Geared Up
Ephesians 6:10-20 Daniel Armstrong Messiah Bible Church – Fall 2026

- Church, there is a war going on, and you're in it.
    - There is a very good chance that you and I are not paying nearly as much attention to the war as we should.
    - I'm not using the word "war" here in a sensational or dramatic way, like a cultural war of ideas or opinions.
    - This war is not in the headlines, it is not a war between any two nations, but you and I are on the front lines whether we knew it before or not.
        - Like we learned from Elder Robin back in studying Daniel 10, there is a great war going on in the spiritual realm with real combatants and real stakes and real consequences
            - It is between the great warrior king and his enemies; it has been raging since history began and it is real and it affects us every day.
- The most important thing to winning any battle we're in is what? The gear you have. Your equipment.
    - This has been true from ancient history until today.
        - The ancient Mongolian empire under Genghis Khan conquered a legendary amount of the globe, the largest contiguous land mass in history, due in large part to their gear.
            - Their compact recurve bows allowed superior cavalry tactics and victory.
        - All the way to today, new advancement in naval fleets, firearms, armored vehicles, aircraft and even long-range missiles have shifted the dynamic of war and conflict
    - To find success and avoid disaster we need to know our mission, our enemy, our strategy and our gear.
- We'll find these things explained towards the end of the book of Ephesians in chapter 6.
- Starting in Ephesians 6:10 we read Paul say

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

- How can we "start" with finally? We don't really.
    - Our section tonight is the final point of the book, the epic conclusion, where Paul has finished his deep explanation of theology in chapters 1-3 and his commands on unity and righteous living in chapters 4-6.
        - Now he's getting ready to equip us to go out and do these things.
    - and he starts with "be strong in the Lord in the strength of <u>his</u> might."
        - In whatever else we study tonight, we must begin with an understanding that our strength in this spiritual war does not come from ourselves and <u>our</u> endurance and <u>our</u> effort and <u>our</u> strength but it comes first and only from our Lord
            - It must be granted to us.
- We have our background, we have our opening statement, now what is **Our war's *mission* and *enemy*? (v.10-13)**

Ephesians 6:11–13 (ESV)

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- Who is our enemy in this great war?
    - It is the devil, Satan, clearly.

- But what does the Bible tell us about the devil?
    - He's not some tricky imp on our shoulder, whispering in our ear and he's not some evil god, equally matched against Jesus and he's not waiting around in hell to jab you with a pitchfork.

- Who really is our enemy, the devil?
    - Jesus, in one of his many debates with the Pharisees argues this in John 8:

John 8:44 (ESV)

44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- Satan first and foremost **is the father of lies**, the father of darkness.
    - The polar opposite to God, who scripture calls a God of all light with no darkness in Him
- What is Satan doing with this deception? He is standing before God **and accusing His saints**

Revelation 12:9–10 (ESV)

. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

- This passage in Revelation describes a future moment in this spiritual war where the devil, Satan is thrown out from heaven.
    - We are told he is no longer able to accuse the saints before God.

- Today he <u>has</u> some access to God's throne room in heaven and he spends his time with his deceptions trying to accuse and tear down the saints of God.
    - Thank you to God for providing a mediator to fight back on our behalf.

- In the first two chapters of Job, we find confirmation that Satan is going back and forth between heaven and earth right now, trying his best to tear down and accuse God's people.

Job 1:6–7 (ESV)

[6] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. [7] The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

- The very next thing that happens is God mentioning Job's righteousness and Satan accusing him and tearing him down.
- For the time being, Satan has access to God in heaven and will use it to accuse you and me.
    - Satan is not sitting waiting for you in hell, he's active today on earth.
- 1 Peter 5:8 tells us

---

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

[8] Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- The devil is a real threat, **he's here on earth**, seeking to devour.

- Satan can't be everywhere like God can, but he has helpers.

