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Get Dressed for Battle (Part 2)
Ephesians 6:16-17

David and Goliath. Quite a match up. The sports pages would burn ink writing about such a lop-sided contest. Goliath the giant was over nine feet tall and if proportioned like Shakiel Oneal, he would weigh well over 400 pounds. This was one big dude. His metal underwear weighed 125 pounds. His spear had an iron point on it that weighed 15 pounds, almost the weight of a college shot put. When this guy stood up against you in full armor He was a very formidable fighting machine.

Ever been up against a giant in your life that looked so incredibly overwhelming you were convinced there was no possible way of a positive outcome. No way you could even escape let alone gain a victory. David is facing a giant, Goliath. How is he supposed to fight against that nine foot monster of a man? Conventional wisdom says he ought to be wearing a full suit of heavy armor too. That's what Saul tried to get David to wear to go out and fight the giant. But it was too big. It didn't fit. It wasn't right. So David took the metal armor off and chose to dress and arm himself with weapons that fit him and were suitable to fight against his giant. We cannot miss the lesson for we fight against giants far more lethal than Goliath. We are fighting spiritual battles and we are needing to fight them with spiritual weapons. Is there anyone here fighting giants this morning? Giants of fear, giants of lust, giants of deception, lies, deceit, giants of doubt, giants of depression, giants of discouragement, giants of crushed expectations, giants of criticism, giants of illness, giants of family and relational conflict, giants of financial crisis? Is anybody facing up against a giant this morning? Then you are going to need the right kind of armor to fight an overwhelming enemy. Its going to be tempting to run to conventional wisdom that says, work a little

harder, bury yourself in leisure, anesthetize your pain with the drug of choice or leisure of choice, hide and hope it goes away, attack it with tips and tricks, read lots of books, educate yourself against it, throw money at it, buy it off, and hope it goes away, keep it entertained, ignore it. But...it doesn't go away because we are trying to fight it with the wrong weapons.

Chances are good that we think we are fighting an enemy, but our efforts are directed against the wrong person. Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 6. In v. 12 reminds us that our struggle is not against people, flesh and blood. Yes, even right now, you may grab your spouse by the hand and say "you are not the enemy". We are in a spiritual battle and therefore must put on spiritual armor in order to stand against the schemes, the methodia of the evil one that wants nothing better then to pick us off and take us out. We must open our eyes to see the battle. See the real enemy and know the methods the enemy has been perfecting for the last 6000 years. We are to put on spiritual armor and stand in the victory that has already been won by Christ. We fight not for victory but from victory.

Are you dressed and ready for battle this morning? Did you gird up your loins with truth? Did you ask God to expose the lies that the evil one has been whispering in your ear this week? And protect yourself in the areas that you are most sensitive and vulnerable with the truth of God? Did you affirm the truth that God loves you. God has a future and a hope for you. God does not make junk. God wants to make some real life change in you. God will provide all your needs according to His riches and is the truth the way and the life. The same yesterday, today and tomorrow? Expose the lies and stand in the truth. Did you put on the breastplate of righteousness, affirming that any righteousness we have comes from God. We cannot work to earn it, for it is given. And so we stand in His righteousness and simply say thanks and then live in that right living out of a love response to God. Asking him to give us a hunger

and thirst for righteousness. Then did you put on your peace shoes? Satan wants nothing more than to cause havoc and confusion and worry and conflict and dissatisfaction in our lives. We need to put on peace. Not the kind the world gives but the kind of peace that Jesus offers to us. We can never know the peace of God until we first make our peace with God. So as we strap on our shoes of peace we refuse to run to Satan's offers of a quick peace that will never last. We apply by faith to live out the truth we know about God and what he will do for us so that we do not have to be filled with worry and fear and anxiety, but instead we can stand in the peace of God because we have made our peace with God and are walking in His righteousness and standing in His truth.

So we come to Ephesians reading (READ v.14-17). Taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. The Greek word for the Roman soldier's shield was not the small round one, but the shield that was rectangular, about 4 feet tall and 2-1/2 feet wide. It could cover the whole body and was made of laminated wood, strapped with iron and covered with hide. Before battle the shield was soaked in water so as to be able to extinguish the arrows that had been dipped in pitch and lit a flame and fired at the soldiers. This is the word picture that Paul used to try to help us understand in similar way that faith is a protection against the attacks of the evil one.

