

Ephesians 6B

- Our seven-month study of Ephesians is coming to an end
 - So it's only appropriate that we reach the climactic part of Paul's letter
 - We've been learning about ways the Lord strengthens us so we are in the best position in our mission of serving Him
 - Our goal is to stand before Christ at our judgment and receive a good report
 - I've labeled this outlook missional living, and it's the call of every Christian
 - In 2 Timothy Paul compares the Christian mission to that of a soldier in military service
 - Like the military mission, ours requires preparation, sacrifice, submission to authority and the right equipping
 - And like soldiers we too are engaged in battle against an enemy intent on preventing our success
 - That final comparison leads us into the final instructions of Paul's letter
 - Today Paul addresses the nature of *our* battle and the formidable enemy set against God's people

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- We see Paul moving to his final point as he opens with "finally" or more literally, "as to the rest..."
 - Paul asks that the church be strong in the power of God's might
 - Earlier in this letter Paul used the metaphor of a walk to describe the Christian life

- Because the life of a disciple is a journey of sorts
- We start the journey at the moment of faith and we move forward in a new spiritual destination
- We are called to pursue our journey without distraction or retreat
- Now Paul says our life in Christ is not going to be a walk in the park; it's more like a march across a mine field
 - As we serve Christ, we are engaged in a battle, a war with a powerful enemy who opposes God and us
 - So Point #1 today is that whether you knew it or not, the Bible says you are in a war that will last your entire life on earth
- There is a battle raging around us, and we must prepare ourselves for that fight or else suffer losses
 - Like any war, on some days everything will be calm on the front, as if a truce had been signed
 - But then other days you'll feel like all hell has been set loose, literally
 - Which just reminds you that no truce is possible with this enemy
 - Every Christian experiences ups and downs in life, but many Christians don't recognize that this pattern is evidence of a spiritual battle
 - They attribute their ups and downs of life to happenstance, good luck or bad luck
 - Or they never give it much thought at all
 - So as a result, they move through the battlefield unequipped and unprepared to engage in the fight in a productive way
 - Therefore, they can't fulfill their mission
 - After all, how effective is a soldier who doesn't even know a war is underway?
 - Imagine a young man walking through a field alone, wearing just shorts and a t-shirt, enjoying a summer day

- Across the field stands an enemy thousands strong, wearing shining armor, carrying battle axes and swords, riding war horses, preparing to attack
- On this day, the enemy declared war, but this young man hasn't heard the news
 - How long would that young man survive the battle?
 - Would it matter how strong the man was? He's not stronger than steel swords and armor
 - Would it matter how fast he was? He can't outrun a horse
 - Would it matter how smart he was? He can't outthink a vast army
 - He would be like the soldiers and sailors who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor in 1941
 - They were caught off guard and were largely defenseless
 - Because they didn't know the war was headed their way
- So no matter how strong you are, you are overmatched for the war that's underway, and so your first defense is simply awareness
 - That's why Jesus said this to His disciples:

Luke 10:3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."

- Jesus said "behold" which means pay attention
- Recognize that we entered a battle field in which the enemy has the strength of a wolf and we have only the strength of sheep
- In fact, the enemy you and I face in this war is far too powerful for us to face alone
 - In 6:11 Paul says we are to stand against the schemes of the enemy
 - The Greek word translated schemes could be translated craftiness
 - The enemy who is set against us is crafty, smart

- He knows how to test the wall of our resistance to sin, looking for weaknesses so he can exploit them
- He's smart and determined, but more than that, he's powerful
 - The Bible teaches that all angels are more powerful than any human being
 - But Satan is the most power of all angelic beings
 - In fact, he's more powerful than any other created thing
- His power and importance were the reasons he rebelled against God
 - We read this in Ezekiel:

Ezek. 28:14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezek. 28:15 "You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

Ezek. 28:16 "By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

- Satan's original job was to stand guard over the Shechinah glory of God on the mercy seat of the heavenly tabernacle
 - The abundance or greatness of his trade (or his profession) cause Satan to be filled internally with pride and violence against God
 - And as a result he sinned by trying to assume the place of God on the mercy seat
 - And so he was cast down from his heavenly place of glory

- Which means that today the most powerful created being in all the universe is among us
 - And he has a serious grudge against God
 - He has made himself God's enemy as well as any who are aligned with God
 - So how do you think your battle with Satan will go if you try to fight him on your own?
 - That would be a foolish strategy
- Even other angels refuse to fight Satan...they won't dare to even rebuke him, the Bible says

