

Introduction:

- A. *Illus.*: Our family visited the Jamestown colony in Virginia awhile back. This is where British colonists landed in 1607. When they established that outpost the settlers most feared the Spanish, so they built a palisade that could withstand Spanish cannons. And they had their armor at the ready. Big, heavy armor—breastplates and helmets, tassets and gorgets; 24 lbs. of clanking, rigid, hot armor that could withstand early musket fire. Always had it nearby. In case the Spanish came. Only, as it turned out, the threat was not the Spanish, but the Algonquian Indians. And the Indians liked surprises. In fact, in 1622 over 300 settlers were killed in an Indian uprising. In spite of their efforts, there just wasn't any armor available against the Indian attacks. There wasn't any armor that could be worn all the time, no matter what a man was doing, that could protect him from surprises and trickery.
- B. I tell you that because Christians have been known to be armed for the wrong enemy. Do you know what most threatens us as believers? **Every-day, ordinary sin.** Turn to **Eph. 6.** I skimmed through the book of Ephesians looking for the threats to believers. Hard hearts. Sensuality. Anger. Unwholesome talk. Bitterness. Unforgiveness. Sexual immorality of any kind. Greed. Obscenity. Coarse joking. Refusing to submit to one another—in marriage, to parents, or to others in authority. How do we protect ourselves against such subtle enemies as those? In our final sermon on spiritual warfare let's begin with **Eph 6:10-13...**

I. EVERY CHRISTIAN WILL INEVITABLY FACE DARK ENEMIES AND EVIL DAYS (6:10-13)

- A. **V.12** tells us that we must be armed so we "can take our stand against the devil's schemes." The literal Greek word is *methods*. Satan has very familiar methods for attacking you and me. **Lies** about God, yourself, how life works, the importance of Christ. **Accusations** against you over your

sins and weaknesses. **Idolatry**—to trust in a counterfeit Jesus or to adore any other master. Here in Ephesians the emphasis is on **temptations** to sin.

Eph 4:27 warns, “do not give the devil a foothold.”

Don't give him position. The verses around that warn against things like lying, bitterness, anger, unwholesome talk, and impure lives. **Those daily temptations are the real battlegrounds of our souls; those are the places where must stand firm in truth, righteousness and love.** The devil's ambush doesn't usually come with the smell of sulfur and the glow of red lights. They most often look like lost tempers and thoughtless words; they lurk on computer screens, over gossipy lunches, and in toxic entertainment.

- B. **V.12...** It is so difficult for us to remember that human beings aren't the real threat because they cannot penetrate the interior of our lives. This is especially important to remember in church so that we don't start see one another as threats and enemies. Remember what **Jas 4:1** says, *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?”* When it comes to our relationships we need to be on guard against *ourselves*—our own sinfulness. The devil likes to stir you up ... *against yourself!*
- C. *Illus.:* Picture one of those scenes from a movie where our hero stands alone against his sinister enemy. It's dark. Sirens wail off in the distance. Then, before they can go at it, guys—bad guys—start stepping out of the shadows all around. Scowling, Pounding their fists. Then more and more, crowding in. Our guy doesn't stand a chance in hell! **V.12**, *“Our struggle is against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* Satan's methods are enacted by a vast hierarchy of dark rulers having great authority and power. They are *spirit forces*, unseen beings with a genius for evil and temptation; powerful, well-organized, working in “heavenly realms”—in halls of power beyond our own. They represent a shadow government—sinister, diabolical,

methodical, at war with God himself, and ruling over the economies, cultures, social systems and governments of this world. That is what we're up against personally and as a church, in our lives and in the world.

