

**DISCOVER
OUR
SPIRITUAL
WEAPONS**

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November 22, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: To win spiritual battles, we must use spiritual weapons, not man-made weapons.

Congregational reading: Ephesians 6:10-18 NKJV

Scriptures: (NKJV) Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:4

Eph. 6:10-18 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

When someone signs up for service in the armed forces, they are immediately sent away to “boot camp” for a time of training in the basics of warfare. There is a very good reason for this. The new recruits don’t know how to fight. They don’t know anything about army discipline, weapons or tactics. They don’t know how to march, salute, take

orders or wear their uniform. Their muscles are undeveloped, and they have no physical endurance. They are soldiers in name only – they don't yet know the art and science of war and fighting.

It is very important for soldiers to be well trained in combat and battle techniques before they go to war and engage the enemy in the field. Because the truth is, **there is only one objective on either side: the death of their opponent.**

Wars are not fought 9 to 5 Monday to Friday with coffee breaks. On the front lines, there is no lunch hour or time-outs. If a soldier needs a rest, the commander has to figure out how to replace him in the trenches because the enemy is always advancing.

Likewise, every new Christian has to receive basic training in how to fight 'spiritual warfare'. Most new believers begin their Christian walk with a joyful, carefree attitude, having just been freed from the bondage of sin and Satan. However, the enemy of our soul hates to lose a battle, so immediately after our deliverance from his domain, he begins a new attack to reclaim his lost territory: YOU!

Therefore, we must learn to fight. Quickly.

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The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus somewhere around 60AD, at a time when Rome was the world's imperial power. Roman soldiers were everywhere and the sight of them struck fear in the hearts of those they had conquered, whose lands they were occupying. As a good teacher, trying to prepare his converts for the spiritual battles ahead, Paul compared a Christian's preparation for spiritual battle with that of a Roman soldier.



From our scripture reading, **there are seven aspects of our preparation for war** that we need to discuss (all of which are illustrated in the picture of the soldier above):

- The **truth** of the word of God is our basic, 'core' defensive armour
- **Righteousness** is an offensive weapon that protects that which is most vital to us
- Sharing **the gospel** is another offensive weapon that brings deliverance to others
- **Faith** is a defensive armour that protects us against Satan's assaults
- The reality of our **salvation** is defensive armour that protects our minds
- The **word of God** is another powerful offensive weapon
- Spirit-led **prayer** is used both offensively and defensively to protect and strengthen our brethren and ourselves

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth

If you are doing any kind of workout program, you will have been taught about the importance of strengthening your core. The abdominal and lower back muscles are crucial for posture, flexibility and balance. They protect our spine and internal organs like our stomach, intestines, liver, kidneys and reproductive system. Without these muscles, we would not be able to stand, sit, walk or run. We cannot ignore our core. And we cannot ignore truth! As Jesus stated in His high priestly prayer in John 17:17:

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

As we have learned many times over, there is absolutely no substitute for the word of God!

The muscles in our “core” protect organs that are mainly responsible for removing toxins from our bodies. And this is exactly what the word of God does. It cleanses and purifies us. At our core, we need the “washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26). Thus, the truth of the word of God is the first part of our spiritual arsenal.

Put on the breastplate of righteousness

The soldier’s breastplate covered his ribcage, another important part of the human skeletal system that protects the vital organs of heart and lungs. Without a functioning heart or lungs, we will die within seconds or at most, a few short minutes. If we cannot breathe, or if there is no life-giving blood pumping through our veins, we cannot sustain life. And that is how important righteousness is in a Christian’s life. It is like fresh air and well-oxygenated blood. Righteousness sustains our spiritual life and allows us to continue the fight against our enemy.

Unrighteousness (knowingly and consistently doing what we know is wrong) will quickly kill us. It is like breathing carbon monoxide or suffering a massive heart attack. Death is swift unless immediate remedial action is taken. Therefore, the breastplate of righteousness must *always* be in place.

Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace

We know that we need to live consistent, godly Christian lives as a witness to the world around us. But apart from just living, we need to speak and share the gospel of Jesus Christ! Everyone needs to hear the good news:

- Jesus died in our place, for our sins, taking the penalty we had earned. We no longer have to face eternal death for our own sins!
- He was buried. This confirmed and verified His death. (And for those who may speculate that He wasn't really dead on the cross, the preparation of His body for burial ensured that He would have died of suffocation, if nothing else.) It is important to know that Jesus actually died and was buried. He took our sins with Him to the grave and they will never be brought back 'from the dead' to be used against us!
- He rose again on the third day, as He Himself prophesied (John 2:19-21). Jesus is alive! And because He lives, in a new, glorified, eternal, immortal body, we also shall live in a new, glorified, eternal, immortal body (1 Cor. 15: 42-45; Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11).

