

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: The Full Armor of God, Ephesians 6:10-20

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INTRODUCTION: My three points are:

1. Warfare in the spiritual realm is very real.
2. Paul provided a checklist for war readiness.
3. The final item on every checklist should be faith in God.

In Chapter 6, Paul continues his writing about submission to authority. I'm skipping the section on slavery because I believe Paul was dealing with an issue in his day, and unfortunately this very scripture was used by preachers to justify slavery before the Civil War. I believe to get into this part of the Ephesians would conjure up old American arguments and deter from what Paul was saying. If you read all of Ephesians at one time, you'll note the tone of the letter on order and submission to one another.

I'll start with verse ten where Paul wrote about the armor of God.

First, WARFARE IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM IS VERY REAL.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:10-12 ¹⁰ *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.* ¹¹ *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.* ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

EXPLANATION: Right here, Paul told the people of Ephesus what the real battle was. With all the conflicts they had among themselves he said their real battle was not against flesh and blood, and by that he meant people, but things in the spiritual realm.

If we compiled all the Biblical knowledge of the spiritual realm and studied it closely, it might seem we have a lot of information. But I believe we only know a fraction of the spiritual realm. We cannot trust any source but the Bible about the spiritual realm. It's best to avoid any book or any person who claims to have knowledge of the spiritual realm outside of the Bible.

God only gives us glimpses of what's beyond this earth because we wouldn't be able to handle any more than he's given us.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:13-17 ¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.* ¹⁴ *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,* ¹⁵ *and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.* ¹⁶ *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.* ¹⁷ *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

In this passage, the apostle Paul gives us a checklist of things we need to defend ourselves against—Satan and his cohorts. The reason many are overtaken by the enemy is because they haven't worked according to their checklist. They only are partially armed. Have you made a checklist before vacation or some type of trip or event and realized later that your checklist was lacking? A few here today have been in war. Do you remember the checklists? Can you imagine being at war and not having what you need? Military people spend their entire careers reviewing checklists and making sure they are prepared for something they hope they'll never have to do.

ILLUSTRATION: Two weeks ago, I had a checklist. I was selected to ride in a T-38, which is a small jet plane used as a trainer. Many of you are familiar with this plane from the old TV sign-off commercial from years ago. It featured a white jet and a video of the poem entitled "High Flight." Before I could fly, I had to go through some training. I had a checklist of things I had to accomplish and went to several classes. It really was information overload.

I had to know how to egress in case of an emergency. I learned how the ejection seat works, how the parachute system works, and I went to a fitting room to get a flight outfit—a helmet, an oxygen mask, a vest, and pants that inflated while experiencing G force to keep all my blood from rushing to my legs and going unconscious. I broke out in a nervous sweat trying to remember all the information and trying to get fitted in the flight suit. I was excited but didn't sleep well that night.

The next morning, I ate half of a banana, drank some water, and went to meet the pilot. I learned our mission was a bombing mission. My pilot was an instructor, and the student pilot would be in a plane near us.

As I got suited up and went to the plane, I kept reviewing everything. I had a small sense of panic I had forgotten something. I kept looking over my flight suit and making sure it was on properly. Another student pilot helped me get fastened in the cockpit. I believe there were nine seatbelts total. He told me to put on my helmet and try on my oxygen mask to make sure it fit well. When I put on the oxygen mask, I realized there wasn't enough oxygen. I removed the mask and said, "This isn't working very well." The student pilot said, "*That's because we haven't turned it on yet.*" And, then, before I knew it, we were in the air. I'm glad they gave me a checklist so I would be prepared.

Let's go back to the spiritual armor.

Second, PAUL PROVIDED A CHECKLIST FOR WAR READINESS.

The first item on the checklist is to stand firm – *Having done all to stand, stand firm.* It doesn't say, *having done all to stand, sit down.* Nor does it say *having done all to stand, give up.* That's where I think we blow it over and over. Spiritually, we prepare and then give up.

Let's think of preparing for spiritual warfare like a military person prepares for battle. A military person spends his or her career preparing for something he or she hopes will never happen. If we had peace for many years, it would be really easy for our guards to be down. World War II caught the nation off guard, and soldiers trained with broom sticks until enough guns were made.

Having done all to stand, stand firm could be restated as *having done all to be ready, stay ready*. Spiritually, we should be vigilant. Honestly, I don't have the final word on how things work in the spiritual realm. I don't really understand why evil things happen like they do. Of course, I could give you some trite answers, but I'm never satisfied with those. What I do know is the scripture is clear: *when the day of evil comes—it's coming—we should be prepared*. Satan and his forces of evil are making their battle plans right now. Are we ready?

I recall a Korean friend from long ago who told me his people prayed to build up a reservoir of prayer in order to draw from it when times got tough. He said we should pray as fervently when things are going well as when things are not going well.

Next, Paul said to have the belt of truth – I'd ask you not to get so caught up with the image of a warrior's belt and to lose sight of what Paul meant. We should all know the truths of scriptures. We should be able to discern right from wrong and between what is genuine and what is the deception of the devil. We should be able to discern what is truth, half-truth, and all out lies.