Jude 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

- Michael the archangel, the most powerful angel apart from Satan, dared not to fight Satan by his own power
- Instead, Michael relied on God's power to defeat the devil
- If the archangel Michael cannot defeat Satan by his power, then clearly you and I have no hope whatsoever to battle on our own
- To be forewarned is to be forearmed, so in v.12 Paul, explains what the war against Satan will be like for any Christian
 - First, it's our struggle
 - Paul calls it "our" struggle because this is the shared experience of every believer
 - No one is exempt from the battle, the enemy overlooks no one, forgets no one, gives no one quarter
 - The only question is how much each of us are fighting back
 - The Greek word struggle could also be translated wrestle
 - And if you have ever wrestled someone, whether in a sport competition or just against a sibling on the living room carpet...
 - Then you understand that wrestling is a constant struggle

- If you stop resisting even for a second, your opponent will put you in a hold from which there is no escape
 - That's why we're called to understand and accept that Christian life is a struggle
 - Because our enemy never gives up and doesn't get tired
- Even worse, the Christian struggles against an opponent that's invisible
 - Our opponent doesn't possess flesh and blood, Paul says
 - Meaning, our enemy is a spiritual being, not a physical being
- Nevertheless, the enemy will use the physical world as pawns in his fight
 - The neighbor's dog who starts barking as soon as we put our head on the pillow...that's not all it seems to be
 - The dishwasher that breaks down right before a party for 50 people...not a coincidence
 - The spouse who tests our patience, the children who resist our authority, the coworker who pushes our buttons
- So the many trials and disappointments we face in everyday life aren't always what they may appear to be
 - The enemy can insert himself into everyday situations to rattle us or tempt us or enrage us
 - He's working to steal, kill and destroy, Jesus says in John 10:10
 - And he uses anything we give him to accomplish that goal
 - He wants to steal our peace, our confidence, our joy, our time, our perseverance, our faithfulness
 - He wants to kill the mind and body with drugs, alcohol, pornography, debauchery, violence, hatred and jealousy
 - He destroys testimonies, relationships, ministries, marriages, families, churches
 - He seeks to eliminate away anything that stands in his way of replacing God

- If he can neutralize us, discourage us, tempt us into sin or distract us with silly earthly pursuits, then we're one less soldier on the battlefield
- He knows he can't change your eternal destiny, so that's not his goal
 - He's not fighting against our salvation, or even against us personally
 - He's fighting God, so if he can neutralize us on the battlefield, then he's a step closer to ultimate victory, or so he assumes
- But the situation is even worse than it seems, because Satan isn't fighting by himself
 - In v.12 Paul says we are fighting rulers, powers, and the world's spiritual forces
 - Paul is referring to the hierarchy of demons that serve Satan in an army opposed to God
 - The Bible says in Revelation 12 that a third of the angelic realm decided to follow after Satan when he fell into sin
 - They elected to worship him as their leader rather than remain aligned to God Almighty
 - So now those countless demons share Satan's fate and they share his mission to defeat God's people
 - They are rulers because they are responsible for some portion of the earth
 - Remember, Satan is a created being, so he can only be in one place at a time
 - Satan is finite, so he needs help to accomplish his work, and the fallen demons are his lieutenants
 - They are powers because like all angels they have true power and spiritual authority under Satan's direction
 - We can suppose Satan has assigned certain demons responsibility for regions of our fallen world, which Paul calls "this darkness"
 - They have some degree of autonomy

- They know their mission and they have their orders
- They are a force of wickedness, Paul says
 - The church of Ephesus was probably well acquainted with these forces
 - The book of Acts and other sources show there was an unusually high degree of demonic activity in Ephesus
 - The pagan temples that dominated the city brought with them demons who were extremely active in opposing Paul and the church
- But these demons weren't visible to believers in Ephesus, just as they aren't visible to us today, not directly
 - Paul says they exist in heavenly places, which means they occupy the spirit realm
 - This realm is a place outside our human experience or perception
 - They are moving around us, perhaps in your home or even in this building
 - They can prey on your thoughts or emotions and they can influence the physical world for calamity
 - They use the physical world, physical things including people, to do their bidding
 - That's why Paul wants us to understand that though we contend with flesh and blood at times, we don't war against flesh and blood
 - They are not our true enemy...they are unwitting pawns, collateral damage in the war
 - So on that day you make a pledge to study your Bible at lunch, your boss decides to schedule a lunchtime meeting...he's a pawn of the enemy
 - Or as you decide to get the family up early to make it to church on time, for some reason the children are unusually bad tempered...they are collateral damage

