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Sermon Notes

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The Whole Armor of God: Shoes and Shield

Ephesians 6:15-16

Imagine a soldier in a trench in WWI... there is the clear evidence of a war; barbed wire, no man's land; sandbags, deep trenches, artillery in position... the smell of death everywhere

And imagine this soldier sits up high on the edge of the trench reading a magazine, blissfully unaware of the war going on around him

Suddenly, his sergeant looks up and sees him, screams at him to get his head down and pulls him safely into the trench just as a sniper's bullet whizzes through the air in the place where his head just was a moment ago!

I am convinced this is the spiritual condition of most Christians in American churches today... unaware of the vicious spiritual warfare going on every moment around them... \

Ephesians 6:10-18 is the sergeant saving your spiritual life by yelling at you and pulling you into the trench for protection... only our protection is not a trench, but our spiritual armor from God!

I. The Basic Command: Stand Firm

A. Review: Spiritual Warfare

1. The overwhelming majority of Christians have no idea that they are in a constant spiritual war
2. This war is clearly described in Ephesians 6:10-13

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh

and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

3. Fundamental to this is understanding your enemy

a. Satan and his demons

i) Satan rules an organized, dark empire, with spiritual beings under him... called here in this text “rulers, authorities, powers of this present darkness, spiritual forces of evil in the HEAVENLY REALMS”

ii) They are intelligent, organized, powerful... and they are unspeakably wicked... hateful, murderous, treacherous... they hate ALL HUMANITY, because we are in the image of God; but they especially hate and oppose Christians

iii) The devil and his angels constantly assault Christians with invisible weapons... pulling us toward sin and away from Christ

iv) These invisible powerful persuasions are called “temptations” and they are effective in damaging our souls

b. Paul calls on Christians to FIGHT... to resist... to STAND

4. So... the basic command here is to STAND FIRM... he says it FOUR times... to resist and take our stand

5. Ultimately the power to defeat the devil comes from the Triune God, not from us... we have no power to defeat him, no ability to conquer him

a. Satan’s intellect soars vastly above ours

b. His power is close to immeasurable

c. His memory and record-keeping is impeccable

- d. He knows exactly what our weaknesses are and how to exploit them
- e. His goal is to destroy your soul... to pull you down with him to hell
- f. He also seeks to destroy your good works... your effectiveness on earth
- g. God alone can defeat him... and he will...

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

- h. We have a vital responsibility to PREPARE to fight, and then to STAND FIRM in the fight
6. God calls on us to BE STRONG IN THE LORD and in the POWER OF HIS MIGHT
 7. If we stand firm, we will win... but if we give way, we will live defeated lives
 8. We have a RESPONSIBILITY here... even though the power for victory is from God, not us
 9. What does it mean to STAND FIRM? We'll talk more about that today, specifically as we look at the footwear of the Christian soldier

B. The Spiritual Armor

1. Part of our responsibility concerns this amazing image of the "whole armor of God"
2. We have a responsibility to PUT IT ON
3. What does that mean?
 - a. To be mindful of the details of doctrinal truth, of biblical truth, concerning our salvation and our work in the world
 - b. Specific details of spiritual truth that we must appropriate with prayer...putting it on our souls by meditation and prayer

C. Quick Review of Last Week

1. Belt of truth

- a. The belt gathered everything together and held it fast to the body
- b. It is called the belt of “truth” because the essence of our spiritual struggle with Satan is a battle over the truth... Satan is a liar and the father of lies... the TRUTH is absolute... the Word of God as it testifies to Christ
- c. We put on the “belt of truth” when we are prepared in our minds for action on the issue of spiritual truth

2. Breastplate of righteousness

- a. This beautiful piece of armor is radiant and glows and is polished and reflects light
- b. it protects our vital organs... our heart, our intestines
- c. it is called the breastplate of righteousness referring not to our own righteousness
- d. rather this is the gift of IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS in Christ...
- e. the heart and the vital organs refers to our feelings, our emotions, our sense of this... ultimately our ASSURANCE of salvation... knowing there is nothing Satan can do to kill us eternally
- f. We go into battle knowing we will survive... we cannot be killed!

