

What scares you? When you are younger thunderstorms, the dark, crossing the street, not being able to find your mom or dad in a crowd. As you get older not having an assignment done on time, creepy crawly things, getting in trouble, still the dark. And then older still not having saved enough to retire, health issues, driving on the highway, the world your grandchildren will grow up in.

How about these verses from today’s lesson ... **our fight is against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms** ... do those verses scare you? We may think our fight is with cancer and heart disease, or with the violence in our country and the terrorists who want to hurt us. We may think our fight is with a difficult boss, a crabby co-worker, a sibling or a classmate. But it’s not.

None of those things can separate you from your Savior. Your fight is against Satan, the commander-in-chief of the enemy forces and his demons. They are pure evil. They hate you. They’re lurking in all kinds of places and trying to rip your faith away from you and drag you off to hell with them forever. They’re ...

- At the movie theater tempting you use the same filthy language you hear there.
- By the computer screen giggling with delight at the nasty websites just a click away.
- By your cell phone tempting you to talk, text, tweet, or take pictures to hurt others with words or gossip.
- At every store tempting you to covet what you can’t have, and complain about what you do have.
- In every home tempting you to talk back to your parents and argue with your spouse.
- Inside the doors of our church tempting your mind to wander and have your heart fill up with self-centered thoughts.

- Outside the doors of our church tempting you to forget your promise of faithfulness to Jesus the moment you leave.

That’s the fight, whether you’re aware of it, or not; whether you want to face it, or not. Now do you see why the Apostle Paul is begging you, pleading with you to ... **put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground?**

Are you scared? You should be – at least the Old Adam inside of you should be. But I’ve got great news for you! Ephesians 6 describes armor, like a soldier wears, that can defend you against demons.

Let’s be clear where this armor comes from. It’s not something you can scrape together yourself. This armor is something that only God gives. Let’s identify the 6 items, and explain why we need them.

1. The belt of truth buckled around your waist. In ancient times, a warrior’s wide leather belt kept their clothes from falling down around their ankles and tripping them up. The truth of God’s Word keeps us from stumbling over the lies of Satan. Here are a few of Satan’s favorites: *“This world came to be on its own.” “You’re nothing more than a highly developed animal.” “When you die, that’s it. There is no heaven or hell.” “Do whatever feels right to you.” “Take whatever you feel you deserve.”*

The ultimate truth from God’s Word is this: *“You sin. I sin. But, Jesus Christ came to forgive our sins.”* Satan’s hatred for you is nowhere near as strong as your Savior’s love for you.

2. The breastplate of righteousness in place. A Roman soldier’s breastplate was bronze. Arrows were not going to pierce it and puncture a lung or the heart. Your breastplate is righteousness. You stand right in God’s sight because Jesus lived perfectly in your place, and the death he died was the penalty you deserved. No arrow or accusation of Satan can puncture that. We know for a fact that God’s verdict on Judgment Day will be: *“You are not guilty of any sin! Come into my heaven and enjoy eternal life.”*

3. Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Obviously, a warrior’s footwear was important. Without strong, well-fitted

boots, he could risk injury, or even death on the battlefield. Your footwear makes you ready to use the good news of the gospel as your defense against hell. You and your God get along. You're at peace with him. Your Savior is still in charge. Your footwear allows you to stand firm when the world seems to be falling apart around you. Your footwear also makes you ready to share the gospel with others, like your parents, or your spouse did with you.

4. The shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. A Roman soldier's shield was large enough to crouch behind – four feet tall by two-and-a-half feet wide. It was made of leather, and often soaked in water. Making it more difficult for those flaming arrows to do damage.

Satan is trying his hardest to burn up your faith, like the wildfires out west are burning up everything in sight. How helpful it is to remember that you have been soaked in the waters of your baptism. As a forgiven child of God, how helpful it is to remember that you have the shield of faith to say: *"No!"* to temptation. No matter how much firepower the devil launches at you his arrows are extinguished

5. The helmet of salvation. A soldier couldn't stay behind his shield. He needed to see the enemy. With his helmet on he could look around his shield with confidence. Nothing was going to penetrate that metal helmet. A Christian's helmet is salvation. No matter what Satan hurls at you, nothing is going to penetrate. All because Jesus forgave your sins on Good Friday, defeated death on Easter Sunday and took a victory lap around hell in between.

His salvation allows us to hold up our head with confidence and joy. When Jesus cried out from the cross: *"It is finished!"* not only was the debt paid to cover your sins, but Satan is finished, too.

6. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The sword was the soldier's weapon of choice in hand-to-hand combat. That's why it's directly connected to the Word of God. Your weapon of choice is the Bible. Think of all the Bible passages you memorized, all the Bible stories you learned, all the Bible studies you sat it and all the Bible questions you answered. It gives you the right to say, *"Satan, you can't hurt me. You thought you took care of Jesus on the cross. But he crushed your head. I read about it, I learned it and I memorized it in His Word."*

There is one more item. A Roman soldier wouldn't have used it, but a soldier of the cross, like yourself, uses it often: **Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.**

Let's be clear about one thing. Prayer is not part of the Armor God gives us. Prayer is different. God speaks to us and comes to us through the Bible, through Baptism and through the Lord Supper. We speak to God and come before God through prayer. Without God's Word coming to us first, prayer is worthless and meaningless.

When the battle got intense, a soldier would communicate with headquarters to send reinforcements. You also have a way to communicate (prayer) with headquarters (God's throne room). He's got reinforcements ready ... his angels or your fellow Christians, or both ... to strengthen you and support you.

What do we pray for in our daily battles with Satan? Pray for whatever is on your heart. Pray for your fellow believers who, like you, are also going to battle against Satan every day. Pray that we, as a congregation and as a synod, continue to proclaim the truth of God's word without any additions or subtractions. Pray for me, your pastor, so that I too keep on preaching and teaching God's Word faithfully and correctly.

So now we've laid it all out what every Christian needs to wear. Here's the key question: How does one and where does one get the Armor of God? You get it at church where you connect with God. But do you think wearing the Armor of God, for one hour of the 168 hours in your week is enough when you have Satan and all his dirty demons trying to make you forget your Savior?

Obviously, we need to wear the Armor of God and remain connected with him during the week as well. That's why reading your Bible daily prepares you so **when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.**

There! Does that help? Can you breathe a little easier? Despite everything that's going on in your life, the victory is there for you as you wear the Armor of God. So, strap on your helmet and grab your gear! Get ready to swing your sword! Satan doesn't stand a chance.