- D. In **v.13** do you see the phrase, "*when the day of evil comes*"? What is "*the day of evil*"? The day of evil is that day, that week, that midnight season when Satan has set you up for spiritual failure, when it seems everything comes together for you to deny Christ, to shipwreck your faith or your reputation, to stop trusting God. Remember what Jesus told Peter on that last night in the garden, "*Satan has asked to sift you like wheat.*" That's a "day of evil." The day of evil is when Satan brings you into the crucible, when God seems silent, and you're overwhelmed.
- E. None of you get a pass on this struggle. No dodging this conflict. But neither are we doomed to defeat. "*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*" **We don't just try harder, tho' try we must.**

II. WE CAN STAND STRONG AGAINST THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES DRESSED IN THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD (6:14-18)

- A. **V.13** recaps: "*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*" What must we do? **Stand!** The word is used four times! It carries the idea of **withstand** as a soldier holding his or her ground. It also carries the idea of **defiance**. *Illus.:* When I was 22 I got the opportunity to spend an hour visiting with **Dr. Alan Redpath**. Dr. Redpath had been the pastor of Moody Church and was an internationally known preacher and author. I don't remember anything about our conversation any more but I do remember how as I walked to my car he stood in the doorway. "*K.O.K.D.*" he shouted. I looked at him, wondering if I'd heard him right. Then he grinned and said, "*Keep on kicking the devil.*" **Defiantly withstanding the enemy and holding our ground.**

- B. **V.10** says, “*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*” That phrase “*be strong*” is from a Greek word with two parts: in+powerful. *Inwardly powerful*. Our spiritual armor is an *endoskeleton*. It is inward—**an armor of the soul**. Our God-issued armor strengthens us inwardly because that’s where the real battle against the enemy’s schemes and power is fought.
- C. Paul’s vivid description of the believer’s armor comes next, based on the equipment worn by Roman soldiers: **vv.14-17....** All this spiritual equipment is God-issued. It comes with our salvation. And it should never come off. In 1655 Puritan pastor **William Gurnall** wrote, “*In heaven we shall appear not in armor but in robes of glory; but here our armor is to be worn night and day; we must walk, work and sleep in it, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ.*”
1. “***The belt of truth buckled around your waist.***” **When the devil schemes against you he always begins with a lie.** Lying is his weapon of choice, his M.O.; it is his native language. Sin always feeds on a lie. If I’m bitter with someone there’s a lie at the bottom of the pile. If you’re watching porn you’re hooked on a lie. If you refuse to submit to others you’re being duped. Our defense against the enemy’s deceit is to buckle gospel-guaranteed truths around us. Surely, you have had times when you were discouraged or frightened and you took up your Bible, the way a hiker lost in the woods picks up a compass, to reorient yourself with verses of God’s faithfulness and love. Or times when you were stained by sin and feeling as though God was fed up with you. But then you remembered the gospel, “*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”
 2. “***With the breastplate of righteousness in place***” (v.14). The breastplate, of course, guards a soldier’s heart and vital organs. Today we call that piece of armor a bulletproof vest. Roman soldiers called this piece their heart protector. Our heart protection begins with the righteousness that Christ freely gives us. He “*cleanses*

us from all unrighteousness.” That changes our whole attitude toward sin, the way putting on a brand new dress or shirt makes you try extra hard to keep it clean. Being forgiven motivates us to want to stay clean.

But the practice of living righteously day in and day out, of doing what’s right, of resisting temptation, of obeying the Lord—protects our hearts like armor. That’s what **Lehman Strauss** meant when he said, *“Right living is wound proof.”*

3. **V.15** continues, *“with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”* This is difficult to understand. Given this context about being battle-ready, it seems like it might refer to sure-footedness. Shoes with gospel grip. You may be in a fierce war but your feet won’t slip from God’s peace. *Illus.:* I remember the night I met with **Babe and Florence Johnson** and their family, along with Florence’s doctor, all gathered so he could tell them at once that there was nothing more that could be done to preserve Florence’s death. It was sober, but there were smiles too. Confidence. Peace. They all knew she’d soon be home. They were sure-footed, in shoes with gospel grip.
4. *“Take up the shield of faith”* (v.16). The Roman shield referred to here was like a door—4’x2½’ made of two layers of wood glued together, covered with linen, then hide, and bound with iron straps. Soldiers would sometimes soak their shields in water so that flaming arrows would be extinguished when they hit the shield. *Here it comes! “You’re such a loser! You’ll never handle the pressure!” “I can do all things through him who gives me strength.”* Ssssss. Extinguished. Incoming! *“Oh, go ahead. God will forgive you.” “If you love me keep my commandments.”* Ssssss. Extinguished. *“If God is good why did he let this terrible thing happen?” “I will praise him at all times. God is good and he is loving.”* Ssssss. Your faith in God’s promises and love is an impenetrable shield.

