

“CHRISTIAN LIVING”

“God’s Soldier Marches as to War”

Scripture Reading – Ephesians, 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour 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 armour 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 round 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. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

‘Let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armour of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.’

I Thessalonians, 5:8, NLT

This sermon is really about ‘SPIRITUAL WARFARE’.

As members of The Salvation Army, we should be always aware that the Christian is continually engaged in spiritual warfare. This sermon seeks to set into place some basic information concerning ‘GOD’S SOLDIER’ who is ‘MARCHING AS TO WAR’.

In my preparation, I came across ‘A BASIC LIST OF COMBAT RULES’ by Glenn Weekley:

‘If the enemy is in range, so are you... The easy way is always mined... Try to look unimportant, they may be low on ammunition... Teamwork is essential; it gives the enemy someone else to shoot at... If your attack is going well, you’ve walked into an ambush... Don’t draw fire it only irritates the people around you... The only thing more accurate than incoming enemy fire is incoming friendly fire... Don’t ever be the first, don’t ever be the last, and don’t ever volunteer for anything... A medal just proves that you were smart enough to think of a plan, dumb enough to try it, and lucky enough to survive... The enemy invariably attacks in one of two ways: when you are ready for them, and when you are not ready for them.’

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Christian Living\God’s Soldier Marches As To War

The Writer of Ephesians, Paul, was not a free man, he was under Roman guard.

‘Paul suddenly sees a picture ready-made. All this time he was chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Night and day a soldier was there to ensure that he would not escape. Paul was literally an envoy in a chain. Now he was the kind of man who could get alongside anyone; and beyond doubt he had talked often to the soldiers who were compelled to be so near him. As he writes, the soldier’s armour suggests a picture to him. The Christian too has his armour; and part by part Paul takes the armour of the Roman soldier and translates it into Christian terms.’

“DAILY STUDY BIBLE”, William Barclay

My intention is to make you ready for the attacks of the enemy whenever they come...

1. THE ENEMY OF GOD’S SOLDIER

‘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.’

Ephesians, 6:12, NIV

‘The intelligence corps plays a vital part in warfare because it enables the officers to know and understand the enemy. Unless we know who the enemy is, where he is, and what he can do, we have a difficult time defeating him. Not only in Ephesians, 6, but throughout the entire Bible, God instructs us about the enemy, so there is no reason for us to be caught off guard.’

“BE RICH”, Warren W Wiersbe

‘There used to be this bully who would demand my lunch money every day. Since I was smaller, I would give it to him. Then I decided to fight back. I started taking karate lessons, but the instructor wanted \$5.00 a lesson. That was a lot of money. I found that it was cheaper to pay the bully, so I gave up karate.’

Jack Handey

Too many Christians believe it is easier to pay the bully than learn how to defeat him.

Too many Christians do not realise they are living on a battlefield and not in a playground.

As soldiers of Jesus Christ, there is a three-fold assault against us...

THE WORLD

The world wants to drag us back.

It desires us to look at the world’s attractions and see that life can be exciting and fulfilling without the God of the Bible. It ridicules your relationship with Jesus Christ and forces you to apologise for being different. It wants to mould you into its ways.

‘Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does –

comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.'

1 John, 2:15-17, NIV

THE FLESH

The Flesh wants our old life back.

It desires us to return to habits and ways of the past that caused pain and trouble. It wants us to return to the deeds of darkness and the sin that so easily entangled us.

'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.'

Romans, 7:18-19, NIV

THE DEVIL

The Devil wants you to believe that he does not exist.

According to a recent Gallup Poll, more than 86% of those questioned believed that there is a God, but only 63% believed in the existence of the devil. For those of us that know his presence only to real, he wants to destroy you!

'Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...'

1 Peter, 5:8-9a, NIV

2. THE ENDURANCE OF GOD'S SOLDIER

'Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes... Therefore put on the full armour 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.'

Ephesians, 6:10-11, 13-14a, NIV

Paul tells us to 'STAND' and to 'BE STRONG IN THE LORD'.

As Paul winds down his letter, he exhorts us, encourages us, commands us, as believers to be strong in the Lord. It is almost as if he is saying: 'FINALLY, BROTHERS, THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT; YOU MUST DO THIS'.

'BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER'.

