

## Pastor Lloyd's Sermon Notes for 24/07/2022

### EPHESIANS 6:10-20 THE UNSEEN WARFARE

When we profess to follow Jesus we discover many things, among them is that we have many new friends...but a disturbing thing we also discover is that we have also made many enemies. There are two mistakes people make when approaching the passage about spiritual warfare and the unseen world. One is to disregard it entirely and live life here as though it does not exist and the other is to so focus on it that our feet hardly touch the ground. And both are wrong. What this teaching is about is holding the reality of spiritual opposition while keeping your footing here and now.

When Julius Caesar landed in England with his soldiers, the first thing he did was commanded all the boats to be burned. There was no going home for these soldiers. They were going to take this land or die trying. And that same attitude is to be ours, I will never go back to my old life, or my old ways I need to stand strong and face my enemies.

The western worldview is largely dominated by rationalism. That means what we can see, touch, smell, and taste is the real world and is all there is. This together with the enlightened scientific age means many people relegate spirituality to an arena for people who are simple, fearful, and unlearned.

Paul was inspired to write this letter chained to a Roman soldier. He didn't have to look far for his illustration. Now let me read you the passage you have heard many times before.....

#### **--Reading Chapter 6:10-20**

**V10 Be strong in his mighty power** – You are not strong enough to win this battle with your own resources and strength. It is God's power that makes the difference! And here's the first challenge for us, in that God does not always turn up the way or at the time we most expect or even ask. His ways are not ours, his timing is not ours.... But his power is ours when we ask for it. His wisdom is ours when we seek it. You need not be a victim is what this verse says. You can be strong in God's power.

**V11-12** speaks about what **kinds of powers and strategies** we are up against. Rulers and authorities, evil spirits in the heavenlies. All these have but one mission which is to defeat you and get you to turn back from following Christ. They are against Jesus and his Kingdom coming to earth and when you take a stand for Christ and his Kingdom you set yourself up as a target. The Devil is spoken of mostly in three places in the Bible....the beginning (Genesis) the middle (Gospels) and the end (Revelation).

So....put on **ALL** the armour of God so you can resist and stand firm.

**1. BELT of truth** – **v14** tighten your belt....What's the last thing the weightlifter does before going out in front of the judges? He tightens his belt.

Right and wrong are under attack today. There is no right and wrong, it's whatever you think to be right is OK! Your right doesn't need to be mine. The concept of what we call absolute

truth is under attack. Because moral absolutes don't cut it anymore. I've spoken over recent weeks about truth, misbelief, and the need for us to be sure about what we believe. We need to be accurate in our Bible interpretation and studious in our knowledge of the Word because truth matters. God does have an opinion on what is right and what is wrong. If you don't believe me....just take a look at what is happening to the issue of genders right now in our society. Now we don't have male and female – or 'other'....we have this idea that children can decide what gender they want to be! So what is the truth about family anymore, the truth about marriage, about employment and work where whole generations of people grow up now with dependency upon the state welfare for living. What is the truth about our judicial system where laws are broken with impunity and our prisons are so full we need to build more. What is the truth about where true purpose can be found? We possess the truth about all these issues. And we need to pull tight the belt of truth.

**2. BREASTPLATE – of righteousness.** This is the cover for your vital organs. It's like the flak jacket for today's police and army. Your heart is where your morale can wilt. This is where you are going to be attacked! "You're not what you should be, you're not worthy of this, you're not going to win"! Why is this important? Well, you need to be sure about the basis upon which you stand as a soldier or enforcer of truth. Are you here in your own authority or are you empowered by someone to act on their behalf? That's why the police officer who stops you puts on his hat as he walks toward you with the lights flashing. He is impressing upon you that he is empowered to speak and even arrest you if necessary. Someone else's authority is given to him to wield. And friends the breastplate of righteousness is the authority or the basis upon which you and I can speak for God into the world around us. God stands behind us, he has 'put us right with himself through the cross' and now we exercise his authority here on earth. Is this not what Jesus said to Peter – "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"! The vital organs of my body – my heart and lungs are kept protected by this great truth. I am his and he is mine! I'm a child of God yes I am!!!

