

BASIC TRAINING

Put On The Armor Of God

Introduction: (Scripture Reading: Isaiah 59:14-20)

1. Part of basic training in the military getting soldiers familiar with their equipment.
 - a. You are not only to know how to use an M16A4 rifle, you are to be able to break it completely down and put it back together quickly. You do not just know how to fire a gun, but how a gun fires. Soldiers gain intimate knowledge of every aspect of their gear... whether it is their uniform, boots, gun, gas mask, or a grenade.
 - b. Recruits are taught how to fire a gun, they spend three days with it before actually firing it. They learn to shoot accurately without a scope before a scope. How to plot location & destination points on their navigation map. How to tie knots and repel. How to throw grenades. They learn the tough way what a gas mask is for and how to use it under pressure. Hand to hand combat & guerilla exercises
 - c. Quote: The redesigned standards have soldiers shooting 600 rounds and receiving 92 hours of training. Much of that time will be devoted to shooting and qualifying with front and rear backup iron sights to ensure soldiers become more familiar and more disciplined with their weapons. The new emphasis on marksmanship is also designed to expose young soldiers to more realistic shooting scenarios. At the end of the final field training exercise known as The Forge, soldiers are required to do a battle march and shoot event. Soldiers march four miles with 40-pound rucksacks and then go immediately into a close-combat firing range, do 25 pushups and engage 40 targets at ranges out to 100 meters with 40 rounds of ammunition. "This is at the end of The Forge, so the soldiers over a four-day period ... have marched over 40 miles already," said Thriso Hamilton, training specialist for the Basic Combat Training POI. "The soldiers are extremely tired, they are hungry, they're under a stressful situation and we want to see at that point how much focus they can garner to be able to ... engage targets," he said. (1)
 - d. This knowledge makes the difference between life & death not only for that soldier but also their comrades. There are no time outs in war to learn or get equipped!
2. Christians, we are at war! We have an enemy that is out to destroy us every single day. He is out to destroy those around us as well. He fights hard & he fights dirty. He is powerful. He is sneaky, subtle, & deceitful. You are at war and its personal. Are you battle ready?
3. Last week we took a peek at the gear God has given us. We saw that the strength for battle is not in ourselves, but in the Lord. We are to be strong in the Lord, we are not to be strong in ourselves. How do we do this? We put on the WHOLE armor of God. We don't pick and choose pieces, but we wear it all. Through this armor God strengthens us, equips us, & prepares us for battle. Notice it is HIS armor we wear (Isaiah 59:14-20)

A. First, Put On The Belt Of Truth...

1. There may be a tendency to overlook this part of God's armor because a belt seems so insignificant, however it is quite intentional that Paul begins here. The belt was the foundational piece of armor for the Roman soldier. It held everything together.

- a. The first thing our eyes are drawn to is that towering shield, the shiny sword, or the beautiful breastplate. But Paul begins with the belt. The belt held the scabbard with which there'd be no sword. The belt was the central point that held all the armor together. From it hung strips of leather protecting the lower body.
 - b. Expositors: "First of all, the belt tied tightly around the waist indicated that the soldier was **prepared for action**. To slacken the belt was to go off duty. The "belt" (zōnē) was not an ornament but served an essential purpose. It gathered in the short tunic and helped keep the breastplate in place when the latter was fitted on. From it hung the scabbard in which the sword was sheathed (v. 17).
 - c. **MacArthur**: "Girding the loins was a mark of preparedness, and **the soldier who was serious about fighting** was sure to secure his tunic with his belt."
 - d. Our belt is the belt of truth. When we start talking about truth, sometimes people's eyes glaze over. It may seem more boring, less practical, or too confrontational. Truth is foundational to our lives as Christians... a vital piece of God's armor!
2. If we are to put on truth, what is this truth? How do we identify it?
- a. We live in a culture in which truth is painted as relative. You have your truth, I have my truth, and they both are truth. We are told that right and good, good and bad, are relative. It's a twisted self-contradicting concept. We have no doubt where this originates... Satan, the father of lies (**John 8:44-45**). He's been sowing seeds of uncertainty about truth in people's minds since the Garden of Eden!
 - b. The Bible speaks of truth with clarity. We're shown that truth is absolute. So there is an objective standard to through navigate life. We can know right & wrong, good & bad with absolute certainty. God is the author! (**John 14:6 17:17**)
 - c. Truth does not depend on my feelings, my background, my circumstances. Truth is consistent. I don't get to decide what is truth. We have an objective standard.
 - d. The world rebels against this because it is condemning. It means I don't get to act and think however I want. It means I might be wrong. Truth has consequences.
3. Usually when we read this we think of the scriptures, the word of God (**John 8:32-32**)
- a. God's word is truth. The things it says and describes are real and accurate. We can base our worldview on what it says. It has been consistently proven reliable.
 - b. God's word is also truth when it comes to direction for my life. It is the authority for every aspect of my life. It directs my thoughts, my actions, my words. It is the standard for my marriage, my work, my friendships, my emotions, my speech. There is NO aspect of my life that is not responsible to its direction.
 - c. It is through this truth that freedom is found. This is ironic to many because all they see in commands is prohibition. First, God's word isn't just full of "Thou Shalt Nots" but also "Thou Shalts..." God's word serves as a lighthouse and compass for our hearts... Directing our paths to a life of liberty from the bondage of sin!
4. But the belt of truth is not necessarily restricted to the Bible. We should be girded about with the belt of truthfulness that is a real and genuine heart (**John 18:37; Psalm 15:1-2, 51:6**)
- a. Truth does not just refer to an objective standard, but the quality of truthfulness. It speaks of a heart of honesty and sincerity. A reliable & consistent truthfulness.
 - b. In other words, truth is who we are. There are no ulterior motives, there is no hidden agenda. There is a purity to us. It's not artificial or superficial... it is who we are

