

LSB Ephesians 6:10 - 17 P.t. 6

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 authorities, 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, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, 17 also receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

When I am alone in my study working through the texts, studying what will be presented to you on Sunday mornings, I always know where to begin, but I never know how far I will get in a passage.

That's because this is a collaborative effort. Last week we ended speaking about the gospel of peace, saying that when that gospel is prepared, backwards and forwards, in your memory banks, understood in every facet that God has graciously allowed us to understand it, that preparation part is in place, there will be times when you are almost surprised to hear what your mouth is saying.

That's the element of collaboration. God's living Holy Spirit in combination with truth, and righteousness in the truth which you've also girded on, may surprise you, where He takes you, and what comes out of your mouth when you get there.

I can't resist illustrating this truth with a story from the book of Acts. Chapter 8, a familiar story that pictures for us what happened to one soldier who was out moving around with his gospel shoes on. Philip with some

other gospelers had been visiting towns in Samaria and they had gone back to Jerusalem when this story happens.

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Rise up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) 27 So he rose up and went; and behold, there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." 30 And Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

***"As a sheep is led to slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He does not open His mouth.***

***33 In humiliation His judgment was taken away;
Who will recount His generation?
For His life is removed from the earth."***

34 And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you earnestly, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him. 36 And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

In 2024, the first century apostolic miracles are no longer present, we don't hear audible voices from an angel of the Lord, but, if we have our gospel footwear on, in readiness, along with a solid foundation of truth, and a life

of personal righteousness, God has a way of getting us in front of or next to who it is He wants to communicate with.

The signs and wonders have ceased. The church is established. But the gospel has not changed and God will use anyone who has their shoes on who are ready to go. The signs and miracles are finished but the collaboration between God's Holy Spirit getting gospelers next to the elect who need to hear the truth has never ceased.

Well, there you go, I started to say in this collaborative effort of study for these manuscripts I never know how far I'm going to get in the passage, and the perfect tie between last weeks study about the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the next pieces of armor, flooded my mind, things I hadn't thought about previously that came in the instant.

This week I hope to maybe cover two more pieces of our armor in this battle.

And the first question that keeps coming up over and over is; What battle?

If you were a christian, in Syria, this week, you wouldn't ask that question. Right? Islam just gained a foothold it didn't have before. The old government didn't like christians, but they were tolerated to a point. No one knows what will unfold as a new government in that vacuum.

Here's what we are learning though. As civilization devolves, and governments are cast out with the garbage, we aren't seeing what Marxism promised in it's ideology of revolution that brings in equality and order. In Haiti, the government fell, and now the only government is gang rule. 200 people died because one gang leader was told his sons death was caused by voodoo. So he killed 200 people in Port au Prince. That's what Satan does.

Or if you're a christian in Nigeria, you may be running from place to place trying to stay ahead of the kill squads who line christians up and kill them.

If you question whether there is a battle, you simply need to go backwards

to verse 12 and remind yourself again.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Satan has battle plans tailor made for different areas around the globe. In Nigeria, murder. In Syria, fear and intimidation. In Haiti, superstition. In our land, secularism and godlessness. Increasing, incrementally. Without a godly influence the world just devolves deeper and deeper into satanic darkness.

Last evening, we decided to watch Beetlejuice Beetlejuice, the 2024 sequel to the 1988 movie. A 36 year span. And I came away thinking of how wickedness has changed, gotten worse, in that third century span.

The new movie is darker, more satanic, stupider, and sadly for those of us who want to relax and watch a story unfold for an hour or so, the vulgarity is blatantly vile. The 1988 movie had an innocent silliness by comparison.

It's almost as if the money people in wherever movies get made have made it perfectly clear, we're not going to invest the capital unless you can guarantee us an R rated movie pushing the envelope towards X, if there is such a thing anymore.

Satan did that. He doesn't murder christians in our land. Yet. But he gives us ease and boredom. We want to be entertained in our ease. And he ensures in that entertainment a slow death by incrementally poisoning my mind with visions of sin.

Gambling. Al Mohler had a piece saying wagering in our land has gone from 7 billion to 150 billion dollars since 2018. Seven years. Everywhere you look, darkness is increasing and morality and decency are vanishing.

