

The Whole Armor of God

Sermon 2018-09-02 - Year B - Pentecost 8-28 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas
Deuteronomy 4:1–9; Psalm 15; Ephesians 6:10–20; Mark 7:1–23

The Reality of Spiritual Warfare

- We hear a lot about “culture wars” in the news. The clash between traditional Christian values and the rising liberal ones on marriage, gender, sexuality, morality, etc.
- It can be challenging to discern our proper response to these shifts as Christians. We value and believe in the truth of the scriptures, but we don’t want to seem hateful.
- Our battle is not against groups of people! It is not even against our culture. It is against Satan and his demons. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (v. 12).
- Satan likes to strike with confusion, anger, conflict, and lots of other ways especially when we are doing something that will make great advances for the kingdom.
 - Side note: not everything is spiritual attack. Sometimes it is our own laziness, or stupidity which puts us in chaotic situations.
- “[Satan] seeks to alienate humanity from God by disobedience (2:1–3; 4:18b–19) and by ignorance and corrupted thinking (4:17b–18). He tries to separate people from each other through the alienating sins of greed (4:22, 23), falsehood (4:25), anger (specifically related to the devil in 4:27) and related sins (4:25–31).”¹ Think about the polarized nature of our culture right now and it paints these “culture wars” in a different light!
- Marital bickering is often a sign of attack in our marriage.
- Satan is also trying to disrupt the mission. When we are at odds with each other and distant from God, it makes it hard to draw others into relationship with the Christ and his body, the Church.
- But we are not alone and helpless, we have one another and we have the help of the whole army of heaven.
- Story of Elisha seeing the heavenly host - 2 Kings 6:15-19.

The Whole Armor of God

- How do these various pieces of the whole armor of God help us in Spiritual battle?
- Belt of truth (v. 14)
 - Satan is a liar, something we see from the very first depiction of him as the crafty snake in eden. The best way to combat lies is with the truth.
 - We need to envelop ourselves with truth to combat the lies of our culture and the lies of the enemy who tries to tell us we are not good enough.
- Breastplate of righteousness (v. 14)
 - Righteousness is important because unrighteousness gives the enemy a foothold to accuse us. The name “Satan” literally means “the accuser.”
 - Our righteousness is first and foremost the righteousness of Christ, but also the holiness that he draws us into by his Holy Spirit.

¹ Max Turner, “Ephesians,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (ed. D. A. Carson et al.; 4th ed.; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1243.

- Shoes which are the readiness given by the Gospel of peace (v. 15)
 - “let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing.” (Revised English Bible).
- The shield of faith which extinguishes the flaming darts of the evil one (v. 16)
 - Roman leather shields were often soaked before battle so that they would quickly put out any flaming arrows that might hit them.
 - When the enemy is sowing seeds of doubt and seeds of mistrust, our faith in God and his power to save go a long way to help us make it through.
 - “Take up the shield of faith thus suggests a deliberate and positive holding on to the God revealed in the gospel; firm and resolute dependence on the Lord which quenches the fiery attempts of the enemy to harm and to spread panic.”²
- The helmet of salvation (v. 17)
 - The purpose of a helmet is to protect your head. “Charles Hodge wrote: ‘that which adorns and protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved’”³
- The sword of the spirit which is the word of God (v. 17)
 - Similar to the belt of truth, the best source of truth for us is God’s word. We need to know God’s word in and out because it is filled with the truth that can combat the lies of the enemy. The more scripture you memorize, the more readily God can use it in your own life and as you minister to others.
 - Remember this is a weapon against powers and principalities, not people.
- Prayer (v. 18-20)
 - Prayer can so often be an afterthought, something we do after we have exhausted all of the other options. But prayer should be the first thing we do!

Our Spiritual Battle as we Revitalize Good Samaritan

- The goal and end of all things, according to this letter, is for Christ to unite all things in himself (Ephesians 1:10). We are called, as a church, to participate in this by drawing those who don’t know Jesus into his saving love and into the fellowship of his body.
- This is important kingdom work, and the enemy is not going to like it as we advance.
- There are certainly things that God calls us to do, but the greatest advances of God’s kingdom come through the warfare that is fought on our knees.
- We all need to regularly be on our knees praying for this church and our mission together. We need to pray for favor with those who are not saved. We need to pray for more laborers for the harvest. We need to pray that God would show us the people he desires for us to reach. We need to pray for God’s provision for this church.
- We need to pray for “all the saints” (v. 18). The church around the world.
- I need your prayers as the Rector of this church (Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him, vv. 19-20). And we need to pray together for the other leaders as well.

² Max Turner, “Ephesians,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (ed. D. A. Carson et al.; 4th ed.; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1244.

³ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 282.