

The Fog of War Ephesians 6:10-20

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Have you ever heard the phrase: "The fog of war?" It's been reported that British Colonel Lonsdale Hale first used it in 1896 to describe what he considered to be the normal condition on a battlefield.

"The fog of war" means that there are times in the middle of a battle when commanders simply lack the necessary information concerning their own troops and the opposition's troops to form a viable plan of action.

Jesus talks about this in Luke 14:31-32, *"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace."*

About 25 years ago Saddam Hussein bragged about defeating America. He said his country had the military capabilities to launch the *"mother of all battles"* and, in a few months, he could defeat America and all its allies. He believed no one could stop his troops.

But, his forces were crushed; surrendering within a few weeks. The *"mother of all battles"* proved to be nothing of the kind.

Saddam Hussein miscalculated the power, strength, and resolve of the United States and its allies.

The Iraqis had blundered into a "fog of war" and it cost them over 100,000 soldiers while the fatalities of the U. S. Army and its allies were under 400.

In today's passage, Paul's trying to educate us so we don't fall victim to the "fog of war" when it comes to spiritual conflict.

While Paul wasn't a professional soldier, he knew a great deal about spiritual warfare.

He knew what it meant to be both victorious on the spiritual battlefield and what it meant to be a victim of a spiritual battle.

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In the Book of Ephesians, Paul's writing to a church that was located in one of the cities where he was imprisoned at one time.

If you remember, while he was preaching about Jesus in Ephesus, a crowd started shouting out the words "*Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians.*"

The locals, who were devoted disciples of the pagan goddess "Artemis," had gotten upset when Paul started telling everyone that there was no such goddess as "Artemis" and that her little statues meant nothing.

Upon hearing this, the city of Ephesus came alive; thousands of people gathered at the local coliseum to proclaim their love, devotion, and worship for Artemis.

They weren't going to have anything to do with this idea that "Artemis" was a fake.

Luke tells us, in Acts 19, that for over two hours, thousands of people gathered to shout as loud as they could - "*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.*"

Paul found himself in deep trouble and, as a result of all this, he was imprisoned and put on trial for his life.

The Ephesians wanted his head for declaring that their beloved goddess was a fake and that her idols held no power.

Paul was eventually acquitted but only after he suffered as a prisoner with the shadow of death hanging over him.

Bible scholars tell us that this had an adverse effect on him, causing him to deal with a period of deep depression and despair.

It was during this time that he really began to understand what it meant to battle against the devil, his legion of demons, and evil.

What it meant to go against *"the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

So, let's look at some things that Paul shares so we won't find ourselves in our own "Christian Fog of Spiritual War."

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Over the years the subject of spiritual warfare has become a controversial topic.

Songs like "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Soldiers of Christ Arise," and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" have either been removed from hymnals or been moth balled.

Today, it's not spiritually Politically Correct to talk about Spiritual warfare.

It's as though unseen forces would rather we didn't talk about such things, so we've swept such ideas under the carpet.

Some feel that talking about spiritual warfare puts Christianity in the wrong light.

We're not a people going into battle. We love and tolerate everyone. We're not warriors. All those ideas and images are archaic. They're for people who don't know any better.

Most people just toy with the idea of evil and the devil. They make cartoon characters of him. They make jokes about him and allow his image to become the mascot of their sports teams.

They pretend that the devil and his horde of demons just don't exist. And yet, if we take the time to really look around, we can see his hoof prints and those of his legion of demons everywhere.

Think about it!! Why is it so hard for us to forgive one another, to pray, to be faithful in our church attendance, to be faithful in our stewardship, or even to be faithful in reading the Bible?

Why is it that each time we get ready to do something with God, or with the Church we get distracted? The cell phone rings, or something else happens that grabs our attention?

We don't think much about it but if we'd write those things down, we'd notice that we don't get those interruptions when we sit down to watch TV, take a nap, or do something else unspiritual.

On the way to church we have a fight with our spouse or children, but that doesn't happen when we go out to eat, or shopping, or to the park.

The truth is we're in a battle. We have an enemy, a force that's coming against us as individuals, as families, and as communities of faith.

