

Ephesians 6: 10-23 “You Are Ready”- Rev. Amanda A. Nevin

Introduction: Today we come to a close with the book of Ephesians throughout this letter Paul has reminded us of our identity in Christ that we are his beloved children and nothing we do can separate us from that identity. He has also challenged us on how we are to live always pointing to Christ in all aspects of our life- in our faith, our family, in the church and in our community. We have been given the characteristics that are appropriate to the Christian lifestyle, characteristics like humility, gentleness, patience and love. We have been reminded to be the light of Christ, to imitate Christ’s life with our own life. We have learned the difficulty of imitating Christ in every aspect of our lives, it is not easy going out into the world that is in many ways goes against everything that Christ stands for and yet that is our calling. Paul wraps up this letter by saying “you are ready.” You are ready to go out and live this counter cultural lifestyle if you have the appropriate equipment with you.

Read Passage

Arm yourself! Put on the armor of God! Why do we need to be armed and ready? Paul tells us that we battle personally and corporately against a world that would try to tear us down, a world that tries to convince us that being a Christ follower is for the weak, the simple minded, the uneducated. We battle against spiritual forces that would try and tell us that our faith isn’t important, that Christ is a made up person, that the scriptures are just some good lessons to make you a better person but has no real value or meaning. We battle against a culture that tries to tell us that being generous; serving another, looking out for the weak, being selfless instead of selfish is silly. We battle against the temptations and sin of this world that would tell us that living like everyone else is acceptable. In CS Lewis’ Screwtape Letters, Screwtape is counseling his young friend Wormwood on the ways to distract a Christian from their faith and to get a Christian to fall away from God and to ultimately follow the enemy- otherwise known as Satan. Screwtape instructs Wormwood to do anything to keep the Christian complacent in their faith, to use any measure to entice them with riches and fame, with increasing their pride making them forget about the future and eternity, and of course reminding the patient of their sin as a way to convince the Christian that they “aren’t worthy of God’s love. By so distracting the Christian with other concerns and even with their lack of faith, Screwtape believes that the Christian will ultimately fall away from God and follow the evil one. In many respects what Lewis is doing in the Screwtape Letters, is playfully telling a story of how we as Christians can fall into temptation to be like the world and not like Christ. Lewis shares this image of the battle we face as Christians in as a way to help illustrate to us that we are indeed under attack whether we talk about it or not as the people of faith. Paul recognizes that as Christians we are under attack and need to find strength in the mighty power of God instead of this world. For Paul we are like warriors going off to war, we need the complete armor of God for our protection. Not only do we need the armor of God for protection against the evils of this world we need God’s armor to help us feel ready to go out and be the people of God.

Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God. Just like we wouldn’t send people out to war with just a gun or an arrow, nor are we called to go out into the world with just

one weapon of defense but rather the full armor. Each part has an important part in our faith journey. The order of the pieces of the suit of armor listed in the chapter followed the order that a Roman soldier would put them on.

Paul starts with the belt of truth around our waist. The belt usually made of leather held was the anchor for the armor. The belt was foundational for battle- it supported the weapons that allowed the soldier to fight. The belt is a reminder that Jesus is our foundation for our spiritual journey and our walk. We must be anchored in Christ. Our anchor is the truth of the Gospels, the truth of Christ's life and death. These are the foundations we need to in our faith journey to help us fight against temptations, to fight against the lies of this world, and to help us as we go forth into the world. Without the knowledge of God's truth in our hearts and life we have no anchor by which to stand on. When the enemy- the world, attacks us with lies about God, giving us half-truths and distortions of God's word we as believers are called to stand on the truth that we believe in through Jesus Christ.

