

Our Mission:

*To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus*



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Paul is writing to a congregation that has experienced persecution by both the Jews and Gentiles. Yet, he wants to be clear that the most important 'battle' is one of the spirit or the soul. In other letters he speaks of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5.22,23), or he describes different spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12), while here he speaks of the character of a Christ follower utilizing the imagery of the battlefield. What he does here as elsewhere is draw a distinct contrast to the ways of God's people and the ways of the world.

Theology Connection:

In some ways what Paul writes of here is the clear cry of the Reformation movement. Luther was unwilling to accept the tradition of the church as his foremost desire was the truth. A right relationship with God founded upon grace was more important than fidelity to the hierarchy of the church. Standing upon the gospel alone gave him peace despite the threats against him. Faith in God alone was his shield, and ultimately this was the path toward salvation. Finally, Luther, moved by the Spirit was willing to engage in the theological battle with those who opposed him.

Application:

Every day our faith is challenged in one way or another. We are constantly being tempted to compromise what we believe in order to get along in this world. A passage such as this one, offer us encouragement to know what it is that we hold true, and to stand for that truth no matter the consequences. Ultimately, God will vindicate those who put the values of the Kingdom above the temptations of the world.

The Text: Ephesians 6: 10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

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. 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

ADULT

A text like this can make it seem so cut and dried. Stand for the truth. Don't be swayed by false promises. Keep the faith. Yet, we know that the world is far more complex, and often it is nearly impossible to discern the truth. Yet Paul is asking us to get back to the basics of the faith; knowing we are loved might we act in love? Does the truth really ask us to despise those who disagree with us? Does the truth ask us to disregard factual knowledge? Does the truth ask us to close our minds and our hearts to others?

YOUTH

I love this, "The armor of God."

We are not left defenseless in this world against evil, but that we have the armor of God protecting us. Recently we have witnessed the ugliness of hostile forces trying to get political power. Constant back and forth throwing mud at each other. To prevent the forces of chaos from reigning, nations need military power capable of defense and offense.

Think of firefighters chasing fires all over the city, as soon as they put one fire out, three more rise up. Of course, freedom-fighting forces could just give up and say: it's not worth it! However, the consequences would be worse than the present solution! It would be like the fire department saying: let the arsonists have their way and let the whole city burn down!

The good news is that we have God's armor protecting us. That does not mean that we are completely out of harm's way, as we still must fight battles, but we have every assurance that we will prevail with God on our side.

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for providing us all with invisible armor. Please help us put it to good use. In Jesus' name. Amen.

CHILDREN'S

Today's scripture comes from the book of Ephesians. Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus to remind them that God gives them everything they need to fight the battle against evil. Paul wrote this letter when he was in prison, where he was surrounded by Roman guards. Paul probably noticed the armor that they wore and thought that the ways that God protects us is a lot like armor! The first piece of armor is the belt of truth. We find truth in God, and when we wrap this truth around us like a belt, it holds everything together. Our second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness.

Even though we all sin, when we put our trust in Christ, we are forgiven. Boots are worn to protect your feet and help a soldier to run bravely into battle. Paul said our shoes are like the gospel. It gives us courage to run and tell everyone about Jesus. Next is our shield! Paul said our shield is our faith in Christ.

Why should we wear a helmet? God has given us the helmet of salvation to protect us from evil lies. God has also given us a weapon, the sword of the Spirit. It can defeat all our enemies so we should never be without it!

Pray:

Dear God,
Thank You for giving us armor to protect us from evil. Help us to remember each day to trust in You!
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.