- c. In our relationship with God → Sometimes we approach God with halfhearted service... trying to serve God while still trying to serve ourselves. Imagine trying to fight for righteousness while harboring sin in your heart. Be open & honest with who we are. We want God to search us & try us... We want to be right!
 - d. In our relationship with Others → We should be a reliable and trustworthy people. Others should not have to wonder if we have ulterior motives or a hidden agenda. When we speak, we speak truth consistently. We avoid manipulation, deceitfulness, & half-truths. Even if the truth hurts or has tough consequences!
5. It's no wonder the armor of God starts here. We can't expect to fight this war with strength if truthfulness does not characterize our lives. Do we love the truth? Do we really want the truth? Be willing to stand for truth... to stand on truth... to defend & fight for truth.
- Read words to [Give Me Truth](#) By Bill Crews ***Bottom***

B. Next, Put On The Breastplate Of Righteousness

1. As Paul's eyes scanned up the armor of the Roman soldier guarding him, the next thing he would have noticed would have been a beautiful breastplate protecting him:
 - a. The breastplate was a key piece of their armor as well. This was a hard sleeveless piece that protected the soldier from their neck to their thigh. It covered all the major organs. A wound here could be fatal where it might not in other places
 - b. The heart, lungs, stomach, and more were all protected by the breastplate. It covers not only the most vulnerable part of the body, but the biggest & easiest target. With a breastplate, the same blows deflect ineffectively. He keeps fighting!
 - c. These breastplates were usually made of bronze but some soldiers wore those made out of chain mail. They were extremely sturdy. It had overlapping sections like fish scales which allowed for flexibility. They had a piece covering front & back.
 - d. As Christians we also have a breastplate that is extremely strong... righteousness.
Adam Clarke: "As the breast-plate defends the heart and lungs, and all those vital functionaries that are contained in what is called the region of the thorax; so this righteousness defends everything on which the man's spiritual existence depends."
2. We need to remember this righteousness is not our own. This armor that we are wearing is the armor of God, so this righteousness is a righteousness of God (**Romans 3:9-10; Isa 64:6**)
 - a. Righteousness is the state of being right or just... It involves **uprightness** and **integrity** of character, loyalty in principle and action to the holy law of God, the devout and holy life, moral goodness.
 - b. Righteousness has two main forms: One describes the way we live holy & pure lives before God (**Romans 6:13**) & one describes our justification before God as He declares us righteous (**Romans 4:5-6**). Neither are based on our own goodness
 - c. When I trust in my own righteousness I become "self-righteous." It's the mindset of the Pharisee Jesus described who compared himself to the tax collector:
 - 1) **Self-righteousness says**, "I did this; and I should be commended and credited for my efforts." **The righteousness of faith says**, "Jesus died for me, and because of that manifestation of God's grace, I am right with God."
 - 2) **Self-righteousness says**, "I have accomplished all of these great things in my life, and I deserve to be rewarded." **The righteousness of faith says**,

"My obedience is only my response to the good news of the gospel; and whatever I do that's good, it is God working in me for His glory."

- 3) He elevated some qualities in his mind where he felt strong & neglected areas where he was weaker. He didn't really seek forgiveness because he felt he did good in those areas. His self-righteousness causes him to overlook areas where he is very weak. He judges others not like him.
 - d. Having this understanding is very practical in nature... If I start trusting in my own goodness, I will have a lackadaisical attitude toward sin and the dangers of this world! May think I have armor on, but that breastplate is full of holes. Exposed!
3. This breastplate of righteous is a gift of God that is given to us when we come to Him by faith in Jesus. It is given the moment God makes us righteous (**Romans 4:22-25; Col. 2:12-13**)
 - a. In the verses before this Paul had shown that David and Abraham were both ungodly men. Why? Because they had sinned. That's why righteousness had to be counted to them. Righteousness was not what they earned, but condemnation
 - b. It is by faith in Jesus that God declares me righteous. But when? Paul ties it together. It is when this faith brings a person to baptism that God goes to work, forgiving all their sins... By faith at baptism God makes me righteous.
 - c. Today, if you haven't come to God by faith in baptism, there is NO WAY you can be righteous. If you think you will do it when you are good enough you have totally missed the point of baptism. A person comes by faith in baptism because they aren't good enough... It is an appeal to God for God to make them righteous!
 - d. But isn't this letter written to people who are already saved? How can they put it on if its already on? I put it on when I trust the righteousness of God instead of my own. If I rely on my own ability to perform, instead of God's grace and the strength He provides, I'm trusting my own righteousness. I putting on the breastplate of filthy rags and there's no protection there!
4. Having been made righteous by God, we are able to pursue righteousness in life. This is the practical side of the breastplate of righteousness we put on (**1 Tim 6:11-12; Psalm 15:1-5**)
 - a. As righteous people we make a real commitment to do right things. Being righteous isn't just about avoiding sinful behavior, but pursuing righteous before. A righteous person who doesn't do righteous things isn't really righteous!
 - b. In Romans 6 Paul describes what God does at baptism. How we are raised with Christ as new creatures. God makes us righteous at that moment. But then Paul goes on to say, "Do not present your members as instruments to unrighteousness but instruments to righteousness." ...Reflect what we are by what we do
 - c. Putting on righteousness also involves my attitude. Do I prefer what is right and good or do I prefer what is sinful and fleshly? Remind David the man after God's own heart? He loved the things God loved & hated what God hated
 - d. Satan's assaults against our heart are much less powerful when we are focusing on pursuing righteousness. We are stronger. There's less room in our life for sin to dwell. We are concerned about doing good, so sinful things are less alluring.