Now... two more elements... the footwear, and the shield

II. The Footwear of the Gospel

Ephesians 6:14-15 Stand firm then... with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Two key images: STANDING FIRM for holiness... ADVANCING with the gospel to rescue the perishing

A. Holiness: Standing Firm is the Vital Issue

1. Falling is a metaphor for defeat

1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

2. To stand firm in the day of testing means to overcome all that Satan means to do in your soul... to STAND in Christ, continuing to serve him and trust in him and walk with him

B. Footwear is Essential in Hand to Hand Combat

1. Our day and age, the most powerful weapons are computer-controlled and launched from a great distance away
 - a. Obviously the most powerful of all is an ICBM... a missile that flies thousands of miles through the air and detonates a thermonuclear device, eradicating a whole city in one instant
 - b. Beyond that, we have all other kinds of computer-controlled weapons: cruise missiles and especially these days DRONES
 - c. For this kind of warfare, no special footwear is needed at all... you need a good office chair... and a steady hand on the JOY-STICK; somebody good at video games would make an excellent warrior... whether male or female, young or old
2. BUT in Paul's day, warfare was a BRUTAL, FORCEFUL thing in which footsoldiers were the most powerful element of any army and battles consisted in immense struggles hand to hand... shield walls with grunting men pushing on each other, like NFL linemen
3. For this kind of warfare, STABILITY was everything... we'll talk more about that in a moment... but if you FELL under your enemy in hand to hand combat, you were almost certainly finished
4. For this you had to have reliable FOOTWEAR

These days we have an astonishing variety of footwear for an amazingly wide array of situations... dress shoes, work shoes, leisure shoes

When I went on a mission trip to Nepal and we were to be trekking through the Himalayan mountains, I wanted good hiking boots

Athletes wear special footwear... and more technology and expense has gone into designing the perfect basketball shoe or baseball cleat than we can possibly imagine

A soldier's footwear is even more important than an athlete's... they have to hike long distances over rugged terrain, covering jagged rocks, thorns, streambeds, burning deserts... the soldier's feet needs protection

If the soldier's feet become blistered or cut or wounded in some way, he will not be able to fight as well, or perhaps even to stand up

The stories of Washington's army at Valley Forge, with inadequate footwear, leaving footprints of blood in the snow... highlights the need for soldiers to have suitable footwear

C. A Roman Soldier's Footwear

1. they looked at the top like sandals, but they were really more like boots
2. Tough leather base... treated for durability... usually impregnated with bits of metal or nails to give him traction
3. The footwear enabled the soldier to have **STABILITY** and **MOBILITY**
4. Since many of the barbarian armies the Roman soldiers fought actually did fight barefoot (like the Germans), these hobnailed soles became an additional weapon for **STOMPING** on the feet of their enemies
5. Sheds light on this verse:

Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

D. Spiritual Analogy: Four Key Concept: Gospel of Peace, Preparation, Stability, Mobility

1. Gospel of Peace

- a. The shoes are the preparation of the gospel of peace
- b. We'll get to preparation in a moment... but let's concentrate on the phrase "gospel of peace"
- c. The gospel is the message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes

- d. The gospel is a POWERFUL weapon in our spiritual warfare with Satan... it enables us to by HOLY by withstanding everything he can throw at us; it also systematically has destroyed his dark kingdom worldwide through MISSIONS and EVANGELISM... more on that in a moment
- e. Specifically here it is called "the gospel of peace": God at peace with US!!

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

- f. Satan's weapons always have to do with anxiety and fear and hopelessness... the gospel of PEACE is the antidote to all that
- g. There is 1) an objective status of PEACE with God; 2) a subjective sense of PEACEFULNESS

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- h. Some of it is knowing that GOD IS GOING TO WIN... and therefore, we're going to win!

- i. I love those accounts of Israel being assured by God that they don't need to fight the battle... God will fight it for them:

Exodus 14:13-14 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

[Jehoshaphat] 2 Chronicles 20:17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

That's the sense of the GOD OF PEACE fighting Satan for us!