Do not be strong in your opinions. Do not be strong in your experiences. Do not be strong in your bank account. Do not be strong in your career. Do not be strong in your knowledge. In other words: 'NO MATTER HOW USEFUL THESE THINGS ARE, DO NOT PUT YOUR FAITH AND TRUST IN THEM. INSTEAD, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER'.

'Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.'

Proverbs, 3:5-8, NIV

*Sound the battle cry! See, the foe is nigh,
Raise the standard high for the Lord.
Gird your armour on; stand firm every one;
Rest your cause upon his holy word.*

William Fiske Sherwin, SASB 698:1

3. THE EQUIPMENT OF GOD'S SOLDIER

'Put on the full armour 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 round 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.'

Ephesians, 6:13-17, NIV

'Since we are fighting against enemies in the spirit world, we need special equipment both for offence and defence. God has provided **'THE WHOLE ARMOUR'** for us, and we dare not omit any part. Satan looks for that unguarded area where he can get a beachhead. Paul commanded his readers to put on the armour, take the weapons, and withstand Satan, all of which we do by faith. Knowing that Christ has already conquered Satan, and that the spiritual armour and weapons are available, by faith we accept what God gives us and go out to meet the foe. The day is evil, and the enemy is evil, but **'IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?'**

"BE RICH", Warren W Wiersbe

THE BELT OF TRUTH

This was the belt which girt in the soldier's tunic and from which his sword hung and which gave him freedom of movement.

Others may guess and grope; but the Christian moves freely and quickly because he knows the truth.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

When a man is clothed in righteousness he is impregnable. Words are no defence against accusations but a good life is. The only way to meet the accusations against Christianity is to show how good a Christian can be.

Once a man accused Plato of certain crimes. "WELL THEN", said **Plato** "WE MUST LIVE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PROVE THAT HIS ACCUSATIONS ARE A LIE".

THE SANDALS THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Sandals were the sign of one equipped and ready to move.

The sign of the Christian is that he is eager to be on the Way to share the Gospel with others who have not heard it.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The word Paul uses is not that for the comparatively small round shield; it is that for the great oblong shield which the heavily armed warrior wore. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out.

Faith can deal with the fiery darts of temptation. With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk close with Christ, we are safe from temptation.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Salvation is not something which looks back only. The salvation which is in Christ gives us forgiveness for the sins of the past and strength to conquer sin in the days to come.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The Word of God is at once our weapon of defence against sin and our weapon of attack against the sins of the world. Cromwell's Ironsides fought with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. We can never win God's battles without God's book.

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus! Stand in his strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you; ye dare not trust your own.
Put on salvation armour, and watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.*

George Duffield, SASB 699:3

4. THE ENERGY OF GOD'S SOLDIER

'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. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.'

Ephesians, 6:18-20, NIV

Paul comes to the greatest weapon of all – and that is prayer.

We note three things that he says about prayer...

PRAYER MUST BE CONSTANT

Our tendency is so often to pray only in the great crises of life; but it is from daily prayer that the Christian will find daily strength.

PRAYER MUST BE INTENSE

Limp prayer never got a man anywhere. Prayer demands the concentration of every faculty upon God.

PRAYER MUST BE UNSELFISH

The Jews had a saying, 'LET A MAN UNITE HIMSELF WITH THE COMMUNITY IN HIS PRAYERS'.

I think that often our prayers are too much for ourselves and too little for others.

We must learn to pray as much for others and with others as for ourselves.

Ron Dunn wrote that prayer is the Christian's secret weapon and that prayer is like an intercontinental ballistic missile. He went on to give five factors about prayer...

Prayers can be fired from any spot.

You can launch a prayer from any spot on earth.

Prayers can travel undetected at the speed of light.

How far away is heaven? I am not sure that anyone knows, but it takes no time at all for your prayer to reach the ear of God.

Prayers hit the target every time.

The ear of God is tuned in to the prayers of his children. He is always listening to his children and he hears each and every prayer.

Satan has no defence against prayer.

He does not have an anti-prayer missile that can prevent your prayer from reaching heaven. Instead, his tactic is to convince you that prayer is a waste of time, that God does not hear, and so the Christian and the Church give up praying altogether.

Prayers often have a delayed detonation.

Prayer delayed is not prayer denied. God has his own schedule, and if you prayed to God about something, that prayer did not fall to the ground; that prayer is in heaven.

*Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the soldier's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

William Cowper, SASB 646:3

"GOD'S SOLDIER MARCHES AS TO WAR!"