C. Then, Shod Your Feet With The Gospel

1. As Paul looked at the Roman soldier, he also noticed the footgear he was wearing. This gear was not simply shoes he wore, but a purposeful part of his armor:
 - a. A Roman soldier wore boots that were heavy duty, thick soled, and openwork. They were studded with hobnails (nails with big heads) which gave them greater traction and ability to stand firm in battle. It was adjustable to each soldier's foot, was ideal for marching, made a thunderous noise as they marched which was certainly intimidating, and they stayed cooler. The hobnails not only gave them traction but were weapons for attacking fallen enemies
 - b. 2000 years have come and gone since the days of these Roman soldiers, yet for the soldier today their boots are just as important to them. During basic training a soldier learns the importance of his boots and how to care for them. Boots are kept under your bunk so when you get up you can put them on immediately. If you are on duty, you're in boots. When in combat, you don't get a chance to take them off. You learn to do everything you do with your boots on
 - c. Quote: "My combat boots saved me from breaking my ankle more times than I can count. Stepping in a hole with 150 pounds on you and not snapping your ankle in half. Running from cover to cover and having to slide, or dive, not having to worry about your foot getting caught in a bad position and breaking it. Combat boots are durable, insulated from heat and cold depending on the boot, and most of all they are there to protect the most important part of your body as military personnel, your feet! If you can't walk or run you're useless on the battle field." (2)
 - d. Since we are at war, Paul impresses upon us the need to have our feet prepared for what lies ahead. Our feet are to be fitted with readiness which only comes from the gospel of peace. If my feet aren't properly geared up, I am not battle ready!
 - e. Practically, we get this. If my kids see my putting on shoes they ask where I am going. Why? Putting on shoes means I am preparing for something. My shoes reflect what I'm expecting to do. I have running shoes, soccer shoes, hunting shoes, dress shoes, casual boots. I don't put on dress shoes to go hunting. You can look at my feet & see what I am expecting to do! Christians have combat boots!
2. God has given us a pair of combat boots to prepare us for our war with Satan and the spiritual battles we face. God gives us the preparation of the gospel of peace (**Eph. 2:11-17**)
 - a. This phrase is difficult and awkward to us in English. Literally it says, "and having shod yourselves as to the feet in readiness of the gospel of peace." Christians are certainly to be a prepared people. But what is this preparation for?
 - b. Could refer to BEING PREPARED → Being prepared to take the gospel of Christ, which is the gospel of peace, to souls that are lost. When we do this, we are fighting the war for the hearts & minds of people. Stay battle ready! (**Isa 52:7 | Pet 3:15**)
 - c. Could refer to PREPARED FOUNDATION → The gospel of peace gives us the strength and stability to stand firm against the attacks of our enemy. Remember the hobnailed studded shoes of the Roman soldier? They gave them the traction to hold their ground as they marched & fought. This is what the gospel of peace does for us as we fight our battles every day! (**Romans 5:1-2; Philippians 4:7**)
 - d. It is the peace we possess as we go to battle that fits the context of Ephesians 6, not being prepared for evangelism. Paul is not discussing journeying from place to place preaching, but standing firm in our faith. The gospel of peace prepares us!

- e. Notice in Ephesians 2 Paul doesn't just argue that Jesus GIVES us peace but that Jesus HIMSELF is our peace. He created peace by bringing together two opposed groups, the Jews and the Gentiles, into one family. But that's not the only peace that occurs... there is also reconciliation with God. God gave us peace through the death of Jesus. Our sins caused war, Jesus gives us peace. Possessing this peace through the gospel of Jesus gives strength to dig our feet in, stand, & fight
 - f. The gospel itself also prepares us, giving us peace for the battle ahead. Imagine going into a battle not knowing your equipment, the plan, your job, the enemy, or even what you are fighting for... Nervous? The gospel is our manual. The more we know it the more prepared we are for battle and that gives us great peace!
3. So let's talk practically... How do we go about putting on this armor of God? Remember, it is putting on the peace that is available through the gospel that prepares for war:
- a. First, we have to make sure we are right with God. Through the gospel of peace I can have peace with God and that peace gives me strength to stand. But if I do not have fellowship with God I do not know peace. The sin, the guilt, the hopeless causes war within me & with God. So, if you haven't come by faith in obedience to the gospel of Christ... Do it! You can't have peace without it and you can't fight Satan alone. For those who have... We have to stop letting things like sin, worldliness, and our pride get in the way of our peace with God. When I go to war but I know things aren't right, I don't have the peace to stand firm! If there is ANYTHING we know we need to do to be right with God, **DO IT (Rom. 5:1-2)**
 - b. Do the simple things that create peace in your heart. We know what causes strife in our souls & we know what causes peace. It's not rocket science is it? Paul identifies three things **(Philippians 4:6-9)**:
 - 1) Dealing with our anxiety through prayer... Praying reminds me that the battle is the Lord's and He fights for me. It also gives me a release from carrying all that weight.
 - 2) I am to focus on things that are good and spiritual. Too many times the struggle within us comes from the garbage we consume. If we want to have peace, we have to focus on things that create peace.
 - 3) I am to imitate those who know peace. Paul knew peace and wanted people to know what he had. Too often we "follow" people who don't have peace and we wonder why we start to struggle ourselves. Surround yourself with spiritually minded people, faithful ones, who know peace!
 - c. Pursue peace with others. Those who are peacemakers tend to be more at peace within themselves, even if others refuse to allow peace to reign. If there is strife between you and another person, don't let it fester but make it right! Do things that create peace at church, at work, at home. Let peace reign! **(Rom 12:16-21)**
 - d. Spend more and more time in the gospel of peace. The gospel not only teaches us about HOW to have peace with God but about the peace God gives us. We learn about Heaven, God's love and faithfulness, our forgiveness, the coming of Jesus, prayer, and so much more. The gospel also keeps this life in perspective when the heat of battle might distract us. Get in the word! **(Isaiah 52:7)**

