

***Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.***  
**(Ephesians 6:13)**

I continue today my discussion on the war that we are actively engaged in, called the ***“wars of the LORD”*** (Num. 21:14). If you recall from the last time I spoke, I established for you that we are indeed at war, and I will endeavor today to bolster that point for you and discuss how like any army going into battle, we must prepare ourselves, and our Captain has provided ample tools for us to be well armed and ready for battle.

I want to draw your attention to a point in Scripture that helps, I think, to put this concept of our being an army into focus. Look with me at Exodus 6, specifically verse 26

***“These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies”***  
**(Exodus 6:26).**

The children of Israel are described as armies when they are coming out of Egypt. Remember, this was not some military coup that occurred here, some breaking off of the land of Goshen through military might and prowess. This was a group of downtrodden slaves leaving Egypt, fleeing for their lives. They had no serious weaponry, they had no real understanding of military tactics or any concept of how to conquer anyone.

But God refers to Aaron and Moses as leading the armies of the children of Israel out of Egypt. They are referenced as armies also in Exodus 7 and 12, but what is so striking to me about the use of this label in Exodus 6 is that from verses 14 to 25 the families and generations of the sons of Jacob are spoken of but when it comes to discussing the departure of Israel, they are armies. When slaves they are families, but when going about to do the Lord’s work of leaving Egypt for Canaan, armies.

This is a significant point. The people of God in all ages have been called upon to war and to do battle against the adversary who is ready to devour them at any time. Here in Exodus we have this specifically called out. The word armies there is Strong’s 6635, *tseba’ah* which is “a mass of persons especially regularly organized for war, an army; by implication a campaign”. A rag tag group of slaves by our definition and account does not an army make. Think about that for a second. Draw to your mind’s eye the pictures you see on the news almost daily now of some conflict here or there where some group of citizens is taking up arms against their government in rebellion. Think about the Ukraine, huge parts of Africa, the so-called Arab Spring of a few years ago. Think about how disorganized and un-army like that looked.

Here you have a group of somewhere between 2.5 million and 6 million people, roughly 600,000 of which were able bodied men fit for war. I say between 2.5 and 6 million because it depends on which calculation you use. The general calculation is a 4:1 ratio of the rest of the population to men fit for war. Some say that the Jews were more prosperous than the global average of the day and an 8:1 or even a 10:1 ratio is appropriate. Regardless of the population size, we know there were “**about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children**” (Ex. 12:37). And out of that 600,000, none of them were war college veterans, with the possible exception of Moses. Despite what Ridley Scott would have you believe, these were not trained fighters. They were sheep herders, brick makers, house slaves, field hands, cattle drivers, miners, quarrymen, etc. You can’t get much more unlike an army than that band of souls leaving Egypt. But you have God calling them ‘armies’.

And look at them in your mind’s eye. This was several million people fleeing from a raging populace and a demonically possessed, power-hungry, God-hating tyrant enraged over the death of his firstborn and the firstborn of all Egypt. The Israelites had plundered their treasure houses without so much as a hint of violence, indeed were given all the treasures of Egypt for the asking (Ex. 12:36). They had not only these 600,000 men fit for war, but the newborn and the old. They had flocks and herds, children and belongings to get on the road with. And they did it all in an orderly, organized fashion, and quickly. There was no panic, not one bit of chaos recorded here. They made their way out of Goshen, led by Moses and Aaron just like a disciplined, well-drilled army.

I say we have plenty of experience with that. If you look at this group of people through an objective lens, there is no way we should be able to overcome the things we do on a regular basis. The chaos we find ourselves surrounded with some days would make most humans curl up in the corner and suck their thumb. The absolutely animalistic mobs we face on a regular basis without flinching or backing away demonstrate extreme discipline and focus, much like an army at its best. I don’t say this to congratulate anyone or cause any to think more highly of us than we should, but to show that there are similarities. Where do those similarities come from? Our Lord and Captain of the Host of course! Just as the LORD commanded him to be and infused Joshua with courage to do what was required to lead the children of Israel into Canaan, we are commanded and infused with that same courage, sense of duty, honor, and necessity to stand as soldiers in this army we represent. To glorify our God is our highest goal, and to behave in any other way than we do would not accomplish that goal!!! We are provided this ability by our God, because we are His soldiers, not free-floating masses of free will operating as free moral agents! As was recently driven home for us, we are conscripts, draftees into this army, and we have no choice but to operate according to the unctious God places upon our hearts and the clear commandments He provides us in His book. This is a miracle we should not lose sight of, friends, and be forever thankful for, especially if you compare and contrast this army to the army of this nation and the filth it represents and promotes today.

