

Sermon Notes: *Put on the whole armor of God (II)* (Eph. 6:15-17b)

Intro: There are some enemies with whom no truce may be made because of their avowed hatred and determination to destroy us. Such is the devil working through the traitor within—the remaining corruption in each of us. The sharpness of the conflict can be seen in our prayers for release from compulsive sin (“God help me stop...to stand against this temptation...etc”). How do we advance in holiness when Satan incessantly attacks through our own lusts, idols, and ambitions?

#1: Put on the shoes of the gospel (15). The believer is able to advance against the enemy because God has provided protective shoes. Today war is carried on for the most part in a highly mechanized way—hummvees, helicopters, etc. In the ancient world, however, the most effective army was mobilized by the “march.” Inadequate footwear destined an army to failure. How reassuring that God has fitted his warriors with shoes of the best possible material for they are composed of “the readiness given by the gospel of peace.” The gospel is strong footwear! It was planned by God in eternity past, accomplished by the enormous expense of nothing less than the blood of the incarnate Son of God. In every sinner who believes, it is experienced as the renewing power that raised Jesus from the dead. The gospel is full of eternal blessings any one of which outweigh the wealth of the world (1:3-14). The peace it gives to those who receive it by faith enables us to march with hope whatever the foe. Why? We have peace with God. When a man knows that his sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, that there is no longer any ground for condemnation by his divine Judge then what a joyful and courageous warrior he is! When we know that God looks on us as his children with the affection he has for his Son, that he sees our every sin as being covered by the blood of Jesus, and our lives as adorned with the wardrobe of Christ’s righteousness then we are readied to march through fire and water without fear. We must be strong and courageous for we know that God is with us and will not desert us. We have peace within ourselves. A house divided cannot stand. A man at war with himself will falter and fail. Conflict within makes for miserable marching. We are saved by grace through faith and we are God’s workmanship created for good works and pleasing God. How blessed to be able to say: “Because I am not only pardoned from sin by faith in Christ’s atoning blood but also liberated from bondage to sin by Christ’s resurrection Spirit, I will seek to please my divine Commanding Officer. I will order my life according to his commands” (Eph. 2:8-10). Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart (Ps 37:4).

#2: Take up the shield of faith (16). In Paul’s day, an important strategy of a disciplined marching army was the battle-line in which soldiers advance side-by-side in close quarters behind door sized rectangular shields covered by leather. A tight-knit military formation behind such shields practically turned a legion into a massive indestructible wall. The shield which protects the believer against Satan is “the shield of faith.” Paul urgently commands its use “in all circumstances” for the shield of faith not only protects the man but his armament too. The belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel—this armor is protected by the shield of faith. Faith not only shields the believer but also his graces. All our graces need grace to preserve them and that grace is given to us through faith! How necessary to raise our shield not only individually but in concert with other Christians—like an army with shields raised. Note: Paul addresses not individuals but the church. He uses “you” in the plural (“you all”). He has urged “unity of the Spirit” (4:3) since Satan’s strategy is often to “divide and conquer.” If Satan can gain a foothold in God’s church through selfishness, jealousy, or covetousness, he

will. Advancing armies were often fired upon by arrows dipped in pitch and lit on fire. The shield of faith enables us to extinguish “the flaming darts of the evil one.” “Flaming darts” describes the well-known and disturbing experience of being troubled by Satan’s sudden attacks of our minds and affections with unworthy, impure, and even blasphemous thoughts. Such things may leave the believer weakened, dismayed, and doubting his salvation. What do we do? Take up the shield of faith and be strong in the Lord! Take up the promises of God. God will strengthen, perfect his work in us, forgive every sin, protect (Isa. 41:10; Phil. 1:6; Heb 7:25; Jn 10:29). Take up the doctrines of grace. God chose not the strong or noble but the weak and contemptible for salvation (1 Cor. 1:27-28). Christ, as our High Priest intercedes for us in heaven and prays down fresh fillings of the Spirit to be with us “forever” (Jn 14:16; Heb 7:25; Lk 22:32).

#3: Put on the helmet of salvation. The Roman helmet was bronze with cheek pieces to protect the head. How necessary is a renewed mind in the Christian life (Rom. 12:2). Paul elsewhere describes the helmet as “the hope of salvation” (1 Thess 5:8). We must be established in specific truths of the gospel so that we may set our minds on them and stand firm during times of intense spiritual pressure (2 Cor. 4:16ff). Though he may falter at times the believer may yet affirm: Rom. 8:28, 37.