4. There is a great paradox here. For the Christian, the way to get prepared for war, the way to be battle ready, is to find and pursue peace. The devil fights dirty, he doesn't fight fair, but God give us peace so we can claim the victory (**Romans 16:20**)

D. Now, We Are To Put On The Shield Of Faith

1. There was probably no piece of the armor of the Roman soldier that would have been more impressive and eye catching than his shield. It was also the most important
 - a. These shields were very large. The word comes from the word for door. The Roman shield was big enough most of the body. A soldier could behind it from attack.
 - b. If a soldier lost his sword or spear for some reason, he could continue marching forward with his troop. The shield could even be used as a weapon if needed
 - c. Barclay: "One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow dipped in 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." (The Letters To The Galatians And Ephesians, p. 183)
 - d. "After the siege of Dyrachium, Sceva counted no less than 220 darts sticking into his shield." (The Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol. 11, p. 88)
 - e. The Roman Army had "The Tortoise Formation" → At the command the troops would tight up and raise their shield in a tortoise shape. This was almost impenetrable to enemy attacks. The shields covered the front and above them. The shields formed one solid surface, overlapping so no gaps would be exposed.
 - f. The army also had a V formation (Cuneum Formate). This was used to charge at the enemy... sword in one hand and shield in another. This too was very effective
 - g. As God arms His people for battle, God gives us a shield that is even more impressive and powerful. Ours is a shield of faith. This boths protect us & attack in battle
2. We cannot understate the vital role faith plays in the life of every Christian (**Hebrews 11:1, 6**)
 - a. Faith involves both the belief that something is and our trust in it. Faith calls upon us to not only accept God, but trust God, and that trust is seen in our submission. For us, faith is an assurance & conviction in God & what His word teaches
 - b. Our faith is not simply something we have, it is the motivating force in our life. It is the core of our existence. It directs our lives. Our faith is precious to us!
 - c. Some people want to belittle the Christian because of our faith. Some claim that faith exists where reason is abandoned. That faith is for people who quit thinking. Such a position is illogical because every day every person operates by faith in different things. When we drive, what we think about history, our expectation of getting paid for work, etc. We all look at the evidence and draw conclusions. When it comes to God and His word... Our faith is reasonable. We believe because of the evidence, not in spite of the evidence! This isn't a blind guess!
 - d. Like with the other pieces of armor, it's important to know that our shield of faith comes from God. Our faith is not the result of our own ingenuity, reason, or logic. Yes, it requires our reason... but its not of my own doing. My faith in God is because of God's revelation to me through His word namely (**Romans 10:17**). I don't go into battle armed w/my own wisdom. I trust God's ways not my own!

- e. Our faith is vital because, when it is based on God's word, it gives us the chance to be objective and reasonable when our emotions or desires want to carry us in a different direction. Faith protects us when our heart would leave us vulnerable
- 3. Our shield provides complete practical defense & protection to march forward in everything
 - a. Notice we are to take it up in ALL CIRCUMSTANCES → There is no situation I can face where my faith is not sufficient. There is no situation I can face where my faith is not needed or that I can ignore what my shield tells me. **(2 Timothy 3:14-17)**
 - b. Notice too how it is strong enough for ALL THE FLAMING DARTS → This means there is nothing that Satan can fire at us that our faith is not strong enough to deflect. Every day we fight battles, but sometimes the battle is more intense than others. Sometimes it feels like we cannot help but to do wrong **(1 Cor. 10:13)**
 - c. We are not left without direction. We do not stand powerless in front of the barrage of assaults from the devil. Our circumstances are not too difficult. God has armed us with an all sufficient faith! Notice our faith isn't just sufficient to not be overcome by the fiery darts... our shield of faith will EXTINGUISH them!
 - d. There's no better place to see this in action than in temptations of Jesus. The devil came after Jesus in a time when He was alone and in a time when He was exhausted. Satan presented three temptations and each one had its unique difficulties. The devil even muddied the water by quoting scripture to give Jesus justification for giving in. Yet Jesus exhibited an unwavering trust in His Father's will and an unwavering commitment to the scriptures. Shield up! **(Matt 4:1-11)**
 - e. God has a home prepared in Heaven for us. He has reserved a place there for us. For now, God uses faith to protect us, to guard us, to ensure our salvation. It is through faith that God is fighting for us, that God is defending us **(1 Peter 1:3-5)**
- 4. Let's talk more practical... What can we do to take up the shield of faith? **(Hab 2:4; 1 John 5:4)**
 - a. Since faith comes through the word, we have to start there! We cannot expect to have a strong and active faith if we don't spend time doing the one thing that really grows it. Remember Satan knows scripture too... Know it better!
 - b. We need to deepen our foundations of faith. Faith for the Christian is reasonable and rational. The world is attacking this more than ever! There is so much evidence out there supporting the Bible and God's existence. It really builds your faith!
 - c. Look to the cross. Remember, a big part of our faith is our trust in God. It's when we fail to trust God that we stop submitting to His will and His ways. We see that with Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden. By giving us Jesus on the cross, God eliminated any reason to doubt our trust. God deserves unconditional trust!
 - d. Don't take for granted the little opportunities to trust Him. How do we know if our faith is strong enough for the most intense of battles? By looking to the little ones. Every chance to trust God, every chance to submit to His will instead of our own, every chance to hope in Him... builds our faith and paves the way!
 - e. Get active in your faith! Find ways to serve God and exercise your faith every day. It starts with prayer, Bible study, meditation, and singing, but it doesn't end there. Be creative. Every day there's so many opportunities to do good, to talk to others about God, to stand up for what's right, to help others fight their battles, and so much more. Every time we do, we are picking up that shield and using it!

