

The Believer's Armor – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul encourages believers to be strong in the Lord, wearing the full armor of God
2. aim – to cause us to stand fast against the temptations and oppositions of the world in full faith
3. passage – Ephesians 6:10-20

b. outline

1. The Believer's Struggle (Ephesians 6:10-13)
2. The Believer's Armor (Ephesians 6:14-18a)
3. The Believer's Perseverance (Ephesians 6:18b-20)

c. opening

1. the reality of *spiritual warfare*
 - a. the real struggle of the Christian life is not happiness or comfort or wellness – it is the struggle against the powers of evil that will do anything they can to destroy your *faith*
 - b. **reality: Paul contends that every believer struggles against forces of evil, and that this evil is so great that it requires the fullness of God's power over us to combat it and survive**
2. the reality of *divine protection*
 - a. **Paul uses a metaphor of as a picture of God himself, adorned with all of the elements of his own righteousness coming against the forces of evil arrayed against him**
 1. each element of the armor represents a particular aspect of God's own nature that is provided to resist a specific way that the forces of evil will attack the *spiritual life* of the believer
3. the reality of *the armor*
 - a. first, the *"belt"* – the essential "girding" of security that sits *at our very core*
 1. the *primary attack*: *"has God [really] said?"* – attacking the *content* of our faith
 2. **we buckle on the belt of truth by ever-maturing in our understanding of Scripture**
 - b. second, the *"breastplate"* – the core of Christ's own righteousness *covering our heart*
 1. the *secondary attack*: are you *worthy* to stand before God? – attacking our *position*
 2. **we put on the breastplate of righteousness by continually relying on the righteousness of Christ within us, even as we fall short of perfection under the attacks of the devil**

II. The Believer's Armor (Ephesians 6:14-18a)

Content

d. the *"shoes of the gospel of peace"* (v. 15)

1. *"shoes"* is a modern English addition – the phrase is best rendered *"and your feet shod"* (KJV) – the Greek word means to bind under one's feet, put on sandals, lit. to be ready for action
 - a. *with* a sense of *"readiness"* – putting on footwear which is designed to protect your feet, but (more importantly) to give the soldier solid footing as he is being attacked (**e.g. my sensitive feet**)
 - b. the parallel would seem to be **Isaiah 52:7 (cf. Romans 10:15)**
"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news"
 1. there, Paul seems to be using the concept of "feet" in a more *proactive* sense – **i.e.** going out with the gospel; the process of going out to evangelize the lost so they hear and believe
 2. here, Paul seems to be using the concept of "feet" in a more *defensive* sense – **i.e.** having your feet shod in such a way that you are prepared to stand *on whatever ground you encounter*
2. *"the gospel of peace"* = the footwear itself is the central message of the Christian faith: the gospel
 - a. gospel = good news; the message of Christ that, because of his **propitiating** work at the cross, those who belong to him *by faith* are no longer subject to wrath *and are fully at peace with God*
 1. this *"peace"* is not simply "the cessation of hostilities" – it is a true sense of *relationship*
 2. it is a peace that exists between family members – with God as our true Father
 - b. this "footing" (then) is the sure knowledge that, regardless of our weakness in the face of evil, we can stand firm knowing that we are always in a loving and intimate relationship with God
3. **Paul continues his metaphor with this reality – embracing robustly the gospel of peace is what every believer must do to withstand the wiles of the devil over the ground of assurance**