- In fact, have you ever wondered why fights with your spouse are more likely to happen in the car on the way to church?
- It's a spiritual war, and sometimes even we play into the enemy's hand
- Paul says we can't see the enemy coming – he works in a heavenly place – but we can see the effect of his work
 - So we need to respond to those moments with spiritual insight
 - Otherwise we will walk into Satan's trap and give him exactly what he wanted
 - By the counsel of scripture, we can know how to respond
- So Point #2 is that we face a specific, powerful enemy who commands a vast force of wickedness
 - He operates in ways we barely understand and he possess capabilities vastly superior to our own
 - Therefore, we have no chance whatsoever in this battle if we enter the fight ignorantly or depending on our own power
 - Still, scripture calls us to stand firm in our walk of faith, to resist him
 - And we do so by standing in the Lord's power

[Eph. 6:13](#) Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

[Eph. 6:14](#) Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

[Eph. 6:15](#) and having shod Your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

[Eph. 6:16](#) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

[Eph. 6:17](#) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- Paul says take up the "armor of God"
 - Armor refers to the spiritual protection afforded by God through certain spiritual disciplines

- By relying on these spiritual disciplines in the midst of battle, we gain a measure of defense and protection from the enemy
- The power is God's power made available by His Spirit working in and through us
- Since we're talking about God's power, then we must also acknowledge that God's will determines how the battle goes
 - The enemy's attack, his degree of success and the extent of the damage is all in God's hands
 - The only thing in question is our response and whether we gain the benefits God intended
- It's helpful to remember the story of Job in the Bible
 - He was an upright man, righteous and God-fearing
 - And it was for that reason that the Lord suggested Satan direct his attacks in Job's direction
 - As a result of Satan's attacks, Job's family died, he lost all his wealth and he was personally afflicted with illness and distress
 - Clearly, Job's righteousness didn't prevent Satan attacks...in fact they led to the attacks
 - God allowed Satan these victories so that Job would be tested
 - So that Job could show himself faithful through his response to these circumstances
 - How did Job respond to this test? He expresses his attitude in a single verse

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me,

I will hope in Him.

Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

- Even if God should allow Satan the victory of taking Job's earthly life, still Job said he would hope in Him
- He would argue his ways before Him, which means Job was confident he would be vindicated before God in the end

- Remember, no matter how much ground the enemy gains in this world, he can't take your eternal hope
 - The Bible says that the enemy has no potential to take that from you
 - 1 John says the Spirit in you is more powerful than the spirit in the world, speaking of Satan
 - And Jesus declared that nothing can pluck you out of His hand
 - So we head into battle knowing that Christ has already won the ultimate victory for us
 - That's the spiritually mature perspective we must bring to life's trials
 - The Lord allows the enemy a degree of freedom to prosecute his attack and any ground he gains is ground God gave him
 - But the Lord does so to test our hearts giving us opportunity to show ourselves faithful
- Notice at the end of v.13 Paul says we are to resist the devil in the evil day
 - The evil day refers to all the days we live on earth
 - These will be days of testing, each and every one of them
 - So we can't make our goal avoiding the battle...our goal needs to be spiritual victory in the battle
 - During these days, Paul says, we want to have done everything to stand firm
 - This English translation obscures Paul's point somewhat
 - Paul mentions standing in the sense of standing for judgment
 - He's saying we resist the enemy during our days on earth so that at our judgment we can testify to having done everything we could to win the battle
 - Like a soldier returning from the front, we want to report that we executed our battle plan as ordered
 - So Point #3 is we are fighting for a good report at our judgment
 - Going AWOL in this battle has consequences for now
 - And it may bring consequences in the kingdom

- But in order to have a good testimony, we need to be properly equipped for that battle
 - Paul used a convenient cultural reference of his day to illustrate that equipping
 - As Paul wrote this letter, he was imprisoned in Rome, guarded by Roman soldiers
 - And everyone in the empire was familiar with the uniform of a Roman soldier
 - So Paul borrows details from the soldier's uniform to explain the armor of God available to every Christian soldier
 - Paul mentions six articles of clothing: the first five are for defense, while the last one was for offense
 - Paul's list proceeds in the order in which a soldier would have dressed himself, starting with girding loins with truth
 - Paul's referring to the sturdy belt that went around the waist over a linen tunic
 - The belt carried the weight of the breastplate and the sheathe that held the soldier's heavy sword
- Paul compares this belt to the truth, which is a reference to the word of God
 - So likewise, our Christian armor starts with the word of God
 - Our fight in this spiritual battle depends on spiritual understanding from God's word
 - It's the ultimate defense against the enemy, who is the father of lies
 - Every other spiritual protection depends on this first element of armor
 - If we lack an understanding of God's word, and we're defenseless against the enemy's schemes
 - We're like that young man in the field with just shorts and a t-shirt
 - And remember this is God's armor, not your own

