

The Armor of God

September 2, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Kumfer

This past week Katrina and I watched all three Lord of the Rings movies. Whenever I watch these movies I'm always in awe of the scenery and stories they tell. Stories about knights and unlikely heroes fighting against what appears to be an unstoppable evil. I love seeing the knights in their armor, the battles being fought with courage, and the people being uplifted and bolded by their leaders. For whatever reason, these things get my blood pumping. I want to rush out into the battlefield of the world and fight the good fight for Christianity. But if I'm going to do that I need to put on the full armor of God that our Ephesians text describes.

I even have a piece of armor here today to do just that. This is a replica of a sword from the Lord of the Rings movie that Aragorn, uses during his days as a ranger.

When we think about armor we think about the knights fighting on the battlefield and watching them slash and clang their swords off of one another. Indeed, the majority of scenes I like from Lord of the Rings are the fights where steel flashes and metal clangs. That is the primary purpose of this type of sword. It is an offensive weapon. It is used to attack and defeat opponents with as little effect to the wielder as possible. It would be a mighty weapon and one that somehow has captured the imaginations and hearts of people across the world.

The armor of God has a sword too, and that sword, along with the whole armor, is described to us not as a physical weapon such as

this one but as one we have by our side always when we need it. We are to use it in our battles.

In every battle, there is a memorable villain. For Lord of the Rings its Sauron, for the Avengers it's Thanos, and for us.... well, it's a little harder to see. We indeed are fighting a battle. As for who is our enemy we tend to go with the ones who are against our beliefs or who think we're outdated and useless in today's modern society. We think that the people with their anger, or immorality, or their lack of faith or faith in false gods are the ones who are fighting against us in our Christianity. But if those are the ones who we view as our true enemy we are fighting the wrong battle.

In the very beginning of his dialogue on the armor of God, Paul tells us, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Our true enemy isn't one another or those who disagree with us. Our true enemy is the evil one and those who work on his behalf. This tells us that every battle we face is a spiritual battle! There is no shortage of battles that distract us from this principle. We face grief, suffering, pain, anger, frustration, greed, lust, apathy, guilt, and the list goes on. It's easy for us to battle against other people, but it scares us to think our battle is against something else.

But I believe that God knew this. He knows that we will be fighting a battle. And for this reason, He provides the armor. Paul begins, "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." The Concordia Commentary on Ephesians reminds us, "It is not the Christian's strength, but the Lord's that counts. The Lord provides the armor, with which the Christian is 'clothed'. Just as no raw recruit in the army would claim to provide his own arms when he is mustered, so the Christian merely receives what he is given from the Lord." Not only is it the armor given to us but it is intact the Lord's own armor that we put on. It's the same armor that God uses to be successful in His battles, given to us.

Anyway, back to the armor, “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Wearing all this armor might be pretty impressive.

The Roman armor that Paul was referencing probably looked something like this. You have all the essential pieces of the armor here except for one; the sword. I want to use the sword to point out one essential difference in our traditional understanding of armor versus the armor of God. In traditional understandings, the sword is the primary weapon. It is used to attack and fight the enemy. Its purpose is to defeat whatever enemy is before us. It is an offensive weapon. This sword would serve that purpose very well. But the sword Paul had in mind might be more akin to this one.

If we look back at the passage from Ephesians, we see that there is nothing that tells us to attack. We aren't taking the offensive with the armor of God. This armor isn't for us to use to battle against the enemy with the hopes of defeating him because we would fail.

The key difference of the armor of God is that it's a defensive armor. All of the verbs in the armor of God text from Ephesians are passive. There isn't a single one of them telling us to go out and fight for our faith. We don't contribute to this battle because the battle has already been won. Jesus took care of that when he entered into human flesh. He lived lives like ours. He suffered and died on behalf of us. And he rose again to assure the victory. We contribute nothing to the end of this battle because there is no need for us too. The battle is won!!!! Victory is ours!!!

But, we need to ask, if this is the case why do we need the armor? Our commentator from before puts it very well, “The Christian is certainly active in the battle, holding up the shield of faith and wielding the sword of God's Word. A defensive understanding of the passage does not imply that the Christian may forsake the gifts

that are given for his defense as if God will defend him apart from means. But the weapons operate with and depend on the Lord's strength, not our own. And the tactics of battle must follow the Lord's plan and mandates, not our own. Although Christ has won the victory, the fight is not over so long as Christians remain in this age. The Christian may fight an internal battle against the desires of the 'flesh.' There is also an external battle brought on by the visible enemies of the Christian church: false teachers and oppressive governments, pagan neighbors and the enticements of the old Gentile life. But Paul insists that these 'blood and flesh' figures are not the real enemy."

He says this because the battle is still raging, and there are battles that we fight. Though Christ has won the battle for us there is still much to do. The devil is attacking us and his influence is the greatest in this world today. This tells us that those who are flesh and blood are simply those who are in need of rescue.

So we are strengthened and stand firm. We stand firm in the knowledge that Christ has won the victory. We stand firm, battling against the spiritual forces so that they don't overtake us. We stand firm and await the glorious day when Christ returns to complete his victory over the evil one.

But as we stand firm we need to know that the battle will become greater as the day approaches. Even amongst our own church and community, the battle will grow. As we launch into our visioning next week we will be focusing on life change and how being a Christian isn't just for Sunday mornings. It is for every day. And we will be attacked when we are following God's way and being led by Him. But, don't be discouraged. Take up, not the sword of attack, but, the armor of God which strengthens us and reminds us that the victory has already been won. In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.