

The Equipment

Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:14-17

Does everyone have their bibles? We're going to bring the second part of a three-part message that will end the book of Ephesians on spiritual warfare. Last week we introduced you to the enemy, and this week we are going to look at the equipment God gives us in facing our enemy. I'm going to begin this message differently than I normally begin. I have permission to share this with you. Last Sunday I introduced the topic and preached my message. I did it at 7:50, 9:15, and 10:40. When the 10:40 service was over, for some reason I found myself in the foyer and was greeted by a young lady. Her first question was, "Bro Ricky, do you remember me?" Ah...I have to be honest. I hate it when someone asks me that and I have to say, "I can't place you." Then she gave me her name, and the moment she did, "Yes, I remember you!" Then she said, "Bro Ricky, if you had given an invitation this morning, I would have come forward, but you didn't. Twenty-five years ago, I heard you deliver a sermon that was almost just like the one you delivered this morning. At the time, my husband and I were a part of Hardin church. We had been to several retreats with you and Celisa, and we were actively involved in the church. That morning that you delivered that message, my husband and I did what we had been doing. We were so growing in the Lord that on the way home we talked about your message. We both agreed we didn't believe your message. We didn't believe it. I mean, we know there is a Savior, we know there's a devil, but we did not believe he could take what belonged to us, and we dismissed it. We said to ourselves we believed everything he has taught us, but this just doesn't apply to us." Then she began to talk about her husband with the word, ex. She began to share with me how after that message and them not believing, they literally lost everything they had. She said, "The reason I wanted to come forward is

because I wanted to stand in front of your church and say to everyone there, don't be like me and believe this can't happen to you, because it happened to me and we lost everything we had that was dear to us because we didn't believe." I asked her if I could begin the message this morning by sharing her story, not just at 10:40, but at 7:50 and 9:15. It would break my heart to know that when I've been preaching at Hardin for sixty years that some of you might come up to me and ask me, "Do you remember me," and me have to say, "I don't," and then when you tell me your name, me put it together and you tell me that story all over again. Do I have your attention? This is real. I'm not sure if the first time I preached it was twenty-five years ago, but I promise you I believe it's true and it's real. Let's stand together, and hopefully listen and believe, and then apply the truth of this message to our lives. This is not a message for the missionary going to the jungle where they practice voodoo and superstition only. This is a message for you and for me living in the Bible belt of America. Things are happening in our communities that we never dreamed would happen here. We are not immune to anything anymore in our area. This morning we will be looking at the equipment God has given us as we do spiritual battle. We will be looking at Ephesians 6:14-17, but remember last week we read 10-20 so that you see the entire context. Next week we will finish the book of Ephesians, and in a couple of weeks, we will kick off our summer series here at Hardin.

Scripture

"Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

(Prayer)

Father, add Your blessings to the reading of this Your Word. Please Father, arrest us, help us be mindful of what is really going on around us, and that

is this thing called spiritual warfare. Don't let us be oblivious to what is happening. Father, spiritual warfare is not always in your face in this area; it is subtle; it is slow. But help us understand the importance of arming ourselves and making sure our loved ones have on their armor. As a granddaughter told me this week, her granny has called her every morning and said, "Did you put your armor on today," may we remind each other about the armor that we should be wearing. Anoint us to not be a hearer or speaker only, but a doer of Your Word. In Your Son's name, amen.

The Armor of God

The context of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus is one of his prison epistles. Scholars believe that it is possible, because Paul talked about being an ambassador in chains, that at the very moment in which he's writing this letter to the church at Ephesus, he is sitting in a prison cell with a Roman soldier who he is either chained to, or that soldier is guarding Paul because he is in custody to the Roman government. As Jesus had that unique ability to look around and see things that just reminded Him of spiritual truths, here is Paul, possibly chained to a Roman soldier, and when he looks at him, Paul sees the Roman soldier's armor, the armor that Rome has provided him as a soldier of Rome. Instead of seeing his armor only, Paul sees his own armor, the armor of God that has been provided him as he does spiritual warfare. He takes that armor that Rome gave that soldier, his belt, his breastplate, his sandals, his shield, his helmet, and his sword and sees the armor that God has given us: truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. Paul knew that Rome gave that soldier his armor so that every day, at the end of the day, that soldier would still be standing, and spiritually, he goes to great lengths to remind you and I that at the end of every spiritual day, at the end of every battle, you and I are to be standing. No matter what the enemy throws at us, we may sway, we may lose balance occasionally, but he never knocks us off our feet. In every battle at the end of every day, we are standing. So now, after telling us about our enemy and who we battle against, Paul again says, "Stand therefore." Can I just make this observation? Here is what Paul is thinking. Paul is thinking that if at the end of the day I am going to be standing, I should begin my day standing. Did you catch that?