- You're seeking to put His truth in your heart so you can respond properly to each trial
- We'll need His counsel to give us patience, love, peace and forgiveness when the enemy strikes, so that we will pass the test
- So if you're feel like you're losing battles lately, get back into God's word so you can prepare for the next attack
- Next, the soldier put on a breastplate
 - This breastplate protected vital organs, ensuring a soldier could survive a frontal assault
 - Paul uses the breastplate to picture righteousness, which is our life's testimony of obedience to the word
 - All Christians possess Christ's righteousness through our faith in Him, and that righteousness saves us
 - But having been saved by our faith, now we're called to display righteousness through obedience to the word of God
 - Our personal righteousness is our next greatest defense in battle
 - If we harbor personal sin, then we are concealing a weakness
 - If we let sin maintain a place in our walk, you can bet the enemy will discover and exploit that weakness sooner or later
 - He'll mount a frontal assault at that point, whether to tempt us into a fall or to expose our weakness so he can ruin our testimony
 - So often Christians suffer needlessly at the hands of Satan because they leave their breastplate on the ground, they set aside their obedience
 - Their sin leaves them vulnerable to spiritual attacks
 - And when they come, the Christian may raise their fist to God and declare life is unfair
 - But in reality, that person gave the victory to the enemy the moment he or she decided to make room for sin in their life
 - Yield to the Spirit, and as you do you're taking up a breastplate of defense against the enemy's accusations

- This was Job's chief defense, that he was an upright man which meant Satan's schemes could not discredit the man of God
- Thirdly, the soldier put shoes on his feet
 - The sandals worn by Roman soldiers were extra tough
 - They were studded with sharp nails to increase traction
 - They made it possible for armies to march long distances to bring victory to any corner of the empire
 - For the Christian, Paul says these shoes represent the preparation of the Gospel
 - The word for preparation could be translated equipment or readiness
 - He's talking about being ready to bring the Gospel message anywhere we go
 - Like a soldier's marching shoes, the Gospel equips us to reach anyone, anywhere
 - Remember we said earlier that the enemy isn't flesh and blood but he uses flesh and blood to accomplish his attacks
 - So then a Christian armed with the Gospel message can be prepared to potentially neutralize an enemy combatant
 - When we share the Gospel with those who seek to persecute us, perhaps the Lord will win over their hearts and turn them to our side
 - Perhaps the boss who makes it difficult for you to pursue your faith might one day become a believer who worships with you
 - Think about Paul himself...the Gospel took him from chief persecutor to chief evangelist of the church
- Our fourth defense is our shield of faith
 - Soldiers carried a wooden shield covered with leather to resist flames
 - It was strong enough to absorb the impact of an arrow
 - It was large enough to protect a soldier's entire body from arrows or other projectiles

- Paul says our faith serves a similar spiritual purpose
 - Faith in this context is not saving faith but abiding faith
 - Abiding faith means living with confidence in the promises of God and our eternal hope for glory with Christ
 - Our confidence, our faith, is a shield against the enemy's flaming arrows
- What are these arrows? We're talking about any satanic assault intended to rob us of our confidence or hope in Christ
 - For example, a false teaching that causes the believer to fear the future, to worry about their eternal security or coming tribulation is a flaming arrow
 - Or world calamities or personal losses that disturb our confidence in God are arrows
 - Think again of Job...his entire family died in a disaster...that's a serious flaming arrow
 - Such things have the potential to wound a believer's faith in the promises of God, leaving them questioning His promises
- But abiding faith – confidence in the promises of God – extinguishes those arrows
 - The arrows still come our way and we still feel their impact
 - But they do not harm us in the end because our faith reminds us that our eternal future is secure
 - Job despaired in his grief, yet his faith in God's promises brought him hope and confidence in the face of his great losses
- Finally in v.17, a soldier donned his helmet as he entered battle
 - The helmet protected his head, obviously
 - But Paul makes this comparison in a different capacity
 - He says our helmet is our salvation
 - Paul's speaking about cover, something over us that provides spiritual protection
 - Our salvation is our spiritual cover