        - A host of angels rebelled and fell along with him, who we call demons.
    - Satan is a created being, not a match for God's power, but among created beings he has real power.
        - In Jude we're told that even the mighty Archangel, Michael, recognized that Satan's power is not one he could match on our own, he knew that battle is won only with the Lord's authority and power.
    - If you were here a few weeks ago as Adam took us through the moment in Genesis 3 where Satan deceives Eve you may remember we learned how Satan works in his deception:
        - That teaching is archived online if you missed it, but we learned:
        - Satan gets you to doubt the truth of God, to depend on yourself and your own wisdom.
        - He also gets you to swap out the truth from God with a lie
        - Lastly, he convinces you that God is not good.
    - His aim has always been to rebel against God, to usurp God's authority and to stop God's mission which is to redeem sinful mankind through mercy and grace.
- Now we have a solid grasp of why we need this gear, this armor of God, to "withstand" against the devil and his schemes and his lies and to "stand firm."
- But notice, <u>equally</u> important to understanding who our enemy is, is understanding who our enemy <u>is not</u>.
    - Paul writes, first, that our enemy is <u>not</u> flesh and blood, it is <u>only</u> spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenly realm.
    - This is huge. This changes our entire understanding of spiritual warfare.
    - Consider back to those Pharisees that Jesus was arguing with. "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."

- Those men, in their own sin and rebellion against God, were unknowingly agents of Satan's will.
    - They didn't realize it, but they wanted the things that Satan wanted and therefore they were fighting on the side of the enemy.
        - These were the men that opposed Christ Himself even to His death!
    - Yet even still, Paul is telling us that these men and any other men and women like these are <u>not our enemies</u>.

- How could Paul say this? Doesn't he understand how much pain and suffering are caused by evil men and women following the will of Satan?
    - The bullies and murderers and abusers who attack and kill and destroy God's church?
    - The corrupt rulers and politicians who oppress and persecute and silence Christians?
    - If these people, knowingly or not, are following the will of Satan, how can Paul possibly not consider them enemies in this war against Satan?
- Paul can say this because Paul, the Pharisee, son of a Pharisee, who stood by in approval as Steven was murdered and then hauled off many more Christ followers to prison and death,
    - because he knows that those evil men and women carrying out Satan's will are not the enemy, they're the mission.
- Our mission is to go and make disciples of all nations, of all peoples,
    - and every single one of those people, including you, before the moment of salvation are in the clutches of our enemy, Satan.
    - It should not surprise us or disgust us when those people act in alignment with Satan's will, it should break our hearts in sympathy as we realize what we have been saved from and

- it should drive us to speak the Gospel boldly and lovingly in hopes they might be rescued from our enemy, Satan and his lies!

- Notice in our passage in Ephesians, that is the reason why all of the language Paul uses about our war with Satan is <u>defensive</u>.
    - Remember, Satan is powerful and we rely on God's power to win this war.
        - Only God can take ground against this enemy, only God can change hearts and souls.
        - It is our role to follow God's leading in our mission and to <u>withstand</u> the attacks of the devil, to <u>stand firm</u>.
- Okay, church, now we know what this war is about. We know who is our enemy and we know who is our mission. It's time to get geared up and ready for the fight.
- Paul tells us that we must take up the <u>whole</u> armor of God.
    - If we're dealing with a <u>real</u> enemy who is as crafty as Satan himself, he'll attack where we're least defended, we need the <u>whole set</u>.
- **Our war's *gear* (v14-17)**

Ephesians 6:14–15 (ESV)

[14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

- Paul begins to describe the equipment we have been given by God in this spiritual war using the metaphor of military equipment for a soldier.
    - First, we'll understand what the gear means for a soldier, then we can understand what it means in this spiritual war.

- An important question to ask first: how would Paul know anything about the equipment and function of a soldier?
    - Interestingly, this letter was written during a period of imprisonment for Paul,
    - But if you remember from Acts 28, during this imprisonment Paul was under house-arrest, watched day and night by a Roman guard.
    - What do you think Paul did with the guard stuck with him all day? He talked!
        - In fact, in Philippians, Paul mentions the entire staff of guards has heard the gospel because of him.
- Paul knows the equipment and function of a soldier's armor because he's stuck in a house he can't leave talking with an active duty soldier the whole time.

