
This message will focus on Ephesians 6:13-17 to acquaint individuals with their spiritual gear to protect them from the one and only enemy.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Church! Welcome to everyone here on-site, as well as to those joining us online. My thanks to Dan for the invitation to preach a mini-series for these three weeks.

We live in a world at war. Battles lines exist between nations. Currently in 2025, there are 38 nations around the world at war; some with one another, others in the midst of internal civil war, and still others with terrorist insurgencies, and all 38 wars are claiming the lives of tens of thousands of people (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war>).

But there is yet another war that has been raging from the opening moments of measured time, and this war has claimed casualties beyond comprehension. The war of which I speak is with the kingdom of darkness. John Eldredge, author of *Wild at Heart*, said it this way, “You live in a world at war. Spiritual attack must be a category you think in or you will misunderstand more than half of what happens.”

Stop and think. Do we find it hard to pray? Is it difficult to forgive? Do we wake up in the middle of the night with worry and anxiety weighing us down? Have we lost our joy? Has laughter given itself over to angry outbursts? Is peace of mind a thing of the past because pessimism reigns in our minds? Are we quick to pass judgment, to find fault with others? Do we drown in waters of shame and self-loathing? The list goes on and on. Our struggles are a part of a much larger campaign. When soldiers are on the front line, they are well aware of a larger battle looming elsewhere. We must think in the same way. Individually, we are being assaulted by an enemy who is wreaking havoc around the world, intent on bringing chaos and destruction to humankind. Jesus called the enemy the devil.

For these three weeks, we are exploring the reality of spiritual warfare, and we are anchoring ourselves in Ephesians 6:10-18, even to the point of memorizing these nine short verses.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 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. 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming

arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

We break these verses into three sections (one each week), and we are labeling these sections with a simple and memorable phrase: Ready. Aim. Fire.

Last week, verses 10-12 helped us be READY for spiritual warfare by understanding the two opposing forces at the battle lines: the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. In studying our enemy, we see a threefold reality that 1) we are at war, 2) the enemy has rank and file, and 3) the enemy has a battle plan with three primary weapons to destroy us: deception, distraction and division. Yet, we have a threefold superiority in that we have 1) the person of God, 2) the power of God, and 3) the plan of God on our side! We have nothing to fear for God is with us and He is for us!

This week, we move into verses 13-17 to explore five significant pieces of armor, and as we do so, let's think about our military. A friend of mine here at The Creek retired as a lieutenant colonel from the US Army, and being a highly trained leader, he helped me understand some important insights as to how our military trains for war.

The US Army spends \$200,000 on what is called AIT (Advanced Individualized Training), by which every person is trained for war. From cooks to computer engineers, from medics to chaplains, whether male or female—every person in the army is trained to fight. They are trained in what WILL happen, and when it happens, their training keeps them from giving in to panic. This training gives each soldier a heightened sense of alertness, almost like having a sixth sense. Moreover, the army doesn't only spend money on the training; the army also invests heavily in equipping each soldier. A soldier is given a TA, a Table of Allowance—think “packing list.” Before deployed to the front line, each soldier has a weapon, ammo, armor plates, goggles, a canteen, food, a communication device, and more. Each soldier is completely familiar with and knows from constant use every tool of war. And here's one last aspect of modern warfare my friend shared with me that speaks right into our text this morning; soldiers have what are called battle buddies. Soldiers are paired off with one another. They do everything together. They know everything about one another. They train and work together as an inseparable team, and when they are deployed to the front line, they fight side by side and have each other's back.

Just as soldiers are trained and equipped to engage the enemy, the Apostle Paul wrote clearly that the same has happened for each of us as “soldiers of Jesus Christ.” Here in our text, notice the provision given to us to engage the enemy, Satan, and his dominion.

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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation.... (Ephesians 6:13-17a)

Ready. Aim. Fire. Think AIM. This is looking down the barrel of a gun ready to fire or along the shaft of an arrow ready to release. AIM is looking at the target, and in war, the target is the enemy. Never forget that as we look at the forces of evil, taking aim against the demonic, they are looking back. We are commanded to immediately and permanently “put on the full armor of God so that *when the day of evil comes...*,” meaning there comes a moment when we engage the enemy. The day of evil refers to any day, any moment, when we are tempted. If the day of evil referred to only the last day(s) or the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), there would be no urgency right now. We would not need to be alert against the enemy.

