

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 10-13-19 AM NOTES

“The Battle for Hope”

Ephesians 6:10-18

# 4 in Series “Hope in a Hopeless World”

Biblical hope is the joyful confidence and expectation that what God has promised in His Word, He will accomplish in His perfect timing.

**Psalms 71:5a (NASB)** “For You are my hope; O Lord God...”

**Psalms 146:5 (NASB)** “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.”

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB)** “For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

**Romans 12:12 (NASB)** “Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.”

**Romans 15:4 (NASB)** “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

**Colossians 1:27b (NASB)** “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

**Titus 2:13 (NASB)** “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”

**Hebrews 10:23 (NASB)** “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

**Romans 15:13 (NASB)** “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

I. The Preparation for the Battle of Hope (v. 10)

**Revelation 12:9b (NASB)** “...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...”

**John 8:44 (NASB)** “You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a **liar** and the father of lies.”

**Matthew 4:3 (NASB)** “And **the tempter** came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’”

**Revelation 12:10 (NASB)** “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren** has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.’”

**1 Peter 5:8 (NASB)** “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a **roaring lion**, seeking someone to devour.”

**2 Corinthians 4:4b (ESV)** “...the god of this world...”

The Christian life is not lived on a playground; it is lived on a battleground.”

—A.W. Tozer

**Philippians 4:13 (NASB)** “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

II. The Goal for the Battle of Hope (v. 11)

**Ephesians 4:27 (NASB)** “And do not give the devil an opportunity.”

**Psalms 16:8 (NKJV)** "I have set the Lord always before me; because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved."

III. The Enemy in the Battle for Hope (v. 12)

**John 8:44b (NASB)** "...He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

**2 Corinthians 11:14b (NIV)** "...for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."

**Hebrews 12:22 (KJV)** "...an innumerable company of angels..."

IV. The Armor for the Battle of Truth (vv. 13-18)

A. The Belt of Truth (v. 14a)

**Ephesians 6:14a (NIV)** "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist..."

B. The Breastplate of Righteousness (v. 14b)

**Romans 3:10b (NASB)** "There is none righteous, not even one"

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)** "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

**Philippians 3:9 (NASB)** "And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith".

C. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (v. 15)

D. The Shield of Faith (v. 16)

E. The Helmet of Salvation (v. 17a)

F. The Sword of the Spirit (v. 17b)

**Ephesians 6:18 (NASB)** "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone;  
The arm of flesh will fail you, You dare not trust your own:  
Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer;  
Where duty calls or danger, Be never wanting there.*

--George Duffield (1858)

## **Sermon 4: The Battle for Hope**

### **Ephesians 6:10-18**

The phrase "hopeless Christian" is an oxymoron ("an expression with contradictory words"). When we speak of hope, we are not referring to a wish for a desired comfortable outcome. In this series, we have defined hope, biblical hope, this way: "*Biblical hope is the joyful confidence and*

*expectation that what God has promised in His Word, He will accomplish in His perfect timing.” To find that kind of hope in our predominately hopeless culture is rare, very rare.*

Recently, I read an article in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (1-5-18) by Patricia Holbrook that shows a connection between hopelessness and suicide. She said:

Hopelessness is the feeling at the center of each suicide attempt. Despaired souls look to their past and present and lose the faith to believe that there can be a better, brighter future. Their hearts become anchored in the bleakness of current circumstances, and thus death seems to be the only answer to end their agony. They leave behind baffled family members, who were often clueless of the measure of their pain.

I think that is an accurate assessment, but there are also a lot of people who are not considering suicide but have just accepted their hopelessness as something they have to endure, and so they just plod on waiting for a desired end to it all.

In contrast to the ever-growing hopelessness of our culture, the message of the Gospel that we share is this: “There is hope!” In the Bible (NASB) the word “hope” is used 143 times. Here are a few examples that just reading them can transform a Christian’s bleak mindset:

Psalms 71:5a: “For You are my *hope*; O Lord God...”

Psalms 146:5: “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose *hope* is in the Lord his God.”

Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a *hope*.”

Romans 12:12: “rejoicing in *hope*, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.”

Romans 15:4: “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have *hope*.”

Colossians 1:27b: “... Christ in you, the *hope* of glory.” Titus 2:13: “looking for the blessed *hope* and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”

Hebrews 10:23: “Let us hold fast the confession of our *hope* without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

My favorite verse concerning hope is Romans 15:13: “Now may the *God of hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in *hope* by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The title of this message is *The Battle for Hope*. In the battle for hope there is so much spiritual warfare. There is no passage in Scripture that gives us more instruction on spiritual warfare than Ephesians 6:10-18. I have preached whole series on this passage and so today will be an overview of this vitally important passage that is foundational for hope. My prayer is that you commit yourself to spend time in this passage in days to come so that you will be equipped to abound in hope as you go to battle.

