

## “Be Ready” (Eph 6:10-17)

### 1. Against the spiritual forces of evil

#### 6:10-12

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Whom are these words spoken to? They are spoken to those who are in Christ. As long as we are on this earth, we are in the spiritual warfare.

We are not fighting against humans. Our battle is spiritual battle, against devil and evil spirits. On the surface, it may appear as human conflict. But in reality, the battle is against forces and authority behind it. Our real enemy is Satan, the rulers of darkness and power that controls the world, that moves the current of the time, the power of fear.

John MacArthur explains about the spiritual warfare in his book “The Believer’s Armor.”<sup>1</sup> It helps me a lot to understand this topic. Many things I’ll share this morning come from his book.

John MacArthur suggests these are nine ways that Satan attacks us: He tries to undermine God’s character, make it hard for us to live the Christian life, confuse us with false doctrine, hinder our service, cause division, force us to trust in our own resources, make us play the hypocrite, cause us to become worldly, and make us disobey God.

How do we deal with Satan’s attacks? Be aware of Satan’s attacks. The major issue is not how he attacks, but that we are ready. The only thing that does matter is that we put all of God’s armor on. By doing that, we can be ready for the battle by the great mighty power of God.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The Believer’s Armor*, Word of Grace Communications, 1986

## 2. Put on the full armor of God

### 13-17

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. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Let's look at them one by one.

#### **(1) The belt of truthfulness**

The belt symbolized preparedness. The belt does not refer to the truth itself. Paul is saying, "when you put your belt on, you reveal an attitude of readiness and commitment."

When we put our belt on, it is the moment when we start to have clear awareness that we are God's redeemed people, we belong to God's kingdom. And we neither avoid nor ignore the spiritual warfare in this world, rather be ready and stand up for the battle.

The devil, Diabolos is the accuser. He speaks lies to us. "God is never concerned about a weak person like you. If you make more effort and become greater, perhaps he may turn his face to you." It's a great lie. God chose the weak of the world particularly (1 Cor 1:27).

Then the devil continues, "That's right. You are weak. There is no way you can win the battle. Remember how weak you are. Don't fight. You'll just have another miserable defeat. Don't be fool. Why don't you make a little compromise? Surely God will give you a break."

But the truth is this:

### 2 Cor 10:3-4

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

### 1 Cor 15:57

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we stand in the truth, we won't be deceived. Putting the belt of truth, we are ready for the warfare, stand firmly in the battle.

## **(2) The breastplate of righteousness**

Our breastplate is made of the righteousness that God granted to us at salvation. But there is our part.

### Phi 3:10-14

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul recognized he had the imputed righteousness of Christ, but he knew he still had to press on, to learn, and move ahead. Imputed righteousness only makes practical righteousness possible. We must apply to our life the righteousness principles that are available to us through Christ.

The breastplate protects our chest. Chest suggests emotion. Emotion is one of the places where the devil attacks us. When we are attacked, different kinds of negative feelings come up such as anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, resentment, impatience, judgement, and so on.

When some bad things happen, we sometimes blame others, judge others, hate others, sometimes we are disappointed ourselves, sometimes we grieve and sometimes we panic. We can bring those feelings to God. And ask him to cover our emotion by his righteousness. Indeed, the negative thing

happened. In fact, that person did something wrong to me. But God never betrays us. He is always faithful. He always does the right things.

In other words, the main issue is what kind of relationship we have with God.

Having a right relationship with God is one way of defending righteousness. If we do not live a righteous life, we lose joy, fruitfulness, reward, and ultimately God's honor in the world.

When we confess and repent of sin, we are maintaining personal holiness. That is what it means to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

### **(3) The shoes of the gospel of peace**

I have done rock-climbing a couple of times. I climbed a natural rock wall. I put the tips of my fingers carefully at a small dent or a tiny ledge. And find a next small dent or a tiny ledge and hook my tiptoe there, move the body weight one step at a time.

For safety, I put a strap around my hip like wearing pants. And fasten it to a safety rope. So, it's safe even if I slipped.

But to enjoy rock-climbing, the key is shoes. I have to wear special shoes. They are very very tight, I couldn't move my toes at all. The tiptoe part is covered by special material which is very very hard and anti-slip. It is possible to hold all body weight even if the very top of toe touches a tiny ledge. In other words, it is impossible to enjoy rock-climbing without special shoes. They also protect your feet from injury. You can enjoy rock-climbing because of the shoes.

100 m race, marathon, soccer, tennis, basketball, for each sport, there are suitable shoes. Shoes give stability, and shoes provide protection. For players, it is very important to have the right shoes.

If it is important to have the right shoe in athletics, you can imagine how important it would be if you were fighting for your life. We must have the right shoes which give stability and provide protection for our spiritual life.

