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**C0524 -- June 22, 2005 – Ephesians 6:17-20 – The Armor of God-Part 2**

This week we will conclude the 8<sup>th</sup> long sentence in Ephesians. This final long sentence began in verse 14 and ends in verse 20. Paul is accustomed to using long sentences because of his complex and interrelated thoughts. First, let's review verses 14-16 since we haven't seen this in two weeks.

**6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waists with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**  
**6:15 and having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace,**  
**6:16 in addition to all these things having taken up the shield of faith, with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,**

The command is to **stand** not to advance against the enemy but to hold Christ's territory. The first three pieces of armor are defensive and must be **put on** like clothing so they are attached to the body.

- **having girded your waists with truth**
- **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**
- **having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**

The fourth piece of armor, the shield of faith, is also defensive but must be **taken up** and not left behind in the midst of attack. It protects the first three pieces of armor and the body.

- **the shield of faith with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one**

Let's review each of these pieces of armor; their location and function,

- **having girded your waists with truth**

<b>Armor</b>	<b>Military Breech</b>	<b>Truth</b>
<b>Location</b>	hanging under armor	word of God
<b>Functions</b>	create stability fasten things to increase mobility	create stability link doctrines to one another increase movement in Christian life

Soldiers in the Roman Army were issued a “military breech”. It was to be worn about the waste and it hung under the armor. The waste is the center of gravity and therefore the military breech had three functions. First, it increased the soldier’s stability in combat. Second, it was used to fasten things to, such as the short sword (*macharia*). Third, it increased mobility by protecting the thighs and serving as a belt to tuck excess clothing in. For the Christian soldier your Commander-in-Chief has issued “truth”. “truth” is what gives you stability. Without a system of thinking that reflects God’s way of thinking you are unstable, tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Learning truth enables you to eventually link doctrines together into a system of thinking. This in turn leads to greater freedom of movement in the Christian life.

- **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**

<b>Armor</b>	<b>Breastplate of Mail or Brass</b>	<b>Righteousness</b>
<b>Location</b>	chest and back of torso	a righteous walk (lifestyle)
<b>Functions</b>	protect physical heart	guards against Satan’s assaults

Roman soldiers were also issued a breastplate of mail or brass. Its location was over the leather jerkin and wrapped around the chest and back. Its function was to protect the physical heart. Christian soldiers are issued the breastplate, which is righteousness. This is not the imputed righteousness of Christ but righteous deeds done in the strength of the Lord. Righteous deeds guard the heart against the assaults of cosmic powers causing them to leave and return at a more opportune time. Righteous acts therefore cause Satan to retreat.

- **having shod the feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**

<b>Armor</b>	<b>Studded Sandal</b>	<b>Prepared with Gospel of Peace</b>
<b>Location</b>	feet	daily walk
<b>Functions</b>	dig in and hold territory	dig in and hold territory assurance of salvation surefootedness in standing

Roman soldiers were issued a studded sandal. This studded sandal was to be worn on the feet and its function was to enable the soldier to dig in and hold territory against an attacking enemy. Christian soldiers are issued the gospel of peace. This piece of armor is practical for the daily walk of the Christian. The gospel of peace refers to the assurance of salvation; the assurance that we are bound to Christ forever. This assurance comes at the moment of salvation and enables the Christian soldier to dig in his heels and stand against wicked assaults of cosmic powers. A Christian can begin to doubt his salvation when he is out of fellowship or when he is confused by false teaching. Assurance of salvation is required for the Christian soldier to stand firmly. Without it we will never be able to stand against the devil's schemes because we will not even be sure whose side we are on.

- **take up the shield of faith with which you are able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one**

Roman soldiers were issued a defensive shield that was convex in shape, 4 feet tall and 2 ½ feet wide. It was covered in canvas and then with calf skin. Before battle it would be saturated in water so that it could extinguish flaming arrows which implanted in the shield. It had a metal boss in the center to deflect some of the arrows. This piece of armor was crucial because it protected the body armor and the body itself. Many a soldier left their shield on the battlefield. This greatly increased their chances of getting killed.

Christian soldiers have been issued a shield, which is faith. Faith is what we use to live. Christian soldiers are not to live by sight but by faith. What this means is that we don't trust our finite rationalistic peanut brains but we trust God's word. If you want to be weak and get defeated then walk in your own strength. If you want to be strong and conquer then you must walk in the Lord's strength. Only His strength is able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. That means, whatever the devil throws your direction you can deflect it by living by faith in God's word as the sole, final and sufficient authority. However, many a Christian has left his shield of faith on the battlefield and operates on his own strength and wisdom. This opens him up to the extreme danger of being slain by the evil one. It should be noted that you cannot walk by faith if you don't know truth (Rom 10:17).

