

Sermon for August 22, 2021  
Nebraska Synod, ELCA, online sermons  
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Ephesians 6:10-20

“Putting on the armor of God! God’s not through with me yet!!!”

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen. Being prepared is very important when you are in battle with evil that is in our world today. When I went into the service, the Navy, we had to go to 13 weeks of boot camp where we were to prepare for any situation that we may encounter. We had to learn how to work as a unit, be prepared, put on the armor of God to protect yourself from the enemy.

Sometimes we take shortcuts to get where we want to be, but that may cost someone their life. When we buy furniture, we start putting furniture together without reading instructions. Someone might say, “Come on, Fred; no one is that careless.” Yet someone’s life is on the line, and they have a list of steps they must follow in order to remain safe. You can bet that nobody would skip a step or two and still be in their right mind.

Sure, we have skipped a step or two when we put together an “easy to assemble” product, yet we often still manage to come out on top. That sounds like a rational argument, but I do not believe God would agree. He has seen first-hand how His people, His creation, skip His plan of salvation simply so they can do their own thing. There are people risking eternal life by rejecting Jesus.

Jesus says, “If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers.” Yet there are individuals who are willing to ignore their eternal lifesaving faith by staying out of the church and away from God’s Word. In fact, we have all followed our own list of do’s and don’ts, rights and wrongs over and above God’s Word because our foolish way of thinking often seeks to cast out God’s wisdom. It is our sin that produces pride within us, enough to think we know better instead of what God wants to share with us today.

This is all the more reason why our Lord speaks to us through Paul to put on the full armor of God. He wants to make it clear that we Christians are in for one heavy battle -- a battle so intense that if we skip one step we will not be able to stand against the enemy much less hold on to victory.

This warning can be found in Ephesians 6:10–18. The book of Ephesians has much to say on what God wants us to do in response to Faith in Christ Jesus. Paul directs us to the Wisdom in Christ, to realize that we have been made alive in Jesus whereby we were once dead in our trespasses. Paul encourages us to remember how Jesus took us in to His own family and that we should remember where we came from.

I am continually giving thanks for where we are heading. We are called to live as children of the light now. Our understanding is no longer darkened thanks to God's living Word that we are imitators of God in all that we do and say, think and feel.

Now, in the last chapter of Ephesians, Paul says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power." This is God's desire for us that we keep on seeking to be strengthened not by our own power or efforts, but solely upon the brute force power of Almighty God. We are just too weak to fight the good fight of faith on our own. We are up against something very dark and menacing, and if left on our own devices we do not stand a chance. It is unique to God's Word to give us all that we need stand a chance.

Therefore, we must lean completely upon God's brute force power which can best be described as hurricane force winds against a feather. To God, Satan's attacks are but a feather in the wind. But to us, the devil's attacks are vicious if we choose to face them without the protection God wishes to provide.

Therefore, our Lord calls us, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Here now is the Lord, the creator of all things, giving to us the tools for the sole purpose of protecting us against the devil's attacks.

The Greek word for schemes is Methodias which may be translated as tricks, lies, doubts, or appeals to the old Adam. Revelation 12:12 says, "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fear because he knows that his time is short." We are also told that Satan is enraged and is seeking to devour us. He has an infinite number of fallen angels, now demons, who will seek to destroy our faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, our Lord gives us His armor to protect us.

But notice, we are commanded to put on the full armor of God. It does sound good to be standing in the front lines with my helmet and breast plate. The breastplate is there to protect exposed areas. God will provide the strength we need to hold our ground against Satan's attacks but, there can be no skipping steps. We cannot go into this battle ill-equipped.

The Greek word Methodias sounds like the English word method and for good reason. Satan has a method; he has a plan to attack. He is no fool. Each attack will be well planned, and when it comes it will be ferocious. God is warning us by reminding us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

This does not mean that there is evil in heaven. What Paul is saying is that whenever we reflect upon God's Word, His promises, and anything that deals with our salvation in Christ, there will be Satan and his angels seeking to remove those promises, to cast doubt over them, or to take away their effect upon our soul. This is how serious God is with this armor. We again hear these words, "Put on the full armor of God so that when the day comes, you may stand your ground."

Thank God that he does not expect us to create our own armor. The good news is that this armor of the God of all creation has been given freely to us through Jesus Christ. The armor was worn by Jesus himself in the wilderness when Satan attacked again and again. Satan encouraged Jesus to come down from the cross to save himself.