## I. The Preparation for the Battle for Hope (v. 10)

The ship that Christians ride to heaven is *not* a cruise ship; it is a battleship! Our enemy, Satan, is real and you can tell a lot about him by his names. He is called in Revelation 12:9b: "... the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world." He is called a "murderer" and a "liar" in John 8:44. He is called "the tempter" in Matthew 4:3. He is called "the accuser of our brethren" in Revelation 12:10, and in 1 Peter 5:8 he is compared to a "a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." When we have an enemy like that, we would be *very naive* if we didn't expect a constant battle! Well, most professing Christians are *very naive*. We seem to be shocked when we find ourselves under attack! Why should we be surprised?

If you need more evidence, listen to some of the verbs associated with Satan: He beguiles, seduces, opposes, deceives, hinders, buffets, tempts, and persecutes believers. Satan is also presented in Scripture as a divider. Sometime after his rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-17) he divided the angels in heaven with one-third of them following him in his rebellion. Satan divided the first family so badly that Cain murdered his brother Abel. He is still hard at work dividing families and churches. Add to that the fact that we live in the Devil's territory called "the world." We are told in 2 Corinthians 4:4b (ESV): that Satan is "...the god of this world..." The world as it is used in this context is our culture's value system that leaves God out and values what God says is of no value and considers of no value what God says is of great value. To summarize, here on this fallen planet, the Christian life is not lived on a *playground*; it is lived on a *battleground*.

As a result of the power of the evil one, we must always as Ephesians 6:10b says, "...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." Let me give you more insight on this verse from the original language. The Greek word translated "be strong" in Ephesians 6:10 is a present tense. That means that it speaks of continuing action. We must continually be strong in the Lord because Satan and his fallen angels never take a vacation. In one weak moment you can give in to the tempter, the enemy of our souls, and make decisions that will mar your testimony and scar your life. Verse 10 literally says, "At all times continue being strong in the Lord." The word translated "be strong" is in the passive voice. That means that the subject is being acted upon. It is literally, "be being made strong." In other words, it is not a strength that we work up; it is a strength that is given to us when we ask for it in faith.

Notice the source of this strength that we receive. It is "in the Lord." At salvation, we are united to Christ. In union with Christ, what He has is ours. Because we are "in Christ", His strength is ours! That's why we read in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." When you seek to go against the enemy with only your strength and abilities it would be like taking on a tank with a sling shot. You are going to be pulverized.

This is our preparation for the battle for hope. Only in His strength can we experience Biblical hope.

## II. The Goal for the Battle for Hope (v. 11)

We will deal with the specifics of the armor a little later, but here I want us to focus on our goal in this daily conflict with these spiritual enemies. Our main task is not to "bind" the devil; it is not to "rebuke" the devil; it is certainly not to "taunt" the devil. Our goal, our task, our ambition is to *stand firm* against the schemes of the devil. The word translated "stand" means to be immovable. Our command is literally to "stand your ground." What ground? The ground that Christ won for us on Calvary's cross! That is what Paul was speaking of in Ephesians 4:27: "and do not give the devil an opportunity." When we fail to stand, we give opportunity to the Devil. Our task is to stand firm in the power of His might and give not one inch to this foe that Jesus

defeated! All of the armor that we will look at is for the front side. We are to never turn and run; we are to stand.

For the believer who has that commitment to stand, the tactic of the Devil is to get you to just give in a little. The devil knows that you are probably not going to turn and run away, but you may compromise a little and next week a little more until you've gone far away from the ground Christ won for us on the cross. Psalms 16:8 (NKJV): "I have set the Lord always before me; because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved." Let me re-emphasize that we are to stand against the devil; we are not told to "chase", "pursue", or in any way be the aggressor in the spiritual warfare. When we focus on lifting up Jesus and making disciples, the devil comes against us.

A few years ago, in West Africa Dick Buchanan and I saw a church sign that gave the name of the church and the Pastor's name. Below his name, it said "Pastor to the whole world and the demon destroyer." We didn't really think that was the church we wanted to partner with. We don't attack; we stand. When we focus on making disciples, we will always be attacked – ALWAYS! We respond by standing against the schemes of the evil one. What are the "schemes of the devil"? In some other translations that word is translated "strategies", or "tactics". The Greek word is *methodeia*. We get the word "methods" from that.

Our goal, our ambition in spiritual warfare is to know the devil's methods so that we can stand and give no ground that Jesus won for us on Calvary's cross.

### **III. The Enemy in the Battle for Hope (v. 12)**

Our activity as we stand against the enemy is called our "struggle" in verse 12. Some translations use the word "wrestle". I like "wrestle" better. The Greek word here was used of "hand to hand combat". The wrestling that Paul was speaking of was not the entertainment that we think of when we think of wrestling today. In the first century, it was usually a battle to the death. This explains why many believers aren't "all in" with the battle: they would rather try to work out a compromise with the devil.

Let's dig a little deeper to understand who our enemy really is. First, we are told who the adversary is not. Our adversary is not other human beings (flesh and blood). The worst person in your life is not your true problem. They may be the instrument that your real enemy is using, but they are not the enemy! Your brother or sister in Christ is not the enemy. Satan and demonic spirits are the enemy; the true enemy is not other people. Let's examine the enemy a little closer.