Take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one

According to the Oxford Dictionary, faith is a “complete trust or confidence in someone or something ... a strongly held belief or theory.”

God has made our lives to be lived by faith. Faith in the air we breathe and the food we eat. Faith in the promises of those who are closest to us and faith in the goodwill of our neighbours. Faith in the doctors who prescribe the drugs we put into our bodies and faith in the banks that hold our money. Faith in the elevators that take us to the 45th floor of our office towers and faith in the pilots and airplanes that take us to our vacation destinations. We live by faith. There is no other way to live.

God demands that we live *for* Him based on our faith *in* Him. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). **When we have this kind of faith in God, complete and unwavering, the enemy cannot destroy us with his fiery darts of doubt.**

Many people have faced situations that have caused them to ask the questions: “Does God know what’s happening with me?” “Does God care about what’s happening with me?” “Will God act on my behalf?” Or: “*When* will God act on my behalf?”

When a child of God faces questions like this, she picks up her shield of faith and declares like Job: “I know my redeemer lives!” (Job 19:25), or “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). This shield of faith quenches the darts of doubt even if we don’t see the answers we are hoping for. Hebrews 11:13 speaks of those who “died in faith, not having received the promises, but ... were

assured of them” and “embraced them.” Such is the power of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Take the helmet of salvation

The helmet protects the skull. The skull protects the brain. The brain is the control centre for everything that goes on inside our bodies. It regulates and processes all the stimuli related to our senses and our nervous system, controls movement, memory, artistic and scientific abilities, emotions, intelligence, imagination, and so much more. Every thought and intention is processed through the brain. Without a functioning brain, we are in a comatose state (at best), or dead.

In our Christian walk, we must strive to have “the mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5), which allows us to think, act and speak as Jesus did. This is possible, desirable and doable in the context of our salvation.

As one songwriter said: “I’m saved and I know that I am!” From the moment of our conversion to the moment we meet Jesus in His eternal kingdom, we need to live in the reality of our salvation. This is what Jesus did for us. This is what we have freely received by faith in Him. This is the present state of my soul, all because of Him. I’m saved, and I know that I am! This causes me to think straight. Without this understanding, we would have no hope and we would be the most miserable and pitiable of people (1 Cor. 15:19).

Use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

Our most powerful offensive weapon against the enemy is the word of God. This is what Jesus taught us as He fought

the classic battle against temptation in the wilderness, after His baptism (Luke 4:1-13). He was extremely weak in the flesh from fasting as He faced His archenemy Satan. Therefore, in the three temptations that are specifically recorded for our example, He did not attempt to defeat Satan in His human strength. He used the word of God to counteract the power of the temptations, rendering them powerless and ineffective.

As David said:

Psalm 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

Then the writer to the Hebrews tells us:

Heb. 4:12 ... the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In every situation we face, we must ask ourselves: “What does the word of God have to say about this?” Then we speak the Word into our situation, strengthening ourselves and defeating the devil.

Pray at all times... in the Spirit

There are many things we do not see, know, or understand. Many situations face us (and our brothers and sisters) that are unexpected and potentially devastating. But Paul said: “having done all... stand.” And the last aspect of how we “stand”, (having taken on all the other six aspects of our armour and weaponry), is that we pray.

- Pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17).
 - o That's how the church prayed for Peter when he was in prison, sentenced to death (Acts 12:5). In fact, in the 28 chapters of the Book of Acts, Luke talks about people praying 34 times.
- Pray night and day (2 Tim. 2:8).
- Pray without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8).
- Pray in the Spirit (Jude 20)
- Pray with your intellect (1 Cor. 14:15)
- Pray in other tongues (1 Cor. 14:14)

Just pray! Even if we are weak in this area, the Holy Spirit will help us and pray on our behalf (Rom. 8:26-27).

As we can clearly see, none of the elements of our Christian armour and war preparations is dispensable. Which part of it could we possibly do without? Everything must be in place at all times. Every morning, we must go through our checklist to make sure we are ready for battle. Every evening, we need to re-group, re-fresh, re-energize, re-focus, re-dedicate and re-commit ourselves to fighting the good fight of faith so we can lay hold of eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). Remember:

2 Cor. 10:3-6 ... though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶ and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Onward Christian Soldiers! Let us ensure that all seven aspects of our preparation for battle are in place and let us take the fight to the enemy. The very gates of hell cannot prevail against the church of the living God (Matt. 16:18).

Remember: Being a soldier in God's army is a lifetime calling that demands our full attention at all times:

2 Tim. 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

And let us also remember that we are assured of victory, in Jesus' name!