

The Helmet, the Shield and the Sword

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Scripture:

We're back into Ephesians where we were last week and we went through one part of the amour that God was given to us but we said that we require the amour because as Paul writes in Ephesians, God is instituting a new order in the world and something that He wants first to showcase through his church and this new order that Paul is talking about is four-fold.

He's talks about the unity that must be present in the community of faith. He talks about purity that must be the behavior of people who are part of the community of faith, he talks about diversity that we need to embrace in the gifts that are given to the community of faith and then he talks about the harmony that must be present in homes and the families where we showcase the presence of God and we said that having brought these four equations into our lives, Satan is bound to try and trip it up and try and neutralize it.

So where there is purity, he tries to bring in the things of the flesh and where there is unity he tries to bring in thoughts of discontent. Where there is harmony, he tries to sow discord and where there is diversity, he brings in jealousy instead of just enjoying the gifts that God has given us, he invites us to look into other people's gifts and say, Oh; I wish I had that one rather than being satisfied with the ones that we have. There is this constant tension between the things that we ought to be doing the behavior that we need to be showcasing as sons and daughters of the most high God, and the things that the evil one would bring to try and trip us up. So he says the call for us is actually a life of holiness to be able to live holy lives.

Last week we saw that he talks about what holiness looks like, he says, there are two things that need to be done: we need to "put off" certain things and then we need to "put on" certain things. We talked about the things that we need to put off that are the vain things that we think about that we shouldn't be thinking about what we call the futility of the mind and then adding ignorance, being callous, being hard of heart and then indulging in sexual things and all these are

things that we need to put off so that then we can put on a renewal of our spirit. We renew the spirit of our minds, and then we lay aside all falsehood. We speak truth with our neighbors, we may be angry at some of the things that are going on but he says: we do not be angry; don't give the devil an opportunity.

Then he says don't steal, watch your speech, don't let any unwholesome words come from your mouth. These are things that we need to put on. You put off things and then in the place that you put off those things, you put on these new things. Then he says that in this battle that we are in, we wage war not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. These are things that we just can't hold on to saying; this is a problem that I have, I've got to meet it. These are unseen things that are happening to us so we need to be able to deal with it spiritually.

So he says: God had thought about that, and He has given us an armor to place on us that will help us navigate the viles that the devil brings into our way and we saw last week that there are three things, that we have, that we should already, have put on. Those three things that we should have put on we see in Ephesians 6:14,

“¹⁴Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;”

The belt of Truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness and the shoes of the Gospel of Peace are the things that we already need to have put on— these are things that we already needed to have put on these are not things that are to be put on when the battle happens. These are things that are part of our existing armory even before Satan tries to attack us. We have truth and we looked at what are truth claims in our lives that we can stand on. Do we have any truth claims? Or do we get caught up with anything that comes along our way? What is the breastplate of righteousness—not the imputed righteousness of Jesus that comes upon us, that the Father sees and allows us to come close, but our own righteousness. What is that righteousness that we are expected to be putting on? Do we walk with the Gospel of salvation? Do we take that gospel wherever we go?

But that left us with three more aspects of the armor and we are going to look at it today. We find it in verse 16.

“¹⁶In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

So now he says that there are three more things that we need to take. Now we put on the Helmet of Salvation, we pick up the Shield of Faith and then we pick up the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Let's look at these three parts of the armory.

The Helmet of Salvation: when we think of salvation we always think in terms of a linear way, that it's the one thing, I'm saying and so I have salvation. Yet the bible looks at salvation in three ways— as something that happened in the past that we accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord in our lives. It happens once; it's not something that happens over and over, over time. It happens once in our life, so we mentioned before, that this is something that needs to happen. If we are going to spend eternity with God in heaven, we need to be saved.

I remember speaking to a youth group a few Sundays ago and I asked the question, "On a scale of 1 – 10 how many of you are sure that you will go to heaven?" I had various answers. Some said 2, some said 4, some said 6, and some said 8 and a few said 10." And I said: "if you are saved today, then there is no grading on that scale. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior then the only answer that you may have is a 10." Salvation that talks about eternal life with Him happens once.

Then we have the salvation that Paul talks in Philippians 2:12 that says:

"... Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" what's he talking about? The first salvation is being justified. The second is sanctification; it's that thing that we work with our lives from the time that we were regenerated or justified to the time that God takes us home, that's our life post being saved. That is the process of salvation – of sanctification which he is talking about, that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. The third salvation that the bible talks about is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 where it says the hope of our salvation is the fulfillment of what began with justification where we will have glorified bodies, when we will spend eternity with Him. So Paul is saying we need to understand the helmet of salvation, you understand clearly what is justification, what is sanctification, what is glorification because if you don't you can get tripped up.