Technically, most of us don't battle directly with the fallen angel named Lucifer. He is the Commander and Chief of demon armies and the strategist behind the attacks, but don't be guilty of assigning attributes of deity to the devil. He is not omnipotent like God. He is a created being who rebelled and was cast out of Heaven. Though his doom was sealed when Jesus died and then defeated death by coming out of the grave on the third day, Satan is still active in the world until that time that he is cast into the lake of fire that Jesus said was prepared just for him and his angels. Satan is not omnipresent. He is not slowed by a flesh and blood body, but he cannot be dealing with some far away terrorist and dealing with you at the same time. He has an army of demon spirits that he commands, organizes, and directs. It is not wrong to say that you are in conflict with the devil because he is the commander and the strategist of the demon hoards. In World War II, soldiers on the European front would say that they were battling Hitler because he was the power behind the Axis troops.

Satan's strategy is not all that complicated. He operates by using deception. He is described in John 8:44b: "...He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies." 2 Corinthians 11:14b (NIV): "...for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." Every false religion and cult was started by this deceiver. He uses men and women, but he is the power behind it.

Demons are as real as Satan is real. They are all fallen, rebellious angels who followed the archangel Lucifer in his rebellion. We are told in Revelation that a third of the angels rebelled. We don't know how many demons there are, but I believe that it could be in the billions. We know that there are so many angels that they cannot be numbered (Hebrews 12:22 – "an innumerable company of angels" (KJV) and one third of an innumerable host is a huge number.

Paul's purpose here is not to intricately explain the details of the demonic rankings, but to help us see that they are many and they are organized, and this is a real battle.

#### **IV. The Armor for the Battle of Truth (vv. 13-18)**

I only have time to focus on two pieces of the Armor and just mention the others.

##### **A. The Belt of Truth (v. 14a)**

Ephesians 6:14a (NIV): "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist..." The soldier's belt was in many ways the most important part of the armor. It was the belt that held everything else together. For believers, our hope and victory are lived out when the truth of Scripture guides all that we believe and all that we do. When we face any decision, we look to Scripture. When Scripture speaks, we look no further. It is our commitment to the truth that settles every dilemma, every plan, and every response to problems and trials. The one question is: "What does the Scripture say?" We do not look to the latest trends, the latest book that was written, or to how the world handles problems or challenges. *We look to the word of god, which is truth!* Our church, our families, our vocations, our trials all look to the truth of Scripture for direction, and when the Scripture speaks, we need no second opinion.

##### **B. The Breastplate of Righteousness (v. 14b)**

The breastplate was the piece of armor that covered the front of the body from the neck to the thighs. The breastplate illustrates righteousness, but what does righteousness mean? Basically, righteousness means to be right. Only God is perfectly righteous because He determines what is right. When righteousness is applied to man it means to be in right standing with God and also to be right in our behavior. The breastplate of righteousness illustrates two kinds of righteousness that we are to possess. First, we have the imputed (put on our account) righteousness of Christ. We have no righteousness of our own. Romans 3:10b: "There is none righteous, not even one." If we are ever to stand before this holy God in righteousness, it must be with what the old theologians called "an alien righteousness." That is, it must be the righteousness of another and not our own. That alien righteousness is exactly what God has given us! There is only one man who was ever righteous in His own righteousness and that was the God man, Jesus Christ. When we repent and look to Jesus as our Lord and as our salvation, He not only forgives us; he gives us His righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." When we come to Christ, His righteousness is imputed or accounted to us (put on our account). Thus, we stand before our holy God not only forgiven, but righteous in Christ's righteousness.

If anyone could have earned his own righteousness, it would have been the Apostle Paul. He was “Captain Israel”! But notice what he says about righteousness in Philippians 3:9: “and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.” The breastplate of righteousness illustrates our imputed righteousness in Christ.

### **C. The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (v. 15)**

The Shoes of the Gospel of peace pictures our readiness to take the Gospel that brings the peace of God to the lost.

### **D. The Shield of Faith (v. 16)**

The shield of faith speaks of how Satan’s lies that he implants in our mind are handled. The Roman shield was large enough to protect the whole body when the soldier crouched behind it. The flaming arrows picture Satan’s lies and deceptions that he uses to deceive the Christian. It is when we stand on the truth of Scripture that the enemy’s lies are exposed and rejected.

### **E. The Helmet of Salvation (v. 17a)**

The helmet of salvation is the comforting truth that one day we will not only be freed from the penalty of sin and the power of sin; we will be freed from the very presence of sin when we will be with the Lord in Heaven forever.

### **F. The Sword of the Spirit (v. 17b)**

The final piece of the armor is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. The Word of God is the only offensive or defensive weapon we need. We don’t need “deliverance experts” or exorcists to come against the enemy; the inerrant word of God is sufficient.

We see how the armor is put on in Ephesians 6:18: “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” In the context, the prayer is referring all that has just been revealed about spiritual warfare.

We see the application of prayer in the third verse of an old hymn, *Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus*.

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone;  
The arm of flesh will fail you, You dare not trust your own;  
Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer;  
Where duty calls or danger, Be never wanting there.  
—George Duffield (1858)*

That is my prayer for you.

**NASB** (New American Standard Bible)

All scripture taken from the NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.