

## **Ephesians 6:10-20**

**10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

**11** Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

**12** 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.

**13** Therefore put on the full armor 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.

**14** Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

**15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

**16** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

**17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

**18** 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 Lord's people.

**19** Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

**20** for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Good Morning my sisters and brothers in Christ, I greet you this morning in the name of Jesus the Christ. If there is anyone in the house who feels the need to praise Jesus then please do so. I am going to praise Him for taking care of me, and my family this week. I am going to praise Him for friends; mature and young; long-standing and recent and near and far. I am going to praise Him at all times, and in all places, and in all seasons. Let everything that has breathe praise the Lord.

Today we come to the end of the three lessons on “Serving the Lord”. On first Sunday we were not here because of the weather. So on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday I combined the two sermons and asked “**WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO TO LOVE YOUR GOD AND SERVE YOUR KING?**” the focus was to remind us that serving God is a daily activity; serving God requires some training; and serving God requires a commitment not to defile yourself. Last Sunday we looked at the parable of the sheep and the goats as recorded by Luke. The theme was “**LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IS NOT A PHOTO OP!**” The sermon was concluded with these words “**Life as a Christian is about being a good person because of the love that flows within you as the result of your love for Jesus the Christ.**”

This morning we are looking at the last chapter of Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus. Generally when Paul wrote to a church it was to answer questions or address an issue that had arisen in the church. But the letter to Ephesus was different. It was a letter written to believers to provide in-depth teaching about how to nurture and maintain unity within the church.<sup>1</sup> Paul was in jail in Rome for preaching the gospel, yet he still preached and taught and wrote about the Good News of Jesus the Christ. (If Christians were arrested for preaching and teaching the gospel, would you be in jail?)

The letter to Ephesus has two main sections: **section one** is the unity of Christ and **the second section** is the unity we have as members of the body of Christ, the church. After providing directions of how to maintain relationships within the body Paul concludes his letter with ten verses on how to fight – not just anybody – but how to fight the devil, the evil one, the spirit of darkness. Those ten verses are our focus for this morning.

Paul always followed Jesus’ examples when teaching. He used examples and illustrations that were familiar to the first audience. He often taught about his faith journey as being a race and/or a fight:

*I have fought **the** good fight, I have finished **the** race, I have **kept the faith.***

**2 Timothy 4:7**

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<sup>1</sup> Chronological Life Application Study Bible (NLT), pg. 1704

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.nbcchicago.com/weather/stories/chicago-weather-record-cold-thursday-february->

Paul also used his situation of imprisonment, and physical discomfort to teach humility

... Therefore, **in** order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a **thorn in my flesh**, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

**2 Corinthians 12:7**

And so it makes sense that Paul uses his experiences with the Roman soldiers and the Roman prisons to teach.

As a **prisoner** for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **Ephesians 4:1**

As Paul encourages he uses the clothing of a Roman soldier, something his audience was familiar with, to teach about standing strong in the faith.

In recent years we have had several sermons on the “whole armor of God” and as I have said before, with any familiar passage there is a tendency to think, “we got this” and not spend time in prayer and reflection. As I was reflecting on the passage and considering how many layers I needed to wear, as the weather was warmer on Saturday than earlier in the week I heard from heaven. I ask you to pray with me and for me as I work with this theme:

### **ARE YOU DRESSED FOR THE WEATHER?**

#### **SHALL WE PRAY?**

God of heaven and earth we need to hear from you this morning. Allow us into your Holy presence. Allow us to hear with fresh ears the word prepared for us. Allow us to speak with a clean heart that which we have learned. Provide us with an inquiring mind so we will study those things we do not understand. Help us to be prepared in all kinds of weather to speak the Word; live the Word; and teach the Word. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

### **ARE YOU DRESSED FOR THE WEATHER?**

This past Thursday the weather in Chicago broke two records that had existed since 1936. The first was for the record low of -8<sup>0</sup> at 6:18 am and the

record high of only 4<sup>0</sup> at 4:55 pm.<sup>2</sup> When we heard the weather forecast I would imagine we had at least 3 thoughts all at the same time:

- Do I need to put more covering on the bed, windows, and doors?
- How many layers do I need to put on me?
- Is there enough food in the house?