The devil and his legions of demons are doing their best to destroy the Church, the message of Jesus Christ, and to block us from walking down the road of holiness.

They're out to confuse us, deceive us, sidetrack us, stop us, and destroy us.

They're out to make us turn from following Jesus and walk towards a life of sin. They're out to keep us from God, from the Church, and from enjoying a life of holiness.

So, what can we do? Well, we need to employ God's defense system!

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Ephesians 6:13, *"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."*

Paul's no one's fool. He knows that just as an army must be prepared to stop an enemy's onslaught, so we must be prepared to stop Satan's attacks.

No army can fight without some type of defense. No society can exist without safeguards.

Think for a moment about our country and the trillions of dollars that have been spent on our military and will continually be spent making sure that we can defend ourselves against those that want to do us harm.

Then locally, we have police departments, sheriff departments, fire departments, first responders, etc. along with armed security guards to make sure that we're kept safe.

We put up barriers, set up security lights and install all kinds of locks to protect ourselves.

But, have you ever taken a moment and noticed what we protect in our country and what we don't protect? Our money, our material goods, our buildings, and our physical bodies.

But what about our morality? What about our faith in God? What about our faith in knowing Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord?

Paul knew that all that other stuff eventually turns to rust and dust. Even our physical bodies will turn to dust.

But our spiritual bodies have the ability to experience everlasting life with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.

We need to be aware that the devil not only wants to destroy creation, he wants to destroy us. He wants us to experience everlasting death with him and his demons in Hell.

And yet, if we look around our country, we see there's little protection when it comes to securing our nation's morals, it's life of holiness, or the sanctity of life itself.

As a result, the devil and his horde of demons have free reign in our schools, our businesses, our entertainment, our sports, our law courts, and sadly even in our churches.

Yet, the same thing was happening in Paul's time. People were more worried about protecting their stuff, their physical bodies, and their money than they were their spiritual souls.

That's why Paul tells us that we must be strong in the Lord and that we must put on the whole armor of God.

Now, understand this. This armor is not ours. It's not made by us, it's made for us by God Himself. It's God's Gift to all of us.

It's a full armor. Not just a piece or two. Not half an armor but a full armor and each and every piece comes from God and is essential.

Each of the pieces that Paul highlights was a part of the armor of a Roman Soldier. And using that imagery, Paul tells us that, as followers of Christ, we need to first put on God's Belt of Truth.

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Ephesians 6:14a, *“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...”*

We need to understand that when we ask Jesus into our hearts and lives, we're asking for the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

As a result, we're not people of deception or lies. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is first and foremost Truth. What Jesus says is Truth because He is Truth.

Everything the devil says and does is a lie. Just as a belt holds our core together, so too does God's truth hold everything we do together.

If we lose sight of the Bible being true, the message of Jesus being true, Heaven being true, Salvation and Holiness being true, then we lose everything.

We must hold on to the truth. We must allow it to protect our core. But then, Paul tells us that we also need God's Breastplate of Righteousness.

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Ephesians 6:14b, *“with the breastplate of righteousness in place.”*

Christians are a people of righteousness and right living. We've been made right through the grace, mercy, and love of Jesus. We've been made right through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We're "right" and we're able, through God's Power and Presence, to live "right." We're not to live or act like the world.

Just as soldiers in each army look different, so too, as Christians, we are to look and live differently.

Different countries have different uniforms. They march differently and many salute differently than we do.

That doesn't happen by accident. It is all by design. It enables people to know who's on their side. We do the same thing when we play sports.

One team dresses differently than another team. If they didn't it would cause chaos and confusion on the playing field.

That's why, when we try to live like the world and do the things of the world, both the Church and the world get confused and chaos reigns.

People can't see the difference between a Christian and a person still living in darkness. That's what's happening today.

The devil's working overtime to get the Church to hold on to the ways of the world in one hand and attempt to be committed to Jesus with the other. This causes confusion.

A long time ago, when the Children of Israel were trying to take the Promise Land, there was a growing debate whether they should adopt the lifestyle of the Canaanites or not.

Could they follow God, the true God of Creation, and still adopt the ways of the people that already lived in the Promise Land? Could they follow God with loose morals and pagan worship?

