



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

The Christian's Warfare Ephesians 6:10-20 8. Your Helmet and Your Sword

When you serve in the capitol, it is almost overwhelming to consider the wide range of topics and issues that are dealt with in a regular session by West Virginia's leaders and legislators. Financial, government, legal, and a wide range of social and moral issues all face those who serve in government.

One of the most important skills for a follower of Christ serving in government can possess is the ability to apply the truth of Word of God to the various issues with which they deal. This is what Paul is talking about as he exhorts us to "take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".

We come to the last two pieces of armor in Paul's description of the Christian's warfare. God has given us the "Helmet of Salvation" to protect our minds and our thoughts and the "Sword of the Spirit" which is the word of God to arm us as face the various issues, struggles, and challenges in the statehouse.

Paul has given us a wonderful, creative illustration to describe for us the challenges of the Christian life. We are in a spiritual battle, with spiritual enemies, and must use spiritual weapons in order to survive and find victory in this conflict. As Paul is in prison as he writes this letter, likely guarded by Roman soldiers, he writes these words exhorting us how to fight the battles we face:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

We come to the last two pieces of armor Paul lays out for us, the "helmet of salvation" and "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God".

The Helmet of Salvation

The Roman soldier's helmet was either a leather cap with metal plates attached or a molded metal helmet that covered the head. It protected the soldier from blows to the head that would kill him or render him unconscious.

We again ask two important questions about this piece of armor. What does this helmet protect? Paul pictures for us here the protection of the believer's mind and his thinking. What and how we think and believe greatly affects our ability to fight the spiritual battles in which we find ourselves. Paul's point in this whole illustration is to remind us "Don't you know there's a war on". As we face the constant struggle of spiritual conflict, we may come to experience doubt and discouragement as to the outcome of the battle or in our own success in the fight. Satan would attack our mind – our thoughts regarding our ultimate victory in the conflict. When we see the great challenges, the growing storm clouds of persecution, even the foolishness that goes on in the name of Christianity, we may become discouraged and wonder if there is any hope? This is when Paul says the Christian soldier must "put on the helmet of salvation".

Next, we must ask what Paul means here by "salvation"? The Bible describes three aspects or tenses of salvation: past, present, and future. In the past is justification – the one-time act of God where by faith, through grace we are made right with Him. Though we were sinners, Christ suffered, died, and rose again so when we repent from our sin and trust in Him our sins are forgiven. We are saved from the penalty of sin. In the present is sanctification – the daily process through which the Holy Spirit works in us to help put off sinful things and become more like Christ. Believers are saved from the power of sin. In the future is glorification – the wonderful day when the battles are over, and we will be with Christ. We will be saved from the very presence of sin. If we have repented of our sin and trusted Christ, then we have the assurance of our past and present salvation and the hope of our future salvation to come.

In another letter Paul uses the same illustration to describe our hope of salvation:

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thes. 5:8)

Once again, we can see Paul is referring to what he taught us in Ephesians 1-3. Paul strikingly describes our past salvation: ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”*** (Eph. 2:8). He describes believers in the present as ***“God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”*** (Eph. 2:10). He writes of the believer’s future ***“hope in Christ”*** (1:12) and the ***“hope of His calling”*** (1:18). He writes of the believer’s inheritance – something to which every follower of Christ looks forward (1:11, 14, 18). He encourages us with the fact God has given believers the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives as a “pledge”, or, a down payment of this promised inheritance (1:13-14).

The “helmet of salvation” surely includes the assurance of our past salvation through repentance and faith in Christ. We have the confidence of victory over sin in this life. We have the hope of final victory when we are with Christ in Heaven. It is this understanding of salvation which gives us hope and protects our minds and thoughts from the doubts and discouragement that will surely come in the middle of the battles we face.

The Sword of the Spirit – The Word of God

We considered the first piece of the armor of God, ***“girding up your loins with truth”*** or ***“fastening on the belt of truth”*** as referring to our understanding and commitment to the whole of God’s truth and authority. With the “sword of the Spirit” we see the specific use of the scriptures to ward off Satan’s attacks and send him fleeing.

Paul urges believers to take up “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”. This sword, the Word of God, comes to us from the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who moved human authors to write God’s Word (2 Peter 1:21). And so, it indeed has power. ***“The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful...”*** (2 Cor. 10:4). What are some of the divine qualities that this weapon possesses? The Bible is inspired by God and is useful for everything the Christian needs for the battle (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is inerrant – it has no errors or mistakes. The scriptures are the absolute truth about all life, death, and eternity. The Bible is complete and sufficient – it needs nothing added to it and provides everything the believer needs in life. God’s word is authoritative and is to be obeyed. The scriptures are powerful to lay open our consciences and show us the sinfulness of our hearts:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

The most serious of Satan’s attacks are against God’s word itself. Many will claim the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions. These come from those who would reject the authority of God’s word. There are many resources available to deal with these attacks. Let us just conclude here that wielding the sword – the word of God – in our spiritual

battles requires understanding its supernatural nature, authority, and power.

A Defensive Weapon

The sword was used as a defensive weapon to parry the blows of the enemy. Jesus Himself gave us the greatest example of how to use the Word of God as a weapon to fend off the attacks of the evil one. After His baptism, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4). After 40 days of fasting Satan urged the Lord to turn stones into bread. Jesus responded with the Bible: ***“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”*** (quoting Deut. 8:3). The devil then took Him to the pinnacle of the temple and, misquoting, misapplying, and taking scripture out of context urged our Savior to throw Himself down. Jesus again responded with scripture: ***“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”*** (quoting Deut. 6:16). Finally, the evil showed Christ all the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Jesus if He would but bow down and worship him. Again, Jesus replies from God’s Word: ***“Go Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only”*** (quoting Deut. 6:13, 10:20).

We should note how Jesus used a specific Bible verse to deal with each of Satan’s attacks. We must follow His example and read, study, know, and understand God’s word so that we might apply it to the specific attacks and temptations we face.

An Offensive Weapon

The sword is also an offensive weapon used to strike a blow to the enemy. We can use the truths and principles of God’s word to strike at the myriad of issues we face both in life and in the capitol. Paul wrote that our weapons are

“...Divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Paul is talking about using the truth of God’s word to deal with all the issues we face whether in life, at home, at work, in our community, or in the capitol. It takes real skill to know and understand God’s word so that we can apply to the many challenging problems, questions, and concerns all around us. We will face questions in our own minds about various issues. People will ask us what we think about the latest controversies. We need to be ready to respond with our sword – with the word of God.

Let us put on our helmet by knowing the assurance and hope of our salvation in Christ. Let us take up our sword by learning to apply God’s word to every attack from Satan and to every issue and question we face.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Government Org. Conference Room (2nd Floor E. Wing)
12:00 PM Senate President’s Conference Room