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EPHESIANS SLIDE INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Ephesians chapter 6.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Ephesians 6,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Ephesians 6 on page **979**.

INTRODUCTION

So, let's pick things up today in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10:

- the text says, **Finally...**
- which is perfect,
- because we've made it to the final week
- in our Ephesians series!

Today is week 13, and we'll close this one out!

And I hope you've made it all the way through this series with us,

- because if you have,
- you will have a pretty good grasp of this incredible book,
- but also of the Gospel.

And, today, Paul starts with, **Finally...**

- Because he's going to put a point on this letter...
- by showing you HOW you can implement the whole thing!

So, here we go. Verse 10:

EPHESIANS 6:10

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

EXPLAIN: STRENGTH

So, Paul says:

- *“Finally...*
- *you’re gonna need strength,*
 - *and not just your own strength,*
- *but you’re gonna need the Lord’s strength*
- *if you’re going to live out all this stuff!”*

Chapters 1-3 of this book were all about BELIEF...

and 4-6 have been all about BEHAVIOR...so...

- You’re gonna need God’s strength to BELIEVE these things.

- AND you’re gonna need God’s strength and might to BEHAVE.

You’re not gonna be able to do this in your own strength!

So, Paul pulls back the curtain and shows what’s behind the whole life.

Verse 11:

EPHESIANS 6:11-12

[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.

EXPLAIN: WAR

Paul pulls back the curtain, and says,

- *“You know WHY you’re gonna need God’s strength?”*
- *You know WHY you won’t survive by your own might?*
- *It’s because YOU ARE AT WAR!”*

Paul is talking about spiritual warfare here.

Now, sometimes we think of spiritual warfare as weird mystical stuff...

But I do want you to remember where he’s just come from.

Paul has just come from talking about

- marriage,
- and parenting,
- and our workplaces.

These are ordinary, average, everyday life things...

- and in those arenas, Paul says,
 - *“You’d better armor up,*
 - *cause you’ve got an enemy, the devil,*
 - *and he’s who we’re at war with here.”*

So, Paul is talking about spiritual warfare. And C.S. Lewis famously said this about the demonic:

SLIDE *“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”* **EPHESIANS SLIDE**

ILLUSTRATION: INTO IT

You see, some people just get way too hyped about spiritual warfare.

- So, if you get a flat tire on the way to work,
 - it's not because you ran over a nail!
 - But it's because the devil was trying to get you!
- Other people think there's a demon behind every bad hair day.
 - And some of you...just have really bad hair!
- Someone once told me that the devil was thwarting their plans,
 - because they ran out of gas.
 - Nah...
 - God gave you that gauge,
 - to show you when to fill it up.
 - I've run out of gas a few times.
 - It wasn't the devil...
 - I was just being a dummy.

APPLICATION: DISBELIEVE

But more often than that, for us,

- I think we just disbelieve
- that there really is a devil
- who is out to get us.

See, you think the real problems in your life...

- are your marriage,
- your kids,
- and your boss.

Like, very often, I'll read the prayer requests, and they'll read,

- *"My marriage is...*
- *or my boss is...*
- *or I just can't get my kids to..."*

And listen, those are real and right things to be praying for.

- But Paul is saying that's not the primary war being fought!
 - It's much bigger than those issues.
- You aren't just wrestling against flesh and blood,
 - but against the very cosmic powers
 - and spiritual forces of evil!

TRANSITION

You have an enemy, church.

- He wants to steal from you,
- and kill you,
- and destroy you.

And just for a second, think about this:

- if you were the devil, how would you try to destroy you?
 - And really quickly you'll see the 'why'
 - behind some of the stuff you continually struggle with.

It's because you're wrestling with powers and forces of evil!

But Paul's got an answer for us...

How do we stand against the devil and his schemes? Verse 13:

EPHESIANS 6:13

[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.

EXPLAIN: ARMOR

We're gonna talk about the Armor of God.

So, I'm calling this last sermon in this series **SLIDE ARMORED**

And man, the evangelical world has really messed up his section of Paul

- by making it into a kitschy kid's ministry thing...
 - with flannel boards
 - and veggie tales
 - and toys.

My first jobs after becoming a Christian was at a Christian bookstore...