Secondly, it is ours to wear and all we need to do is to put on, completely, allowing no part of us to be unprotected. When we battle, when we struggle, the

Greek word used to define this battle is a tussle. We must not forget that our enemies are not weak. They will bring doubt, causing you to believe that this one sin you keep on sinning cannot possibly be forgiven because you have yet to master it. The devil will remind you of all your faults and failings, and suggest to you that God does not want someone like you. In times of great trial, he will suggest to you that God does not want someone like you.

Maybe you lost your job, so you think God is punishing you. You just got bad news about your health, so you think God is punishing you. This is just a portion of the attacks we can receive. But do not worry, for we have the armor of God to defend us.

And yes, you will notice that all the armor that Paul is talking about is for defense. Jesus took care of the devil. He already defeated Satan when he rose from the grave, and won for us eternal life. Now God gives us what we need to be victorious as well. It's all about the armor for defense.

The first goal of God is to protect us, and the second goal of God is for us to be standing in the end, so let us take a closer look at this so we can see just how you use this equipment God has so graciously given.

First, we are to stand firm with the belt of truth. The belt of truth against the devil's lies. The devil's lies can be victorious. He will try to convince you that God is too busy to care about your problem because you have been away from church so long. The devil will lie that the Lord no longer has any interest in you. When you wear this belt of truth, God's Word can remind you of the Father's love for you, and that that love is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Next, we have the breast plate. God himself is symbolically described as putting on this breastplate when seeking Justice. Our breastplate is one of righteousness. That is your acquittal against the devil's accusation. Satan will endeavor to point out every flaw, every failing, every mistake and oversight, and make you think that you are unworthy to receive the precious Gospel of Jesus. He will point out that you and I are sinners. However, this breastplate points out that we are Holy in God's sight, thanks to Jesus, and yes, we are deemed righteous.

The boots we wear are made for walking as the country song says. However, we are to wear those boots for the good news of Jesus Christ. We walk in the Good News of Peace. We are not God's enemies as the Devil would have you believe. He will whisper in your ear all sorts of accusations and horrors of what is yet to come. He will point out your despair and feelings of hopelessness. And yet, despite all those sins you can own the peace that surpasses all understanding, thanks to the boots you wear as your part of the Armor of God.

I had an accident in August 2014 and it paralyzed me from the chest down. I had to put on the Armor of God to get me through this time of trial. The devil wanted me to give up on my ministry in Callaway Nebraska. But God said, I am not done with you yet!!! I have to keep on with the Armor of God because he, the devil, is still working, trying to turn me away from Jesus. It is not my will, but God's will. Without the Armor of God, I would not have the peace I have now.

There will still be days when all sorts of evil comes crashing around your head. All sorts of disasters will come at you hard, especially when you belong to the Lord. The devil will instruct you that you no longer have any hope; that life is dismal. The one who suffers with cancer and lays in bed for hours at a time will receive this taunt. Yet the helmet of salvation restores you to the promises of eternal life won for you before you ever utter a single word, or cry out with your first discomfort.

As the hymn 555 says, "Salvation has come by God free grace and favor. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, Who did for all the world to atone. He is our one Redeemer."

You can see that all of this armor is for defense - even the last piece, which is the Short Sword. The Sword of the Spirit is sharp as the Word of God that comes out of our mouth. Satan will encourage you to lean on man's word, man's understanding and strength. He will come at you in close quarters where a spear is ineffective. However, the short sword can hold off the enemy. And, as Martin Luther wrote in his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God", "One little word subdues him, the devil. Jesus said, "It is finished," and Satan was done for. Jesus says, "no" to the devil, and he was eternally bound.

The sword of the Spirit is with us. Satan's might is doomed to fail. With God's Word we still stand. We can do no other. I think it is safe to say that when the Lord God Almighty offers us his armor for protection, we need it all. We are wise in Christ. No, we should not take any shortcuts with God's Word, and that daily His Armor should be upon us.

Reading God's Word is the Armor that we need daily, and we will continually be praying for. We are ready for all the attacks as we stand our ground. We are first, therefore, to pray in the Spirit on all occasions, especially asking God to make sure that his armor is upon us as we remain faithful to stay in God's Holy Word. Amen.