It seems like we may have a little win in the Wokeness Diversity Equity

and Inclusion arena. Ordinary Americans are beating back those encroaching weeds, for now, but they'll just regroup and come back fiercer than ever.

There is a war. Where we live it's all the old boundaries collapsing and an onslaught of filth and sin in drowning proportions getting thrown at us. I may have to opt for Turner classic movie channel and only watch the stuff from 1949. Those had plenty of sin going on, but it was discreet.

Our war in this land is directed at the first two pieces of armor. Truth and righteousness are under continual and fearsome attack. There is no sky God. Therefore there are no absolute moral laws. No truth is absolute. All we have is science and experts. Anything goes. Discover *your* truth.

I'll say one thing. It's a tough mission field. But that directly leads us with logical necessity to our next piece of armor.

16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,

The armor is in three's. The first three are attached to the soldier's body. They go where he goes, automatically. Shoes and breastplate and belt.

The next three are tertiary. That doesn't mean they're less important. But it does explain Paul's use of the language where he says, *in addition to all*.

You've got your battle dress on, now pick up some defensive and offensive weapons and get into the fray. It's like the draft. You get inducted into the war, but you don't immediately get thrust into a front line situation.

There's boot camp to toughen you up and educate you on how the war works when you do end up on the front line. There's a preparation period. You don't go into the heat of battle unprepared.

You need a firm foundation in truth. A real workable knowledge of God's

word. And we'll see that with the shield. We've girded our loins with a belt of truth. And we've put on a practical real righteousness based in the absolute truths of God's book. And having got that foundation in place we've prepared and understood the gospel that can rescue perishing people trapped in sin.

Now it's time to get in the battle. And we'll need a shield.

16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,

In verse 15 we have the word, *preparation*. Now in verse 16 we *take up*. Actually it's in the past tense, *having taken up*. Preparation time is far enough along that the time has come to take up the weapons of defense and offense. Time to get in the battle and fight.

What are the *flaming arrows of the evil one*?

We know who the evil one is. That's a very common and often used designation for Satan who has usurped authority over this planet and who holds slaves in bondage to and because of sin.

What are the flaming arrows? All we need to do is go to the first 3 recorded words we know of from Satan's mouth. In Genesis chapter 3. In the midst of edenic bliss, Satan shows up and asks Eve a question framed with these 3 words. *Hath God said?*

In our current predicament in America, Satan's been able to adjust his attack to not just, Has God said, to; there isn't any God and whether someone thinks he said something or not, is moot. Meaningless. We don't care what you think your sky God said. We believe He is NOT.

Sort of gets right to the basic issue doesn't it. When Moses spoke with God at the burning bush and asked Him what His name was, God said, my name is; I Am that I Am.

In our post, post-modern world Satan no longer says, Hath God said, he begins with the premise, what God? Him? Nonsense. Only lunatics believe in some sky God who speaks. Dangerous lunatic radicalised people believe in some kind of a God. That's where our secularized culture has landed.

How do we do combat with those flaming arrows coming at us like machine gun bursts these days? Faith. *16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,*

There are many definitions of faith in God's spoken Word but let me take you to a couple of them that define Paul's argument and why it works.

Hebrews 11 and verse 1; *Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

One of Satan's most effective modern tactics in the post post modern world is to teach that only what Science can see and measure is real. The physical world. Secularism is based right here.

If you are convinced of and believe things that cannot be seen or measured are real, you're a buffoon. You get lumped together with conspiracy theorist type lunatic folk.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

We believe in things we have not yet seen. We have been told things in words in a book which claims it is the revelation from the Creator of things not seen and not able to be found out with our 5 senses that are real and true. X2

I've been talking all morning about a battle in a spirit world we cannot see.

Angels and demons causing things we can see, like slaughters in Haiti and governments crumbling leaving christians in increased danger. We believe there are forces in this cosmos, this world system, spiritual forces of evil, causing chaos and death.

Likewise we believe in a Creator who has set a time in time and space when His sovereign plan to retake this world and cast out Satan the usurper and rule in absolute righteousness is coming. In fact about a third of our book speaks of that ultimate conclusion in some form or another.