- f. Focus on your future. Ultimately, our faith is pointed to eternity. So much about life pulls our shield down... life makes us focus on cares and concerns of right now. Our faith rests our Father who is in Heaven. Our faith is about going home to Heaven. We've got to renew our focus on Heaven. Think like pilgrims!

E. Next, The Christian Is To Put On The Helmet Of Salvation

1. As Paul considers the majestic armor of the Roman soldier, possibly even examining it firsthand as he is under arrest, he next notices the helmet. Certainly no Roman soldier would consider himself "battle ready" until he has put on his helmet.
 - a. "...Helmet was originally made of leather or untanned skin, strengthened & adorned by bronze or gold. Leather helmets were made by the process of tanning which consisted of the conversion of hides into leather by steeping them in a solution of tannin, an acid solution often brewed out of oak bark or gall." (3)
 - b. The helmet Paul would have seen would have been a Coolus Helmet. The "helmets of the commanders were surmounted by a crest which was often made of horse-hair or feathers, and so made as to give an imposing look with the illusion of height that helped him to appear more commanding."
 - c. The importance of a helmet is obvious. It protected the head from blows. Any blow to the head could prove fatal, however, broad swords were particularly dangerous. These were large, heavy, two handed, double edged swords. As the cavalry attacked, the soldiers would strike with a strong force either splitting the skull or completely decapitating their enemy. The helmet helped you keep your head in the heat of battle!
 - d. A Christian is not battle ready until he takes up the helmet of salvation. Just as a helmet helped the Roman soldier keep his head, our helmet of salvation helps us keep our head!
2. What is the helmet of salvation the Christian is supposed to take up? (**I Thessalonians 5:8**)
 - a. Our initial thought may be that Paul is telling us that we need to be saved. That by getting saved a person takes up the helmet of salvation. But I don't think that's exactly what Paul has in mind... He is writing to people who are already saved.
 - b. What it most likely refers to is our confidence and assurance in our salvation. In other words, our hope. It refers to the hope that being saved produces in me
 - c. Like the enemy of the Roman soldier, Satan wields a two-edged sword... One edge is doubt and the other edge is discouragement. Satan grabs it with both hands and swings hard at our heads. He uses these difficulties to overcome what we know with our feelings. The helmet of salvation, our hope, guards what we know when Satan is taking his swings. Focuses us on what is true (**Psa 140:7, 13**)
 - d. In the book of Revelation John paints an incredible picture of the spiritual war that has been waging since this world began. The war started between God & Satan. Satan has lost that war and he knows it. He is a loser, but he refuses to give up. Now he is wreaking havoc on the earth seeking to destroy mankind. While he has lost the ultimate war, he can win the battle over the souls of men & women. So we battle and it is personal. How does Satan fight against us? We are told here that Satan is our accuser. He seeks to condemn us. He uses such doubt

- and discouragement to shipwreck our faith. He works through guilt to crush our hope. He employs feelings of worthlessness to handicap our service (**Rev 12:10**)
3. See Elijah. Even though Elijah was a prophet of God and even though he fought valiantly in the spiritual war against idolatry, he felt blows of doubt & discouragement (**1 Kings 19:13-14**)
 - a. Elijah was just coming off a great spiritual victory. He stood up to the prophets of Baal and the indifference among God's people. God answered Elijah's cries and showed Himself through fire consuming a sacrifice in front of everyone. The prophets of Baal had been killed and God's people recommitted to faithfulness
 - b. But next Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah. She was certainly powerful and had the means. So Elijah runs, scared for his life. When God speaks to Elijah he is hiding in a cave wishing God would just end his life then. He tells God that he alone is left. Elijah felt powerless and lonely. Discouraged, doubting, and depressed!
 - c. God provided nourishment for Elijah, God gave Elijah a new job to get done, God reminded Elijah of His presence... Elijah was reminded of the salvation of God!
 - d. Here we see no one, no matter how strong, is immune from the seeds of doubt and discouragement from our accuser. Here we see that we need protection not only during the struggle but also in the victory. Here we see God strengthens
 4. As we look to put on the helmet of salvation, we must remember the nature of it. This armor is God's armor and not ours. We are to "take" the helmet of salvation. Our hope of salvation, the confidence and assurance we have, is a gift of God (**2 Timothy 1:8-10**)
 - a. Our helmet of salvation is not based in how good we are or how well we perform, but in God's ability to save. Our trust is in God's grace & God's power and not ourselves. When we lose this focus, it is like going into battle without a helmet!
 - b. We are quick to point that the we are to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling..." and how continued obedience is necessary. But let us never forget that the next verse speaks of God working in us. If God wasn't working in me, nothing I would do would matter! He works on my desire ("both to will") & my actions ("and to do") – God hasn't left me on my own get it done! (**Phil 2:12-13**)
 - c. Our confidence & assurance is based on the power of God at work in us (**Eph 1:18-20; 1 Peter 1:5**), the faithfulness of God to His promises (**Titus 1:1-3**), the love and grace of God (**2 Thess 2:16-17**), the work of the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 1:13-14**), the work of Jesus in suffering on the cross (**Hebrews 2:9-10**) – We could go on!
 - d. Sometimes in battling some of the false teaching in the religious world, we get unbalanced in our own thinking. It's not intentional, but it happens. The focus on our salvation gets shifted from God to ourselves. Am I good enough to be saved? Is there some matter of obedience I may have overlooked? We know our all our failures & weaknesses well, if the basis of my trust isn't God, I am not able to live with real hope of salvation. I am not taking the helmet He provides!
 - e. **Bill Hall:** "Entrance into heaven will not be based upon a long list of credentials built up accumulatively through the years (so many new converts, so many passages memorized, so many lives influenced, so many years in the service of the Lord, so many sermons preached, etc.), the person's chances of going to heaven being enhanced with each new credential. Entrance into heaven will be based on the merit of Christ's blood. One prepares for heaven by entering into Christ through

faith, repentance, and baptism (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3); living a faithful life in Christ; and dying in Christ. *'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord'* (Rev. 14:13). This is the true basis for one's hope, whether he has been a faithful Christian for fifty years or is just rising from baptism in newness of life." (4)