Now, no general is going to send his army into battle without preparing and supplying them. Not if he wants to win, at least. We are led by the greatest general ever to exist, the Captain of the Host of heaven, and we are provided with all things necessary to go into battle.

Let us examine the elements of what we have been supplied, looking specifically at Ephesians 6:13-18.

- ***Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, (6:13-14)***

Here we are exhorted to take “the whole armor of God” that is supplied and readied for us. Not just one piece – a sword or a shield, say – but the **whole** armor. It is the duty of the true Christian not to second guess the armaments given, but to know they are all given for a reason and they should be studied to obtain expert knowledge in their use and application. I remember the first time I studied this idea of the armor of God I was about 14 or 15 and had just seen the movie ‘Platoon’. There’s a scene in that film that has always stuck with me powerfully in this context, where a couple of green privates have just landed in Vietnam, and they’re preparing to patrol. They’ve got all this gear strapped to their bodies and their sergeant walks up to them and starts peeling stuff off of them, throwing it to the ground until they are left with their gun and a couple of other things. The equipment they were given had them ready for every possible contingency of war, and the experienced soldier knew what they’d need to survive.

That image has always powerfully stuck with me. We don’t have that problem. We don’t have someone leading our army who says we must be prepared for every contingency and then doesn’t supply us properly with what is needed. We aren’t overburdened with equipment or gear that is marginally useful, nor are we short-changed. Our Captain has provided us with the “whole armor”, and it doesn’t need to be second-guessed, retrofitted, re-outfitted, re-designed, manipulated, adjusted or changed in any way. Maybe most importantly here, we don’t have to outfit ourselves. We don’t need to craft new arms or armor as we go through this wilderness. We don’t need to rely on our own skillfulness to know that we are properly and completely armed for the battle that is set before us to engage in! Take the armor and stand!

Having this armor taken to ourselves, we must then do three things:

1. We must “withstand in the evil day” – withstand the temptations and alluring pleasantries that Satan puts before us. Understand, Satan stands against us:

***“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel”***  
(1 Chronicles 21:1).

He's not just lounging waiting to see how things turn out. He is active against us. Therefore we must withstand him and all he brings to bear against us, and resist the temptations of sin. This armor is the key to accomplishing that.

2. We must stand, as in stand our ground. We cannot give ground by compromising our doctrine or succumbing to the overwhelming desire of those around us to be silent on these vital matters, or relinquish our God-given duty to warn people that there is a judgment coming. We must stand on Christ, resolved to hold firm in our belief that He will overcome and so we by Him and through Him. We cannot give so much as one jot or tittle on the words, the doctrines, etc. If we fail to stay upon Christ, we give entrance to Satan to overcome us because we can't withstand him alone. So when we've done everything else, remember, to stand on Christ as the Captain of the Host and to take His armor and put it on.
3. We must stand armed, ready for action. We've done the work to take the armor and put it on, so we might as well stand once we've done it. We must look to each element of our armor and be ready to put it all to use every moment of every day, not worrying or questioning whether we are prepared. If we have taken this armor, then we are by God's grace prepared and ready for battle. Those who do not take on this whole armor and do not stand, cannot be thought of as battle-ready, and will become easy prey for the enemy.

A soldier sitting when battle comes upon them is a dead soldier. Sitting in repose or comfort is not a battle stance, and our war is not yet won. We must not take quickly to leisure or relaxation thinking that this or that moment is not one for battle. We must "stand" and be ready for the fight whenever and wherever it comes. All the time. You should be detecting a theme here, by the way. You can't sit by sipping lemonade and fight a war. Prepare yourself, stand up to fight!

- ***having your loins girt about with truth (6:14)***

The underlying element of the armor we are provided with and are instructed to gird ourselves with is truth. Truth is found of course in only one place, the Gospel. The truth has been preserved for us without mixture or dilution to wrap ourselves in as a protective layer and foundation of our armor.

