

1. EPHESIANS WEEK #15 – SJGC

“Spiritual Warfare, Part 2”

Ephesians 6:10-18

JEFF

We saw last week that the first few verses introduce the topic of spiritual warfare. Which is interesting, because we find that some Lutherans and other Christians don't want to really address this topic. And don't want to talk about the devil.

Martin Luther himself wasn't shy about this in the least, however. And we know why. When you are leading a movement to reform the only church that exists and you've been thrown out of said church, and people are trying to kill you because you won't shut up about what needs to change, there can be no illusion that you are in the thick of a spiritual battle.

Consider these words of Luther from the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”, which we urged you to sample last week if you got a chance...

1. A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

3. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

(Martin Luther, 1529. Public domain.)

The little word, of course, is Jesus.
Because he has authority over the Devil.

But back to this section on Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians 6... It's no accident that these instructions come on the heels of 3 sections devoted to how we should be treating one another in Spirit-filled relationships.

Paul wants us to know that we will be doing this work and indeed living out our discipleship within the context of a full-on ENEMY ATTACK.

JEFF

An army of spiritual darkness and wickedness is arrayed against us as we strive to live as disciples of Jesus. Last week, we took a look at the tactics of these enemies that the passage calls principalities and powers.

Tonight we'll look at the arsenal of the Spirit that will empower us to defeat those our enemies, **the full armor of God.**

The full armor of God. What does that mean? In 1 John we're told that all of us are always fighting against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. These are the dimensions of the evil that we are fighting.

The old pagan religions always saw spirits behind every tree. If you had problems, you probably had gotten a spirit upset with you, so you needed to sacrifice to the tree god, or the water god, or the harvest god, or something like that.

In a sense, they saw all of our problems to be spiritual. They were superstitious. They believed everything had to do with demons, with evils spirits, and so on.

But some sociologists blame the world, and insist that our environment shapes who we are becoming. Others blame genetics. You are who you are because of biology and there's nothing you can do about it.

Still others think that our problems all stem from the choices we are making.

So who's right?

The Bible says they're all right and they're all wrong, Evil is multi-dimensional. And it comes at us fast from every possible direction.

PATTI

There's evil inside me, outside me, and above me. So if I want to live the Christian life, I'll need to know how to address that and live in victory over it. Or it will beat me.

When you don't know about spiritual warfare, or you forget about it, you'll know you've been beaten, but you won't know why.

You can't luck into a full and happy life. You have to put on the full armor.

The armor is a military metaphor. If you're in the military, you are not able to demand an explanation for the orders you get from your commander.

If you get an explanation, that's great, but we all know that in the heat of battle there's no time for that. You have to trust and obey your commander.

Why does Paul use a military metaphor?
 He does not glory in warfare.
 He does not think military stuff is grand.
 He's saying, "This is the only metaphor that gets across the seriousness of what it means to live a Christian life in a way that you won't be defeated."

The first thing is you have to obey orders.
 Put on the armor, which is a symbol of the benefits and privileges of the gospel.

The apostle Paul says in Romans 6:5-6, "You're dead to sin."
 Then down in verses 11-13 he says,
 "Therefore, count yourself dead to sin."

What does that mean? He means it's one thing to have something be true, but it's another thing to act like it.
 In Christ, you have benefits and blessings and privileges and powers that he won for you on the cross.
 Are you using them?

JEFF

Paul's explanation of the armor itself is pretty straightforward.
 It's truth and righteousness and salvation – the benefits of the gospel.
 And to put them on means to see yourself and the world and the people around you through the lens of these gospel benefits and promises.

When I was in college, I went to an older Christian friend and basically said, "My life is falling apart."

And he was very sympathetic, but he asked me,

"Do you know that Jesus says this?"

"Yeah."

"And do you know this and this and this?"

"Yeah."

Finally after listening to me whine and asking all these questions, he said, “Well, what’s the problem, then?” And I said,, “My gosh, I don’t know what the problem is.” What happened was that my friend was helping me put on the armor of God.

Which means taking the benefits of the gospel and beginning to use them in your life.

And in a sense, that means **preaching to yourself**, as Luther encouraged in his commentary on Galatians. Preaching the gospel to yourself, is in a sense, remembering that you are an undeserving sinner, but also remembering vividly the implications of his grace and mercy.

Verse 13: “... put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand ...”

You’re supposed to put the armor on before the big battle, not during the big battle.

PATTI

Notice it says, “Put on the armor so that when the evil day comes you will stand.”

When the arrows are flying, it’s too late.

Paul is using a military metaphor, because in other fields when you slip up, you lose money. In this particular area, when you slip up, you’re destroyed.

If I slip up with a bad sermon, I hear about it.

Some people may write me note about it.

If a warrior slips up with a maneuver, he or she has their head cut off, maybe literally.