5. As we face our daily battles and the ongoing war with Satan, the hope we have of salvation protects our heads from otherwise fatal blows (**Romans 5:1-2**)
 - a. If you are not living in fellowship with God right now, how do you do it? You don't have the forgiveness of sins, you don't have freedom from guilt, and you don't have the hope of eternal life. In your ship of life what do you have as an anchor & sail?
 - 1) Atheist Robert Ingersoll: "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry."
 - 2) Atheist Samuel Beckett: ""How am I, an a-temporal being imprisoned in time and space, to escape from my imprisonment, when I know that outside space and time lies Nothing, and that I, in the ultimate depth of my reality, am. Nothing also?"
 - 3) You may say, "But I believe in God!" – Sure, but even the demons believe & tremble. If you haven't come to God by faith in obedience to the gospel, your state isn't much different
 - b. Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins... Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge that we have fellowship with God... Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge that an eternal home in Heaven is reserved for us... Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge that one day this mortal & corruptible will be changed into eternal & incorruptible bodies... Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge that Jesus will return to take us home with Him... Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge of the deliverance from sin, suffering, and death.
 - c. How does it protect us? As we face our battles, these are things we can begin to question. Feelings of doubt and uncertainty can make these feel distant or unattainable. Remembering our hope of salvation keeps us strong & zealous!
 - d. How does it protect us? As we are enticed by temptation, we remember how much we have in Christ. Our hope of salvation is a treasure worth so much more than any passing pleasure sin provides. This knowledge keeps our hearts in check.
 - e. How does it protect us? It gives us incredible joy. Joy endures when happiness would have long since faded. Joy can exist when external things around us are good or bad. Joy motivates us in our service to God. It keeps us faithful. If we ever stop enjoying being a Christian we will stop being a Christian. Hope fills us with joy!
6. If this helmet is our confidence and assurance in our salvation, how do we take it & put it on? What can we do daily to make sure our heads are protected? (**Rom 15:13; 2 Thess 2:16-17**)
 - a. First, protect your salvation. It's hard to have confidence & assurance in our salvation if we are living in ways that undermine it. It's worth too much to sacrifice! We can't have joy in salvation if we live in a way that fills us with guilt! Take steps, even those that hurt, that makes sure nothing get in the way of your hope!
 - b. Get in the word. It is the word that tells us all about our hope of salvation. It reminds us of the promises God has made and God's faithfulness to His promises. There is no way to know what things God has in store if we don't know the word! Perhaps you know it pretty well, the better we know the better we appreciate!
 - c. Devote time to meditation. God's word tells us all about our hope of salvation. Once we read and study about God's great gifts, meditate on them. Be purposeful

- about thinking about Heaven, your forgiveness, your fellowship, etc. Daydream! It will keep it on the front burner of our hearts and be more real to us. One practical way to do this is to Count Your Blessings – A list of aspects of salvation
- d. Sing. I know some of you are groaning inside... singing isn't your thing. Perhaps you can't carry a tune in bucket. Perhaps you just don't enjoy it. But God created man with an appreciation of music. It is a gift from God that allows messages to resonate in ways that words cannot. Maybe you need to get online and find good church singings. Singing refocuses our hearts on our hope in a special way
 - e. Spread your joy. The joy of a Christian ought to be infectious. We have a message of hope and salvation that our world desperately needs to hear. Talk about it! It doesn't have to be a formal Bible study or purposeful attempt at evangelism to talk to people about your confidence and assurance. We all need to hear it a lot more! Maybe its fear, maybe its shame, maybe its awkwardness... but we tend to clam up. The more you spread your joy, the more your joy will grow!

F. Finally, We Are To Take Up The Sword Of The Spirit

- 1. When a soldier enters basic training in the Army, he is introduced to his weapon... an M16A, a fully automatic AR15 weapon. The Roman soldier carried a Gallius sword
 - a. On the ancient battlefield “The short blade of the *gladius Hispaniensis* made it an ideal weapon when soldiers were closely engaged with the enemy and gave its carrier a distinct advantage over an opponent armed with an unwieldy and heavier, longer-bladed sword who had no space in which to swing his blade” (5)
 - b. They were usually no longer than 24” – This made them more effective in battle as they could be used to stab as well as to cut, other swords could only cut. The Gladius was used defensively, to deflect blows, as well as to attack the enemy
 - c. This sword was incredibly effective. After seeing its damage some Macedonian were amazed. “Arms lopped off at the shoulder, or heads separated from bodies with the neck cut right through, or entrails lying open, and other repulsive wounds, and there was general panic as they began to see what sort of weapon and what sort of men they had to fight.” (SIC)
 - d. These swords were actually pretty common in the First Century. The soldiers had them when they came to arrest Jesus (**Matthew 26:47**), Peter carried one personally (**Matthew 26:51**), one was used to execute James (**Acts 12:2**)
 - e. The Roman soldier knew his sword well and was trained in it. Paul says that as Christians we also have a sword to take up. Remember, the sword he describes was not a long heavy sword but short and razor sharp. It was a close combat weapon. Our war is not fought from a distance, but is up close and personal. Earlier in this section Paul seemingly mixed imagery. He speaks of our warfare while describing us as wrestling. So are we wrestlers or are we soldiers? Both images fit when we realize we are soldiers involved in a war that is more like a scrap than a formal fencing match. Our sword, the sword of the Spirit, equips up for this up close and personal warfare... a fight we fight to the death!