- and we sold this: **PIC SLIDE**
- This is the Full Armor of God toy!
- It literally says: "Christian Character-Building Costume."
 - And I said last week that sports don't build character...
 - Well, I know for darn sure THIS doesn't build character!
 - Some poor kid wearing this in a Nerf battle...
 - Trying to extinguish the foamy darts of the enemy...
 - with that shield? Come on!
- And you wonder why people make fun of Christians?!?

ARMORED SLIDE

APPLICATION: TOO LATE

But the full armor of God is actually of the utmost importance!
This is why Paul closes this magnificent letter with it.

Now, this is incredibly important...

- Paul is going to use past tense language in the coming verses.

You see: when is the right time to put on armor?

- Is it during the battle,
- or is it before the battle?

Gosh, I hope that's a rhetorical question, y'all!

ILLUSTRATION: LACROSSE

I played lacrosse in high school, and listen,

- we put on our pads and helmets before the game,
- cause if we waited until the whistle blew
 - and that hard little white ball started getting slung around,
 - and dudes are swinging sticks...trying to check you...
- it we waited until then to put on our pads,
- dang man, it's too late.

And I think the same is true here.

We must armor up NOW...before the battle begins!

TRANSITION

So, let's work through these ways to be ARMORED...
before the battle begins and the enemy begins his attack.

Verse 14:

EPHESIANS 6:14a

[14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,

EXPLAIN: BELT

Now, Paul is going to describe something that every one of his Ephesian readers would have been familiar with.

- They were living in the Roman empire,
- and there were Roman soldiers all around them.
- So, Paul picks up on that
- And turns the armor of the common Roman soldier
- into a metaphor for how we stand against the devil.

So, he starts with the **SLIDE BELT OF TRUTH**

Now, your belt goes around the core of your body.

- It holds all your weapons,
 - and keeps the rest of your armor in place.
- So, this is the center piece...
 - plus, it keeps your pants on! So, bonus!

But Paul starts with the belt, the center,

- and he calls it the BELT OF TRUTH,
- because he's dealing with what's at the core for the Christian.

You see, most people think of truth as a WHAT...

- but in the Bible,
 - the truth isn't a WHAT...
 - the truth is a WHO.

Remember John 14:6?

SLIDE JOHN 14:6

[6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

BELT SLIDE

TRANSITION

So, Paul's saying,

- *"Gird yourself up with Jesus."*
- *"Make your identity in Christ the center of your life."*

So, Jesus is the truth, and HE ought to be our center.

He keeps going in verse 14:

EPHESIANS 6:14

[14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

EXPLAIN: BREASTPLATE

Ok, second is the **SLIDE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Now, a breastplate covers your vital organs, most notably, your heart.

- So, what does he mean by covering a vital part of you...
- your heart...with righteousness?

Well, this is an image of what happens when we are in Christ.

So, we must ask: whose righteousness are we covered by?

Well, another Acts 29 pastor, Joby Martin, has my favorite treatment of this.

- He points out that on a Roman soldier,
 - the breastplate is all chiseled and formed
 - to show perfect pecs and abs. Right?
 - Like Chris Hemsworth or something...
- I mean, they don't make breastplates that look like me...
 - Lanky with love handles?
 - That's not intimidating anyone in battle!

Which means that...

- what you see when you're wearing that breastplate...
- is a perfect form...
 - perfect righteousness!
- regardless of the jiggle that's going on behind that thing.

And this is doctrinally sound, y'all!

2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

SLIDE 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

[21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

EXPLAIN: IMPUTED

So, there's this nice big theological term for this called double imputation.

On the cross Jesus performed a double imputation.

- The first imputation is of a believers' sin to Christ, right?
 - Jesus takes away our sins.

- But the second is of Christ's righteousness to believers.
 - He gives us his perfect life...
 - and credits it to our account.

BREASTPLATE SLIDE

APPLICATION

So, we put on the breastplate of Christ's righteousness.

But then I think there's also an obedience element here.

- You are covered in Christ's righteousness,
- But, you must also bring your life into conformity with it.
 - Remember, BEHAVIOR does matter!

And Satan will use whatever part of you

- that is not surrendered to God...
 - not covered by the breastplate...
 - and conformed to the breastplate...
- as the focal point of his attack.

Maybe it's a bad habit you have...

- any you know it's sinful...
- but don't take seriously enough to really break.

Maybe it is someone you won't forgive...

- Or a bad relationship you won't let go.
- Or just an area of your life not under God's control...
 - like your dating life...
 - or how you spend your money.

Whatever part of your life is not brought into obedience to God...
will be Satan's focal point of attack in your life.