We hear a lot today about fake news, and I've brought up the topic several times. Have you ever thought fake news has been around since the Garden of Eden? Have you ever thought Satan is the creator of fake news? The serpent tempted Eve with fake news.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 3:4-5 ⁴*And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.*

Christians, know the truth, and you won't be so easily deceived.

Next on Paul's checklist is the breastplate of righteousness – Again, don't get so caught up with the image of armor and lose sight of righteousness. The Greek word for righteousness here is *dikaio suné* (dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay), which is used ninety-two times and means "divine approval." An even more literal definition is "God's judicial approval after his examination." Wow, what a powerful definition of the word *righteousness*.

Every single person should know we are not righteous on our own terms. The scripture is clear, *There is none righteous, no not one* (Romans 3:10). After God's examination of us, without forgiveness of sin, we are guilty, but with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, his righteousness blocks our lack of righteousness. The image here is the putting on of righteousness, which is really the putting on of Christ. What better lives we'd have if, when we got up every morning, we went through a routine where we intentionally put on Christ and each and every day we surrendered our will to his. Living this way, we would realize our day is directed and protected by his righteousness.

You may be listening to me and realizing your failures might be due to doing it all on your own terms without putting on Christ.

The third piece of spiritual armor is found in verse 15— *and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.* That's an interesting combination of words.

Next on the checklist is the helmet of salvation – The helmet protects the head and the brain, which controls our thoughts and our actions. I Corinthians 2 says we have the mind of Christ—at least those who are surrendered and growing believers have it. Having the mind of Christ means we will see the world through his plan and perspective, which is salvation for all who believe.

Next on the checklist is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God – The sword of the ancient warrior was the weapon of action. It would be absurd for the warrior to be ready for battle and have no weapon. The scripture is the Gospel of peace as I just mentioned. If we are to be people of peace with the Gospel of peace then why do we need a weapon? This is not your typical weapon. It is not meant to kill people. As believers in Christ, our weapon of action is God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 4:12 ¹² *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

I continue to wonder how many believers read, study, and even think about the Bible. My guess is not that many, and that's why the church continues to lose the war against pop culture. I watched a sermon online not too long ago, and there wasn't much Bible taught. I listened to another preacher, and the Bible teaching was rich and insightful. There was a clear difference.

Since we call ourselves people of the Bible, it should be important to us, right? If it's hard for you to understand, remember the advice you've heard before— focus on what's clear, and the unclear passages will become clearer. All believers need the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Fourth, THE FINAL ITEM ON EVERY CHECKLIST SHOULD BE FAITH IN GOD.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:16 ¹⁶ *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*

EXPLANATION: Faith is what holds off the enemy. Satan hates your faith in God and wants to see it destroyed. He hates your faith in others and wants to see it destroyed. Having faith means you are constantly taking another step of faith to make you stronger.

ILLUSTRATION: Just Friday, I learned about a friend losing his job. Being a man of faith, he is convinced God has something better for him, and when he told me what happened to him, I believe it to. I'll tell you his story before long.

APPLICATION: If you are God's child, he'll challenge your faith because he wants you to trust him more.

According to Paul's vivid image in this scripture, if Satan shoots his flaming arrows at you, your shield of faith will put them out.

Paul closes his letter to the church at Ephesus with an instruction for prayer and a prayer request.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 6:18-20 ¹⁸ *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.* ¹⁹ *Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words*

may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Then Paul goes on to say that man who delivered his letter to them would give them more information about his situation. He was in jail in Rome for preaching the Gospel.

The question remains: How did the church fare after the received Paul's letter? The Book of Revelation tells us the church at Ephesus worked hard and persevered, they did not tolerate wicked people, they exposed false apostles, and they remained strong. But Revelation tells us more—they had forsaken their first love.

ILLUSTRATION: I want to return to my story about the plane flight. The mission was a bombing mission. We flew to a practice field, and the pilot dove toward a target numerous times. He didn't drop any practice bombs because today they use electronic targets. After each practice run, the pilot got his score. The student pilot was nearby doing the same run.

On the flight back to the base, I was glad we finally leveled off. My curiosity was now satisfied...I went through the training, went on the bombing mission, and was now headed back. Then the pilot asked if I wanted to take the stick. Of course you know my answer. He told me to hold it at 5,000 feet. I took the stick, and immediately we dropped about 300 feet. Then we went to about 5,200 feet. With a little coaching, I was able to hold the plane steady for about five seconds. I turned it to the right and to the left. Then the pilot took over, and we headed toward the runway. You know, my life was in the hands of the pilot. I had confidence in him. If I did not have confidence, I would have been afraid the whole time because my knowledge of it all would not have been enough to save my own life had there been trouble.

APPLICATION: I thought about that experience while reading about Paul's description about spiritual armor. Paul talked about readiness, being alert, and being ready for an unexpected attack. He provided us with a checklist. We can work the checklist. We can be ready for the attack, but ultimately our lives are in God's hands. Just as I had full confidence in the pilot, we must have full confidence God will go ahead of us and fight the battle for us.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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