

Last year, the District of Columbia overturned a ban on the prohibition of firearms in the city. Now, citizens once again... have the Right to Bear Arms.

It seems that being able to be ARMED with a weapon gives individuals a sense that they are protected against those wishing to rob them or do them harm.

God has chosen to protect us (as His children) by have us take up the ARMS of His promises in the midst of the ongoing war of lies in which we live.

God's Promises dictate to us... the reality out of which He wants us to live. Because they protect us from LIES (which are Satan's chief weapons)...

He calls these realities (here in Eph. 6) the armor of God. The armor is actually a metaphor... and illustration that Paul has chosen to use... to give us a visual picture of just how protected (and dangerous) we are WHILE we are **relying upon** what He tells us here to be true.

Because we are at war..... (as we saw last week) with a fierce and deceptive adversary... with the army of evil led by the Deceiver of all mankind.....

I want you to pray that God will help you ABSORB the reality of who you are (if you will enact these promises) by faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ..... you are.....

## Armed and Dangerous

### Ephesians 6:13-20

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and 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 the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

This is the first of a two part message..... as to not only how you can survive in this spiritual warfare called the Christian life.... but how God protects you with Himself... so you can become a DANGEROUS **rescue** agent on behalf of your King...

Next week, we (Lord willing) we will unpack our offensive weapons....

Today... (1<sup>st</sup> half) we are going to focus on ....the command to...first:

### 1. **Arm Yourself.**

You are probably familiar with the reality TV game shows where people race through ridiculous activities as they compete with one another...

It would not be hard to imagine.... on one of those... having a **set of Armor** laid at each contestant's feet ... (belt, breastplate, helmet, shield...) and they have to hurry up and put each piece on before they can even begin the adventure that lies ahead of them.....

That is the **type** of urgency which Paul is trying to convey to us here in this text.... that you can not even begin to run the race of faith.... without these essential protective truths...

Apart from them you will be a sitting duck....

### **Ephesians 6:13**

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

**Faith** is the **means** by which the promises of God are TAKEN up and become ARMOR for you...

You can give mental assent to these realities.... you can believe they are true conceptually....

But until you TAKE them UP **yourself**..... you remain vulnerable to lethal attacks...

No matter how secure you **feel**..... or attempt to feel by relying on self-confidence...pride... or other people....

No **human** armor is sufficient to protect you from the foe you are up against.....

They must all be thrown away.... and counted (as Paul says) like DUNG.....

And you must begin to RELY exclusively upon God's Protection.....

Spelled out figuratively for us through this illustration of ARMOR.....

Vaughan – God provides the armor, and it is ready for our use. But it is we who must, on our part, faithfully accept every instrument and implement that God offers. The tense of the verb “put on” denotes urgent and decisive action. When we have already engaged the enemy, it will be **too late** to arm ourselves. The suggestion is that the divine armor lies at the believer's feet ready for use; it needs only to be **appropriated** by him. ”

Remember that the Book of Hebrews tells us that Israel **had** the promises of God.... but those promises were not accompanied by FAITH in those who heard....

Theirs were the oracles.... but because they did not **trust** in Who God had revealed Himself to be... and find their protection in HIM.....

but instead went their own way..... following after their own ungodliness and relying upon human strength...

God **delivered them up** into the hands of their enemies....

That might just describe some of you this morning.....

One reason your life is a mess..... is because although you KNOW the truths illustrated here.... but you do not have a practice of **ACTIVELY trusting** in these means of protection .....

You know a lot of truths about who God is and who He says you are in Christ.....

- But those truths sit **neatly arranged** in their original boxes on the shelves of your mind.....

And you unwittingly drift downstream into the enemy camp.... (unarmed).. where he waits on the bank ready to shoot lies into the vacant space of your thinking ....

God warns you here.... TAKE UP (**arm yourself**) with these realities... so that you will not only be able to RESIST evil.... you will not only be able to OPPOSE evil....

But (by God's grace) you will be able to **Keep On Standing** until you see the Salvation of the Lord (on your behalf)...

When should you do this?? When should you actively enact TRUST in these realities?

- Before you confront your children in their sin? **Yes.**
- Before you go into the office where you know people will be gossiping... **Yes..**
- Before you pick up the remote control for the TV..... **Yes.**
- Before you click on most news articles on internet.... **Yes.**

God says...**ARM** yourself.... So you will be able to **RESIST**... to Withstand attacks.... in the **evil day**....

I believe he is particularly referring here to those especially awful days..... when for no apparent reason.... all hell breaks loose.....

Usually, I find it is when I am in the midst of God doing something good.....

It often comes upon us **unannounced**..... like a STORM for which we have no advanced warning system...

So you have to be ready all the time.....

But remind you that.... this whole age in which we live has been given over to evil....

So ....to some extent.....**EVERY** day is evil.

### **Ephesians 5:15-16**

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because **the days are evil.**"

... this time period (until Christ returns)...is what Paul calls in Galatians... this **present evil age...**

So ARM yourself.....with these pieces of God's armor.... so you can keep on STANDING.... in Christ your Savior...