- The first piece of equipment is this "belt of truth."
    - Being the first step, it's probably not like a belt for our pants that goes on at the end.
    - Instead, this would be a type of undergarment that is fastened on first and provides padding between the soldier and the rest of the armor.
        - Think of it like military-grade long underwear.
    - This must be equipped before anything else. Without this, the other pieces wouldn't fit, or they'd be uncomfortable and hurt the soldier.
- Now, what could Paul be saying about this belt of truth in our stand against Satan?
    - If our goal is to stand against the father of lies then where else could we possibly start but in truth?
    - It is tempting to approach all these metaphors in an unhelpfully broad sense.

- We could say “Jesus is the truth! The gospel is the truth!” and therefore we would conclude that we need to believe in the truth of the gospel of Jesus to be protected from Satan.
- Now, all of this is very true. But in this context, it is also very unhelpful.
- If we make the mistake of taking Paul’s words too broadly here, then the lessons he’s trying to teach us lose all meaning.
- If Paul is simply trying to tell us we need the gospel to fight Satan, then this whole thing is redundant in a number of ways.
    - This armor is for believers, but Paul seems worried that not all believers are taking up their gear!
        - This isn’t as simple as believing the Gospel and becoming a believer.
        - “The truth of the Gospel” is not something that Paul needs to be worried about a believer missing, because it’s step one to becoming a believer.
    - The second reason that this would be redundant is that every single piece of armor in this set could be taken as a reference to the Gospel.
        - “Truth”, “Righteousness”, “Gospel of Peace”, “Faith”, “Salvation.”
            - So yes, salvation by faith in the true Gospel of Jesus bringing peace with God and the righteousness of Christ is absolutely a part of the armor of God,
            - but believing the Gospel is a given and if these terms don’t mean anything further or deeper then the whole metaphor is pointless.

- How, then, can Christian put on this covering of truth as we daily resist the father of lies and his accusations?

- Putting on the belt of truth means believing the truth, yes, but it also means telling the truth.
    - How can you expect any of your protections against the father of lies to fit on your body while lies come out of your own mouth.
- Paul said it this way earlier in the book:

Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

- It cannot be stated any more strongly: if you follow the Lord, Jesus Christ, then you follow the God of truth and you are at war with the father of lies and there is no room in your life for falsities or deception to come out of your mouth.
    - You might as well throw down the rest of the armor because it won't fit.
    - You're sabotaging yourself and you're failing your duty to the brothers and sisters battling around you.
- There's no faster way to open yourself up to Satan's attack than indulging in lies, cover ups and deception.
    - Without truth holding everything together, individual Christians and the church as a whole crumble before the enemy's attacks.
    - Lies are how little temptations turn into addictions
        - Truth in confession is how sins and addictions are killed and removed.
    - Lies are how Christian friendships, marriages and churches fall apart.
        - Truth is what builds together the closest bonds this side of heaven.

- Get deception out of your life, fasten on the belt of truth, and now we're ready for the next piece, the Breastplate of Righteousness.
    - The form of ancient armored chest pieces varied a lot, but if you're imagining some form of solid plate like a huge metal poncho you strap on, or like a medieval knight type of suit of armor, those are usually extremely expensive and hard to make so they aren't nearly as common.
        - What's more likely for your average Roman soldier or guard is either chainmail or scale mail breastplates where lots of small pieces of metal are either linked together or stitched together onto a leather body.
    - Whether a solid plate, chainmail or scale mail, this is going to be the biggest, heaviest and most expensive piece of armor for the soldier.
        - Putting on and taking off this armor is not a quick and simple task, like putting on a jacket.
            - We have a fancy term for taking the time to put on armor, you've likely heard it before, we say a person is "donning" their armor.
            - What you probably don't know, and what I'm unreasonably happy to teach you today, is that there is a real companion term, "doffing," for <u>removing</u> the armor.
                - That isn't especially relevant to Ephesians 6, but when else am I ever going to get to use term "doffing" again?
    - Breastplates may be big and expensive and heavy and take time to don and doff, but soldiers are more than happy for the effort because they're also extremely important for protection.
        - Of course, breastplates protect your torso, and that's where most of all your important parts are!