Tonight let's conclude with the final two pieces of armor and the manner in which we are to **grasp** them in the wake of an imminent satanic attack. We grasp these last two pieces of armor by being in a constant state of prayer and alertness. Prayer is necessary because our enemies are superhuman beings and must be fought with superhuman strength.

*Greek Text 6:17 kai ten perikephalaian tou soteriou dexasthe kai ten macharan tou pneumatos, o estin rema theou, NA<sup>25</sup>*

**Translation 6:17 and grasp the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,**

**Concordance: Isa 59:17; 49:2; Hos 6:5; Heb 4:12**

Literally, verse 17 begins with the words **and grasp** rather than **and take**. This is because the **helmet** and the **sword** were the last two pieces a soldier would pick up. The **helmet** was hot and uncomfortable. It was only put on when faced with impending danger. The **sword** was only taken up when an enemy was approaching. The **sword** is the only offensive weapon used in the context but in light of the command to **stand** it is not to be used offensively but defensively.

The command to **grasp the helmet** is, once more, *aorist middle imperative*, signaling *your responsibility* to grasp it and to do so with *great urgency*. Nobody is going to put your helmet on for you. You must put it on yourself. The urgency is due to the nature and powers of our enemies. They are wicked cosmic powers and they fill the universe. Their plans are comprehensive and vile and their attack could come at any moment. They want you to buy into lies, confusion, and counterfeit messages so they can destroy your Christian witness and drag more people to hell. Therefore the command to **grasp the helmet** is an urgent one.

The Roman soldier was issued a **helmet**. The helmet was revised in the time of Paul (under Claudius' reign AD 37-41). It was made of bronze fitted over an iron skull cap and lined with leather or cloth. The helmet came down and covered the back of the neck, fitting slightly over the shoulder and had a brow ridge fitted above the face to protect the nose and eyes. It even had hinged cheek pieces to protect the face. The Christian soldier is also issued a helmet, **the helmet of salvation**. The helmet signifies day to day salvation or deliverance from our enemies. Paul probably has in mind the Divine Warrior of Isa 59:17.

**Isaiah 59:17** He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

The Divine Warrior puts on the helmet of salvation when He is returning to destroy His enemies at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming. In the same way, Paul is not talking about the moment we were saved but our daily deliverance from our enemies after being saved. However, knowing

that we have been saved by the Lord's strength and are now overcomers gives us confidence that we can continue to win the daily battles against the vile assaults of wicked cosmic powers (1 John 5:1-5).

Lastly, we are to **grasp the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. After putting on the helmet of salvation the soldier was to **grab his sword** just before the attack. This Roman **sword** referred to here is the *machaira*. The *machaira* was a short sword about 2 feet long which had a double-edged blade that was about 2 inches wide. This is not the same **sword** we saw in the early chapters of Revelation (1:16; 2:12, 16; 6:8; 19:15; 21; although *machaira* is used in Rev 6:4; 13:10, 14). That was the *romphaia* or Thracian sword which was wider and shaped like a tongue. This sword, the *machaira*, was designed for close hand-to-hand combat. It was normally placed in a sheath and attached to the girdle high up on the waste so it did not interfere with the legs when running.

The Christian soldier is also issued a **sword**, namely, our **sword is the word of God**. It is called **the sword of the Spirit** because the **word of God** originated with the **Spirit** and because the **sword** can only be used effectively by the administering power of the **Spirit**.

**the word of God** here is the *rhema of God*. *rhema* is the spoken word of God. We must speak the word of God when we are confronted with wicked cosmic powers. Jesus used this method during his three encounters with the devil (Matt 4:1-11). Every time Jesus used the written word of God against the devil to defeat the temptations. You have to do the same thing. First, I would suggest praying that the Lord would not permit you to be "lead into temptation" (Matt 6:13). That is, that you would not be put into a tempting situation. That's the first step in avoiding sin. Second step, if you are already in a tempting situation then you must use the written word of God in order to deflect Satan's temptations (Matt 4:1-11). The Spirit of God can use the word of God to defeat your enemies. This offensive weapon "is not used to make advances but rather to enable the believer to stand firmly in the midst of satanic warfare. The devil and his forces must not be allowed to gain new territory in Christ's kingdom or to rob believers of their spiritual blessings in Christ."<sup>1</sup>

As a member of the body of Christ you are not alone in battle. We have been united into a fighting fortress. Just as the Roman soldier did not fight alone but with a unit so we are united under our Commander-in-Chief, Jesus Christ.

Verses 18-20 describe the manner in which we **grasp** these last two pieces of equipment. We are to be continually on the alert and continually in prayer for ourselves and others so that when the attack comes we are not caught off guard and without power to defend.