But look what he does. In naming these six pieces of armor, he uses two different verb tenses and breaks them into two different categories of three each. He says, "Therefore," based on what I've just told you about this enemy who is in the heavenly places and you battle against him and all of his evil forces, "Therefore stand, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace," and the picture is Paul is sitting in a cell with a Roman soldier who has his belt on, has his breastplate on, and he has his shoes on, but over beside him is his shield, his helmet, and his sword. Do you see that in the English language? Having put on, you have it on right now. Having put on, stand, but don't forget on the battleground, take your shield with you, take your helmet with you, and don't forget to take your sword. So these three we keep on at all times, but we are told to not forget to take with us also these other three pieces of armor.

The Belt of Truth

Are you ready? It is kind of odd to me that the first piece of armor is a belt. I've never put my belt on first, have you? I know you ladies don't wear belts like we men do, but I usually put on my underwear, my socks, my jeans, t-shirt, and shirt. Depending on what kind of shirt I've got, if it is the kind you wear on the outside, I've got my shirt on over my jeans. If it is not, I tuck it in, go to my closet, and reach for the belt I'm going to wear. Guys, I just don't feel like I'm ready until I have my belt on. Do you guys agree? I don't wear a belt as a fashion statement. Even when I'm wearing a shirt over the belt that you don't see, I have the belt on. If you're a guy, you just have to have a belt. It just holds it all together. But I feel like the belt is part of clothing, not armor, so what is Paul doing here? Why is a belt part of the armor? You can say that is what holds the sheath where he puts his sword, and I get that, but in the Roman world, when the soldier got dressed and put his clothes on, he put that belt on first because sometime during his life, he would hear the command, "Gird up." When he got that command, it meant he reached down and grabbed the bottom of his dress and tucked it in his belt. That freed up his legs because it would have been disastrous to rush into battle with your robe on, your dress on,

and trip and take a spear to the neck. That wouldn't be good. So to make sure the legs were free to move so that you were unencumbered, you wore that belt. It was part of your armor. With that belt on, you knew that you had it all together, and your innerness and your outerness were in perfect balance, and that is what you need on the battlefield. You need to know you've got it together. You need to know that you are ready for what God is going to bring your way this day, and that piece of armor that we put on to engage in spiritual warfare is what the Bible calls the belt of truth. Does that make sense?

Now, we've got a choice here; we can either go objectively about truth, or we can go subjectively about truth. A lot of commentaries build strong arguments on whether it is objective truth or subjective truth, but I love what John Stott says. He said why do we have to choose; why can't it be both? I tend to believe it is both. I tend to believe that what holds you together, in every battle, in every temptation, in every encounter in spiritual warfare, is this: the truth of you knowing God. Amen? Do you know what? You don't really know God until you know God in all of His fullness. So the belt of truth that you wear is not just objective truth that God is God and who He is, it is the subjective truth that you know about the things of God. So what gives you that ability to go out there in the world and face battle and temptation is the belt of truth! Jesus didn't apply truth to a principle; He applied truth to Himself and said, "I am the truth." Then He told us that you know the truth, and it is the truth that will set you free. So please know that on this battlefield, it is you knowing God, knowing Christ, knowing the truth that gives you the confidence to engage in spiritual battle. If you don't know Him, you aren't going to make it on a spiritual battlefield.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Now, the Roman soldier knew that when he went into battle, the easier way to take a guy out was to take a sword, spear, or arrow to the heart. So the Roman government actually provided their military men breastplates of metal that were two parts. One part covered the front and the other covered the back. It had two leather straps on the side and two leather straps at the top so that in hand-to-hand combat, when the sword came, if

it hit that breastplate, the metal was strong enough that it would deflect that spear, shield, or arrow. What Rome knew was that if the vital organ of their soldier got damaged or injured, they were done, so they provided them with a breastplate. Let me just remind you that as you go into spiritual battle on a day-to-day basis, you need to have the breastplate of righteousness on. You need to guard your heart. You need to guard your heart. The reason some of us don't stay in the game, the reason some of us don't stay in the war, the reason some of us don't stay in the battle is because the accuser of the brethren, Satan, goes after your heart and gets you to doubt you, and doubt your heart. Therefore, you don't feel worthy to battle. You don't feel worthy to stay in the game. Please hear me; your enemy, our enemy, is not in Heaven anymore. He has been kicked out, cast down, and now walks to and fro upon the planet, seeking whom he might take and eat their lunch! He is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses you to you. He can't accuse you before God anymore, so he just whispers in your heart. You've all faced that before, right, where your motive for doing what you're doing is being challenged. Paul says no, you've got to guard your heart! The way you guard your heart is borrowing the breastplate of righteousness.