2. God does not send us into battle without properly equipping us so we can both defend ourselves against the enemy to conquer our enemy. He has given us a sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. God's word is what we fight with! **(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
 - a. When we hold the scriptures in our hand, we are holding something amazing!
 - 1) "There is the sword; and the sword is the word of God. The word of God is at once our weapon of defense 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." (William Barclay)
 - 2) "There are words written by kings, by emperors, by princes, by poets, by sages, by philosophers, by fishermen, by statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt, educated in the schools of Babylon, and trained at the feet of rabbis in Jerusalem. It was written by men in exile, in the desert, in shepherd's tents, in green pastures, and beside still waters. Among its authors we find a taxgatherer, a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit. We find poor men, rich men, statesmen, preachers, captains, legislators, judges, and exiles. The Bible is a library full of history, genealogy, ethnology, law, ethics, prophecy, poetry, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy, and the perfect rules for personal and social life. And behind every word is the divine author, God Himself."
 - 3) **The Scottish writer Thomas Guthrie said**, "The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun."
 - b. Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is dedicated to praising the word of God. The psalmist often describes God's word as a wonderful treasure. He confesses his love for the scriptures. He speaks not only of the way God's word teaches him, but also the way it guards, strengthens, & establishes him **(Psa 119:41-48)**
 - c. The word of God is a hammer for breaking rock hard hearts, a fire to consume the stubble of sin, a light to guide our feet, a lamp to direct our steps, a friend to cheer our hearts, a sail and an anchor for navigating life's storms.
 - d. This piece of armor, like with the others is God's gift. Specifically, we have the word because of the work of the Holy Spirit **(Eph 3:4-5; Heb 3:7-8; 2 Pet 1:19-21)**. These scriptures we read are not simply the thoughts and ideas of men, they are instructions from God. They carry the weight of full authority over our faith and our lives because they are of divine origin. How do we know what God wants? What He thinks? We have the mind of God clearly revealed to us by His word!
 - e. When you go out into battle, it is the sword of the Spirit you take... Do not face battle with the sword of the Spirit in one hand and the ideas of this world in the other... your selfish desires in the other... the advice of your friends in the other... pop psychology in the other → It's tempting to turn to the ideology of man in dealing with our marriages, child rearing, finances, etc and put more emphasis on what people around us think about life than what God teaches us!
3. Because it is the word of God we take into battle, we can approach our spiritual warfare with trust in the weapon with which God has armed us! **(Rom 1:16-17; Heb 4:12; John 6:63)**
 - a. This message is powerful enough to melt the hardest of hearts and break the most impenetrable of walls. It has brought mankind, from peasant to president, to their knees confessing their sinfulness and need for a savior. It convicts our hearts, it exposes who we really are, and leaves us eternally changed.

- b. These words aren't just black and red print on a page. They aren't just the saying and stories of ancient people from weird cultures. These words are the words of God... the One who Created the heavens and the earth. They are words from infinite wisdom, eternal perspective, and unceasing love. TRUST THEM!
 - c. But sometimes we struggle to trust our sword. Are we willing to submit to the scriptures and live out whatever it says, even when God's word goes against our logic, our desires, and popular opinion? Do we give up on people because of their difficult situation before giving them a chance to respond to the gospel? As we face temptation do we face it believing that what God has said about that temptation and sin is really right, or do we question whether it really matters? Do we submit fully to God's word or do we say, "I know it says that, but..." and respond with our own reasoning? Perhaps we fail to remember its power!
4. Consider the example of Jesus as He went to war with Satan at the beginning of His ministry. Jesus used the sword both as an offensive and a defensive weapon: **(Matthew 4:1-11)**
- a. Remember, this is an intense moment for Jesus. He was in the desert. He was alone. He was hungry from fasting. He was in a weakened and vulnerable state. It is then that Satan came to attack. When we are in positions similar to Jesus it is easy to make excuses & blame others. Jesus kept the mindset of a soldier!
 - b. We often point out that with every temptation Jesus answered, "It is written..." – It was His mastery of the scriptures that He raised as a weapon to fight against the attacks of the devil. Even Jesus trusted in the word to deliver Him!
 - c. Notice, Jesus quoted scripture to defend Himself from Satan. Satan's temptation appealed to Jesus' flesh... His personal desires. For the moment it would've been easier to give in. With each blow of Satan's long, heavy, broadsword, Jesus quoted a scripture. It strengthened Him & kept His flesh in check!
 - d. We get that... but once Jesus defended Himself, He went on the attack! Jesus didn't just explain why He wouldn't give in, but He put Satan in His place. Jesus corrects Satan. Satan knew the scriptures, but Jesus knew them better!
 - e. The sword of the Spirit is not simply something we depend on to be REACTIVE in our battles, but we depend on it to be PROACTIVE as well. In the spiritual war in which we have enlisted, our mission is not simply to resist sin but to go on the attack against evil & error. We take the fight to enemy. Remember, our battle is not just for our own souls but for the souls of those all around us **(Jude 17-24)**
 - f. ILLUSTRATION: SOTU speech. We want our soldiers to come home... But sometimes it is better to fight the wars on the shores of the other country instead of within our own border. To keep battles from our own shores we go after the enemy. Isn't this the case with our spiritual war as well? The proactive soldier is more prepared when he has to be reactive. We don't get caught by surprise!
5. The sword of the Spirit is our weapon. It is crucial that we spend time with our weapon, not only learning what it is, but how to correctly use it **(2 Timothy 2:14-15)**
- a. During basic training a soldier is issued an M16A4. The soldier isn't handed his weapon and told to hit the range, he is first taught how it works, how to properly clean it, and how to break it down and put it back together under pressure. Christians we need that kind of intimate knowledge of our weapon!