Armor is a complicated thing. If you don't put it on right you have a situation where you are unable to operate with the right freedom of motion and you can't fight to your greatest potential. If you don't put pieces together correctly, you end up with gaps that leave you vulnerable. If you put pieces together that don't really belong in the same suit of armor, you end up with something that doesn't function properly, has gaps, and is likely very uncomfortable so you're unable move in the way you want to move to protect yourself and defeat your enemy.

The Japanese samurai got this concept of girding their loins very well. Under all that very protective and very scary looking armor, they wore very comfortable specialized silk undergarments that were put on in very specific ways so that they would not bind or restrict their freedom of movement, and provided their skin protection against the harsher materials that the armor was made of, whether that was wood or metal. This is the proper idea here, not the image of a belt commonly displayed. You can't be worried about taking off some important piece of armor while marching or waiting for the battle to start to scratch some itch or adjust your clothes. This under layer is critical to your success as a soldier so that physical discomfort doesn't derail you right before the trumpet to attack is sounded.

The truth serves this same purpose for us in spiritual warfare. It is the foundational element of our armor, wrapped about us in a way that is both comforting **and** comfortable. We do not operate out of our own self-interests or from our own thoughts. The base layer of our armor is truth – not our truth, but God's:

***“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).***

To arm ourselves properly, we first wrap ourselves in the truth that is Jesus Christ. The plain truth that He is the mediator, the King whom we serve. In the truth He has established and preserved for us we gird ourselves for battle.

***“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).***

The light is the truth. If you do not speak according to these words we speak, all of them, you are not armed as we are armed, protected as we are protected, and are therefore not of this army. You are not a brother or fellow soldier in Christ if you do not have the equipment provided by our General. Without this truth, we have nothing, no ability to go forward into the fray or properly use the other pieces of our armor. If you don't have that armor, I don't want to be standing next to you in the battle, friend. You are a risk to me because you are not properly prepared to fight, and therefore will be a distraction when the bullets are flying and the bombs landing all around us as it were.

- ***having on the breastplate of righteousness (6:14)***

The breastplate covers our chest and body, wherein are our most vulnerable organs. It is one of the most important pieces of armor that a soldier can wear, because it deflects the most grievous and life-threatening of blows, and if built properly it is able to withstand a veritable onslaught of attacks from arrows, spears, swords and all manner of weaponry and attack. The breastplate protects what is today called 'center mass' and is also the greatest target.

With the breastplate of righteousness we protect the heart. This is where our allegiance to the King resides as well as our love for Him which moves us to take the battlefield and deliver the message we do. It is from Him that we receive this unction and by Him we are tried:

***“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:10).***

This is not our righteousness that makes up the armor. This is the righteousness of Christ that is afforded us as protection. Our works can never achieve any righteousness, and no matter how good the work we do is, it is filth. A perspective we should keep before our eyes always, never comparing the work we do to the world and calling it good, but looking to the work our Savior has done and seeing our own as nothing.

***“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).***

This imputed righteousness of Christ is the ultimate and only guard against the accusations and railings of Satan against us. The method of protection against these slings and arrows is given us at 1 Thessalonians 5:8

***“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love...”***

This is no new or different breastplate, but one in the same with the breastplate of righteousness. How can we demonstrate the righteousness of Christ without demonstrating faith and love? Faith in Him, and love for Him? Not some sloppy-agape love, some slobbering goofy nonsense, but genuine, sincere love of the brethren and love for these sorry souls who wander about in darkness? The expression of truth, the seeking of truth and acknowledgement of His truth in the Word is our donning of the breastplate. Without that, we have no protection against the wiles of Satan and from the wrath we so surely deserve. I also point out that Christ is adorned similarly:

***“For he put on righteousness as a breastplate...” (Isaiah 59:17).***

Christ is being shown in that state and position He will be in upon His return. He wears this same armor, although in His case, it actually is His righteousness which He bears. We must look to that example and be like Him. Remember from my last sermon our role as an occupying force. If we do not occupy properly in the right state of preparedness, when He returns, fully armored, ready for battle, we will not have time to put the armor on at the last minute. Since we know not the hour of his return, it behooves His servants to be armored at all times, prepared and anticipating His return.