5. Take the helmet of salvation” (v.17). To render a Christian powerless, the Enemy has to mess with our heads. **He always plays mind games.** But our crowning protection is our salvation, protecting the believer’s thoughts from Satan’s blows to the head, these mind-numbing spiritual concussions.

*When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.*

6. “Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v.17). Here [the Bible] is our weapon. Here is how we fight back, how we put the devil on his heels, just as Jesus did in the wilderness when he quoted Scripture to parry the three temptations of Satan. We counterattack the temptations of the devil with the Bible’s commands and promises, with the stories of God’s faithfulness and power. We need to read the Bible often to keep our minds honed and sharp.

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” This is how. Putting on this body armor—truth, righteousness, the gospel’s peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God. God gives you all this. You don’t have to be strong by yourself. You’re divinely equipped *if* you put it on.

- D. In my translation **v.18** starts a new paragraph but it actually completes the previous sentence. This ESV translation catches it better: *“praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication.”* The sense is that the way we put on our spiritual armor is through prayers of every kind, in synch with the Holy Spirit. Prayer is how we talk through with God our spiritual protections and our counter-attacks. Prayer is how we remember our strength and protection.

We realize that something we're facing is really stressing our walk with the Lord. We're terribly tempted to sin or to lose heart. So we pray. In prayer we name the method of Satan and we think of God's character and promises. We regain our footing in what Jesus has done for us. We think of the Lord's instruction, of biblical models, of psalms that give better language to our heart cries. **As we pray truth wraps itself around us and arms us.** We have a new resolve to be righteous, a clearer understanding of our position in Christ, a better grip on God's truth. Remember, the strength of God is *inner strength* acquired through prayer.

Don't miss that last phrase of **v.18**, "*With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*" We can help our brothers and sisters arm for the struggle simply by praying for them. A friend wrote me recently, "*By the time I was done praying with you today, the depression was gone. Thank you, brother.*"

All this is why **Kent Hughes** wrote, "*The Christian soldier fights on his knees.*"

Conclusion

For several weeks we've talked about spiritual warfare—about our enemy, the devil, and the demonic spirits under his authority. We saw how he induced Eve and Adam to sin. We saw the importance of humility and perseverance in resisting him. We saw how the main prong of Satan's attacks in the world is to empower false teachers to deny the full identity and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. And now we have heard that we must "*be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power,*" defiantly withstanding the schemes of Satan by wearing the spiritual armor of the soul, spiritual protection that we put on through prayer.

Illus.: Some years ago a missionary in the jungles of New Guinea wrote this letter to his friends back home. You can almost hear his armor clanking as he writes.

“Man, it is great to be in the thick of the fight, to draw the old devil’s heaviest guns, to have him at you with depression and discouragement, slander, disease. He doesn’t waste time on a lukewarm bunch. He hits good and hard when a fellow is hitting him. You can always measure the weight of your blow by the one you get back. When you’re on your back with fever and at your last ounce of strength, when some of your converts backslide, when you learn that your most promising inquirers are only fooling, when your mail gets held up, and some don’t bother to answer your letters, is that the time to put on mourning? No sir! That’s the time to pull out the stops and shout Hallelujah! The old fellow’s getting it in the neck and hitting back. Heaven is leaning over the battlements and watching. ‘Will he stick with it?’ And as they see who is with us, as they see the unlimited reserves, the boundless resources, as they see the impossibility of failure, how disgusted and sad they must be when we run away. Glory to God! We’re not going to run away. We’re going to stand!”