- The protection of a breastplate may be obvious, but there's one more factor important here, and that's thinking through what kind of attack is blocked by a breastplate.
  - I want you to picture yourself like you're in a swordfight with armor, sword and shield.
  - You see your opponent rush at you; I want you to imagine blocking that attack with your breastplate.
    - That's ridiculous! But why?
      - Because breastplates are not for attacks you see or are prepared for, that's what your shield is for.
  - Breastplates are for blocking attacks that you either weren't expecting or that have made it past your defenses.
    - They are the last line of defense between you and a sword in your heart.

- Turning to the spiritual application of the metaphor, we've already determined that the moment we put our faith in Jesus as our savior, believers are granted His righteousness.
  - We are justified as perfect like He is perfect in the eyes of our father,
- How, then are we to understand this righteousness that must be <u>put on</u>.
- This is the righteousness of our lives and deeds here on earth.
  - A life defined by righteous living is not something put on overnight, but like those pieces of chainmail or scale mail, it's a heavy, costly process involving dozens and hundreds of little decisions of integrity throughout your life.
    - But when we do put on a life and reputation of righteousness, it is so valuable
  - And when those lies and deception from the enemy come against us in ways we don't anticipate, sometimes that life of righteousness is our only defense.

- When a Christian stumbles into a moment of unexpected temptation they're not prepared for, sometimes it's only the habits and lifestyles of righteousness they've built up over time that protect them.
    - Christians who are protected from temptations of lusts because they're never in a situation to fall
    - Christians who stand firm against greed because their finances are very well controlled.
- More than temptation, righteous living is sometimes our only defense against an accusation that we don't even know is there.
    - When that lie and deception from Satan accusing you is striking through a conversation, you're not even part of in a room you're not even in, do you have a reputation of righteousness that defends you even when you're not around?
    - There are men in this church that if you told me they were having an affair, the first thing I would do is laugh and laugh.
        - Now, no one is above sin or examination, I'm not saying anyone is immune to sinful mistakes,
        - But what I'm saying is that those men have spent their whole lives donning this breastplate of righteousness and that's a beautiful thing that will protect them from the enemy's lies and accusations.

- The next item Paul describes is the "shoes of the readiness given by the Gospel of peace."
    - We often shorten this to the "shoes of peace" or "shoes of the Gospel of peace" but like we said earlier, all of this armor is tied to the Gospel, but these shoes are a bit more specific than that,

- They're specifically the <u>readiness</u> of the Gospel of peace. The NASB refers to it as the <u>preparation</u> of the Gospel of peace.
    - This is that concept Peter talks about in 1 Peter 3: "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you"
    - This is the readiness or preparation you've made in advance so that you have the gospel available when you need it.

- For a Roman soldier, footgear has two primary purposes, and they're very simple.
    - First, your footgear is what gets you to the battle in the first place.
        - When there's a war over there and you're over here, you're not flying or riding in a transport vehicle, you're rarely sailing in a ship and there are not enough horses for everyone to ride. You are walking, you are marching, a lot.
    - Second, when you make it to the war, now you're caught up in a defensive battle, holding ground against an enemy, you better hope you have some good shoes.
        - You might be on flat ground, or uphill, or downhill, on grass or on rock or sand, it could be raining or snowing or muddy,
            - but your job is to "stand firm," and you have enemies pushing against you, hoping you'll slip and fall so they can kill you and your friends.
            - You're going to need good shoes.
- A Christian also needs these shoes of readiness for the same two reasons
    - First, a Christian needs to be prepared with the Gospel in all circumstances because sometimes we're over here and the war is going on over there.
        - Whether God calls you to fly across the world in missions to an unreached people group in another continent

- Or if He just calls you to walk downtown for our street evangelism,
- or if He just calls you to walk from your table at lunch to the next table over,
- We need to be prepared with the Gospel in all moments to all people.

- Once we get to the battle, and Satan is set against us so that we would be less effective in our ministries, we need to be prepared with the Gospel to stand firm.
  - Where the enemy tries to create conflict, the Gospel brings peace.
  - When Satan tries to separate and divide based on race or gender or politics or even the sins of our past, the Gospel brings peace and unity.

- With the belt, breastplate and shoes we're halfway through our armor, and now Paul gives us the last three:

Ephesians 6:16–17 (ESV)

16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

---

- Paul describes this shield of faith to extinguish Satan's flaming darts.
  - This is a very specific description, because both these darts and shields were common to battlefield strategy.
  - This isn't a little round shield you might picture, no, Roman soldiers were famous for their large rectangular shields that they could fit together in an impressive and unstoppable shield wall.
    - Nothing was getting through these things.