The first word in Eph 6:14 is "stand." Here Paul is talking about standing. And Eph 6:15 refers to the believer in conflict with Satan as the context shows. Preparation simply means, "made ready or equipped." Putting all together, having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace simply means that we are equipped to stand firm on the good news against Satan's attack.

Satan does, and will continue to do, all he can to hinder us from realizing the purpose of God. There are no short cuts to effective, victorious Christian life, we must give our mind over to the Word of God so that our thinking and feeling are controlled by truth.

#### Rom 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

We used to be an enemy of God (Rom 5:10), yet Christ makes peace a reality. That's the good news. We are at peace with God – we aren't on opposite sides anymore. God is on our side. We are reconciled. That means a Christian who stands firm can say, "Satan, you can come against me, but I have the shoes that anchor me to the ground. God is on my side."

We use feet not only to stand up but also walking. The devil tempts us to walk toward self-centeredness. He tempts us to act for self-glory, and try to separate our heart from God.

When our motivation is love for God and our neighbors, the devil cannot drive us. The actions to glorify God and not self don't bring conflict and division.

In Christ's power we stand. We can say to Satan, "Whatever you may cast against me, I have absolutely no fear because God's on my side." We can stand in absolute confidence. When Satan attacks, our feet are rooted firmly on the solid ground of the gospel of peace. The good news is that we are not an enemy of God anymore. He is on our side because of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can move forward boldly in our life of faith, in the spiritual warfare.

#### **(4) The shield of faith**

This shield is designed for full protection. It is sufficient because it quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Satan fires shafts of impurity, selfishness, doubt, fear, disappointment, lust, greed, vanity, and covetousness. Those temptations are all part of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

To have faith is to believe God. Every fiery dart that Satan ever shoots is a lie. If you and I believe his lies, we're not believing God. Every time we sin, we believe Satan. We say, "I know I ought to do this for the Lord, but I want to do that for me instead. He can wait there." We do what we want and shove God in a corner. But all we've done is to cheat ourselves.

Each time Satan shoots fiery dart to us, we must take the shield of faith and go under it to cover us. By faith in God we shelter ourselves in God. In any kind of spiritual attack, challenge or temptation, we must be aware that God's presence is with us. He has the highest authority, strongest power. He is our refuge, our protection, our strong tower. Submitting ourselves to God, we can prevent Satan's attack and persevere without falling into panic.

It is pretty easy to say "I fully trust you, Lord." But sometimes or often my mind is not necessarily following what I'm saying. Long time ago, there was an occasion when I was waiting for a reply. I prayed, "I submit this plan to you. Your will be done, not mine." But while waiting, my stress level went up. I was frustrated and irritated. And finally I even became ill physically. I came to realize how strongly I'd been holding it in my own hand, and hadn't really submitted it to the Lord. I received peace when I finally threw it onto him and surrender myself to the Lord.

The shield of faith is the consistent application of what we believe about God to the issues of life. What's most important is our relationship to God. The more we know God, the more we will trust and believe him. The more we submit ourselves to God and surrender to God, the more we will have power and victory.

### **(5) The helmet of salvation**

The helmet of salvation does not refer to being saved. The helmet of salvation offers confidence in the future. In 1 Thess 5:8 Paul calls it "the hope of salvation." Satan wants to belt us in the head with discouragement and doubt. The helmet gives us strength to live in the present, even when things get tough. There is a finish line with a glorious reward.

For Timothy there are many discouragements.

- Tempted by youthful lusts. (2 Tim 2:22)
- Many people were saying he was too young to know anything. (1 Tim 4:12)
- His stomach was upset. (1 Tim 5:23)

- Embarrassed because Paul always seemed to be in jail. (2 Tim 1:8)
- There were some false teachers, but he didn't know if he could handle them. (1 Tim 1:4-7)

So Paul said to him, "Stir up the gift of God" (2 Tim 1:6-7). "Be strong in the grace" (2 Tim 2:1). "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:12).

We received salvation by faith. And we stay in the hope of salvation by faith (Col 1:23). And we keep running the race of salvation until we receive the crown of righteousness (Heb 12:1; 2 Tim 4:8).

We can have the confidence of our salvation by the Word of God. The Word of God must be our foundation of faith. We sometimes feel we are saved because we have joy, because we have peace. But if we base our confidence on feelings, when we lose those feelings, we doubt our salvation. If the confidence of our salvation is based on feelings, that will be shaken so easily.

And we will be easily tossed by false teachings when our understanding of the gospel is shallow. If the gospel is not rooted in us firmly, we will be easily distracted by the other things or situation. The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word to grow and bear fruits (Mark 4:16-19).

And some of us struggle to have the confidence of salvation because lack of understanding, misunderstanding, subjective impression and prejudices.