2. Preparation

- a. Paul speaks of the preparation of the gospel of peace...
READINESS
- b. PREPARATION AHEAD OF TIME... ready to march, ready to stand, ready to fight
- c. If a soldier's boots are off, he's at leisure... he's not ready to fight at all
- d. Paul wants all Christians to "sleep with their boots on"... even better to be wakeful with your boots on
- e. The enemy is most certainly coming... he will most certainly attack
- f. BE READY!! BE PREPARED!!
- g. I think about Peter the night he denied Christ

Matthew 26:40-41 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Practicality: As you begin the day, you put on your spiritual armor and get ready for the fight; you PREPARE for battle; you

EXPECT to be attacked, expect to be tempted; you think about your day – who you’re going to interact with, what you’re going to do; you think about ways Satan might come after you, and you PREPARE yourself

- h. More than that, it has to do with your entire outlook on life... do you look on life as WARFARE... that we are left here on earth to GLORIFY GOD by advancing in **holiness** and in **missions**... internal journey of holiness, external journey of worldwide gospel advance
- i. Are we PREPARED to fight so we can advance? Are you READY for WAR??

Practical application: Begin every day of your lives with a reference to this passage of Scripture... get yourselves ready for a WAR today, a spiritual war in which you are being assaulted by temptations all day long; get ready to fight... with prayer and scriptural meditations, put on each of these elements of the WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD... the footwear, the shoes of the gospel of peace gets you ready for this fight

3. Stability

- a. The Roman boots gave the soldier stability... he wasn’t as likely to slip and fall; he had traction
- b. Remember that FOUR TIMES Paul calls on the Christian soldier to STAND

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Notice Paul says “after you have done everything, to stand...” this is the PREPARATION we were just talking about

Ephesians 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place

See??? FOUR TIMES the call is to STAND!

- c. This is the issue of STABILITY
- d. The opposite is FALLING... falling into sin, falling away from a secure position in Christ, falling under the devil's sword, falling into the muck and mire of sin or depression or weakness

*Psalm 73:1-3 Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. ³ For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall

Again and again, the Bible uses the image of FALLING as a devastating spiritual outcome... to fall is to DIE; God's awesome power is there to protect us from FALLING:

Jude 24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy

- e. As we've said, in Paul's day, in desperate hand to hand combat with a mortal enemy; STABILITY is absolutely vital... if you fall on the ground, you'll be slaughtered
- f. Also, at the end of the day, when the battle is over, we know which side won by who was still STANDING!!
- g. The preparation of the gospel of peace is STABILITY... a FIRM FOOTHOLD

4. Mobility

- a. The second use of good footwear for the soldier is traction for MOBILITY...
- b. This is essential in battle, as the enemy will try to SWING AROUND BEHIND a shield wall and cut you up from behind;

- c. The full armor of God provides no protection for your back... you are to FACE the enemy; but the enemy MOVES, he comes at you from THIS SIDE and then from THAT SIDE
- d. Not only in your defense, however, the church of Jesus Christ is ON THE MOVE with the gospel of peace... we are not to STAY PUT, but to GO...

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

- e. The feet fitted with the READINESS that comes from the gospel of peace is a MOBILE image of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, to the distant lands, where people have never heard of Christ... the church is MOVING OUT with this gospel of peace; we are taking the battle to Satan's strongholds and assaulting the walls of his wicked fortress of LIES and spiritual deception: the high walls of Islam, of Buddhism, of Hinduism, of Atheism and godless materialism...