- The fiery darts, or arrows, described here were a tactic against defensive formations, because they would be hollowed and filled in with something flammable like pitch before being lit and fired so that even if you dodged the arrow from hitting you, you just have a different problem.

    - An improperly prepared shield that is supposed to protect you is a big dangerous fire attached to your arm.
    - How accurate this is for Satan's accusations and lies, because even when we stand firm against him in the truth,
        - sometimes just the mere existence of an accusation is enough to start problems and burn down relationship.

- But the soldiers knew to expect this attack, so their shields made of flammable wood had a patch of leather on the front that was a fire retardant and would sputter out the flaming attack.
    - That preparation would mean the fiery arrows would be harmlessly doused as they struck the shield wall.
    - Many teachers tend to associate this verse with some strategy of soaking the shield with water beforehand because of the verse's language.
        - These armaments and strategies are old enough that finding real, verifiable information can be pretty difficult.
        - The best information I could find suggests the weight the water would add and the damage to the wood would make this fairly unlikely on the shield, but this was a real tactic on their siege equipment.
        - Ultimately, the hide by itself is enough to have the quenching effect described.

- How, then, can our faith do the same thing and make Satan's attacks against harmless?

- Earlier we said that blocking an incoming attack with our breastplate makes little to no sense, because our shield is our first and primary response to an incoming attack. Faith is the same way.
- Just like our truth and righteousness, our faith also starts with our the Gospel, faith gifted to us by God,
    - But just like truth and righteousness, we also must go a step further and take up this shield intentionally, we have to continue choosing to live in faith.
    - When Satan wants us to doubt God's word, our faith must persevere
    - When Satan wants us to doubt God's promises, our faith must persevere
    - When Satan wants us to doubt God's goodness, our faith must persevere.
- When we encounter the lies and deceptions and attacks of the enemy, our first and primary response must be faith in the Lord
    - Just like we studied last week in Psalm 31, when the Psalmist is at their deepest, darkest moment of despair, they choose trust in the Lord: "but I will trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.'".
    - Just like Job responded to Satan's attacks after he lost all his children, wealth and property, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
- Not only do we respond to attacks with our faith first, but just like that Roman shield wall, our faith is more effective together than separated.
    - How much easier is it to stand in faith in the midst of the worst circumstances when we have a community of brothers and sisters standing right there with us, bolstering our faith?

- We become unstoppable
    - But when we don't have that support or when we haven't prepared our shields properly, soaking them daily, expecting those fiery attacks, then our defense falls apart.
- This shield of faith, then, is our first and primary defense against Satan's deceptions.
    - It requires preparation, knowing that our faith will be tested by the enemy
    - It requires teamwork to hold strong together.

- Next in our list, the helmet of salvation.
    - There are two main purposes to the helmet, one is fairly obvious and the other less so.
    - As you can probably imagine, your head and everything in your head is fairly important to keep protected in warfare.
    - But there's another important use for the helmet. When you stop and imagine what an ancient Roman helmet looks like, what's one of the first things that pops into your head?
        - We love to depict these soldiers with that giant feather plume sticking off their head!
            - The helmets have these little hook spots or boxes that would allow for these types of ornaments and attachments.
        - What's the point of that thing? It's identification.
        - We're not really sure if those plumes and decorations were only ornamental for parades and celebrations or if they really made it into any actual warfare, but with or without the fancy feathers, the concept remains the same.
            - You can tell the identity of someone on the battlefield based on their helmets.
            - What squad are they a part of, are they in command or not, are they even on your side or not?

- How comforting is it knowing that in our conflict with Satan himself, our salvation both protects our most vital and vulnerable areas and it also defines our identity in the war.
  - Because, our salvation is something we do nothing to earn and can do nothing to lose.
  - Our identities as the sons and daughters of God, rescued out of the clutches of Satan sits atop our heads proudly,
  - declaring to any who see us that we fight for king Jesus and are protected from all the most vicious attacks of the enemy by His work alone.
- If you are hearing this message and only now realizing that you are missing this salvation from God, you are still on the wrong side of this conflict, serving the interests of Satan intentionally or not, then this is where you need to start.
  - For salvation, you don't need change in your behavior; you need a change in identity. You need to defect sides.
  - You need to declare that you aren't leaving this room as the same person who entered, you need to rely on Jesus Christ for your salvation and redemption.