So if we want to know what the attack of Satan is, we must ask the question what is faith best at defending against. At what times in our life do we most need faith? Certainly doubt would be a flaming missile attack on our faith. Satan uses our doubts, our questions to taunt us into thinking that there is no God, that He does not care for us or love us. Tempt us into thinking He really isn't in control and we are all on our own. We may have doubts and blame ourselves thinking how we could possibly think this way if I am Christian? We may think that we have lost our faith other ways we wouldn't be thinking such things, that there is

something wrong. We think that if we are someone of faith we should never have doubts because people of faith do not have doubts. This is a lie of the evil one and a missile shot at your heart.

In James 4:7 it calls for us to resist the devil and he will flee from you. This is placing up our shield of faith. This is refusing to believe the lie that if you have doubts then you can't possibly be a man or woman of faith. Doubt is always an attack on faith. But even the fact that you are being attacked with doubts, highlights the fact that you have faith. The reality of the attack reveals the reality of the faith. For example when I was in school, it was only the Christians who were really living for Jesus that were ever made fun of or ridiculed for their faith. No baseball player ever bothered to worry about or even think about a guy sitting in the stands, even if he was wearing a ball glove. He wasn't in the game, It was the guy who dared to step up to the plate and hit a ball that caused damage that the pitcher worried about attacking with curve balls and deceptive sliders. If you are getting attacked by doubts. In one way be encouraged...you are in the game. Then put up that shield of faith.

We must put up our shield of faith because the missiles are aimed, powerful and directed at us. We also need to put up that shield of faith because we burn so easily. The flaming missiles are shot designed to pierce, but also intended to ignite a fire that will grow into an inferno that will spread its destruction out of control, if we do not take the steps to extinguish it. I wonder if that was what the Psalm writer David was thinking about when he wrote, "Thou O Lord are a shield about me."

The enemy launches a volley of arrows with flames that have the potential to fan into bonfires in our hearts if we allow them to stay lodged in us. Arrows of doubts, fears, discouragements, loss or abundance, lack of things or wealth of stuff, crushed expectations, people who have let us down, lack of direction, our labor that seems to look to be done in vain. Lust, rebellion. We could be hit with one of these or several of these at

one time and if we allow it to stay lodged in our hearts it could spread destruction. They must be extinguished.

So what is faith and how can that help us extinguish the fiery attacks by the evil one? Hebrews 11 gives us a definition. V. 1 says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Faith is assurance and conviction in those things that have been promised to us, but have not yet come to be or we cannot see how they are coming to be. Faith is a deliberate decision to hold onto the promises that God has revealed to us in the scriptures. Faith is a dependence on God that refuses to run away in panic when the enemy is attacking. Faith is looking to the hope of the eternal reward. Faith sees our circumstances through God's eyes. Faith is believing in the promises that God has given when we cannot see the end result. This is not a blind faith for we are placing our faith in one who has been proven to be faithful. That assurance, that conviction comes not because I can always see how it will turn out or what the last chapter reads in my book of life. This faith comes strong when it is based not on my view of the circumstances around me but based on how well I know the One who is Faithful and True.

Faith is acting on belief. The first piece of armor we took up the belt of truth. Those things we know are true that God has said about Himself and what He will do. Faith acts. Faith is acting on what we believe is true. It is saying, "Yes, I believe that Christ is truth. I believe that He has forgiven me, He has saved me. He has adopted me into His family. He has draped His robe of righteousness around my shoulders. He is my peace. No matter how difficult things are here on earth, there is a hope in heaven. There is life after death. God is real. Heaven is a real place and we can be forgiven in Christ. Our labor is not in vain. God will direct my paths. We can read the faith chapter in Hebrews 11 it describes how the great men and women of the bible demonstrated their faith. Abel worshipped God with his best and gave God a portion of his

best by faith. Every time we put money in the offering box in the back, we do it by faith that God will use that money for His glory in our own lives and others. By faith Noah built an ark. It made no logical sense. It hadn't rained yet on the earth. There wasn't any place within 100 miles to float his ship. It made no logical sense. Yet, God said build and by faith Noah obeyed God and built by faith. Abraham, was called by God to sell his house and go to a place and God didn't even tell him where, just told him to start walking. Abraham obeyed God by faith and began looking for a place where God was building and working. In v.13 and then repeated again in v.39 it says all of them died without receiving the promise. Now many of them received hints or partial sight of a promise. Noah saw the purpose of the boat. Abraham saw the land, the baby boy heir. Joseph saw the throne. Moses saw the parting of the red sea. Joshua saw the destruction of Jericho when it seemed pretty crazy to walk around the city and blow trumpets. But none of them saw the ultimate promise that comes through faith. They were simply men and women who acted on their belief in a God who is faithful and true. That faith was simply working out the implications of what they believed to be true. They said, "If this be true then I must follow, I must obey." That is how we put up the shield of faith. We simply say yes to God.