Matthew 16:18 on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Storming the GATES!! That is an image of MOBILITY... the church is not static, not waiting for the world to come to us

The feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace is the willingness to MOVE OUT from your comfort zone and cross the street to talk to an unsaved neighbor who is doing yardwork... to build a relationship with him so you can speak the gospel

The shoes of the gospel of peace means you're ready to cross the office floor and speak to a worried co-worker whose wife has just been diagnosed with cancer and the prognosis is very bad; your put on the READINESS of the gospel of peace and you MOVE OUT to his cubicle and talk to him

Isaiah 55:12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

III. The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

A. What was the Roman Shield?

1. Called a “scutum”, it was curved, 4 feet high, 2 and a half feet wide, able to protect much of the soldier’s entire body
2. It was very strong, and was covered with a fire-proof metal lining that made it impervious to flaming arrows
3. Paul specifically has in mind the protection a soldier would need on the battlefield from arrows fired at a great distance... without a shield, the soldier would be defenseless
4. The bow and arrow was a devastating offensive weapon... and it continued to be developed... the adding of fire to the tip of the arrow made it even more deadly... the arrow would pierce the soldier’s leg, then the fire would ignite his tunic and he would burn to death

B. “In Addition to All This”

1. Some translations seem to imply that this “shield of faith” is the MOST IMPORTANT part of the whole armor of God...

^{KJV} Ephesians 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith

2. However, the words actually apply to all three of the elements Paul is about to describe... the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit
3. Also, the words are best translated, “In addition to all this...”

C. The Shield of Faith Described

1. So, any shield is supposed to be an IMPENETRABLE BARRIER, a wall of protection from the projectiles the enemy is sending
2. Why does Paul call it the “shield of faith?”
3. My insight on faith: “Faith is the EYESIGHT OF THE SOUL”... the ability to see invisible spiritual realities, to make them vividly clear to your soul
4. This is especially poignant when it comes to spiritual warfare, because the enemy is INVISIBLE, and so are his FLAMING ARROWS

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

5. Satan and his demons are fighting us in the SPIRITUAL REALMS, and we cannot see them, they are not physically but spiritually discerned
6. An INVISIBLE ENEMY is almost impossible to defeat

“Fellowship of the Ring” ... Frodo is a tiny, weak hobbit who has a powerful magic ring; when he puts this ring on, he is INVISIBLE; at the end of the book/ movie, one of his friends Boromir, corrupted by lust for the ring, tries to take the ring from Frodo... Boromir is a powerful warrior, much taller and stronger than Frodo... but Frodo puts on the ring, becomes invisible, and slips out of Boromir’s grasp... he then circles around behind Boromir and hits him on the head from behind! Boromir’s whole arrogant demeanor changes, and he is immediately terrified of little Frodo. Frodo’s invisibility basically makes him invincible! But Frodo just uses it to escape.

HOW MUCH MORE FEARSOME is the devil’s invisibility! He is vastly more powerful than we are... if we could see him physically, we would melt in terror if he revealed his full awesome power. But not only is he more powerful than we, we CANNOT SEE HIM or any of his demonic rulers... they attack

us IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS... with invisible, spiritual arrows and invisible, spiritual flames

7. “Night vision goggles”: another illustration is the value of night vision goggles that enable a soldier to see his enemy at night... if one side has them and one side doesn’t, it is a HUGE ADVANTAGE!!
8. The whole image, then, is one of PROTECTION THROUGH SPIRITUAL VISION... to see in the Spirit what Satan is up to, what kinds of attacks he’s making

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

D. The Flaming Arrows of the Evil One

1. So, what are these “flaming arrows?”
2. Basically, they are IDEAS, CONCEPTS, SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS that pull us from the true path of Christ
3. They come in various patterns
 - a. Temptations: a flaming arrow of temptation that seeks to KINDLE our lusts and IGNITE our passions and make us sin...
 - i) perhaps enflamed sexually: like when David saw Bathsheba bathing; or when Potiphar’s wife seized Joseph by the garment and said “Lie with me”... or the alluring temptress in Proverbs 7, who grabs hold of a young man and speaks honeyed words to him that her husband is gone and her bed is ready... her words kindle FIRE of LUST in his heart
 - ii) Or perhaps temptations toward SINFUL ANGER... Satan is enflaming your heart, making you HOT WITH RAGE at your spouse, or your child, or another church member... Satan firing flaming arrows, kindling your pride, making you sinfully, pridefully angry
 - iii) Or perhaps temptations toward covetousness... some material possession, and greed has conquered you... Satan’s

flaming arrows of discontent and enflaming your heart... you "GOTTA HAVE IT"... or a sinful ambition toward power, or position