When Satan tries to deceive us and make us doubt our salvation, we must take the helmet of salvation so that we will not be shaken by his deception. We continue in what we have learned and firmly believed (2 Tim 3:14). We protect our hope of salvation by the helmet of salvation. And we will run the race of salvation until we receive the crown.

## **(6) The sword of the Spirit**

We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (Eph 1:3). Our resources give us the knowledge of how we are to live. Now we are facing the reality that Satan resists our application of those resources. Satan tries to stop our productivity – to stop us from living out our position in Christ. The only way to overcome his resistance is to have the armor of God on us.

God gives us the sword of the Spirit. The sword is spiritual in the sense that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual (2 Cor 10:4). And our sword is spiritual because it was given to us by the Holy Spirit.

God's word is so powerful. It can bring truth to error, happiness to sadness, and light to darkness. It can change stagnation into growth. It can make an infantile person mature.

Satan knows the Word is effective and powerful, so he tries to stop it. The reason so many Christians fall to temptation is they just don't know how God's Word deals with things. They aren't equipped to use the sword properly.

Just because you own a Bible doesn't mean you have a sword. We must know the specifics in the Word of God to use it offensively and defensively. The Holy Spirit will teach the Word to us if we will submit to His teachings. God will enable us to understand as much as we need to understand to win the victory.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The Word of God is our weapon to fight against any kinds of Satan's attack. In the battle, the Holy Spirit gives us the Word, reminds us of the Word. And he gives us power and encouragement to use it. We must take it and use it.

How can we use the Word for the battle?

- Illumination: The Word clarifies our situation like a light. We keep a lookout for the attack from Satan.
- Discovery: The Word let us notice our weak point. We can check our arms.
- Alarm: The Word gives us alarm when Satan attacks, then we can stand up for the fight immediately.
- Fight: The Word of God is our weapon for our spiritual warfare.

For us to practice this, it is important for us to read the Bible from cover to cover regularly, become familiar with the Word, and keep it in our mind on a daily basis. We must make us to be ready for the battle.

### 3. Be ready

We looked at the armor of God. It seems there are six armors, but it's actually one set. It is not enough if we have only some of them, and if any of them is missing, we are off guard.

The armor of God. That is the gift from God. It's not for either decoration or collection. When we use it, we know the value. But we may not be skillful in how to use it. It's okay and it's normal. The more we use it, the more we become skillful. As we use it, we grow into a greater warrior.

The story of David fights against Goliath is one of my favorites. King Saul generously let David use his own armor. It must be great honor for David as he is just a shepherd boy. He tried them and said, "I can't go in these. I'm not used to them." So he took them off.

What was his weapon then? He armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, and there were five stones in his shepherd's bag. Did he lose his mind? Was he fool? No, he had very cool mind and had a strong confidence for his victory.

How could he be so confident? He understood that the battle is for God's, and besides he also had experienced many victories as a shepherd boy. He fought against lions and bears. He was very sure how to fight using his own armor.

It is unrealistic to think that David was very skillful in fighting with the sling from the very beginning. I'm pretty sure that he had practiced to throw a stone by the sling many times. No doubt he made many mistakes in the past. Many times he may not have been able to hit what he targeted. But he continued to use the sling.

Now he became so skillful with the sling. He was able to hit what he targeted. He was confident that he could knock down the giant fighter with five stones. Indeed he defeated him with only one shot.

How can we be successful? Make mistakes and learn from them. And try it again, never give up. If we lose one time, it doesn't make us a total loser. Even if we fail sometimes, it doesn't make us a complete failure. When we fall down, we can always stand up because our God is the God of resurrection, his power of resurrection is for us.

In the spiritual warfare, we learn how great and how real the power of God is. As we fight with the arm, we become more and more skillful in how to use it, and we learn to win even harder battle.

God understands who we are, what we can do very well. God leads and trains each one of us according to the progress we have already made. Through the warfare against Satan, we will grow, become mature, and become a great warrior for the kingdom of God.

### 10-14

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 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. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

- Read 2 Tim 2:3-4. Do you view yourself as a soldier of Christ? If you don't see yourself as a soldier, then how do you see yourself?
- Read Rom 8:31-39. Meditate on the victory you have in Christ.
- How do you respond to each of the following darts of Satan: impurity, selfishness, doubt, fear, disappointment, lust, greed, vanity, and covetousness? How would you use the shield of faith to defend yourself against each of those attacks? Record your answers and prepare to use them for the next attack.
- Look up the following verses: John 5:26; 10:28-29; 14:19; Rom 8:34-39; Col 3:3-4; Rev 1:18. List as many securities as you can.
- What are some of the ways that Satan has tried to discourage you? How would you use the helmet of salvation to defend yourself against his attacks? How would you use what you have learned to encourage someone else who faces discouragement?

Taken from John MacArthur, *The Believer's Armor*, Word of Grace Communications, 1986