For if we have no faith Hebrews 11:6 says that we will not be able to please God. For it is impossible to please God without faith. For faith is that trust, dependence that believes God is good and will justly reward those who seek him. And that reward may come partially here on earth, we may see some of our faith become sight, but ultimately we are seeking for the reward that comes in heaven after we die Therefore, my contentment is not going to be strapped down to what happens this afternoon or this next week or next month. My eyes of faith will lash their contentment to the promise of the eternal reward. Are you looking to heaven? The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we

know all the answers, but that we are know. Are you affirming the truth you believe about God in such a way you are acting upon it saying, "If this is true then I must obey" Then you are placing up your shield of faith.

V. 17 describes another piece of the armor that we need to be putting on in order for us to stand firm against the attacks of the evil one. "take the helmet of salvation". That word for take is a Greek word that does not so much emphasize our putting it on, but refers to accepting or receiving or welcoming it. This Roman helmet was probably made of leather and brass or sometimes iron. It protects the head. One thinks then of the protection of the mind, the intellect and ability to reason.

Satan knows that the battleground he fights on is in our minds and would like nothing better then to aim his arrows into our minds convincing us that we don't belong to Christ that our salvation is of no affect. He also wants to rob us of the hope of our future salvation in heaven and eternity when we will see Christ's future and complete victory. Satan will attack us trying to convince us that we must work hard in order to obtain eternal peace with God. Or he will attack us with pride thinking that I can obtain salvation on my own if I work to be good. Or Satan can attack us with despair thinking that I could never possibly be good enough to be saved by God. Or he can attack us with lies in getting us to think that there is no life after death, no sin. No need of a Savior. That is what John Lennon believed when he wrote the song "Imagine". Imagine there is no heaven or hell...it's easy if you try.

Putting on the helmet of salvation is to affirm its truth by faith in God's word that I am a child saved by Him because of God's work. Ephesians 2:8,9 says "For by grace I am saved through faith, not of myself it is a gift of God." So when I receive and welcome the helmet of salvation, I am receiving believing in the salvation that God has promised he will give to me by His grace. Living in the knowledge that I am saved

by God will protect my head, protect my mind, protect my ability to think and reason. For those who are not in Christ will ultimately struggle to reason because they have left out the very important and necessary spiritual aspect of reasoning as a creature created in the image of God.

In his last book "*Mind at the end of its Tether*" noted freethinker and liberal philosopher George Bernard Shaw wrote this haunting statement; "The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels which were to establish the millennium led instead directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once. In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshippers in the temples of a thousands creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith." In the world there is no protection for the mind, for leaving God out of any reasoning or science or thinking is to ignore the creator, the One who has all the answers to life and the One who can ultimately save. We would be wise to receive with gratitude the helmet of salvation.

The last piece of armor listed here is found in v.17, it is the sword of the Spirit, which is specifically defined as the Word of God. This Roman sword is the short light razor sharp sword that was used in hand to hand combat. It is mainly an offensive weapon. The word of God is used to attack and fight back with truth.

Remember in Matthew 4 when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He quoted the Word of God back to Satan in the face of Satan's' attacks. When we quote the truths of God in the face of Satan's attacks, he will flee. We are attacked with the temptation to forget God, to relegate him only to Sunday mornings or only in crisis. We fight back with daily sharpening our sword, being in and reading the Word of God. We fight back the lies by being in the word and speaking it to Satan, reading him a goodbye stories about the truths of God and him. One temptation is so intellectualize the Bible that we begin to trust in our own wisdom and not Gods. We start thinking we can know and not

bother to apply what we learn and in doing so we rely on our own wisdom and become fools. Proverbs 3:5,6 warns us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make your paths straight." Or the other side some are tempted to say, "I'm not a great reader." Or I don't read that very much. I've heard enough. The Word is not that big of a deal. Other people might study the Bible and memorize it but that's so prideful I'm not going to do that...I'm content to work with what I know." That's ridiculous. Who ever heard of a soldier who went out to the battlefield and never bothered to sharpen it that morning, or never even bothered to bring it to the battle. That's like a professional basketball player who never touches a basketball all week and then shows us at the stadium and can't even dribble or do a simply cross over lay up.