**3. SHOES –v15 the peace of the good news.** The Roman soldier's shoe was more like a sandal but the fighting sandal had spikes on the soles for grip. You need good shoes to maintain your footing in rough terrain. How important our feet are. I've become very aware of this over recent years since my feet have become damaged. Every moment of every day – it's the only thing that connects me to the ground. It's where the greatest pressure exists in my body with all my weight pressing downwards. When your feet are malfunctioning your whole body knows it. The shoes cover the feet, and these shoes are the Gospel of peace. It's peace with God and peace with each other. And we cannot do battle for God without having confidence in this **gospel**. There is no other message we have to share. Nothing else to say, no other purpose than this gospel. That Jesus died and rose again for our sin and puts us right with God and each other. When you lose grip of that essential simple and powerful message you will go down as a soldier for God. Many people are starting to doubt this gospel that it's relevant, that it's appropriate for today. There is a whole movement of the well-intentioned impressionable younger generation who buy into a gospel that ignores and demeans atonement as the primary purpose of the cross of Calvary. It's not long before you

will lose your grip and remember this – where was Goliath when David defeated him? He was lying down on the ground – he lost his footing before he lost his head!

**4. SHIELD – of Faith v16** Hold up the shield. Don't allow it to slip down and rest on the ground through weariness or cynicism. Keep the shield up to protect you from the attacks of Satan that are like fiery darts. These are the not-so-subtle attempts to derail you from your life purpose, using your gifting, maximising those opportunities to share your faith, attacks on your home and family by bringing division instead of unity, attacks on your decisions and choices to put God first in your life and not some other person or venture. Anything that is designed to steer you off God's best in your life requires the shield of faith to protect you from being taken out. What has happened to the many people you know who used to love God, and said they would follow him and serve Him but these days are nowhere in their Christian walk? They have been taken out because their shield of faith has been let down in the midst of the battle. You know *faith is what we bring* that releases God's power. The Bible says that even if we have faith as small as a mustard seed we can say to this mountain 'be removed into the sea'.....that's not a literal mountain – those are obstacles and mountains that stand in the way of you being what God calls you to do and say. So it's not the size of our faith.... it's that we have it, and where we place it.

**5. HELMET – v17 of Salvation** The helmet covers your head and your mind. It's where most of the attacks take place and where you are vulnerable. It's our thinking under attack today. Your thinking is where you fail before your choosing. We need to be so much more alert to what we believe and what we *think about what we believe*. You know you are saved in your thinking as well as your heart don't you? What does the verse mean then "as a man thinks in his heart so is he"! The battle for our minds is the most effective strategy of Satan. And the helmet of salvation covers your mind. Now you need to understand something about the language to see the connection here between mind and heart. We have for a long time believed that when we get saved that it's our heart that gets saved and only that matters. Your mind needs saving too, as does your emotions and even your body too for that matter. Although I suspect that we are too fixated with bodies and maybe God doesn't see them as more than a container in which we carry around his Spirit. A word we need to understand is holistic – it means body mind and spirit. It's what is meant by the way we are to love God with all our being; body, mind, and spirit. So we need our minds to be saved and our spirit and our bodies patched up long enough to last the distance!

Let me ask you a question....***when did David defeat Goliath?*** Was it when we slung the rock at his forehead, or when he took out that massive sword and cut off his head? Or was it somewhere else? I think he defeated him before he went out on the paddock. You read the story again – he runs up to him and shouts about defying the living God! There it is....David defeated Goliath in his mind before he lodged a stone in the sling. The sling was only the means to achieve what he already ***believed*** God would do.

**6. SWORD – v17 Word of God** Now there is a major difference with this one. The other five pieces are all for *defence*, but the sword is for the *attack*.

As I said before the sword is hung off the belt of truth. You cannot separate truth from the Word. I like the way the sword is spoken of *with the Spirit*. I think this again is a purposeful connection in that both Word and Spirit are needed in the battle for today's church. The Word of truth is often seen or heard as harsh or judgemental and even at times without life or passion. The Spirit on the other hand is full of passion and fire and we need both in our lives, the Word and the Spirit.

**Hebrews 4:12** tells us that the Word of God is like a sword that cuts apart the thinking of people who hear it when the power of the Spirit moves in their life.

Verses 18-20 are where Paul wraps up this teaching and says some rather *powerful one-liners*.

Pray **in the Spirit** at all times on every occasion.

Stay alert and be **persistent** in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Pray for me too that God will give me the **right words** to explain the mystery.

I am in chains now still preaching as an **ambassador** for God, Pray that I will keep speaking **boldly**.

Isn't it interesting that after this rather heavy teaching on spiritual warfare Paul finishes his letter asking for boldness and courage to preach and explain the gospel. He is under no misapprehension that he is bulletproof, capable of missing God's opportunities, or that he might do it poorly. This is great because it's an encouragement for every one of us to remember here is a man just like us! The temptation to give up praying when we don't see the answer we want....

The possibility of losing the plot running the last few kilometers of the marathon is real for Paul and for each of us. We want to finish well this race. We want to represent the Father well as his **ambassador**. (*Someone who lives in another country and represents their homeland to others*).