- b. Paul's instructions to Timothy remind us of our need to give diligence to our study and mastery of the scriptures. The Bible is much more than a bathroom reader or a collection of fanciful stories. It is the sword we use to fight our spiritual war! We can't expect to be battle ready if we don't know our weapon!
 - c. Notice it says, "Rightly handling the word of truth..." – Much harm has been done over the years by people who know some scripture but use it wrongly. Verses get taken out of context, scriptures get twisted, confusion gets created between the Old and New Covenants and more. The soldier of the cross must also be a serious student of the scriptures. To know it accurately & to use it accurately!
 - d. It is never a waste of time for a soldier to sharpen his sword and train with it for battle. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus said, "Every soldier is every day exercised, and that with great diligence, as if it were in time of war, which is the reason why they bear the fatigues of battle so easily" (The Jewish War, 3:5:17)
 - e. If we wait until the battle comes to get to know our sword and how to use it, we have waited too late. There is no timeout in this warfare! It is not enough to kinda sorta know it, to know some stories, we must know it well! Satan knows it too!
6. What are some practical things to help us take up this sword of the Spirit? (**Hebrews 5:11-14**)
- a. First, develop real and concrete Bible study habits. For most Christians, we simply study the scriptures when we get the chance. This is if we even study them at all, outside of the assembly. If we don't schedule things, what happens? They fall by the wayside! We cannot afford to let the scriptures be an afterthought! If the only meaningful bible study we get is during services, we are anemic!
 - b. Find someone equal or ahead of you in their Bible knowledge and study with them. It doesn't have to be a preacher or an elder. Just get together regularly, read and study the scriptures together. Iron sharpens iron! Both grow as a result. How many of you would love for someone to ask to study with you? How incredible would it be if everyone was studying with someone else from here every week?
 - c. Start outlining, mapping out the scripture. There are many literary devices out there that can be used to break down the bible narrative. You can break it down as an entire piece, a section of the bible, a book, or even a chapter. You can take the 17 Bible time periods & create a time line and study everything in relation to it.
 - e. Follow a daily Bible reading program. You can find these free online. Many Bible apps have them. Some follow the whole bible, some are themed, & some specific Bible books. You can find one tailored to your needs. It helps to have a schedule
 - f. Find someone to hold you accountable to your Bible study habits. You can meet for lunch, dinner, or just text back and forth about your reading habits. It will help you stay committed if you know someone is going to be checking in on you
 - g. Be practical with USING the scriptures. A sword is USELESS if we keep it in our sheath the whole time! You actually grow in your mastery of the scriptures by putting the scriptures into practice. Take what you learn and apply it. What good is it to know all the beatitudes, if we aren't looking to live them? Or the Christian graces, or the fruit of the spirit, or the Christian armor? The gospel of Jesus changes you... not just academics. Always ask, "How can I use this each day?"

Conclusion: Having taken up the whole armor of God, we are still not battle ready. We need prayer.

1. Communication is crucial in the success of battle. Back in ancient they had messengers who literally ran the news from place to place. Remember the Greek, Pheidippides? He ran to Athens with news of the great victory his people had over the Persians at Marathon. He successfully delivered many messages by foot, but after this final message (“Rejoice, we have conquered”), he fell over dead. → Communication matters!
2. A line of communication with our commander is vital. If prayer is an afterthought in our lives, we probably don’t really appreciate the nature of our battle or sense the danger ahead. Colly Caldwell: “Prayer is the admission that armor alone does not make a good soldier. God is the source of strength needed even by the most courageous and effective warrior. The Christian is ready for combat only when accompanied by his captain.”
3. As we put on the armor of God, prayer plays a comprehensive role in our preparation for war. Notice in these short verses how many times Paul emphasizes prayer. Notice also how many times Paul says the word “all” (**Ephesians 6:18-20**).
 - a. As soldiers we are to pray at all times – One big characteristic of the early church was a devotion to prayer. Does prayer characterize your life or is it something you occasionally do? Pray without ceasing... its something we are always doing. We approach every aspect of life, every situation, with prayer. Pray first!
 - b. As soldiers we are to pray all kinds of prayers – Why say prayers and supplications? Because there’s different approaches in prayer. Not every prayer is a long prayer, not every prayer is as formal (See Nehemiah 1). Pray with prayer!
 - c. As soldiers we are to pray for all the family of God – Soldiers learn early on to watch their comrade’s back. If each soldier is guarding the soldiers around him, every soldier is completely protected. The soldiers of Christ need that awareness. We are not alone. Fight for your brethren with prayer. This means we must be observant enough & know them enough to know what they need prayers for!
4. It is through prayer that we are able to keep alert with all perseverance. It’s hard enough for a soldier to survive war, but if a soldier is not being careful and observant, if he falls asleep at the wheel, he will not make it home. Prayer has a way of keeping us focused on serving God and keeping our life in perspective. Prayer is not simply a formality or habit for the Christian, it is their line of communication for combat. Since our war never ceases and our battlefield is in every place, our prayer must be always & everywhere!

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(3) <http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/roman-army/roman-helmets.htm>

(4) “Hope Is To Be Found In Christ,” *Stand*, Jan. 1988, 25:1:3

(5) https://www.ancient.eu/Gladius_Hispaniensis/

(6) William Barclay, *The Letters To The Galatians And Ephesians*, p. 184

GIVE ME THE TRUTH

If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not prize my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear that truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations, above my salvation.

Do not think that by ignoring my sins you can help me. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove yourself charitable. However I may react to it, whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, *give me the truth*. For the *truth*, and only the *truth*, can make me free from the shackles of sin (John 8:32), strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness and lead me to the joys of heaven.

If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass; if I have been drawn into the pleasures of the world; if I have left my first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in knowledge and be edified, GIVE ME THE TRUTH!