Do not be deceived into thinking that the Word of God is powerless. Too many preachers spent too much of their sermons telling good stories and interesting illustrations, thinking the power is in the story. Its not. The power is in the Word of God and we must speak and think and live the Word of God.

In order to be able to apply the truth of God to a specific situation you have to know the whole word of God. Its interesting that the Greek word here in v. 17 for Word of God is not the more common word Logos, which often refers to the total utterances of God, but it's the rarer word Rhema which refers to the specific sayings of God. The Sword of the Spirit is the Rhema of God, word of God, which is a specific saying of God applied to a specific situation. If you do not know the Logos Word of God the whole of what God says, you will not be able to apply the Rhema or specific sayings of God to a particular situation.

Hebrews 4:12 says "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts an intentions of the heart. The Word of God is a sword used to fight temptation and apply

truth with surgical precision to the point of need. Have you not had in a moment of temptation a flash of scripture pierce to your heart and been saved from stepping from the line of temptation to sin? Or perhaps someone has asked you a question of spiritual nature and you just about to say, "I don't know" when the sword of the spirit illumined your mind and you spoke with words and wisdom you had no idea were with you. This is because the sayings of God strike home like arrows to the heart.

So how are we to put on this sword of the spirit? Obviously, the greater the exposure there is to Scripture the more the Spirit can use this sword in your life. If you do not bother to read or memorize or meditate or study the scripture then you are left terribly exposed to defeat and despair. But again a word of warning. It is not just reading but reflecting on how to apply the truth. It is not just studying but putting it into use. It is not just believing it to be true but to applying it by faith that makes your sword sharp and active. God's word reveals God's mind so that if we fill our hearts and minds with His word, sin will not be able to dominate us. Take up the sword of the Spirit. Get God's word into your mind and heart and hands and feet.

So in the morning we wake up, open our eyes and as we stand before God in the shower. Shall we begin to put on our spiritual armor before God. God, I confess my sin and ask you to wash away the sin dirt I have allowed to accumulate in my mind and body. I ask you God, to expose the lies I have believed that have caused me to drift from following you fully. I am now picturing myself putting on the belt of truth. I affirm a desire to speak truth and walk in truth today especially in the areas where I feel most vulnerable and sensitive. I will stand in truth and refuse to believe the lies that Satan whispers in my ears.

I will also now put on the breastplate of Righteousness. It is not my own but Gods and so I simply say thanks. I remind myself the truth that I am a child of God and am a new creation. I ask God to whet my

spiritual taste buds to delight in holiness and be attracted to righteousness instead of the pleasures of worldly counterfeits.

I now put on the shoes of the gospel of peace. I refuse to panic and run to the worldly offers of a quick and easy peace that never lasts past the morning hangover. They are fake and non-lasting. When I am tempted to worry and be confused and my relationships fill with conflict and disorder, I will instead stand in the peace that Jesus has offered. I receive the peace with God so I can rest in the peace of God. I choose right now to take all the worries and fears of today, take them to God. I will rest in the peace God has to offer by taking my cares to God in prayer and thanksgiving and think on those things that are right and true and excellent.

I now deliberately lift up the shield of faith believing with positive conviction in the One who is faithful and true and the hope you have for me. I refuse to be intimidated by arrows of doubt that are shot my way. I instead will view them as badges of honor being one who is in the faith and In faith. I will choose to see my circumstances through your eyes. In faith I will look to the heavenly reward. In faith I will believe that you are and will reward those who diligently seek you. Faith indeed is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4)

I then will receive the helmet of salvation that comes from God to protect my mind and ability to think and reason with my whole being as God created. I will not allow Satan to shoot his arrows at me to try and convince me that I don't belong in Gods family. No I affirm right now based on God's word that I am in Christ and He has saved me.

Finally, I take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. I am asking you God to bring to my mind this day specific sayings in your word that I could apply to the situations I will face today. God as I drive and work and talk with people throughout the day, bring to mind scriptures that I have memorized or read or studied that can cut to the truth of the matter. Words that bring healing. Words that bring

conviction. Words that keep me from giving in to temptation. I do not want to just be a hearer of the word but I want to be a doer of the word that puts my belief into faith action. May I lean not on my own understanding but trust you and acknowledge you in all my ways. Today Lord I am dressed ready for battle to stand in Your strength and stand firm in your truth. I want to please you today as your faithful servant.