

## **“Victorious Grace”**

**Psalm 146; Ephesians 6:10-18**

November 10, 2024

### Introduction

- What's the greatest pep talk you've ever heard?
- I'm sure I've heard some good ones along the way.
  - o One, in particular, came from a basketball coach when I was really young, I remember it to this day.
    - We were up against our archrivals; they had this kid on the team named Roge.
      - He'd go on to play football at Carolina and was just an incredible athlete.
    - To beat the team, we'd need to be at our best.
    - And while I don't remember the exact words, I do remember how we felt going out onto that court.
      - We felt like we could beat the Tar Heels that day and that was back when Michael Jordan was there.
- But there are some great pep talks recorded in history. My favorite, I think comes to us from Shakespeare.
  - o King Henry the Fifth has invaded France to assert his claim to their throne.
  - o He's not done terribly well but now stands at a place called Agincourt. A castle he wants to take.
  - o He makes a famous speech; a pep talk to his troops.
    - “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.”
      - Makes me want to go out and kill some Frenchmen.
        - o It does the job, the British win the battle and Henry wins.
- Paul, at the end of Ephesians, has given us a pep talk for the ages, hasn't he?
  - o This is the final sermon in my series on Ephesians and it serves as a good opportunity for us to look back at what we've learned.
    - We've learned that there is a cosmic plan in place for our redemption.
      - One that began before the foundations of the Earth.
      - One that is ongoing now, as sinners come to the Lord Jesus Christ and find salvation.
    - We've talked about the ease with which redemption enters our life.
      - We simply begin to believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead.
    - We've talked about how we are children of God and that confers us with an identity that can never be taken from us.
      - No matter what becomes of us on this side of eternity, we are known and beloved by a loving God who has shown us the depth of his Love in Jesus Christ.
- Here, though, before getting into the pep talk, Paul needs to alert us to the stakes.
  - o We are engaged in a cosmic struggle.
    - We tend to think of life as a lazy river, just flowing along.
      - But the Bible gives us something different.
        - o A battle.
    - One whose outcome we need to establish in the beginning, is already WON.

- That's why we call this sermon Victorious Grace, because we've already won.
  - Jesus Christ risen from the dead shows us that our final enemy, death itself has been defeated.
- But the skirmishes are ongoing and the stakes couldn't be higher.
  - Right now, evil works against good, the darkness still tries to encroach against the light.
- Paul alerts us at the beginning of our passage that we're fighting.
  - **Ephesians 6:10** – *'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.'*
    - This isn't language we Presbyterians dwell on terribly much but there it is.
      - There is a devil in the world, that's the inescapable conclusion given to us from the Bible.

## The Devil

- Thankfully, there is a lot of Devil talk that has its origins far more in literature and film than in the Bible.
  - The Bible talks about the Devil as Satan, the Tempter.
    - We meet Him first in the garden of Eden as the honey-tongued serpent who provides Adam and Eve just the right nudge to get them to transgress.
    - He also appears in the Book of Job as the one that delivers all the bad things to Job.
      - Job 1:6-12- *"The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright...'* Satan replied, *'Does Job fear God for nothing? ... But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.'*"
- Biblical interpreters look at a couple of Old Testament passages to get us to his backstory.
  - **Isaiah 14:12-15** – *"How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit."*
  - **Ezekiel 28:12-17**
- Satan was a heavenly creature that rebelled against God and that still operates with some autonomy here on Earth to this day.
  - We are warned about him in First Peter.
    - **1 Peter 5:8** – *"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith."*
- Now let's put things into some perspective.
  - Yes, the Devil is real.
  - YES ALSO, the devil has been defeated and none of God's sheep are in any danger.
    - That's the point of having God in your life, right?
      - He provides protection and care.
- But also true, the devil can cause havoc in our lives, tempting us to do things we might not normally do.
  - The Devil is out there, to be sure.
- That's the spirit we're to hear this section of Ephesians in. We're to hear it as this is an ongoing struggle that we have already won.
  - World War II analogy.

- The best way I can describe it is to think about it like World War II after the successful landing at Normandy.
- As much as we like to think about life as a lazy river, it isn't.
  - It's a bit of a warzone, where light and darkness battle.
    - The victory is assured but the skirmishes are ongoing.