We thought about weather as a noun: the state of the atmosphere **and** as a verb: will we be able to weather/withstand what was to come.

### **ARE YOU DRESSED FOR THE WEATHER?**

Not only is our climate changing, but the attitudes of people are also changing. Some recent headlines to make my point:

- Female florist sued by the Attorney General of Washington state because she refused to provide floral arrangements for a same sex wedding
- 41% of all lost inventory is from employee theft
- 50 Shades of Grey ...
- Websites for youngest person convicted of rape, murder and other felonies
- Multiple articles on why Christians are not attending church regularly

As Christians there are some things we ought not do; some issues on which we must take a stand; some things we cannot teach as being normal; some things we declare to be unfit entertainment.

### **ARE YOU DRESSED FOR THE WEATHER?**

As you know your behavior reflects your attitude and so as we experience changes in attitude in the culture around us we should also note changes in behavior. For example:

- More people call themselves "spiritual" than Christian and many cannot explain what they mean.
- Regular church attendance is a couple of times of month not every Sunday

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.nbcchicago.com/weather/stories/chicago-weather-record-cold-thursday-february-18-292218691.html#ixzz3SRHI3cYS>

- o Giving to the church is considered in the same way as giving to charitable organizations – Red Cross, Arthritis Foundation, Diabetes Research.

Because the climate is changing and the behavior is changing we as Christian must change. We have to get dressed for the weather. Paul tells us how to get dressed.

***14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,***

The evil one, the devil, lies and sometimes the lies sound like truth. In order to stand firm as a Christian we need to know what the truth is and then allow the truth to guide us in our daily walk.

*with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*

The breastplate protects our hearts and our hearts represent our emotions. When the devil gets into our emotions we begin to doubt our own self-worth, we believe the things “they” say about us, we lose sight of our goals.

***15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.***

If we are going to take a stand we must have on the right shoes. It is not about the style of the shoe or the price of the shoe. It is about the brand. These need to be God made shoes of the gospel – the Good News of Jesus – and they need to contain peace.

**Let's stop and put these three pieces on!**

We have studied the truth and we know the truth so we can put on our **belt**. We have decided that everywhere we go we are not going to allow the lies of the devil to turn us around. **Our breastplate** is in place. We have new **shoes** on our new feet and we are ready to go wherever God sends because we have

(And) the **peace** of God, which transcends all **understanding**, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:7**

***16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.***

Paul knew that we would not be able to run this race, to stay in the fight without a shield. Our shield is our faith. Our faith can and will protect us from the evil attacks of the devil. But sometimes we want to lay down our shield of faith (GOLD) and pick-up our old shield (Tarnished Silver).

- The shield of “let me tell you one thing”.
- The shield of “God, can I just have 5 minutes and I can fix this”.
- The shield of “let me get my little red wagon and my rubber ball and get up outta here”.

But when we stand behind our shield of faith we can withstand all that is thrown at us because we know the ultimate victory is with Jesus.

We are still not fully dressed.

<sup>17</sup>Take **the helmet of salvation**

We need something on our heads. How many of you have heard and/or said “put something on your head before you go out”. Our head is our mind and we need to protect our mind from those things that sound like the gospel, but are not.

“You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian...”

<sup>23</sup>Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10)

and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

Last Sunday during Kid’s Time we talked about what it takes to get to heaven and the Kingdom Seekers in the choir stand reminded us that all we need is the Word of God.

The only piece of our “full armor of God” that is offensive is the sword of the spirit, the word of God. Sometimes we need to take the offense with the devil.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” (Matthew 16)

**We are now fully dressed: belt, armor, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword.**

**Only one thing left before we leave home.**

**<sup>18</sup>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 Lord’s people.**

**ARE YOU DRESSED FOR THE WEATHER?**