Through His Word, God, our Commander in Chief, ordered every one of us to put on the full armor that God provides—not partial pieces, but every piece. Why? So that we will be able to “stand our ground.” Notice the word “stand” appears four times in these few words! If something is repeated, it is important! God wants this to capture our attention. The word Paul used for “stand” is one and the same, and it means to stand against. It is the very same word that we find in James 4:7, “*Resist (stand against) the devil and he will flee from you.*” When Paul wrote, “...and after you have done everything, to stand,” he meant that when the battle is over and the dust has settled, only one army will be left standing—the army of God! “Done everything” means to finish the job.

Shortly after Jesus was baptized, Satan went after Him (Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13). Jesus resisted him. Jesus stood His ground, and when the dust settled, Jesus was left standing. “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13).

Satan “left Him until an opportune time,” meaning he had every intention of coming back, again and again and again. Jesus would have to stay alert because the threat level was constant. As soon as you and I surrender our lives to Jesus Christ and are baptized, we can expect the enemy to come after us. The day of evil will happen again and again and again. Why? We have declared that we are on God’s side, that we are followers of Jesus. But we have the power of God and the protection of God’s armor, each and every piece.

Now, let’s get into this army. I’m sure we are familiar with the phrase, “Clothes define the person.” For example, if we see someone at the store wearing scrubs, that person could work in the medical, dental, or scientific field. If a mass shooting took place, a SWAT team would be deployed. If a terrorist bombing took place in the city center, soldiers would be deployed. The clothes (i.e., the gear) of these officers or soldiers would define them—and they would be threatening, unsettling to the perpetrators of the attack. In the same way, our clothing defines us and when we put on the full armor of God, it must unsettle the enemy, causing him and his demonic army to quake in fear at the threat that WE pose to them.

The Department of Homeland Security has devised five threat levels denoted by colors. The highest, most serious threat level is red. When we stand at the battle lines and Satan and his demonic forces look across at us, who are followers of Jesus Christ, they should feel unsettled, threatened by just seeing us. How so? Think of the phrase, “Clothes define a person.” When the demonic see all of us wearing the “full armor of God,” we should strike fear in the enemy! And realize this: *the fit determines the threat*. How well-fitted we are in the armor (or not) determines the level of threat that we are to the enemy. If we do not obey the command of God’s Word to

put on the full armor of God, we appear as little or no threat to the kingdom of darkness. So then, how fitted are we in these five pieces of armor?

Armor up with “the belt of truth buckled around your waist”

Every Roman soldier had this essential piece of equipment, which held other equipment, such as a knife or a sword, and also held his tunic (i.e., clothing) up so that he could walk and run into battle and not trip over his clothing. In a similar way, your life and mine are held together by truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus is the embodiment of truth. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and in him, there is no truth of any kind.

Paul was the founding pastor of the church in Ephesus, and when he wrote this letter to them, this piece of armor would serve as a warning to a key group of men in the church. In Acts 20, Paul was traveling to Jerusalem where he would be arrested and eventually end up under house arrest when he wrote the book (letter) of Ephesians. Notice in Acts 20:17 that Paul called for the *elders* of the church to meet him while in route to Jerusalem. This was the final time Paul saw these men (vv. 36-38). He had a most serious conversation with them.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. *Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.* So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

Did this actually happen? Yes! Nearing his death, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy, his “son in the faith.” Notice what Paul wrote in his first letter.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.... (1 Timothy 1:1-3)

Timothy was the new pastor in Ephesus, becoming the successor of Paul, yet Paul had to write to him and say, “Stay there in Ephesus.” Timothy wanted to leave, and why? Young Timothy had to command “certain men to stop teaching false doctrine,” and those men were the elders of the church! Even the elders of “First Christian Church Ephesus” failed to have the “belt of truth buckled around their waists.” If it can happen to spiritual leaders (i.e., elders), it can happen to any and every Christian.

In 1992, a movie was produced that became an American classic. Starring Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson, the movie was a legal thriller called *A Few Good Men*. There is an iconic scene in the movie where Cruise, a young lawyer, is interrogating Nicholson on the witness stand. Cruise gets Nicholson so enraged that he screams, “You can’t handle the truth!” When we embrace truth and

bind every aspect of our lives in the truth of Jesus Christ, we can declare to Satan, “You can’t handle the truth!” When we are well-fitted with truth, we raise the threat level to its highest against our enemy.