Joshua gathered all the tribes together for them to make a commitment.

He wanted them to either choose to go all out for God or else abandon God and adopt the Canaanite lifestyle, gods, and religions.

Joshua put the measure up for a vote, but before the vote he told the people in Joshua 24:15, *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!"*

No matter what the popular vote was going to be, Joshua and his family were going to be 100% committed to God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the One and Only God of Creation.

This morning, we must make that same commitment. There's no such thing as a weekend warrior when it comes to faith in Jesus.

We can't be faithful and true on Sunday and then live for the devil the rest of the week. Jesus says we must be sold out 100% for God – *"Serving the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, and strength."*

That doesn't mean we're perfect, but it does mean that we've drawn a line in the sand and we're going with God.

We're determined to look like, talk like, and live like a disciple of Jesus. No one is going to have to wonder if we're a Jesus Person. We'll proudly be wearing the breastplate of righteousness.

Next, we need to put on the Shoes of Peace.

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

One of the strangest things that happens when someone is struck by a car is that their shoes are usually knocked off?

Have you ever had an argument with someone, and it felt like they knocked you off your feet? The truth is the devil will do anything and everything he can to knock us off our feet.

He'll do everything he can to get us to get angry with one another. He'll do everything he can to get us to fuss, complain and fight with one another.

And when we do, it's like trying to walk around a battlefield without shoes. We're no good to ourselves or to others.

It's during those times that we stub our toes, cut our feet, or find ourselves madder and angrier than ever.

We do this when we fight with one another. We miscommunicate. We misspeak. We misunderstand. And instead of taking a step back, we take a step out of our Shoes of Peace and go at it.

The devil causes us to do more damage with just a few words than we can fix or repair in a few weeks or months. Paul reminds us that it's essential for us to keep our “peace keeping shoes” on.

We have to make sure that we stand on the Peace of Christ and walk in the Path of Peace. We need God's Shoes of Peace on all the time.

Then, we need to grab God's Shield of Faith.

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Ephesians 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.”*

Doubt and Disbelief are killers. It’s imperative that we have faith in Jesus and in one another.

When we put our shields of faith down, that’s when the devil’s able to hit us with those fiery darts of doubt, despair, disappointment and depression.

When we put down our faith in Christ and one another, that’s when we allow the devil to start picking us off one by one.

God's Shield of Faith is a life saver. The bigger the faith the bigger the shield.

Roman Soldiers had the ability to lock their shields together to make a huge shield that protected them from attacks from above and all sides around them; joining our faith together protects us.

We must stay close and share our faith. That means that we must lean on each other. We must link up and lock shields together.

That’s what true faith is all about. We’re all called to be part of a faith team. We need one another.

And our last piece of defensive armor we need to put on is God's Helmet of Salvation.

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Ephesians 17a, *“Take the helmet of salvation...”*

We must get it into our heads that we're Born Again. We've been redeemed. We've allowed the Holy Spirit to renew us into the image of Jesus Christ.

We're to allow the Holy Spirit to protect and renew our minds by putting a new head covering around us from the inside out.

You see, one of the problems many people have is that after they get their hearts in the right place, they don't bring their minds around to be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

They live with old minds that lies to them and tells them it's okay to live like carnal man, the old self, the false self.

We need Holy Spirit head gear. We need to remind ourselves that we belong to King Jesus. We're to no longer wear a head gear of carnality and sin.

We're to wear God's Helmet of Salvation. His helmet of grace, mercy, and love. We're to no longer think like the world thinks. We are to think Holy Spirit style, to link up our minds with the mind of Christ.

After explaining the defensive armor of God, Paul ends by telling us that we also have two offensive weapons that we are to use to fight against the devil and evil.

The first offensive weapon, given to us by God, is the Sword of the Spirit, or... the Bible.

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Ephesians 17b, *"and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

Have you ever noticed one interesting fact about God's Armor – there's nothing for our back sides? There's no back shield.

I believe that's because we're to follow Jesus and Jesus doesn't retreat. Jesus already won the war against sin, hell, and the grave when he died on the Cross and was resurrected.