- b. Conversely, Satan's flaming arrows of ACCUSATION and GUILT fly through the air as well... he seduces us to sin, then turns and ACCUSES US and makes us feel defiled and worthless and defeated... he knows both God's Law and your sins better than you do... his flaming arrows of GUILT and ACCUSATION can be devastating; by faith, we can block those accusations:

Romans 8:33-34 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

- c. Or flaming arrows of DOUBT concerning God's Word

Genesis 3:1 "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

- i) False doctrines can creep in... flaming arrows of false teaching... the prosperity gospel; the cults like Mormonism; scientific atheism—Darwinism and evolution, and human philosophies... these flaming arrows are POWERFULLY EFFECTIVE

E. The Shield of Faith is IMPENETRABLE

Vs. 16 ... take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

1. This is an excellent quality shield! Satan's lies cannot penetrate
2. More than that, the arrows get EXTINGUISHED
 - a. Think about the arrows of lust... how our hearts get enflamed
 - b. Many people struggle with internet pornography
 - c. If you could see into the invisible, spiritual realm, at the moment of temptation, and you could see Satan firing that flaming

arrow, and see also GOD, the HOLY JUDGE, enthroned on a throne of fire to judge sin, and on a throne of grace to help sinners... if you could see the REALITY of the invisible spiritual realm, you would see that flaming arrow of temptation truly... your faith would BLOCK that arrow, the arrow would go out and cause you no harm... you would RUN from that temptation like Joseph did... finding the WAY OF ESCAPE that the Lord has made for you

- d. Also, if you could see everything in LIGHT OF ETERNITY... what it will look like on judgment day... for example, perhaps the Lord is leading you to give sacrificially to the church budget, or to the Global Priority Fund... as you decide to do this, Satan fires a flaming arrow of selfishness and greed and covetousness... he says “Why don’t you give half of that amount, and save the rest toward that new, flat screen TV you’ve been wanting?” You see that flaming arrow coming toward you, and you see the moment in light of Judgment Day and eternity; what will you be glad you did on Judgment Day?

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The Shield of Faith makes Judgment Day very real, very visible to you

Acts 24:15-16 there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

F. You Must LIFT UP the Shield of Faith

1. The shield of faith has to be TAKEN UP, or LIFTED UP
2. This is not much different than wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God in a DEFENSIVE MOVEMENT... to BLOCK what Satan throws at you
3. You have to APPLY the faith you have learned to the IMMEDIATE situation... like when the Lord commanded Peter to

walk on the water... Peter became FAITHLESSLY AFRAID of the wind and waves

Matthew 14:31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

4. Peter should have been able to see the immediate danger in light of the presence of the Lord.... His command to “come, walk on the water”... and fought the temptation to fear and doubt...
5. APPLY WHAT YOU KNOW, what you have learned from Scripture

Hebrews 13:5-6 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." ⁶ So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

IV. Applications

A. Come to Christ!

B. Get Prepared with the Gospel of Peace

1. Are you READY FOR WAR?
2. Do you get up every day and put on the full armor of God to get PREPARED for battle?
3. Do you have a sense of STABILITY in the gospel of peace... assurance of God's peace with you?
4. MOBILITY: Do you see the internal journey that you have to travel? A journey of holiness? Do you understand that Satan will fight you every step of the way? Do you also see the EXTERNAL JOURNEY of missions and evangelism... that we have Satanic strongholds to capture, ground to cover to take the gospel to the lost?

C. Take Up the Shield of Faith and Wield It!!

1. Can you “see” spiritually the spiritual warfare we are experiencing

2. Are you able to SEE what the devil is trying to do in your marriage, with your family, in your work, in our nation?
3. Are you extinguishing those flaming arrows by faith... seeing each TEMPTATION and ACCUSATION in light of Christ