Kent Hughes – this verse is both a **command** and a **promise**. The promise being that if we will actually put on (by faith) this protection and take up these weapons.... we **WILL** stand successful over the enemy!

Even though we are going to go through this armor one piece at a time.... it is essential you understand the exhortation that this armor is a **complete set**... each part complements another....

v. **14a** **Stand** therefore, having fastened on the **belt of truth**,

Before you try to take your stand in the evil day..... you must have **ALREADY** done these things...

These are ongoing steps of preparation..... just like you make preparations to get up and go to work tomorrow... or to school....

These are ongoing realities you must make sure you are actively RELYING on...

You can not wait until an attack occurs ..... by that time ... its too late...

By the time you are feeling like **giving in** to the temptation..... by the time you realize you are despairing of this whole Christian struggle.... and want to **give up**....

too late...

You will only be able to STAND... to Resist.... if you have **already** fastened on the **belt of truth**.

Remember that as Paul is writing these words... he is likely chained to (or at least in view of a Roman guard.... who is likely dressed in his armor...

The belt (or girdle) Paul references probably looked something like this...



A girdle (belt) served two functions for the Roman soldier....

- 1) It was a means of gathering together his tunic so he could move about deftly in battle...
- 2) More importantly....these metal strands... protected from injury....what is the most vulnerable part of the male body...

Remember this is WAR! Not flag football....

Not only would an injury here leave a soldier weakened and unable to defend himself against any further blows.....

But (for us as Christians)... an injury here directly affects any reproductive capacity the Body can have.....

These words are probably most literally rendered:

..... "Having **GIRDED** your loins with truth...."

To Gird up your loins.....Means to wrap something around your loins.....

What Paul says we are to wrap around ourselves.... (to be surrounded with) is **TRUTH**.

This is the first piece of protection God wants you to have....

Armed and Dangerous

1. Arm Yourself

A) **Surround Yourself with Truth**

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the **most** expendable entity in American life today is **truth**. We cast it out regularly .... we are careless with it..... some even deny absolute truth exists at all.....

But it is no accident.... that as Paul prepares us for battle..... He **BEGINS** with a means of protecting us from BLOWS that will make us susceptible to evil of EVERY sort...

He says surround yourself with truth....

God's WORD is ultimate truth....

So as we seek to surround ourselves with **WORDS of truth**.....

As the Living Word speaks to us through THESE words... and they begin to dwell in us richly.... forming the framework of our thinking and living.....

that is the means God uses to make us into **PEOPLE of truth**.....

As we surround ourselves with other PEOPLE of truth..... who worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth.....

Together we gradually become a BEACON of truth.....

The Light of the World..... which Jesus commands us to be.....

That starts with you desiring to WRAP yourself in TRUTH...

- Don't tolerate lies of any kind..... 1) from yourself.... 2) From your kids..
- Have **complete integrity** in what you say....

The other day we were in DC and I was buying tickets for an exhibit.... I knew I could get away with it and so I was momentarily tempted to buy two childrens tickets when we only qualified for one.....

Don't compromise TRUTH at any level.....

When you fail..... (maybe God is even bringing to mind something right now)...

Some lie.... some exaggeration... some half truth....

CONFESS it..... REPENT..... receive the forgiveness... of the Cross..

It is in that way that your CONSCIENCE can be **clear**.....

That is SO important ..... as we seek to grow in grace together.....

Because if you have a guilty conscience....you can not truly be **yourself**.... you live in fear that someone will find you out to be false...

So you put on a **MASK**.... you are scared to let down your guard.... lest people find out who you really are.....

Laden down with guilt... you become susceptible to **all sorts** of lies.....

That is why some of you **FANTASIZE**..... you conjure up FALSE versions of reality.... to try to cope with the untruths of your heart....

Good News..... Jesus has set you **free** so you can be surrounded by TRUTH...

(Gird up your loins) with TRUTH.

Armed and Dangerous

1. Arm Yourself

## **B) Put on Christ's Perfection**

Nobody's perfect.... right? Everyone has chinks in their armor..... Skeletons in their closet.....

Yet... we do **LONG** to be perfect. We so long to be without weakness....or fault.

So much so... that we will often seek to wear clothes.... that IDENTIFY us with people who we think are closer to perfect than we are....

In the celebrity basketball game the other night..... Justin Beiber wore bright yellow tennis shoes.... do you know what that is going to do to sales of those shoes?

Whether it be a brand of clothes that popular people are wearing or endorsing....

Or even... a replica jersey of a sports figure who seems to stand ABOVE the fray of regular, imperfect ..... vulnerable people..... like us.

Paul says.... the PERFECTION we long for.... has already **been accomplished** for us in the LIFE of Jesus Christ.....

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

"For our sake he made him to **be sin** who **knew no sin**, so that **in him** we might become **the righteousness of God**."

Jesus is **the** Righteous One!

And as a FREE gift... GOD imputes that perfect track record of His own righteousness to You....