Now, we have two options here; again, one objective and one subjective. The first truth could be this; the breastplate that God gives us could be the actual imputed righteousness of Christ to us at the moment of salvation. Boy, I love this thought! I love this thought of me going into the battlefield and I'm standing toe-to-toe with the forces of spiritual warfare in the heavenly places, and in this battle, my heart is protected by this truth; that I have the imputed righteousness of Christ and I'm in God's army. I'm in this battle, not because of any act of righteousness that I have, but I'm in this battle because I am right with God because He dealt with what was wrong with me when on that cross, He took my sin and put it on His Son. On that cross, His Son gave me His righteousness, and I now stand imputed, perfect, and righteous in God's sight because of Jesus Christ! Bring it on Satan! I am not who you say I am; I am right with God, not based on what I do, but based on what He has already done for me! Amen! Wow! But can I be totally honest with you? How do you really know that is true? How do you really know you're saved? How do you really

know you're righteous in Christ? I want to tell you where your confidence comes from. Your confidence comes from this; that moment, that day you go back to when you got saved, God freed you from the penalty of sin, and put the imputed righteousness of Christ in your account and made you right with God, He also, at that moment, set you free from the power of sin. What you've been seeing since that day you got saved, you have been seeing, not just the forgiveness of sin, you've been seeing you free from sin. So those things that you used to want to do; you now don't want to do. When you do some of those things, you feel really bad about doing them, so you've made an agreement with yourself that you're not going to keep living that old life you used to live because that's not who you are anymore. What you are seeing, from this imputed righteousness of Christ that's been given to you where you are righteous with Him, is actual righteousness in your life. All of a sudden, those people that you couldn't used to stand, you don't have those thoughts anymore because you are not only right with God; you are right with them now. As a matter of fact, every time you blow it, you kind of doubt, don't you? "If I was really saved, would I have done that?" "If I was really saved, would I have said that?" "If I was really saved..." Right? That is where Satan comes at us; that is where he attacks. So let the imputed righteousness of Christ motivate you to live an actual life of righteousness, and if you live rightly, you won't shrink from battle. You will hang in there because you'll recognize where what's being said to you is coming from and you'll recognize it is not really him, and it's not really her, and it's really not them, and it's really not about you; it's about Satan, and it's about the spiritual forces of evil.

Shoes of Readiness from the Gospel of Peace

Then he says we have our sandals on. This is important to a Roman soldier because Rome was really wise. You know they had a vast military, and they learned of you would take sandals and beef them up a little bit, make them really sturdy with leather soles, and then put objects in the bottom of those soles, when a Roman soldier went into a creek bed, or into the sand, and planted his feet, his foot wouldn't move. If that Roman soldier knew that in hand-to-hand combat, his foundation, his footing, wasn't going to give away, he will be more proactive and stay engaged in the battle. It is

kind of neat today, because our soccer teams, our baseball and football teams, kind of reinvented the military boot and we call it a cleat. How many times have you seen football conditions where it's so bad that the team comes out in one pair of cleats, but go change because that cleat isn't holding on the field? A running back is not going to run with authority if he plants that foot and it gives way. He's not going to plant, so that keep changing that cleat until he feels he is solid, grounded. Here is what the Bible says we have; we not only have a belt of truth and a breastplate of righteousness, we have the shoes of readiness that comes to us from the gospel of peace. You and I will engage in spiritual warfare, we will stay in the conflict for this reason; the gospel frees us up to be ready at all times to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those we are in battle with. Please hear this; a true believer engaged in spiritual warfare recognizes that the person you're talking to is not the enemy. Now, they may not know that. They may think you are the enemy, or you may think I am the enemy. But I know I'm not; the enemy is Satan, the enemy is spiritual warfare. So therefore, I can stay engaged with you and be ready at all times to share with you what I know about the gospel. But listen, even though we are battling in spiritual warfare, the conflict comes with people; people at home, people at work, people at church, and people at school. Don't be deceived! The gospel of peace gives you the grounding, the footing, to stay in those relationships because you're looking for the opportunity to help them. He says we have put this on; we have this on at all times if we are a soldier of the cross.

Shield of Faith

Then Paul says to make sure you take your shield of faith because in all circumstances, there could be a fiery, flaming dart that is shot at you, and the shield of faith will extinguish it; it will quench it. If you are like me, you have seen the movies of the Roman Empire. You've seen a Roman soldier with that round shield on his forearm and a sword in his other, and he is battling one guy and blocking another guy. There was a word that the Romans had for that shield, but that's not the word that is used here. So don't get this picture of you going out doing spiritual warfare like this. No,

the word that is used here to talk about spiritual warfare is the word we get our English word, door, from.