### Gearing Up

- In that space where we realize that there is a cosmic battle going on and that we're called to participate in it by sharing our light and our love with the World, not by taking up arms against it, we realize we need to be equipped for the battle.
- That's what Paul gives us.
- Remember, soldiers were a common sight in the ancient near east.
  - The Romans with their pax Romana had legions everywhere.
  - So, Paul uses an image of a warrior armoring up to give us a pep talk about this ongoing fight.
- **The Belt of Truth**
  - The Belt of Truth is the first piece of armor Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:14, emphasizing its foundational role in the life of a believer. In ancient armor, the belt secured and held together the soldier's tunic and other pieces, ensuring that everything was in place before battle. Likewise, the Belt of Truth symbolizes the unshakable foundation of God's Word that binds and secures all aspects of our faith. Truth is not just a concept but a person—Jesus, who declared, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). This truth guards us against deception and keeps us anchored, allowing us to stand firm even in the face of spiritual attacks. When we buckle the truth around us, we choose to live in alignment with God's reality, resisting the lies and schemes of the enemy. Just as a soldier without a belt would be ill-prepared, a believer without truth is vulnerable; it is only with the Belt of Truth that we are fully equipped to stand firm.
- **The Breastplate of Righteousness**
  - The Breastplate of Righteousness is a vital piece of armor that Paul calls us to put on in Ephesians 6:14, symbolizing the protection God's righteousness provides to our hearts and inner being. In battle, the breastplate covered a soldier's chest, guarding vital organs, especially the heart, from fatal blows. Spiritually, righteousness acts as our defense, shielding us from guilt, accusation, and temptation. This righteousness isn't our own, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith, as 2 Corinthians 5:21 reminds us: "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*"
    - It's really important that we understand that this righteousness isn't from us.
      - We stand on the Righteousness imputed through Christ.
        - We stand upon His righteousness, not our own.
- **The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace**
  - The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace equip us to stand firm and move forward with confidence, rooted in the peace that comes from knowing Christ. In Ephesians 6:15, Paul calls us to have "*our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace,*" symbolizing stability and preparedness in spiritual battles. Just as sturdy footwear enables a soldier to stand firm on any terrain, the peace of the gospel gives us strength and grounding, even amid life's challenges and uncertainties. This peace is not passive but active, driving us to share the good news and bring God's peace to others. Anchored in Christ's peace, we can face any storm with a firm foundation, knowing that we are secure in Him and ready to carry His message of hope to the world.
- **The Shield of Faith**
  - The Shield of Faith is a powerful defense against the enemy's attacks, enabling us to stand firm in our trust in God. In Ephesians 6:16, Paul urges believers to "*take up the*

*shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.*” This shield is not just a passive protection; it actively intercepts the doubts, fears, and temptations that the enemy throws our way. Faith acts as a barrier, reminding us of God’s promises and keeping us rooted in His truth, even when circumstances are difficult. Just as a shield would cover and protect a soldier’s entire body, our faith covers us, giving us confidence and courage to stand firm. With faith as our shield, we’re able to face life’s battles, trusting that God is with us, that He is good, and that His strength will see us through every trial.

- **The Helmet of Salvation**

- The Helmet of Salvation is our defense for the mind, guarding our thoughts and giving us the assurance of God’s saving grace. In Ephesians 6:17, Paul instructs believers to *“take the helmet of salvation,”* a symbol of the protection that comes from knowing we are redeemed and secure in Christ. Just as a helmet shields a soldier’s head from deadly blows, the certainty of our salvation protects us from doubts, fears, and discouragement. This helmet reminds us that we belong to God, that our salvation is not based on our performance but on Christ’s finished work. With this assurance, our minds are safeguarded against the enemy’s lies, allowing us to think clearly and confidently as we walk in God’s promises. The Helmet of Salvation gives us the strength to persevere, knowing that, come what may, we are eternally safe in God’s hands.

- **The Sword of the Spirit**

- The Sword of the Spirit, described in Ephesians 6:17 as the *“Word of God,”* is our only offensive weapon in the armor of God, enabling us to actively counter the enemy’s lies. Unlike defensive armor, the sword allows believers to engage in spiritual battle by speaking and standing on God’s truth. Just as Jesus used Scripture to resist Satan’s temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), we wield the Word to push back against deception, fear, and temptation. The sword is both sharp and precise, providing us with the guidance and authority needed to navigate life’s battles. Armed with God’s Word, we can stand confidently, knowing we have divine wisdom and power to cut through any falsehood and to claim victory in Christ. The Sword of the Spirit reminds us that truth is our best defense and offense, empowering us to stand firm in faith.