Armor up with “the breastplate of righteousness in place”

The breastplate was made of leather and then covered by metal. When worn, it served to protect a soldier’s chest as combatants faced one another in hand-to-hand battle. The breastplate protected the vital organs (i.e., the heart and lungs) from injury. This is similar to the Kevlar body armor worn by soldiers today. Spiritually, we are to be well-fitted with this piece of armor. The Word commands us: “Above all else, guard your heart for it is the well-spring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). At the top of the to-do list, the top priority is to guard our spiritual core, for every aspect of our lives flows from it. Think of guarding the vital core of our spiritual being with a covering of righteousness. We have “all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), so our righteousness has been given to us by Jesus. It’s His work on a cross that has made us righteous—from the very heart of our being. If our term papers are due at the end of the school year, and we turn in a term paper written by Jesus as being our term paper, we are graded by HIS work. Because of what HE did for us, we should WANT to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 5:6), guarding our hearts with breastplates of righteousness. How do we protect the vital core of our lives?

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (James 8:12). Satan and his demon army work in the dark. Jesus IS the light of the world. Soldiers must fight in the dark, and to do so they use night vision goggles. These goggles take the ambient light of the moon and the stars and amplify it so that the soldier can see the enemy in the dark. But if there is no light, there is no sight. Simply put, if we do not have the light of the world—Jesus Christ—in us, we will not see the enemy around us. No light, no sight. When we play with and stay in the dark, we will be pounded by the enemy. In Matthew 16:18, in a conversation with Peter and the disciples, Jesus said that He would build His Church. The word Jesus used is *ekklesia*, meaning “the called out ones.” Peter would later write that we have been “called out of darkness and into His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). Do not, do not, do not play and stay in the dark recesses of the enemy! Our ability to see the evil one around us is as strong as the light of Jesus in us. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). We can drift into sin, but we do not drift into righteousness. Satan cannot stand it when we hunger and thirst after righteousness. When we are well-fitted with righteousness, we raise the threat level to its highest against our enemy.

Armor up with “your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”

A Roman soldier did not go barefoot. He had footwear with some kind of spikes or nails in the bottom so that his feet could anchor in the ground, enabling him to stand his ground and advance against the enemy. He didn’t wear them when he was resting. He prepared himself for battle by putting them on his feet.

This piece of armor is a direct affront and threat to the devil and his angels because it is about the gospel (i.e., good news) of peace being made between God and all humankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus called Satan the *diabolos* or “the devil” in English. Used over thirty times in the New Testament, this word means accuser, slanderer, backbiter, to sever a relationship. Everything about his name reveals his intent to kill, steal, and destroy—to steal and destroy marriages and families, friends from one another, even communities of believers. The devil thrives in relationships where there is chaos, confusion, and conflict, inciting us to turn on one another.

Check out this name given to Jesus: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). When you and I wear the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace, and when we live up to that name by making peace with people, we are a threat to the devil. When you and I are quick to forgive others, deliberately making peace with others, we assault our enemy with a profound blow. When we are well-fitted with the good news of peace, we raise the threat level to its highest against our enemy.

Armor up and “take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”

The shield Paul referred to here was not small and round, but rather it was tall and thick. The Greek word used here for shield has a root in it meaning “door” (Greek *thyreon* = shield, *thrya* = door). These shields were large like a door! Easily four feet or more in height, the shield was made from wood and then wrapped in leather. When moving to the front of the battle line, soldiers would soak the leather with water so that when the enemy shot flaming arrows, they would hit the shields, and the wet leather would extinguish the flames. Moreover, the soldiers all had one of these shields and when they stood together, side-by-side, holding their ground, these shields created a formidable wall. Of great importance are the words “take up.” This is an imperative (a command) and it happens to be plural. Paul did not give the command to one single person. He gave it to the entire Church at Ephesus, and he does the same with us today. When we stand our ground, side-by-side, we are a formidable foe to the kingdom of darkness, particularly when we stand in faith. The sight of us standing united in faith poses a tremendous threat to Satan.

Satan and his minions instill fear, worry and despair into our lives. It may be that something happens and we don’t understand it. We don’t understand why the test results indicate cancer. We don’t understand why we didn’t get accepted into the school or get the job for which we had hoped. We don’t understand why relationships are not working well. We have all kinds of questions because we do not understand what is happening. Listen carefully. The word that Paul used here for faith is the Greek word *pistos*, meaning to have trust and confidence in God. Even though we do not understand, we have confidence that God’s got this. We trust in God that He is in control. “Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord” (Psalm 20:7). When we are well-fitted with faith, with confidence and trust in God, we raise the threat level to its highest against our enemy.