See, a Roman soldier had two shields. He had the little one, but then he had this shield that was like a modern door, about two feet wide and four and a half to five feet tall. When he went into battle in those days, it wasn't warfare like we do warfare. One army marched down into the valley and the other army marched down into the valley, and they hurled their arrows first, took out as many as they could, then they ran at each other. We learned as a country not to fight England that way, or we wouldn't be America. So back in those days, to fight conventional warfare, a man took his shield, his door, with him. Do you know what happened? You lined up shoulder to shoulder with another soldier and you had your 2x5 (door) shield, and he had his 2x5, (door) shield, and so on, and there were several rows of men behind them lined up. Arrows had been configured with ropelike fibers on the end of the arrow, dipped in pitch, and set afire, and when the arrows were released at you, you put your whole body behind that shield. Now, the shield was the modern equivalent of plywood. The Romans took thin pieces of wood and pressed them together, and because of the pressing of those different boards, it would actually allow that arrow to penetrate so deep that the oxygen would be cut off and the fire would go out. It would stick in solid wood and catch the wood on fire, but not plywood, so to speak, and it quenched the darts. So here I am, standing by my buddy, here comes the arrow, and I say let's duck. We duck, and the arrow hits. I'm not doing anything masterfully; I'm just getting behind the shield. I'm letting the shield do what the shield is supposed to do, and that is to protect me from the flaming darts. The darts still hit the shield, but they get put out.

What is the shield that God has given us as a Christian soldier? He has given us faith, yes, faith; confidence in God, trust in God, reliance upon God, belief in God, commitment to God! What I have noticed is when Satan can't penetrate my breastplate; he goes for my shield. He knows when he cannot get me to doubt my heart. No matter what you or others are saying about me, I know my heart. And when they are saying it about you, you know your heart. So that's not going to cause you or me to step down

from spiritual battle when people are saying what you and I know is not true. But when that doesn't work, he causes me to doubt my God. Have you ever doubted your God? Isn't that funny? We don't doubt ourselves because we know ourselves, but we doubt Him. So let me say this; when we start to doubt Him, tighten that belt up one more notch, that belt of truth of who He is and what you know about Him. Then stand behind the faith of what you know about God, and don't let Satan cause you to doubt Him. If you will keep your faith anchored in God and stay behind the shield of faith, it will extinguish all the flaming darts.

The Helmet of Salvation

Then make sure you put on the helmet. Don't just pack it around. Put it on. Fasten it, the helmet of salvation. I want to correct us as Baptists here. We Baptists are really strong, good, anchored in when we see the word, salvation. We think of it in the past tense, "I've been saved." And hopefully, you have been saved and I've been saved. Many times in the Bible when it talks about salvation, it is talking about the past tense of salvation, being justified. I am right with God and have been set free from the penalty of sin. But there are also times in the Bible when salvation isn't talking about the past tense; it is talking about the present tense, being saved at this very moment, being transformed further and further away from Adam, and more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. But the Bible also talks about a future tense of salvation, of the day when Jesus Christ comes and I will once and for all be set free from the presence of sin, forever and ever, and I will get a glorified body and be just like Jesus Christ forever and ever. When the Bible talks about me putting on the helmet of salvation, based on what Paul said to the church at Thessalonica when he also told that church to put on the breastplate of faith and love, he said to put on the helmet, and he called the helmet the hope of your salvation. When the Bible is using the word, hope, it is not wishful thinking. That is confident expectation. It is talking about that tense that hasn't happened yet that is in the future. Here is the point, because we have been justified, we are being sanctified. Please hear me say this; if the trend in your life is that you aren't being sanctified, not becoming more and more like Christ, then chances are you are not justified. You can have a moment

of not being like Christ, but if your trend is you are not like Christ, you are probably not saved. For those who are justified and are being sanctified, the hope you have is that you are eternally secure, and one day you will be glorified and live with God forever and ever. And that is not based on what you do for Him; it is based on what He did for you when He took your sin, not in part, but all of your sin, and put it on His Son and His Son gave you His total righteousness.

So listen to me. Here's what we Christians have confidence in; I'm going to stay on the battlefield because when I'm on the battlefield, I have this promise that all things work together for good. So, there is nothing ever going to happen to me in spiritual warfare that will cause me to lose my salvation or one day not be just like Jesus Christ. That hope, that guarantee that I am eternally secure allows me to hang in the battle. I wear that in my mind and I know that my destination is secure, so it doesn't matter what happens on this battlefield. If Satan takes me out, I just immediately go into glory with God.