Paul is saying, then - “Do you realize the peril you’re in?”

If you are lazy about reading the Bible,
if you are not diligent about developing a habit of regular prayer,
if you allow un-dealt-with sins to continue to grow in your life,
if you refuse to put on the armor of God,
at some point you're going to be spiritually wiped out!

We've been talking to lots of people these days who
would describe themselves as **depressed**.
Please understand, I'm not talking about clinical depression here;
I'm not talking about people with a chemical imbalance
that requires medication and counseling and so forth.

But there are lots of people out there right now,
and you may be one of them, who can relate to
the author of Psalm 43:5 and Psalm 42:11
when he asked, "**Why are you downcast, O my soul?**"

If we've been relying on outward circumstances
to determine our mood for years or even decades,
and suddenly things around us seem pretty grim,
then it's likely past time to put on the armor.
To remember Christ and his promises.

Christians who are sporadic in practicing
the basic disciplines of the faith and sporadic
in their obedience to God always seem to me
to be too busy.

They're always saying, "Well, I'd like to get around
to really being serious about my faith."
That's a little bit like when someone says,
"The enemy is attacking! They're almost here!" and you say,
"Yeah, I should put on my armor, but I'm going to finish
watching this TV show first, because I want to know how it ends.
That's what Paul is trying to get across.

JEFF

One last thing ... It has to be the armor of God.
This means that if you try to deal with problems
using your own weapons you will be defeated.
Almost all satanic influence is at its core
an infection of your imagination.

What is **worry**? It's an infection of the imagination.
You get nothing but these vivid pictures
of could go wrong or will go wrong.
It's all right to be anxious, but if it's an infection,
it paralyzes you.

It's all right to be **guilty**, by the way, if it leads you
to repent and change, but if guilt becomes an
infection, and all you can ever see is how bad you are.

It's all right actually to be **angry** because anger
is actually the emotion that is needed to protect
boundaries. When anger is healthy, then, it
reflects the righteousness of God.

But it becomes **bitterness** when your imagination
gets infected and all you can do is replay that tape
of what they did to you.

When it comes to the Devil, then, what we're
really dealing with is infected imaginations.

Take worry. When we use our own weapons on worry,
like common sense, we say,
"Well, there's no use crying over spilt milk.
What's going to happen is going to happen."

Try to help somebody that way. Or use rational logic.
Say, "Well, things could be worse. Even if this happens,

I know people who had it a lot worse than that.”
Or use willpower. “I won’t worry. I won’t worry. I won’t worry.”

You try that, and you will see immediately that
the spiritual forces of darkness will always defeat you,
because the Devil and his demons are an angelical order of being,
inferior only to the Holy Trinity.

PATTI

You will lose if you try to deal with your problems
using only common sense or willpower or anything
but the armor of God, which is standard issue for believers.
It’s provided.

The Word of God proclaims to you the blessings and
promises and privileges of the gospel that alone will
give you victory.

Jesus Christ is the Captain. Nobody has ever
had a captain like him. They say that Trajan,
the great Roman captain, when he was on the field of battle,
would take his own armor off and put it on his wounded men.

He’d tear his own garments up and use them as bandages.
But that’s nothing compared to Jesus, because
Jesus Christ tore himself to deal with your wounds.
He took the spear that was meant for us into his own heart
so all of our debts could be paid.

Put on the full armor of God. Because Jesus Christ
made himself vulnerable for you.
And his promise is that when you
take your STAND against the devil,
you can become protected in him.

Even though Lutherans don’t TALK as much about
spiritual warfare as we probably need to, we actually

SING about spiritual warfare all the time in our worship services.

In closing, then, listen to these words written by George Duffield over 200 years ago...

1. Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
as soldiers of the cross;
lift high his royal banner,
it must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory
his army shall he lead,
till every foe is vanquished,
and Christ is Lord indeed.

2. Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
the trumpet call obey;
Stand forth in mighty conflict,
in this his glorious day.
Let all his faithful serve him
against unnumbered foes;
let courage rise with danger,
and strength to strength oppose.

3. Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
stand in his strength alone;
the arm of flesh will fail you,
you dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armor,
each piece put on with prayer;
where duty calls or danger,
be never wanting there.

4. Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
the strife will not be long;
this day the din of battle,
the next the victor's song.

The soldiers overcoming,
their crown of life shall see;
and with the King of Glory
shall reign eternally.

("Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, Lyrics by George Duffield, 1818-1888; Tune by George Webb, 1803-1877)

JEFF

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word and precious promises, which are able to protect us and make us victorious over our enemy, the Devil. Empower us daily to see ourselves and our world from the perspective of the benefits, blessings, and privileges that you died to give us, so that the evil one can neither steal our joy, nor infect our imaginations. We pray in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.