- a. **another attack** of the devil will be to *twist the content* of God's word – "you will not surely die" (**Gen. 3:4**) – to *change* the core message of the gospel to something else **with less assurance**
 - b. this is the *error* of liberalism creeping into Evangelicalism – changing the gospel so that it is no longer about sin and judgment and wrath, but about "doing our best" or "loving our neighbor"
 - 1. the "assurance" that God is not a god of holiness, but a god of love and help
 - 2. the "shaky ground" of **diminishing** the nature of God to make him less "worrisome" in the face of sin – the "hopeful" belief that God is *not really* one who judges sinfulness
 - a. **i.e. God loves you just the way you are!**
 - c. **we shod our feet with the gospel of peace by fully recognizing that, although we deserve the wrath of God, Christ Jesus has completely propitiated that wrath and we now stand firmly in the presence of a just God wonderfully at peace with him**
- e. the "shield of faith" (v. 16)**
- 1. "shield" = one of two (2) shields Roman soldiers typically possessed, each with a distinct usage:
 - a. a small round shield held on the opposite arm, used for protection in close hand-to-hand combat
 - b. a large square shield (2' x 4½') carried with both hands in front of the body for advancement
 - 1. creating a wall of soldiers moving forward toward the enemy while that enemy attempted to penetrate it with various forms of ammunition (**e.g.** arrows, cannonballs, etc.)
 - 2. it is likely that this *larger* shield is what Paul is referring to here (and his compatriot would not be wearing!) – note the use of "darts" (or "arrows" NIV) to suggest this one
 - 3. the imagery is of a shield covering the believer from head to toe, with no space for the devil to "get in" an arrow of some sort to defeat him or her
 - 2. "the shield of faith" = a shield of composed of faith, that defends us against attack
 - a. "faith" = a **radical** trust in the promises of God – radical because:
 - 1. it runs *counter* to our natural inclination to trust in ourselves *first* (**e.g. fear of flying**)
 - 2. it permeates *every* aspect of our lives – every part of us (**i.e.** in our utter obedience to Christ)
 - b. this "shield" (then) is the totality of trusting the promises of God over ourselves and making that trust cover over every thought, word, decision, reaction, conclusion, failing, or success
 - 3. **Paul continues his metaphor with this reality – wielding a shield of radical trust in Christ over every aspect of our lives is essential for the believer to defend against the wiles of the devil**
 - a. **another attack** of the devil will be to fling *doubt* – "did God actually say 'you shall not eat'" (**Gen. 3:2**) – what did God actually mean by this – is this actually *true* – would God actually *kill* you?
 - b. **reality:** all of us struggle with doubt – it is an inherent element of the human condition (**Mark 9:24**) "I believe; help my unbelief!" (the father of the child with an unclean spirit)
 - 1. **to deny that doubt is real is to give the devil a foothold – it is to deny that we sin**
 - 2. the "darts" of doubt are designed to be **cumulative** – to slowly chip away at the belief of the Christian until he or she has *apostatized* – not all at once, but slowly through *questioning*
 - a. in fact, most who "abandon" the faith do so *over time* (**e.g.** the shallow or weedy soil)
 - 3. faith is to trust (to believe) the revelation given to us in the face of questions and doubts
 - c. **we take up the shield of faith by immersing ourselves in the revelation given to us by God, seeing his faithfulness generation by generation and trusting in his character, so that the devil has no "room" to penetrate our lives with doubt**
- f. the "helmet of salvation" (v. 17a)**
- 1. "helmet" = a head covering, designed to protect the head but to allow for sight and hearing
 - a. the picture here is synonymous with every device used to encircle the head for protection
 - b. metaphorically, a device protecting the "thinking center" or "the mind" (the seat of intellect)
 - 1. **IOW:** something that *occupies our mind*, something *we know*, or something *we contemplate*
 - 2. "helmet of salvation" = the substance of all that makes up what it means to be *saved*
 - a. "salvation" (*soterios*) – being rescued from something dangerous or fatal (**an object**)
 - 1. **i.e.** being rescued from the judgment and condemnation of God himself (**Matthew 10:28**) "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - 2. in biblical soteriology, there are a number of elements of how salvation is wrought in us:
 - a. election, conviction, conversion, atonement, redemption, justification, sanctification, etc.
 - b. this "helmet" (then) is the intelligent processing of all of what it means to be saved from the judgment of God – to *consider* what God has done to save us
 - 3. **Paul continues his metaphor with this reality – putting on the helmet of salvation is to use our minds to understand all of God's work as a defense against the wiles of the devil**
 - a. **another attack** of the devil will be to change religion to something *primarily* emotional – "so when the woman saw that the tree ..." (**Gen. 3:6**) – you just want something that *feels good*?

- b. this is the *error* of emotionalism creeping into Evangelicalism – making Christian religious practice into something that is fun (entertaining) *and* anti-intellectual (devoid of doctrine)
 - 1. **Pew Forum (4/25/18)** – 80% of Americans believe in God, but only 56% believe in the God described in the Bible – 33% believe in a “higher power” version of “god”
 - 2. the result of three (3) generations of Americans going to churches where little or no doctrine is taught has resulted in the majority being illiterate about the nature of God himself
 - a. a “Christianity” that is fun to practice, requires little knowledge outside of our own “truth” about who God is, and requires little of us (moralistic therapeutic deism)
 - b. a “Christianity” that has no idea of what salvation *really is* (other than “heaven”)
- c. **we take the helmet of salvation by filling our thoughts with the truth of who God *is* and what he has *done* for us so that our minds cannot become the “playground” of the devil**