Armor up and “take the helmet of salvation”

Helmets were made of bronze, and they were used only when going into battle to protect a soldier’s head. They were an essential piece of armor. While marching or working, soldiers did not wear helmets. Putting on helmets marked what would soon be a battle.

When we surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ and we were immersed, the enemy declared, “Let the battle begin.” We rejected Satan and the kingdom of darkness and became followers of Jesus in His kingdom of light! From that moment, the devil has intensified his attacks against. The devil and his angels are deceiving us for this is a battle for our minds. Helmets are often worn when people ride bikes, ski down a mountain or climb up a mountain, play baseball or football, and more. A person will take deliberate steps to protect his or her head. If not, it could be game over. Similarly, the evil one attacks how we think. Here’s a clear example. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

With absolute, explicit clarity, the Holy Spirit says that any time after the cross (i.e., “last days”), some believers will abandon (withdraw, depart from) following Jesus. Why? These believers do not protect their minds but rather follow deceiving spirits and the teaching of demons. Lying is their only language! Notice at the end of the chapter, Paul says, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Paul told Timothy to watch how he lived and how he believed (i.e., his doctrine). When he protected and persevered in sound doctrine, he saved himself and those in the church at Ephesus from being deceived and lured away from God by demons! Jesus said, “Be faithful to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10b). Where is a crown placed? On the head! When we protect our minds, watching our lives and doctrine closely, and remain faithful to Jesus until the day we draw our last breath, we receive a righteous crown of salvation—and that drives the enemy mad. When we are well-fitted with helmets of salvation until the end of our days, we raise the threat level to its highest against our enemy.

Our Challenge

It is one thing to for us *hear* the Word of God and it is entirely different for us to *live* the Word of God. At the end of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that everyone who hears His word and obeys it is like the WISE person who builds a house on rock. When the storms of life suddenly come, the house remains standing because the foundation is on the rock. Jesus went on to say that everyone who hears His word and does not obey it is like a FOOL who builds a house on sand. When the storms of life suddenly come, the house is destroyed. Here are three distinct responses to the Word of God today.

No Fear

Pastor and author Mark Bubeck wrote: “It is a very human and natural response to fear the unknown. For a believer to keep himself in the dark about Satan’s person and work is a

dangerous mistake.” No fear. There is no need to fear. When we know about the devil and his angels, we can take our stand and fight without being afraid. It’s just not KNOWING about Satan, it’s DOING what we KNOW to resist him.

We will not and do not fear him. Moreover, we strike fear in him. When we wear well the armor of God, we intimidate the devil and his angels. A battalion of soldiers or a SWAT team outfitted with the most powerful fighting gear and standing on the front line of conflict strikes fear in the opponent. And we, wearing the full armor of God, strike fear in our enemy. We intimidate them. We raise the threat level to its highest so that they know that we are a threat to their doomed kingdom of darkness that will be destroyed on the day Jesus returns. No fear.

No Retreat

Did you notice that there is no armor for the back of Christians? Why is that? Christians do not retreat! Christians stand their ground! With no fear, Christians face the forces of evil head on and they do not retreat.

No Excuse

New Testament scholar Klyne Snodgrass, PhD said:

If you seek a religion to make you comfortable, despite all its focus on peace and benefit, Christianity is not it. This is no religion for the weak or the lazy. Passive Christians cannot do the will of God; the very label ‘passive Christian’ is an oxymoron. A battle is going on, and contrary to our deception, we do not live on neutral turf. We either live for God or against Him.

Comfortable, convenient Christianity is a cancer that the great deceiver has implanted in our minds. Church at home on-line keeps us from one another. Choosing NOT to be in a life group with other believers keeps us isolated and easy prey for the enemy. Paul wrote to Christians in Rome: “I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong...” (Romans 1:11). Paul longed for, he ached, to be physically present with other believers so that something powerful could happen. They would become strong! The same happens when we are together. We become stronger men and women of God, refusing to be weak-willed Jesus-followers. Every team has a roster. Every school has a faculty. Every company has a staff. Every church can and must have an army of believers standing against the kingdom of darkness.

No fear. No retreat. No excuse. This is war—and by God’s power and presence, we will win.