- Now we've got the full set of armor on. Undergarments, breastplate, shoes, shield and helmet.
  - All of this armor might help us withstand the attacks of the enemy, but we need something capable of offense if we're ever going to actually drive off the enemy and claim victory.
    - "The best defense is a good offense."
    - James 4 tells us "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
  - What tool are we given to resist the devil?
- We're given a sword with two names, the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.
  - The Word of God, or scripture as we call it, the Bible, is often referred to as a sword.

- For a soldier holding their ground, their sword may not be the best defense against an attack but it is their only opportunity to push back their enemy and find relief from attacks.
    - But the importance of the sword to a soldier starts long, long before the moment an enemy stands before them.
        - While it might take some time to don a breastplate or put on your shoes and helmet, it takes years of practice to wield a sword effectively.
    - Besides the initial time spent learning, practicing and mastering the sword, a soldier must continue daily to drill and train with the sword or risk failing and dying in the moment they need that skill.
- We, too, have only one weapon that the Lord has given to us to fight back against the enemy, Satan, and that is the Word of God.
    - When Jesus, Himself, in His earthly life, was in a battle of temptation against Satan in the wilderness, He relied not on His divine power, not on legions of angels, but on the Word of God.
        - You can read the full story in either Matthew 4 or Luke 4, but in those you'll find that for each of the three temptations that Satan put before Him, Christ's only response was quotations from the Word of God.
            - With those, He declared "begone, Satan" and the devil left Him.
    - If the warrior king, Jesus, needs no other weapon than the word of God, than we don't either.
- But the question is, how well have you trained with this weapon?
    - Training with the Word of God requires constant, daily practice.
        - How many soldiers would have preferred just a little more of a sleep in, but got up and worked and sweat and drilled until they knew how to use their weapon because their lives depended on it.

- You don't need to find the time for God's word in your life, you need to make the time.

- Besides daily practice, training with the Word of God requires teachers to guide us.
  - The fact that you're sitting here today, listening to a preaching is proof that you understand that you need instruction in the Word of God, but remember two things:
    - First, if your instructors are spending more time in story-telling or motivational speaking or political persuasion than teaching you what's in the Word of God, find better teachers.
    - Second, if you spent 10 hours a week going to swordplay seminars and 30 minutes a week actually holding a sword then you aren't actually learning anything.
      - Teachers are amazing at helping us learn the Bible, but they are not substitutes for studying the Bible ourselves.
- Lastly, where is the Sword of the Word of God when you need it the most?
  - When a soldier comes under attack, where is that soldier's sword?
    - Strapped to them, ready to go, in their hand.
      - They don't take it out to practice with it, then lock it back up in a trunk.
  - When Jesus faced Satan in the wilderness, did he go "hold on, I know the Deuteronomy said something about this, Satan, let me go get my scroll."
    - No, he was practiced and prepared with his weapon, ready for any attack.
  - Having a digital Bible anywhere and everywhere we go is amazing.
  - Having a digital Bible is not the same thing as having God's Word hidden away, written in your heart.
    - There is no substitute for memorization of God's word.

- When that attack comes and there's temptation right in front of you,
    - to blow up in anger
    - to make that addictive purchase
    - to load that site you shouldn't
    - in those moments, you need the Bible in your head and heart, not in your pocket.
- You need to have <u>already read</u> God's word so that you can benefit from it.
- Yes, diving into the scriptures for help when you need it is powerful, but you are not always going to be strong enough to make that choice to open the Bible when you need to most.