Satan can tell you my goodness you think you are saved? You are not! You are not sure of going to heaven. If you are not sure of what you've done, with Satan you'll fall for it and say, that's true. I really am not sure. But there needs to be in your mind one clear moment when you said "yes" to the Lord. It doesn't matter if you were born in a Christian home. It doesn't matter if

four generations of your family are Christian, it doesn't matter whether you have evangelists in your family or that you come for bible study or go for prayer meeting. If you haven't come to a point in your life where you say Lord Jesus, I have sinned and I accept the penalty that you paid, I accept that on my behalf. If that transaction hasn't happened then you really need to re-think where you are in your Christian life. Because that is the most important decision that you will ever take in your life— the most important and I presume that all of you here have. But if you haven't, beloved don't leave this place without making that decision, either come and talk to me or talk to one of our leaders but that is one of the most important decisions you make. Paul says, put on the helmet of salvation so not only are you sure that you are saved but are also working, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life so that you will be changed from glory to glory.

In the Garden of Eden, the glory of God, the doxa was on Adam and Eve which went away when they sinned. That glory being restored to us as we accept Jesus' penalty. We allow the Holy Spirit work in our lives. Paul says again, we have to change from glory unto glory and that kind of righteousness is being put back and that onus is on you and me.

Sanctification: with the help of the Holy Spirit. That responsibility is upon you and me. Don't just get a ticket to justification and say, I'm headed for heaven and now I have no more responsibilities. God says, No, I leave you here because the process of sanctification in your life is what showcases me to the world. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Then hope in the salvation that will culminate in glorification. Having glorified bodies like the one Jesus had when he was briefly here on earth after His resurrection. That kind of a body you'll have in eternity. So you have that helmet of salvation and be clear in your thinking of what all this means for you.

Secondly, he says, take a shield of faith. Why the shield of faith? He says, because that is what is going to ward off all the flaming arrows that are coming your way. How do arrows come our way? They come our way through temptation isn't it? Why is it that we fall so often, because we trip on yielding to temptation.

Satan, somebody said, cannot mess our present. He cannot take us away from Jesus. The Bible says, nobody can pluck us out of His hands but what he can do is mess with you in terms of your present life of sanctification. Because he knows your past— he has your past, so he brings it up every now and then and throws it to you saying, how is it that you are still stumbling over something like this? I thought you were done with this... so he keeps throwing it to you and pretty soon you will be wondering, my goodness what do I do?

One of the most beautiful verses on temptations—

1 Corinthians 10:13 and in every bible this needs to be underlined or highlighted, do what you need to so that when you pass through Corinthians, you will have to stop there. 1 Corinthians 10:13, three beautiful truths have been planted in that particular verse.

1. “No temptation has ceased you but that which is common to all.” What does that mean; it means that every temptation that you face, somebody else has also faced the same. Why is that important? Because Satan would like to try and isolate you. He comes to you and says, “My goodness you’re dealing with this nobody else feels like this”. You’re really in a tough position because this is unique to you only and then you begin to think, my goodness, really, nobody else? If you had only tried and given it a thought saying, let me check with a friend, and they would say, “I struggled with this myself as well and suddenly we are able to pray for each other. But Satan would like to isolate you so that he can think you off. There’s no temptation that comes to us that is not common to everybody.
2. God will not allow us to be tested and tempted beyond what we can handle. Do you know what that means? It means that every temptation that is coming to you first passes by God. And he looks at it and he think about you and then he says: no problem he can handle it, (she can handle it). It comes with God’s stamp on it saying, that you are able and capable to get through it, that’s the confidence with which you and I need to face every temptation that we say if it has come to me then and God almighty is saying, I can handle it. No temptation comes to us that we will fall into. God is saying, only the things that I know you can handle will come your way.
3. That you will also find a way of escape. There will always be a way of escape. Isn’t that beautiful that God says: with the temptation, I’ll show you the way out of that temptation. Yet sometimes that’s where we fail because we are on our computers or on our devices we are watching something and we are getting tempted to go to sites we shouldn’t and we say: “Oh Lord, God, would you just let lightning come and burn out my computer.” But God says there’s an “on-off” button right there (Laughter) and we say, Lord, lightning, lord lightning! We need to take the escape route and God is giving it to us. The three beautiful truths and in the middle of it is the wonderful phrase that says, “...and God is faithful.”

How true He is in our lives and He cares about the things that come our way but we fail when we start dealing temptations as if we have already fallen. Temptation by itself is not sin. Being tempted is not sin, giving into temptation is sin.

Remember, Jesus Himself was tempted and yet was without sin. Very often we find ourselves fighting temptation, saying my goodness I thought I had dealt with it. Why is this coming again? We get so much worked up when we just need to quietly get up and say, Lord, where is that escape route you were talking about? How do I navigate this and just walk away? The question when temptations come our way beloved is not why am I being assailed by temptation, the questing is how do I get out, that's the operative question, not why, it's always how. So we put in the shield of faith so that we can ward off temptations, the darts that come from the evil one.