Next is the breastplate which was a large leather, bronze or chain-mail piece that protected the body from the neck to the thighs. Protecting the vital organs was essential for survival for any soldier. We are called to put our trust in God's holiness and in the fact that we are chosen by God's good graces and as such are made righteous through Christ. Remember back in the very beginning of this letter we are told that we are made right in God's eyes because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. This is important for us as Christians because we trust and believe that we are made right before God through the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Why is this important for us to hold on to? When others try to convince us or even when we tell ourselves: that we aren't "good enough" or that Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites, or when people try and tell us that we aren't really saved, that we are just disappointments to God, basically when our hearts and our spirits are attacked we are called to remember that we are made right with God because of Christ and even when we make mistakes, even when we sin, we know that we are forgiven. The caution here is to always remember that our own efforts, or good works are never what make us worthy of God's protection, love, or righteousness- it is only through the power of Christ that we are made right with God.

Next we are called to put on our feet the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Roman soldiers had special shoes made of soft leather with studded soles, which allowed them to march farther and faster and it allowed them to dig in and hold their ground in hand to hand combat. Our preparation for battle is the gospel or good news of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. The gospel tells us of Christ's work here on earth which is to bring the peace of God and reconciliation between people. The word of God is the good news that brings peace and we as Christians are called to share that peace with people. We are supposed to be ready at all times to give an account of our faith. We need to be versed enough in the scriptures that we are ready to go out and share with others as needed.

We then are called to take up the shield of faith. The image of the shield was taken from the Roman shield that was oblong, often made of leather and then soaked in water so that when flaming arrows came at the soldier they could ward off the flames and protect themselves. For Christians this shield is faith means total dependence on God and willingness to do his will, it isn't something that we put on for show or on occasionally

have when we are struggling or “needing God.” It means that we believe in God’s promises even when we don’t see those promises materializing yet, even when we feel like there are arrows come at us from every direction we are called to hold up our faith and the truth of God as our shield. Paul is reminding us that when we are faced with temptation, doubt, anger, lust, despair, problems, trials in our life, when we are dealing with family issues or doubting friends, when we are dealing with all of life’s demands we are called to look to Christ, to lean on the assurances we have been given that we are indeed Christ’s children and to hold on to that shield of faith for protection and comfort.

Next is the helmet of salvation. The helmet protected the soldiers head. The helmet of salvation is our reminder that we our salvation is secure because of Christ. We have been chosen before the foundations of the world to receive salvation through Christ. In Christ, we can find deliverance in every situation, spiritual, emotional, and physical. He has to be our source, our guide, our way out. We cannot deliver ourselves. When lies come in we know that we are protected because we have the truth of our salvation in our hearts and our minds.

And finally we are called to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. The sword of the spirit is our only offensive weapon. God’s word is a powerful weapon against our enemy when its used under the spirit’s power and direction. We are called to be grounded in God’s word so that we can go head to head with others, so we can point to the scriptures as Truth and we can point to the scriptures as our sure and confident hope that we have in Christ. It doesn’t mean that we have to be Biblical scholars, nor that we have to have all the right and perfect answers, but rather we have to recognize that God’s word has power. God’s word has the power to change hearts and lives, it has power to encourage and strengthen our faith, it has power to reveal God’s heart to the world and it has power to continue to change our own lives. And yet if the sword of the spirit- the scriptures remain on our shelves collecting dust it is of no use to us. The scriptures are part of our armor- it is a tool for our own faith development and for the encouragement and building up of the church. Without the scriptures it is like going off to war without your weapon that can help save your life and the lives of others in your group.

The armor of God is what helps us get through those difficult moments of our life and when we forget to put on our armor we expose ourselves to the temptations of this world; we expose our heart and faith to this world that would strip us of our power and of our faith. When we go out, when we put on our armor we are called to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. When we are in prayer, when we are studying God’s word, when we are engaging in our faith and putting on the full armor of God we are ready to go out into the world.

When we put on the armor of God we are ready for God to work in our hearts and our lives, we are ready to be the witnesses of Christ to a broken world. Our challenge is to remember to always be equipped, ready to go, to take up the armor of God and be in prayer that we might be ready always to share the message of Christ. We have been assured of our identity in Christ, we are confident now in our salvation, we have hope because of what Christ has done for us, and we have been given the equipment to go out and be the people of God. Our challenge is to go, you have the tools, you have the assurance of God with your always; what is holding you back?