What do you think that would be for you?

Or let me ask it this way:

- If you knew, a year from now,
- that Satan was going to bring you down,
- what would be the thing he uses to do it?

We put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Next: verse 15

EPHESIANS 6:15

[15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the
gospel of peace.

EXPLAIN: SHOES

So, the **SLIDE SHOES OF READINESS**

This text just said that...

- your feet are offensive weapons in this war.

Paul says we overcome Satan by going on the offense with the gospel.

- This overcomes Satan's work in both the lives of others...
- as well as our own.

Listen, joining in gospel work is one way we overcome Satan's work.

- serving,
- missions,
- evangelism!

You see, we're the easiest prey for Satan when we're bored in our faith...

- That's how King David fell into adultery:
 - he was at home,
 - disengaged from the battle,
 - Everyone else was out fighting...
 - David was at home lounging...
 - and BAM...
 - there's Bathsheba!

Listen, some of you are sitting ducks for Satan because you are bored.

- Get engaged in God's mission,
- and Satan won't have so much opportunity in your life.

Join a serve team at Fathom!

SLIDE FATHOMCHURCH.ORG/SERVE

Hear me: God has made it so that we are only healthy when we fight.

- So, get connected!
- Serve!
- Share!

Verse 16:

EPHESIANS 6:16

[16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

EXPLAIN: SHIELD

So, Paul reminds us, that the evil one is firing darts at us!

He's actively attacking you!

And so, take up the **SLIDE SHIELD OF FAITH**

- Now, a Roman shield,
- was created to be used in group combat,
- not in individual combat.

They were created to be used alongside the man next to you.

- They would create a shield wall.
- They would link together
 - to protect against arrows...
 - and the attack of the enemy,

Now hear me, I think the reason Paul calls it the SHIELD of FAITH is this:

- sometimes YOUR own faith just isn't enough...
 - to get you through a situation...
- BECAUSE IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO!

You were NEVER meant to be in the battle of individual combat.

You ARE meant to be a part of the shield wall of faith in the church.

And Paul is clear that there ARE flaming darts of the enemy...

- There will be times in your life...
 - where you cannot make it on your own.
- Your own faith will not feel like it's enough to hold you up...
 - and hear me...
 - it was never meant to.

The body...the church...WE are meant to bear one-another's burdens!

So, yes, come on Sundays...

- BUT you've gotta link your shield...
- with some other believers in a deeper way.

This is why we push connecting in D-Groups and bible studies so much.

We have lots of options for you:

SLIDE FATHOMCHURCH.ORG/GROUPS

- Men's groups,
- women's groups,
- mixed groups...
- Young adults,
- youth...

Get in one before the darts start flying.

- And, if you're already under attack...
 - Man, get on in here!
- Dive behind the shield wall of faith.

Verse 17:

EPHESIANS 6:17

[17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

EXPLAIN: SWORD

So, the helmet of Salvation,

- this is similar to the belt of truth...
- and the breastplate of righteousness...

But specifically, your head is where you think.

Paul is telling you...

- to let the truth about your salvation
- and God's grace in your life
- permeate your mind.

But this is then linked with the **SLIDE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

And Paul explicitly tells us is the word of God.

God's word IS how we renew our minds!

And I've talked about this before: but what is a sword?

- It's a weapon!
- Church, the Scriptures are a weapon!

And why do we need a weapon?

BECAUSE WE ARE IN A FIGHT!

- And again, the problem for so many of us is...
- we don't actually believe we are in a fight.

You are in a fight against the world and the flesh and the devil.

- And the only reason you wouldn't want a weapon,
- is if you didn't believe you were going to be attacked.

ILLUSTRATION: GENESIS

But you are in a fight and the Bible is your weapon!

- And wherever you are not centered in the truth of Scripture...
- you are exposed to the attack of the enemy.

Gosh, don't you remember Genesis 3?

SLIDE GENESIS 3:1

[1] Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

Satan’s first attack on us was to say, “*Did God really said this...?*”

- And for millennia now,
- he hasn’t changed his tactics.
- He doesn’t need to.

His goal is to get you to do 1 of 2 things with God’s word:

- One: doubt it...
- Or two: neglect it...which works just as well.

So, church...

- this is why we preach through books of the Bible here.
- This is why we teach our kids and youth the Bible.
- Every year we offer you a Bible Reading plan,
 - and for 2023, we’re actually doing a plan...
 - on the YouVersion Bible App...