- ***having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (6:15)***

As Sam told us in his last sermon, the feet must be shod if a soldier is to be of any use on the battlefield. Without the feet protected, you're always looking down to make sure that you don't step on something. You won't see the spear that is flying toward you. We must have a way to protect our feet, one of the most tender parts of the body, that enable us to march and run the full course of our race, and our Captain has provided just such a protection in this armor.

The foot is the base of all that we do as creatures. Without stability at the base, our movement is halted and uneven. If our feet are not properly balanced our movements are not fluid. They are halting and jerky. If we do not care properly for the feet, our head will not be focused on our goals, because we are spending time focused on the pain we are suffering in the feet and watching where we are putting them. All it takes is a small misalignment and the whole is off. Think of a small stone in your shoe when you go to run and how it changes how you move.

To prevent against this halting and make it so that we can run our race with alacrity and fluidity, we have this armor of "the preparation of the Gospel of peace". Let us look at the beauty of this apparent paradox here – we are armored for war with the Gospel of peace.

The Gospel gives us peace even when going into war. It provides us the sure knowledge of God's truth, His promises, His revealed will, everything He wishes us to know about Himself, His Son, His throne – everything. Within the Gospel is the safe haven, a peaceful harbor in the maelstrom that is our existence, providing for us the hope that our sins are forgiven. It calms the chaos of the hearts and minds of those people who see their own wretched sinfulness, their utter and complete lack of any ability to alleviate the punishment they deserve for their sins. The good news of the Gospel assures us that not all mankind will go to hell as they righteously deserve brings peace to those whom it is intended to bring peace.

If you go into battle unsure of who you fight for, what you fight for and why you are on that field of battle, you cannot focus on attaining the prize and taking the day. If you, on the other hand, at your foundation, in the place you must be stable, solid and grounded, have calming peace and know precisely why you are there, for whom you fight and what the goal is, all of your energies can be focused on attaining that goal.

So we must be prepared in the Gospel. We must **know it**. We must have it as our foundation. Not just a rote memorization of the words, for even the devils can do that. No, we must see it as and believe it is the unmitigated word of God, and make it to be as a fire shut up in our bones, part of our warp and woof, our every fibre, not just the words, but the **meaning** of the words and a thorough understanding of where they apply. Our feet, our mode of movement and propulsion must be founded on the

Gospel. It must be the fuel that moves us and the motivation for our motion. Without that we are simply wandering.

While we rely on our God to help us understand, we must do the work to have that deep love of the words. We have no right to demand that God give us knowledge and understanding if we will not open the book and humbly seek His help in understanding it. That preparation becomes the material with which our feet are shod! The Gospel itself becomes a protective covering over our feet to make us stable and sure as we charge into battle every day to war against principalities and powers and the temptations with which they seek to destroy us.

- ***Above all, taking the shield of faith (6:16)***

The shield is an item of great importance to a warrior fighting in hand to hand combat. It is versatile, mobile, can protect parts of the body that are not directly protected by plates of armor, and when used in conjunction with the shields of other warriors becomes a nearly impenetrable wall of protection. It can be turned in any direction to ward off attack, and in the hands of a skillful warrior makes them virtually invulnerable.

Our faith is our shield. The better sense of the word “above” here is “over”, because there is not an intended sense that the shield of faith is more important than any other of our armor elements. It is, however, over all the others, as a shield would be providing a front layer of protection. It is our first line of defense, if you will, since without faith, we have no hope of salvation, we cannot understand the Gospel of peace, nor can we wield the sword of the Spirit.

The shield can protect the head, the legs, the body; it can be worn on the back to protect from arrows while engaged in swordplay; it is an extremely vital part of the warrior’s kit. And so is our faith. Our faith is acknowledgement of the truth with which we are girded, that Christ is the Savior of those whom He has chosen. That faith allows us to deflect the blows of Satan’s universal lie – “***ye shall not surely die***” (Genesis 3:4). Our faith gives us knowledge of the lie and hope that deserved death will not come to us.