- This past Sunday we began studying Psalm 119 and Pastor Tony issued a challenge to the church to start memorizing scripture.
    - He and I didn't plan this together, that was God making that work out.
    - We're three days in, how far along are you? How much practice have you put in?
- If it's been a while since you were in school or have memorized anything, may I suggest the program, website and phone app "Fighter Verses."
    - It's a fantastic tool produced by the nonprofit Truth78, which grew out of a ministry under Pastor John Piper's church over the last 50 years and the app has been a big help to my own personal memorization. Again, the name is "Fighter Verses."
- The point is, that we're not properly geared up and ready to withstand our enemy until we are trained and practiced with our <u>only</u> weapon, the Word of God.

- We've got our mission, and we've got our gear on, but there's one more important step. **Our war's *strategy* (v.18-20)**

Ephesians 6:18–20 (ESV)

[18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

- Our mission is to win the hearts of unbelievers and stand firm against our enemy the devil. In God's strength we've been given our gear, and our strategy is two-fold.
    - First, we are to be in constant prayer and spirit-led communication with God,
    - and secondly, we are to keep alert.
- If we've done all the work to gear up, yet we're not in communication with God through prayer than we won't know what to do or where to go.
    - Remember that we don't overcome Satan and his forces in our power, we rely solely on God's power to do that, we need to be constantly in prayer in supplication,
        - asking our God to rescue and protect us and our church and all the saints.
- "To that end," Paul states, we must keep alert.
    - For a soldier, everything else we've talked about tonight is all useless, if they're not paying attention.
        - They could march to the right place, don all their armor, practice with their sword, but if they're dozing off at their post, none of it matters.
            - At best, that soldier is doing no good against the enemy, and therefore he leaves them alone to their distractions,
            - And at worst, they're dead before they even know what's happening.
    - For us, it's the same way in this spiritual war.

- This is what Jesus warned us about in Luke 8 when he described the type of Christian that "hear" the Gospel, "but as they go on their way they are coked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature."
    - Satan knows, a distracted Christian is useless for this fight.

- Paul gives us two last specifics that are worth mentioning here.
    - First, he asks for specific prayers to God that he might be bold in opening his mouth to proclaim the gospel.
        - We don't find success in this war with closed mouths.
        - Yes, we need to hold our ground against temptations and lies,
        - Yes, we need to put on our righteous living and faith and practice with the Word
        - But ultimately, serving our mission in Christ requires you to open your mouth and boldly proclaim the Gospel.
        - Introverts in the room, I'm sorry, that's just how God made it,
            - but don't be discouraged, because if even the apostle Paul needed prayer and encouragement to share the gospel, then it's okay that you need that too.
    - Secondly, Paul describes himself in the most fascinating way, "an ambassador in chains."
        - This is a confirming sign to us that this letter was written while Paul was imprisoned, literally.
        - But think about that metaphor, because when is an ambassador in chains?
            - Ambassadors are the chosen representative of one country to another, if you take a countries ambassador and lock them away in chains, that it is about the strongest declaration of war that you can make.

- That's a clear sign that negotiation has ended, there is no reconciliation and no common ground between the children of God and forces of Satan
- We are called as ambassadors to a world that needs Christ, but we are also called as ambassadors to a world that is at war with Christ.
    - It is dangerous work we are called to.

- As we end tonight, consider each of us stand in one of four spots in this spiritual war. Which one is you?
    - Are you struggling and fighting for survival on the losing side of the war?
        - You're in this fight all alone, you have no strength of God and no protective gear given to you.
        - You need to humble yourself before the true king and switch sides, desperately begging for His mercy, which He gives freely, even to His enemies.
    - Maybe instead you <u>have</u> been granted salvation, but never bothered to put on your gear or practice with your weapon?
        - You're on the right side but you're failing your mission and you're more of a danger to your fellow soldiers than you are a help.
        - Take to heart Paul's commands for truthful and righteous living and preparedness with the Gospel and with God's word.
            - Make changes in your life to get your gear on.
    - Maybe instead your life shows you're ready for the fight but you're <u>just not paying attention</u>.
        - Snap out of it.
        - Do whatever it takes to break away from the cares and the worries and the pleasures of this world so that you can focus on what matters, obeying your King.
    - Lastly, maybe you're geared up, paying attention and struggling for your life against our enemy.

- If that's you, keep fighting.
- Stand firm. We all want to be there with you.
- Get on your knees in prayer and pray for one another in this fight that God would give us the support we need to hold fast against this enemy for as long as we need to.