*Greek Text 6:18 dia pases proseuches kai deeseos proseuchomenoi en panti kairo en pneumatic, kai eis auto agrupnountes en pase proskarteresei kai deesei peri panton ton agion*

**Translation 6:18 through every prayer and petition praying in every opportunity in the Spirit, and for this purpose keeping alert with all perseverance and petition for all of the saints,**

**Concordance: Luke 18:1; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1**

Verse 17 is not the end of the sentence. Verse 18 continues the same thought. We are **to grasp** the helmet and sword **through every prayer and petition**. “In other words, keep praying and watching when you take up the last two pieces of armor because the attack is imminent, the schemes are cunning, and God’s power and insight are needed.”<sup>ii</sup>

Prayer and Petition. The first word for **prayer** speaks of prayer in general. **Prayer** means “talking to God”. We talk to God by addressing the Father in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Spirit. The second word **petition** refers to “requests” and has the sense of “pleading or begging” God for something. We **petition** God when we are in great need of something. Christians that **petition** God have realized that only He is able to provide what we need. Christians that don’t **petition** God still think they are self-sufficient and don’t need God’s help or that they are bothering God. Paul realized that all Christians are in dire need of God’s help continually. Paul’s view was that humans are totally insufficient, particularly in the battle against wicked cosmic powers.

When should we pray? Paul says **at all times**. This does not mean 24 hours a day or else you could never sleep. What this means is **at every opportunity**. Christians should pray at **every** given **opportunity**. Anytime you have the opportunity to pray you should. This can be in the car, working outside, taking a shower, making dinner, lying in bed, etc...But this does not mean it is not wise to set aside a time and place for prayer. These prayers are to be offered **in the Spirit**, meaning **in the sphere of the Spirit** or we would just say, *in the power of the Spirit* (Jude 20). This whole context indicates that this is the Christian soldiers cry to God when under assault by Satan and his wicked authorities.

**and with this in view, keeping alert.** The Christian soldier is to remain on constant guard. The word means “watch”. A disciplined military puts men on “watch” through the night lest they be secretly surrounded by their enemies and destroyed. A disciplined Christian stays on the watch at all times lest he be destroyed. The word pictures “laying awake at night” “counting sheep”. Job kept watch over his children by praying for them continually.

Jesus told His disciples to be “alert” for His coming. Here believers are commanded to remain on watch for the attacks of the evil one. We must remain alert for the threat is imminent and real. Secondly we are told to **persevere** or **persist** in prayer. Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. What they were asking of Him was for Him to teach them how to really attend to the ministry of prayer. If you haven’t noticed prayer is a difficult ministry to attend to. We struggle to pray for more than five minutes at a time. We struggle to find things to pray for and we struggle to stay awake as we pray. Reasons We Struggle to Pray.

- failure to believe God answers prayer (Weak Doctrine of God)

Those who do not believe in the absolute sovereignty and omnipotence of God cannot fully trust that God answers prayer. Believers who do not turn to God in prayer at every event say, in effect, that they do not need God’s help. Yet the Bible says, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Does God supply all our needs or do we supply all our needs? The Bible also says, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” It’s His omnipotent power that is required to be victorious.

- trying to get things on your own steam (Weak Doctrine of Man)

Those who want but do not ask try to get things on their own steam (James 4:2ff). They use their own cunning and manipulative devices to get things they want and to hurt others in the process.

- failure to be alert to real danger (Weak Doctrine of Spiritual Warfare)

Those who are not alert to the reality of spiritual warfare against wicked cosmic forces do not pray for God’s strength in times of critical danger. Nor do they pray for their fellow saints who are also coming under attack from the evil one. The prayers of most Christians focus on physical needs rather than spiritual needs. Yet Paul’s prayers time and again are devoted to Christian’s spiritual needs (cf 1:15-23 and 3:14-21).

Christians need to wake up to the fact that they are in dire need of God’s help, that they are totally insufficient to get things on their own steam and that God is sovereign and omnipotent so that He is able to answer our prayers and is never bothered by our petitions. Indeed He is simply waiting on us to call upon Him.

How should we **keep alert? with all perseverance.** The word **perseverance** means “to devote oneself to, to persist.” We should devote ourselves to **keeping** alert. Jesus’ disciples failed to **keep alert** on numerous occasions. For example,

**Matthew 26:36-46** <sup>36</sup> Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. <sup>38</sup> Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." <sup>39</sup> And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." <sup>40</sup> And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? <sup>41</sup> "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>42</sup> He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." <sup>43</sup> Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. <sup>45</sup> Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

The disciples didn't think anything was going to happen. Therefore they were not alert. They were ignorant of the short time they had with the Jesus, they were ignorant of the power of temptation, they were ignorant of the importance of prayer for others, even Jesus, and they were ignorant of Satan's attacks.