He's not interested in retreating. We may retreat, but when we do, we're an open target for the devil. It's hard to protect yourself when you're running away from God.

Instead of retreating we're to be advancing, and one of the main ways we advance is with the Sword of the Spirit.

The better we know God's Word, the better we're able to understand and apply the words of the Bible in our lives.

The better we know God's Word, the better we're ready to share and live the message of eternal life and salvation.

God has given us His Word and we're to believe in it. Don't be drawn into debates and arguments that people have about the Bible. The Bible is God's Word - Period. No questions.

I believe in the Bible. I believe that the Bible is God's Word; His Love to Us. It tells us how He wants to rescue us, redeem us, and restore us into the image of Himself.

I believe that if allowed, the Holy Spirit will use the Word to teach, to reproof, to correct and to train a person into a life of holiness. Period.

The devil has done a great job in having people leave their Spiritual Swords at home or allowing their swords to get rusty, dirty, and dull.

He doesn't care if we have a Bible, as long as we don't read it, know it, or utilize it in our lives on a daily basis.

He doesn't care if we have Bibles in our worship settings as long as we allow them to just sit on the pews or in the racks.

The devil doesn't care if we read all the Biblical theology and Biblical history that we can as long as we leave our Bibles laying around.

He doesn't care if we become masters of archeology and eschatology as long as we don't read the Bible.

What the devil does mind is when we become Bible believing, Bible reading, and Bible doing disciples of Jesus.

What he does care about is when we memorize, read, and apply God's Word in our everyday lives.

The devil knows that when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the Son of God defeated him each time with scripture.

God's Word will send the devil on the run. God's Word is powerful. The better we absorb God's Word the better we'll live out the life of Holiness that God has called us to live.

But there's one more offensive weapon, and it's often left off by people who study the armor of God -- Prayer.

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Ephesians 18-20, "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. 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, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Paul ends this passage with a call to prayer. Paul wants us to understand that prayer is as essential as communication is on a battlefield.

Any soldier knows that battles can be won or lost because of either good or bad communication.

How many times has the devil used silence between us and God, and us and one another to defeat us?

How long has the devil gotten people inside the church and between denominations to give each other the silent treatment?

How long has the devil used the lack of prayer to cause us to be afraid of one another, doubt one another, or mistreat one another?

Paul knew that unless people were praying for him, he wasn't going to make it.

Now, no one quite understands all the ends and outs of prayer, but have you ever noticed that the more people pray:

- The more God does for them.
- The more they reflect God's image.
- The more they love others.

The opposite is also true, the less we pray the less we experienced God's miracles, anointings and blessings. The less we pray the less we love others and the less we reflect God's Image.

Why do you think that the one service that the devil did his best to get rid of in the church was Prayer Meeting? The devil could care less about a church's Sunday Morning service.

Too many are merely concerts followed by a small motivation message. Corporate prayer takes up only a minute or two. Sad, but true. But, when we get together to really pray, the devil takes notice.

He knows that when we pray the Kingdom of God comes down. He knows that when the Church prays, he and his legion of demons are in big trouble. He knows that when the Church prays, things happen.

So, what does he do? He convinces us that all we need are a few songs, a little message, and very little prayer.

He tells us that if we want to pray, then we can do it quietly for a moment or two at home or on the way to work.

But think for a moment - what were the Disciples doing when Pentecost fell - Praying in One Accord.

What was the Church doing when the Angel came to rescue Peter out of Prison - Praying? What did Jesus do before He called His Disciples – Praying?

More than ever today we need prayer. We need to pray in the Spirit. What does that mean? It means that God's Spirit is interactive with us.

That we're being empowered and instructed by God's Spirit. That we're allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us, guide us, and filter our prayers.

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Conclusion

As we close the morning, would we pass inspection?

Are we fully dressed in the whole armor of God, including the Sword of the LORD and are we engaged in Holy communication?

This morning as we sang that old song, *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, were we ready to do battle today with evil?

Are we prepared to walk together in peace? Are our minds being renewed in the Holy Spirit? Are our hearts right with God? Is the Truth of Christ protecting our Core?

Take time to allow God's Holy Spirit to inspect His armor in our lives.