- Christ's sacrifice for our sake assures us of eternal life
- No matter what comes at us, we have an assurance of resurrection, of a new sinless body and of an eternity serving the Lord in His Kingdom
- With these things assured, we can have great confidence to face the enemy without shrinking back
 - So when you face the risk of losing your job or your friends or even your life because you dare to share Christ with another person, remember you already have everything in eternity
 - You can't lose anything, because everything you have here will be left behind anyway...so what good is it?
 - You have nothing at risk and everything to gain as you enter the battle
- That's a true defense
 - They always say the toughest opponents to beat in war are those who have nothing more to lose
 - They throw caution to the wind and fight with all their strength
- So it must be in our warfare with the enemy
 - You are covered by a helmet of salvation that means you can't lose
 - We need not fear anything...not fear of failing, nor fear of embarrassment, not even fear of dying
 - Those things are nothing in comparison to what we have assured by faith
 - As Paul said:

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- Finally, a soldier picked up his only weapon of offense, his sword
 - The sword pierced and cut at the enemy to incapacitate him
 - Likewise, we have a sword Paul says: the word of God

- Do you notice that the word of God began this list, and now it ends it too?
 - The word of God prepares us to defend ourselves against the enemy's attacks
 - And it becomes a tool in the hands of the Spirit to neutralize our enemy
- Remember Jesus' example in the wilderness as He fasted 40 days?
 - He endured the attack of the enemy by living according to the word of God
 - That's the belt of truth upholding us in the battle
- But then at a certain point Jesus went on the offense against Satan
 - He responded with the word of God to defeat the enemy
 - Eventually the enemy fled having been rebuked by God's word
- That's what we can do too
 - The enemy is far more powerful than we are, but he is nothing compared to the word of God
 - So when the enemy lies to you, quote the Bible
 - When the enemy tempts you to seek for wealth instead of serving Christ, let the word of God remind you that you can't serve two masters
 - When he causes you to doubt God's love, remember that scripture says love is laying your life down for another
 - Resist the devil and he will flee
- At this point, you may have noticed that one essential element was missing from Paul's list...

[Eph. 6:18](#) With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

[Eph. 6:19](#) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

[Eph. 6:20](#) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

[Eph. 6:21](#) But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.

[Eph. 6:22](#) I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

- Paul's instructions in v.18 are actually part of the prior verse
 - In fact, vs.14-20 are one long sentence in Greek
 - So we should read the need for prayer as part of the description of the helmet and sword of v.17
 - Therefore, prayer could be considered the seventh and final part of our armor
 - Probably like every soldier facing battle, we need to pray a lot
 - We pray and place requests (petitions) before the Lord at all times
 - We are soldiers on a battlefield, but Christ is the general and He knows where all the pieces are
 - So we need to put our concerns before Him, asking Him to rebuke the devil and seeking His strength
 - I admit, this is my biggest challenge
 - My first instinct is to fight battles in my own power
 - But I think the Lord is working to teach me to let Him fight the fight
 - Which may explain why I see the fight coming back time and again...it just offers more opportunity to pray
- So if it's His armor and His power to fight the battle, what's our role?
 - Paul says in v.18 the Lord asks of each of us to persevere and be alert
 - He says it's especially important to remain alert so that we can intercede on behalf of other believers

- You can't pray for other's battles if you don't notice what's happening around you, if you're ignorant that a spiritual warfare is a real thing
- There is a battle raging around us so we need to be like a soldier on watch, ready to pray at all times for one another
- Pray for victory, protection and peace
- Finally, Paul asks the church in Ephesus to pray for him, since he was in chains
 - He wants to make known the mystery of the Gospel to his oppressors despite the danger it would bring to him
 - He wants boldness to speak and so he needs prayer to bring him that boldness
 - Even as a prisoner, Paul said he was still an ambassador
 - Chains weren't preventing him from serving Christ
 - Imprisonment in Rome was just a new way to witness to Christ
 - In fact, Paul did eventually speak the Gospel to Nero himself
 - That's missional living, turning imprisonment into a mission field
- Finally, Paul closes his letter with a few personal thoughts
 - He sent a man, Tychicus, back to Ephesus to report on his condition
 - Paul wanted the church to understand his suffering in chains
 - But also his godly response to his situation
 - As much as he was a witness in his life, Paul dearly wanted to be a witness in his death
 - Sometimes, missional living as a Christian includes missional dying
 - Making the most of every moment because the days are evil
 - May Paul's last words to the church become our daily prayer

[Eph. 6:23](#) Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Eph. 6:24](#) Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.