Our faith prevents us from wallowing in despair and self-pity over the extreme horrors of our sins. Our faith allows us to acknowledge the readiness of the wrath of God to be put to use in punishing sin, and at the same time provides us the means and belief to avoid that punishment, through the mercy of Christ. Our faith allows us to deflect the fiery darts of temptation which Satan fires at us constantly, without rest. The idea is that if this fiery dart, this temptation, should take hold in the body, it might not itself kill, but the fire would spread and consume you. With the shield of faith we swat away the fiery darts, and mitigate the risk that little sins, little faults, will spread like fire and consume us, becoming soul-damning faults leading us to hell.

- ***And take the helmet of salvation (6:17)***

At 1 Thessalonians 5:8 this is expressed as “***for an helmet, the hope of salvation***”. The helmet protects the face and head. The body can withstand any number of vital and terrible wounds, but the right blow to the head and it’s all over.

***“And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth” (1 Samuel 17:49).***

Goliath’s helmet obviously didn’t help much, but ours is a perfected piece of armor, provided by our God.

***“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lamentations 3:26).***

This hope of salvation is what gives us our ability to keep our heads, so to speak. Think about the onslaught we face on a daily basis, both direct and indirect, for the defense of the Gospel we undertake. We face the fiery darts of Satan launched at our heart constantly, working to cause doubt and introduce idolatry and sin into our thinking. We have the physical attacks that we endure sometimes on a daily basis as we stand in the gates of this generation. We have the attacks we face in the workplace and schools where they seek to discredit us and take away our livelihoods. We have the vexation of watching the men of this generation deny God, and pursue every manner of perversion they can find, calling good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20).

I say think about this onslaught. It is literally continual. This house, this congregation is basically the only place on earth where there is any peace, any respite from that onslaught. It is 24x7x365x360 degrees. The press, the entertainment industry, our co-workers, fellow students, strangers on the street, billboards, TV, the Internet, the music coming out of the radio, writers, technologists, politicians, judges, lawyers, doctors, the wealthy, the destitute, etc., etc. Literally **every single element of humanity** is under the power of the Wicked One to try and quench this hope that we have.

There are two types of salvation meant here. First, temporal salvation from daily affliction and the onslaught of our enemies. Second, our eternal salvation. If we had no hope that we will overcome in these two facets, what purpose would our lives have? Indeed, Jude describes such people as “***clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots***” (Jude 12). The hope of salvation is our drive and motivation to make the sacrifices we make, and if we don’t arm ourselves with that, we won’t be on the path for long, and I would argue that this lack of hope is what causes most, if not all those who fall off the path to do so.

- ***the sword of the Spirit (6:17)***

As the verse tells us, this sword of the Spirit is the word of God. This is the only distinct weapon we are provided, but what a weapon it is! From it we derive all the elements of our armor and find the means by which we are to defend ourselves from Satan's attacks, parrying his blows.

It is by this weapon that we live, for it is not only our sword, but the bread of life as well! A more elegant mixing of two metaphors I don't think is found outside of scripture.

The word of course is sharper than any two-edged sword, and when wielded by our Savior is fully able to divide both soul and spirit and joints and marrow (Hebrews 4:12). It is a grave weapon that men disregard to their own peril.

This is the very weapon our Captain Himself uses to destroy His enemies finally:

***“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Revelation 19:15, 21).***

The word is the most effective weapon we have to fight against temptation, despair, hopelessness, faithlessness, affliction, persecution and sin. When Christ was tempted in the wilderness, what did He say but ***“It is written”*** (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Here is given us the most perfect of weapons, making carnal weapons useless. Should we not arm ourselves in like manner to our Captain?

I hope it is obvious that these elements of the armor of God are all tightly intertwined with one another and are deeply rooted in the Word. We must, as soldiers in this army, prepare ourselves by studying the Word of God and making ourselves ready for battle on all fronts, ready for it at all times. This readiness and study are not academic things, but practical things. They prepare us to resist the devil so that he will flee from us. If they are part of our warp and woof and we wear them like armor, we are less susceptible to falling into the temptations the Wicked One can put before us and distract or even destroy us with. This armor is perfect, and there is no place for second-guessing it.

Study the word, my friends, and you will be well-armed for battle. To not do so puts your soul in peril.