Go to **SLIDE FATHOMCHURCH.ORG/BIBLE** to join the plan.

- I’ll be doing this...
- and I’d love you to join me.
 - You can read or listen to it...
 - and leave comments...
 - and be held accountable.

So, join us. It's live today, and we start reading on January 1st.

Alright, verse 18:

EPHESIANS 6:18-20

[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.

EXPLAIN: PRAYER

Many times, people don't include this in the weapons.

But listen, **SLIDE PRAYER** is one of our main weapons.

- Notice that prayer is NOT ONLY...
 - something we do in preparation for battle,
- but it's ACTUALLY what you do...
 - when you are dressed for,
 - and in the battle.

We often treat prayer like it is only preparation for ministry.

But according to Paul, prayer is the ministry.

See, sometimes we think the prayer answer...

- is too simple...
- or too lame...
- or too obvious.
 - *"Of course I should pray!"*

But honestly,

- when things go bad,
 - don't we try everything else...
 - in our own power...
 - to get some relief...
- and THEN we'll say...
 - *"Well, all that's left to do is pray."*
- No! That's the first place to run!

Do you see prayer as your first line of defense, or your last resort?

ILLUSTRATION: SHOOTING

Hey, listen, I didn't get a chance to talk about the shooting in Colorado Springs a couple weeks ago...

- and gosh, if that wasn't an atrocious act of violence!
- We can all agree that what happened there
 - was horrible.
 - And sinful.
 - And heinous.

And President Biden tweeted this, in the aftermath...he said:

SLIDE *"Prayers are not enough to end these senseless mass shootings."*

And I appreciate his sentiment...but his theology is off!

Yes, there are more things to be done around violence in our country...

- but as followers of Christ,
 - the FIRST thing...
 - the ONGOING thing...
 - the MOST important thing...
- is that we fall to our knees...
- and plead with the God of the universe...
- to intervene!

Goodness...

- fill out a prayer card...
- come be prayed for after the sermon...
- join us for First Sunday Prayer gatherings.

PRAY!

CONCLUSION **BLANK SLIDE W/PADS**

- So, Paul's last words are to tell us that we are in a war...
- and he tells us where we can find the strength to stand firm.

And 1 Peter 5:8 says this:

SLIDE 1 PETER 5:8

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

First thing to note...

- the Bible calls the devil a lion...
- which is in the cat family...
- just sayin'.

But secondly...he's on the hunt!

And, man, if he was a real lion hunting us, gosh...

- that'd make things so simple! Right?

If there were some legit flaming darts coming our way...

- we'd see them coming!

But actually, the image is that our enemy...

- is hiding in the weeds...
- just out of sight...
- waiting to pounce.

And I just don't think we take our enemy serious enough!

ARMORED SLIDE

ILLUSTRATION: WOLVES

So, I've shared this image before...

It's the way indigenous people hunt wolves in Alaska.

- The way they deal with wolves...
 - isn't to shoot them...
 - or trap them...

Rather, they get a razor-sharp knife,

- and they dip it in seal blood.

And they let that blood freeze,

- and then they dip it again,
 - and again,
 - and again,
- until the knife is completely covered like a blood popsicle.

Then they bury the knife, so the handle is hidden,

- and there is this tasty,
- seal blood treat.

And when a wolf comes by...it starts licking it.

- But as the wolf licks the frozen blood,
 - it numbs its tongue.

But they keep going...and going...

- And soon their numb tongue reaches the razor-sharp knife,
 - but they can't feel it...
 - because their mouth is numb...

So, they keep going,

- and now there's more blood,
 - but it's no longer seal blood...
 - it's the wolf's own blood.

And they will bleed to death as they are trying to swallow more and more, all the while unaware of what's going on.

ENDING

And I'm sorry that's graphic...

BUT THIS IS HOW OUR ENEMY WORKS!

He's sneaking up on you!

He's prowling!

That's how he makes his assault!

- But we can AND should be confident...
- that we have a God...
- who has ARMORED us.

Where do you need to put on the whole armor of God?

Ultimately, all these pieces of armor are simply learning to apply the gospel Paul has preached to your life.

- They are not new spiritual strategies to learn;
- but learning to cover your life in God's strength.

So, are you armored?

Let me read the last two verses of this letter:

EPHESIANS 6:23–24

[23] Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

And that, my friends, is Ephesians.

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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