our culture understands the principle that **our attire must be fitting for our activities.**

In Paul’s epistle to the church at Ephesus, he stresses this principle to us in the spiritual realm. He wants us to be aware that we are not merely participating in earthly activities. The decisions we make, our responses toward others, the way we spend money and the way that we work do not operate in an earthly vacuum. If we were to peel back the layers of reality, we would see that daily, we are engaged in spiritual activities. Paul likens these activities to a spiritual battle. His desire for the Church is for our attire to be fitting for our activities. He wants us to enter spiritual activity fully equipped. Paul instructs us to put on six pieces of spiritual armor so that our spiritual attire will be fitting for our spiritual activities.

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/ubs-dresscode-clothes-bank-2010-12>

Commanded for a Purpose:

Put on the Full Armor of God- that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11, Chronological Bible p. 1532)

Paul commands the first-century church in Ephesus and twenty-first-century Christians today, to put on the full Armor of God. It is not a suggestion. It is a command. Paul gives this requirement for Christians because of the spiritual opposition that they will face. Paul tells us we are to put on the full Armor of God, in order to stand against the schemes of the devil. Satan is our enemy out to destroy our life as we know it.

Throughout the scriptures, the devil is given various names. But the two primary names are as our "Accuser" and our "Adversary." The devil accuses us before the throne of God, and he accuses us when we fall short in our personal walk with God. As our Adversary, he is the enemy of God and is trying to thwart the purpose of God in our life. Where God seeks to build us up and breathe life, Satan wants to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). Paul tells us to be on guard because we face a true spiritual enemy every day.

Paul writes in Ephesians to inform us that we have a real enemy who has a strategy against us. He tells us to put on the full armor so that we may be able to stand against the **schemes** of the devil. The word "wiles" is the Greek word, *methodeia*. It speaks of a detailed and unique method of attack. What the Apostle Paul is trying to convey is this: we have an enemy and he has a unique plan of attack for each of us. He has a unique methodology of how he will attempt to corrupt us and rob our lives of joy and true substance. Therefore, we must clothe ourselves with the right attire (the Armor of God) for the activity in which we are engaging, (a battle against the devil).

1. The Belt of Truth *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth ((Ephesians 6:14a, Chronological Bible p. 1532)*

In the first century, a soldier would wear a belt that would hold his sword. The belt would also hold his chest plate in place and allow for him to tuck his robes above his knees so that he could engage in battle. Without a belt, the rest of the attire could not function. The belt held everything together. Paul makes a comparison between the belt of a soldier and truth.

The truth of God holds everything together. Without it, we cannot engage in the battle. If we are going to fight this spiritual battle against the devil and the forces of evil, we must have truth to win.

In John's Gospel, Jesus gives us great insight into the character of Satan. Jesus tells us that the devil does not *"hold to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* (John 8:44 NIV) The devil wants us to believe lies about ourselves, God, and this world. He whispers lies into our hearts and minds and is attempting to lead us away from God. Christians must arm themselves with the belt of truth so that we can engage in the battles against the lies of Satan.

Truth is more than feelings. Truth is even more than facts. *Truth is reality from God's point of view.* In the movie *Inception*, Leonardo DiCaprio's character carries with him a totem that helps him verify the true world in which he lived. They needed an objective standard in their world because they could not rely on their own feelings or even the set of facts that were presented to them in the dream world. They needed a way to decipher between what was real and what was a lie. In the same way, you and I need an objective standard of reality for the world we live in as well.

Thankfully, God has provided that objective standard in the truth of His Word. God has given us His true standard of how the world is to function and operate in His Word. Every day you and I must engage in truth so that we can differentiate the lies and reality. We must put on the Belt of Truth if we want to be successful in the spiritual battle that we are in.

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness *having put on the breastplate of righteousness* (*Ephesians 6:14b, Chronological Bible p. 1532*)

Soldiers would place a breastplate over their bodies to help protect their vital organs during battle. The breastplate would cover them from their collarbone to their lower abdomen, guarding their heart, lungs, and intestines. With their breastplate on, they could enter the battle with confidence knowing they were protected.

The Breastplate of Righteousness has two-fold significance: 1) The breastplate represents the **external righteousness** of Jesus Christ placed on us. Jesus' righteousness protects us, and it guards us against the blows of the devil for eternity. 2) The Breastplate of Righteousness represents the **internal righteousness** of a godly life. This is the main thrust of Paul's usage of the breastplate.

Our greatest protection and ally in the Christian life against the schemes of the devil is to pursue a righteous life. Satan, who is our Accuser, cannot accuse us of sins we do not commit. He cannot condemn a consecrated life. Integrity and righteousness in the Christian life protect us from the everyday assaults of the devil and helps us to engage

the spiritual battle with confidence. When we live righteously, we can know that we are covered and protected. An obedient Christian is an effective Christian.

3. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15, Chronological Bible p. 1532)*

These shoes were tied, ready to go, ready to fight. They had short nails that would help give the soldier traction to make sure they were not slipping in battle. Paul tells the Church at Ephesus if they want to stand firmly in battle, they need to put on the shoes of the gospel. But notice it is the gospel of **peace**.

Two painters were tasked with painting a picture of peace. The first painter painted a calm serene scene of a shepherd leading sheep beside still waters in rolling green pasture fields as the golden sun rolled down sinking below the horizon. The second painter painted a thunderstorm with flashes of lightning in the background. A torrential downpour and turbulent water surfaced throughout the canvas as waves violently crashed over rocks. Down on the lower righthand corner of the painting was a small bird on a rock with his mouth open and little musical notes coming out of his mouth.