Then finally, he says take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God which acts both as a defensive and as an offensive. Jesus used it so beautifully in the wilderness. He used scripture. Why, because He also knew scripture. It begs the question; if this is a weapon of defense and offence do we understand the Word? Do we know enough of the Word to be able to say, "No that's not true?" This is what scripture actually says. Did God say... is how Satan started the conversation with Eve and he comes to us so as to create doubt. And we need to say, "No, No Satan, this is what the Word says." Do we know enough of the Word to be able to say it?

This past Wednesday we looked at the parable of the soil and we said that the Word of God would come to us and for some it was just beside the road and Satan came and took it away. It didn't even make a difference— just read it and it leaves no mark on us. Then some fell on rocks it came up that there was immediate joy but the moment difficulties came it got taken away. Why because there was no root, we didn't spend time digging deeper and letting it go in and transform our lives, we didn't engage at that level with the scripture and so the moment affliction came, the moment the situation and circumstance got difficult it went away. It couldn't stand.

The third was among the thorns, again it says, that it came up, but the thorns came up as well because we allowed our lifestyle to have things that were deceitful, things that were wicked— the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. We allow those things to come in and corrupt the Word of God. So when those things came up it choked up the Word of God. The Word had no voice because we were listening to other voices. Voices

of riches, voices of worry and both Jesus has addressed it saying, “Don’t worry about tomorrow.” “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and then lose his soul.” And we allow those things to co-exist with us until we get choked out the World.

The question for you and for me today is, where is the Word fallen in your life, in my life? Where is it for us, has it fallen by the side of the road where it doesn’t in any way interfere with us or has it fallen on rocky ground where initially we have the emotional high and everything is fine and then the moment difficulties come we say my goodness I can’t stand it or is it co-existing with the things of this world or has it fallen on good soil which the bible says brings forth fruit – hundred, sixty and thirty fold.

So the ultimate, the litmus test for being a disciple of Jesus is to see whether there is fruit in our lives that comes from the proximity with His Spirit and learning of His Word, the engagement with His Word. So as we look at getting on this path of holiness through this Lenten season, a season of spiritual reviewing, do we have the armor in place or are there chinks in our armor that are going to expose us. Have we put on the things that we need to put on after putting off the things that we need to put off? Are we ready? Because I can tell you this beloved, because if your desire during these forty days is to grow closer to the Lord, to learn from His Word, to be obedient to His Spirit then Satan is going to come and attack you. He wants you lukewarm but we know what Jesus talks about lukewarm disciples. I’ll spew you out He says. Luke warmers don’t cut so we are on the right path if we are seeking renewal, if we are seeking His holiness. If you are saying Lord, I want to draw closer to you, I am interested in this season, I want to know your heart, I want to know how it beats, and I want to beat with it. I want to see the world through your eyes. My heart needs to grieve for the things that make you grieve. That’s how I want to feel and for that we need to be able to stand firm. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Three times or four times he says stand firm. We are not backing away; we are saying we stand in the strength of the Almighty God. We say this is where I stand, on Christ the Solid Rock. Everything else is immaterial. This is my agenda, this path that I am after during this Lenten period and we need to have it in place. While I was putting this sermon together I felt the Lord zero in on me just highlighting the Word for us to spend more time in the Word. Today to make that a priority, we have to say, today I know a little bit but by Easter I am going to know a whole lot of it. I’m going to engage with the Word, I am going to look at every passage I read and say, what does it mean? Then I’m going to ask the question what does it mean for me, how is this Word going to help me in my day today, and having got that answer you’ve got to make

sure that it is put into practice every day. Are we willing beloved to engage in scripture in that manner. Let's put it away that we just read as passage and say, I've read the bible for today. Let's say that's not sufficient during these days and dig deep into the Word and let it transform our hearts and mind.

Well let's pray.

If God is speaking to you in whatever area we're just going to have a couple of moments of silence. Will you just speak to Him and say, Lord this is the area I need to work on, would you through Your Spirit help me in this part. Would You just speak to Him in the quietness of this moment.

Our Father, forgive us for times when we have taken you so lightly. We have even got to the point where we are callous and hard towards the leading of your Spirit and the engagement with Your Word. But Lord this morning we want to draw a line and say not any more from this point on we are going to engage with you. Your Word is going to be a Lamp and a Light. Your Word is going to inform us, we are going to memorize your Word, we are going to allow it to transform our hearts and our lives so that we can showcase to the world what it means to be purified, what it means to embrace the diversity in the Kingdom, what it means to have victory over the flesh and be pure and may our hopes showcase harmony in neighborhoods that have so little. Lord, give us victory we ask in the precious name of Jesus. Amen