I really love to read the writing of one of the guys who pastors a church, and he told this story. I don't know if it's true, but he tells it to be true and I trust him and I think it is true. Do any of you remember Lord Cromwell, the protector? Do you remember that from history? His infantry, his army, would go into battle, and historically they never lost a battle. Lord Cromwell, the protector, never lost a battle, and here is what historians say the reason they think his troops never lost a battle. Now, I'm going to introduce a word that we don't talk about here at Hardin very often. It's a term some of you may not know, and I'll define it for you briefly. But historians say the reason his troops never lost was because they were "Calvinists." Now Calvinist is a spiritual term. It is a term, which applies to people who believe, basically, that they are eternally secure because of, not what they do for salvation, but what God has done for them for salvation. These people also believe that God is sovereign over the affairs of His children. He has actually ordained, oversees, their life, so that not only are they going to Heaven when they die, but wherever they find themselves in this world, they trust God has a purpose for them being there. Historians believe because these people, these soldiers, were also

spiritual, with a belief about God that if they lost their life on a battlefield they would just be promoted to glory. They believed they were supposed to be there because they were fighting for a higher good, for God's good, so they never backed down, they weren't afraid to sacrifice their life, and they never lost. Is that amazing?

Can I just say that you and I at Hardin Baptist Church, we are Christians and we believe we are eternally secure in Christ, and we believe that God is sovereign over our life, He has a purpose for us being on the spiritual battlefield, and if we really believe that, we will not back down! It's not our belief in military tactics; it's my belief in God and our security in God that causes us to be willing to lay my life down for your sake, and you would lay yours down for my sake because we are not going to let Satan take from us what is most valuable to us! So let's put that helmet on and understand that on this battlefield we are eternally secure in Christ. Therefore, you don't lose your salvation in battle, you use your salvation, and your salvation in Christ influences you to fight the battle righteously and truthfully, and be ready to share the gospel at all time and extinguish all those fiery darts Satan might throw at us.

The Sword of the Spirit

The last thing he says that we do not leave lying on the floor is our sword. Paul calls it the sword of the Spirit, and then he modifies it to say, "...which is the Word of God." There were two words for Roman swords. There was that big sword you see on TV that takes both hands, and you just sling it. Then there is that little Roman sword that was anywhere from six to eighteen inches long. That is the word here for sword, the little one. It is the one you become a master at. But here is what's amazing; there are two words in the Greek New Testament for 'word.' One is 'Logos,' the other is 'Rhema.' In John 1 when it identifies Jesus as the Word of God, it is Logos. Jesus is the Logos of God. When Logos refers to Jesus and the Word of God, it refers to the whole of God, the whole of God's Word. But Rhema is not referring to the whole. Listen to this; Rhema refers to the part of the whole that you know. Did you catch that? When I became a Christian, I don't know why, I think it was because I was raised in a church where my Granddaddy Bogard taught me that we were a people of the

book, and I knew people of the book meant we were a people of the Bible, so once I got saved, I started taking my Bible everywhere I went. I took it to school as a thirteen-year-old kid. When I learned to drive, I put it on the dash of my truck or car. I just took it everywhere I went. I kind of had this thought *I have the Word of God with me*. I thought it worked like this; I've got the Word, I've got the Logos, and then I remember God opening my eyes as I started learning Greek. This Word is Rhema. When I begin to look up Rhema, it wasn't talking about the totality of this book. Rhema wasn't talking about having this on your coffee table, on your desk at work, in your nightstand, on the dash of your truck. It's not that book you brought this morning. Rhema is the part of this that you actually know. In spiritual battle, you don't get to search through it, "I know it is somewhere in here; give me ten minutes. Somewhere, I know...it's in here, trust me!" No, no, it is the part you know. In Matthew 3, Jesus is declared the Son of God, by God. In Matthew 4, Satan tempts Him and says if You are, then prove it. Jesus said, "It is written," then He quotes the Scriptures. Let me ask you this question. If your sword is only as long as the Scripture that you know, how long is your sword? Some of you are doing battle with a sword just this big, rather than really doing battle with the Sword of God. My grandchildren, when it's Star Wars season, are trying to become masters of the lightsaber. When it is Lord of the Rings we are watching, they are trying to become masters of the sword. As a soldier of Christ, you should desire to be a master of the sword, so let's study it. Let's memorize it. Let's meditate on it, because not only does your life depend on it, the life of your spouse and your children, your church, and your friends depend on it too.