The peace that the gospel offers is not ideal circumstances throughout all of life. The peace of the gospel is, that when the storms of life come, you are still singing. Peace is not the absence of chaos. Peace is assurance in the midst of chaos.

The gospel is good news because it is the gospel of peace. It offers us true peace with God, providing reconciliation for our sins. It offers true peace with our self, transforming us into the image of Jesus. The gospel gives us true peace with others, providing an example of sacrificial love through Jesus Christ.

4. The Shield of Faith *above all, taking the shield of faith whith which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (Ephesians 6:16, Chronological Bible p. 1532)*

In the world Paul lived in, a soldier's shield was large. It would cover their bodies from shin to shoulder. It was wooden but covered in leather so that it was fireproof. The soldier would hold it out in front of him to protect him from spears, swords, and flaming arrows. He could interlock his shield with the shield of other soldiers and form a wall that was virtually impenetrable.

Have you ever watched old black and white Western movies? There is often a scene where the Indians repeatedly ride around the circled wagons of the cowboys. Then, one Indian would dip his arrow in oil and light it. He would shoot his flaming arrow at the

wagons. The flaming arrow would not be meant to kill the cowboys. It was meant to distract the cowboys because you cannot fight fire and fight Indians at the same time.

Satan will try to shoot arrows of distraction in our lives with the purpose of distracting us from the real battle. We are to take up the shield of faith and protect ourselves from these fiery arrows. Satan will shoot arrows of distraction to move our attention away from the fight and toward the fire.

The Apostle Paul instructs us to carry the shield of faith so that we can extinguish the flaming arrows of the devil. When we focus on the object of our faith instead of the distractions to our faith, we can effectively engage in spiritual warfare.

Throughout scripture, faith is always measured by action. Faith is not measured by good intentions, chills that run down our back in worship service, or feelings. Faith is accounted for by action, moving us in the direction that God has called us to go.

If you look at the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 you will notice a pattern of faith. It goes like this: the person is named, a declaration of their faith is stated, and a display of their faith through action is explained.

- Noah → Trusted God → Built an ark.
- Abraham → Trusted God → Left home to another land.
- The People of Israel → Trusted God → Went through the Red Sea on dry ground.

When we utilize the shield of faith we can trust God, extinguish the distractions, and move in action to what God has called us to do. This is a prerequisite to winning our spiritual battles.

5. The Helmet of Salvation *And take the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17a, Chronological Bible p. 1532)*

Soldiers marching out onto the battlefield would first place a helmet on their heads. It was absurd for anyone to engage in combat without a helmet. The Apostle Paul tells the church at Ephesus to put on the helmet of salvation. It was their salvation that served as a guard for the Ephesian church. Their salvation was their standing before God.

The spiritual battle is won on the battlefield of the mind. If Satan can infiltrate our minds and cause us to think wrongly about God, he can convince us to disobey God. He did it with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He twisted their thoughts about God and tempted them to sin. God commands us to put on the helmet of salvation to guard our minds with the reality that we have been saved by Christ. Right thinking leads to right living. If we protect the way we think, by filtering it through our salvation, then we will

protect what we love. If we protect what we love, ultimately, we will protect what we worship.

6. Sword of the Spirit *and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; (Ephesians 6:17b, Chronological Bible p. 1532)*

So far, Paul has given the church defensive pieces of equipment to engage in spiritual warfare. Next, he gives the church their only offensive weapon. He writes to them to take *the sword of the spirit which is the word of God*. In Greek, there are three different words for “Word.”

1) *Graphé* – which means the writing compiled. Think of writings collected in a book.

2) *Logos* – an announcement, written narrative or treatise. Think of the subject matter inside of a book.

3) *Rhema* – specific statements or sentences in a book.

Paul uses the third word *Rhema* for the *word* of God. He is urging the Ephesian church to memorize and apply specific statements from scripture to help them successfully fight their spiritual battles.

When Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, He used *rhema*- specific statements from God’s Word to defeat the devil. Satan would tempt Him and He would reply: *It is written man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*. Another temptation would be thrown at Him and He would reply, *It is written you shall worship no other gods*. And finally, the last temptation was solicited toward Jesus and He responded, *It is written do not put the Lord your God to the test*. If the immortal Jesus relied on specific statements from scripture in order to defeat the devil’s temptation, how much more, do we being mere mortals need to memorize and apply specific statements from God’s Word in order to successfully navigate spiritual warfare?

Paul knew the power that came from the scriptures. He knew that the Sword of the Spirit is, *living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*. (Heb. 4:12) Unlike a physical sword that grows dull after it is used, the more we use the Sword of the Spirit the sharper it becomes and the deeper it pierces. When we interact with specific statements of scripture applying and memorizing them, they bring life and heal us while simultaneously maiming temptation and Satan’s schemes.

We engage in spiritual activities on a daily basis; therefore, we need to clothe ourselves with the appropriate spiritual attire. Every day we live, we enter into a spiritual battle against the devil and the supernatural forces at work around us. We must put on the full armor of God to stand in the fight. Remember the activity you are involved in, and remember to put on the attire God has provided for you to wear to win the battle.

Resources:

Warren Weirsbe, *Be Rich*

A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*

Mounce Reverse Interlinear New Testament -

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6+&version=MOUNCE>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/ubs-dresscode-clothes-bank-2010-12>