Why? to increase your self-esteem?

No.....so you can WEAR it.... and OWN it.... as ARMOR over your **HEART**...

the BREASTPLATE (in Roman armor) protected the HEART.... and other life giving organs....

As you (by faith) put on (wear) the BREASTPLATE of Christ's Righteousness.....

Your heart is PROTECTED from condemnation..... and pity parties.... (I wish I were a **better** person....)

That is the GOOD NEWS of the gospel.... you are a **rotten** person..... But God has placed your rottenness on Jesus and given you HIS perfection in its place as a gift of His grace!...

- Put On Christ's Perfection.....

WEAR it continually.... by reminding yourself.....

That God's standard is PERFECTION..... and you have fallen short..... WAY short....

So God sent His Perfect Son... to live... and to die in your place.... so you could wear His righteousness...

#### **Romans 1:16-17**

" For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For **in it** the **righteousness of God** is revealed from faith **for** faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith.""

The vitality of your Spiritual LIFE is contained in you TRUSTING in the righteousness of God given to you through faith in Christ.

The Holy Spirit enabled Isaiah to experience this ..... even though He only had prophetic words about Jesus to guide Him....

#### **Isaiah 61:10**

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for **he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...**

Okay... okay... we get it..... why is he making such a BIG deal about this one....

### **Christ's Perfection is Your Foremost Protection**

Remember how much Satan was after Jesus..... tempting him, trying to kill him before the time.....

Finally when the appointed time had come....

Here is what the PERFECT Lamb of God responded to the reality that Satan was about to show up.....

**John 14:30**

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has **no claim on me,**"

Why did the accuser of the Brethren have no claim on JESUS..... because He was PERFECT..... no fault could possibly be found in Him....

That is the PERFECTION God has given **you**..... that is how He wants you to fight against Satan and condemnation...

By wearing the REALITY that Christ's Perfection has been imputed to you....

Next piece of armor....God provides for you...is a **Shield**

**Ephesians 6:16**

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

A Roman shield was made out of wood and weighed over 20 lbs....

It was capable of protecting almost all of the soldier's body...



He would charge the enemy with it outstretched...and then kneel behind it...often waiting for his foe to get close enough to slice him with his sword...

But no Roman soldier could face an enemy without having EXERCISED with his shield first.....

Likewise.... in putting on your armor.... God is calling you to....

Armed and Dangerous

1. Arm Yourself

C) **Exercise Your Faith**

Your shield is your FAITH.....your faith in the Truth...

God the Holy Spirit.... creates, strengthens, and enlivens.... your faith..... as you seek Him in His Word...

Just like a true athlete never stops conditioning... never stops trying to get stronger..... training for the next event...

You must never slack off of seeking to ACTIVELY trust in God's Word....

EXERCISE your faith..... by intentionally choosing to take God at His word INSTEAD of going with how you feel.....

Find a Promise each day.... you can cling to.... stand behind.... and trust in.

Strengthen your faith by USING it....

Because your Faith in the Truth.... PROTECTS you against every LIE the devil hurls your way...

**LIES** are the devil's **primary** weapon....

These flaming missiles (fiery darts) are lies that come with **destructive power**... because they spawn FEAR... uncertainty, doubt. They threaten to destroy EVERYTHING you have (family, your faith, your sustenance, your kids...)

Some of you know what it feels like.... to have a thought RUSH into your head.... that scares the daylights out of you.... it threatens to undue you entirely.....

Like a flaming torch thrown into a barn full of dry hay.....

Your ONLY shield against that SUDDEN FEAR.... is your BELIEF in what God says (over against) what the world, the flesh and the devil say....

You have to BLOCK those thoughts at all times.... by thwarting their entry through what you BELIEVE...

**REFUSE** them entry.... on the authority that Almighty GOD has spoken and you choose to believe HIM.

The last piece of PROTECTIVE armor God has provided you with and calls you to put on... maybe the most vital.....

- What is wrong with this picture?



Did you know that beginning in 2010... (because of concussions)...that NFL players are no longer allowed to play without a helmet? The Officials are now supposed to whistle a play dead as soon as a player loses his helmet.

God says the Helmet He has provided for you.....is far better than something to protect your brain from getting bruised... or even your skull from being cracked....

Your helmet is the **ASSURANCE**.... that no matter what happens to your body.....

Even if you are KILLED for your faith... by people who hate God....

Your SOUL is forever PROTECED by Christ's eternal salvation.....

Armed and Dangerous

1. Arm Yourself

D) **You Have Eternal Protection**

Paul calls it the Helmet of Salvation..... and you can be protected by it... as you believe this truth...

**1 Peter 1:3-6**

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, **kept** in heaven for you, who **by God's power are being guarded** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**Put on the gospel armor.... each piece put on with Prayer...**

If God is FOR us... who can be against us.....

We are fully ARMED.....and therefore we are DANGEROUS.....

Next week (Lord willing) we will see how we are to go on the offensive...with the gospel... prayer.. and the Sword of the Spirit....