Let's go back to Ephesians 6:18. Paul closes this verse with the phrase **petition for all of the saints.** We are all in this warfare together. You as an individual are a part of an entire army and we are all together at war against wicked cosmic powers. To demonstrate that you are really concerned about one another you can pray for one another.

Note the repetition in this verse. **Prayer** and **petition** are mentioned four times to emphasize the importance and intensity of prayer. We should pray at every opportunity, through every prayer and petition, with all persistence and petition for all the saints, particularly in the midst of warfare. Interestingly soldiers on earthly battlefields turn to prayer more often than in the comforts of their homes. If we realized that we were on a heavenly battlefield now how much more would we pray at all times?



Next Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him.

*Greek Text 6:19 kai uper emou, ina moi dothe logos en anoizei tou stomatos mou, en parresia gnorisai to musterion tou euaggeliou,*

**Translation 6:19 specifically for me, that utterance might be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,**

Paul's Two Requests. Paul says, **and pray for me or specifically for me**. There are two things that Paul asks them to pray for. In the first *hina* clause Paul asks them to pray **that utterance might be given to him in opening his mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel**. The prayer is that God may give Paul **utterance** when Paul opens his mouth. The OT prophets were to speak only as God opened their mouths. Paul is asking them to pray for the same thing. When Paul opens his mouth he wants God to give him the words to speak. The utterance Paul desires from God concerns **the mystery of the gospel**. The manner in which Paul wishes to make it known is **with boldness**. First, let's look at the content, the **mystery of the gospel**. This is not the gospel message of salvation but refers back to the **mystery** of Eph 3:5-6, that believing Jews and Gentiles are united into one new body, the church. Remember, a **mystery** is something totally unrevealed in the OT. This **mystery** of Jew and Gentile united in one new body is the good news that Paul wants to speak boldly. Historically, Paul was in prison and was going to have to stand trial before Caesar (Nero) in Rome when the Jewish accusers charge him. Paul realizes that this will be a time of great satanic attack against him. The Roman authorities looked upon Christianity as a sect of Jews but the Jews considered the Christians as a heretical group. Paul needed the words and the boldness to clarify to the Roman court that Christians were neither a Jewish sect nor a heretical group but an entirely new entity, the church, the body of Christ, composed of Jewish and Gentile believers. That is why Paul needs their prayers.

*Greek Text 6:20 uper ou presbeuo en alusei, ina en auto parresiasomai os dei me lalesai.*

**Translation 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

**Concordance: Eph 3:1; Phil 1:7; Col 4:3-4; 2 Cor 3:12**

It was because of the **mystery** of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body, the church, that Paul was in chains. He was not in chains simply for preaching the gospel. This message was and is extremely important. Jesus Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall so that there is peace between believing Jews and Gentiles. This message caused the Jews

to consider Christians as heretics but the Roman authorities thought the Christians were a sect of Jews. Neither understood that Christians were a new entity, neither Jew nor Gentile but a new man, a new race in Christ. It was for this message that Paul was in chains. Paul was sent as **an ambassador** of this message and was in prison because of it (cf 3:1ff). Paul doesn't look for sympathy because he's in prison. He realizes that his circumstances are controlled by the Lord. All he asks for is prayer that he would proclaim the mystery.

The second request is in verse 20 where he says **that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak**. It would not be easy to face a Roman tribunal (Acts 25:11-12, 21; 26:32' 27:24; 28:17-19). Paul was possibly going to face the paranoid Nero which could be quite intimidating. In these future circumstances Satan would try to confuse the issue so that the Roman tribunal would dismiss the trial on the grounds of mistaking Paul's message to describe the formation of a new Jewish sect. That would be a hindrance to the clear message of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body, the church. It could stunt the growth of the church in the Roman Empire. Therefore, Paul needs prayer to speak it boldly as he ought to speak it so he can get his point across clearly.

All believers come under Satanic attack. All believers are required to **put on** the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace. All believers are required to **take up** the shield of faith and all believers are responsible to **grasp** the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. All believers are responsible to continually pray and petition God for themselves and for all the saints. Failure to do so results in failure in the Christian life. May we fight the good fight of faith, may we hold fast to the faith once for all delivered to the saints..

<sup>18</sup> This command I entrust to you,  
Timothy, *my son*,  
in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you,  
that by them you **fight the good fight**,  
<sup>19</sup> **keeping faith and a good conscience,**  
**which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith**  
**1 Timothy 1:18-19**

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<sup>i</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 853.

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<sup>ii</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 855.