The whole of the book from beginning to end is about this unseen battle between God and Satan. Satan said he would be like the Most High, and the Most High cast him and a third of the angelic beings out of heaven.

Satan captured this planet in his rebellion. When Adam and Eve sinned, the entire human race that issued from them were born into their rebellion. But God in infinite grace and mercy is working to not simply wipe the rebellion clean and start over, it pleased our God, in love and grace and mercy to redeem fallen men. To purchase them out of the rebellion and adopt them into His family. It cost Him His Son's life in trade for ours.

Then we are told that the Son, who rose up from the dead and ascended back into heaven with His Father, will return to this planet that is in Satan's rebellion, and He will in an unimaginable conflagration crush all rebellion, burn all rebellors with fire, lock satan away in chains, and rule here, on earth, which is returned to edenic splendor, He will rule in Jerusalem on David's throne for a thousand years.

Beginning of problem in Genesis 3. Problem completed with utter victory by God over Satan in Revelation 22. And everything in between is all the history leading to God's utter final victory, with His redeemed saints with Him for eternity in glory. Finally a new heavens and new earth.

We haven't seen any of that. With our physical senses. But we believe it.

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen.*

Conviction. I am convinced of things I can only read of but haven't experienced with my 5 senses. Why? Well, because of what I can see.

It isn't really any more complicated than; pinch yourself, there you are. Although Satan is doing his best to complicate that simplicity with all of the lies, just in the last 150 years or so, of so called learning. Evolution made it possible for the first time in history to deny God. Nonsense, but for those who desire to suppress the truth, nonsense is fine. You want to eliminate God, we can work with nonsense.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge....

I believe in things not seen because of what I can see.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19 For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse.

The creation is enough. God says so. Ever wonder why it is that big cities seem to be more godless than rural areas. Secularism and godlessness thrive better in concrete jungles. Living out here in God's wide open creation, beautiful and undisturbed makes it much more difficult to abandon God. His creation is hard to ignore.

Beyond those things that God has provided for all creation, which is enough to hold them fully accountable for their rebellion against Him, I

also enjoy the personal witness of forgiveness. The burden of my sin was lifted. The debt I owed to the Creator for my rebellion against Him, a debt I was bankrupt to ever repay, was paid for me.

I have a real peace inside my heart because I'm forgiven. And beyond even that, I have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling inside my heart. Outside evidence in creation. Inside evidence in my cleansed and relieved of sin heart.

Creation. Debt forgiven. Indwelling presence and downpayment for all of the future promises. For all of those reasons and more I'm very sure I haven't even thought of; *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

That word, conviction, is the horrific word to secularist people. Because I am convinced of all the things I cannot see, I am compelled by my conviction to live within the limits and boundaries a God whom I have never seen orders. Faith compels me to live within God's laws.

That idea horrifies secular society. Wild eyed Christians doing what their sky God insists upon. Constrained by some morality outlined within the pages of an ancient book. Convinced their book is absolute truth. When they describe believers as **people of faith**, it isn't a compliment in their minds.

Satan is bombarding me with lies, but I have a shield that protects me. The shield of faith.

OK, here's some simple math for you. Faith in what? Faith is not a stand alone element. Faith requires something else in order to have any meaning. We laugh at that stupid song. I believe, I believe. Good for you, the demons also believe and tremble. Belief is empty, at best, if that's all there is.

Jesus told the devil; 4 *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall*

not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Your shield of faith is only viable, only possible, only available to you if you first have the belt of truth. Your shield of faith is nothing unless it has truth to believe IN. If you don't have something to believe IN, your shield is just air. The more truth you own, the thicker and bigger your shield becomes.

I've noticed something new that Satan is doing in our days just within the past few weeks. So I'm an old Ford nut, and I'm in it at a level that the world loves to call "expert" these days. Also a word that is rapidly becoming valueless. But that's another sermon.

I'm an expert on antique Ford's. What I'm noticing lately though, on Facebook, God bless their pointy heads, but lately I'm seeing more and more computer generated pictures of non real things, things that are a conglomerate of elements of other photographs that make up a new artificial intelligence photograph of something not real.

A conglomeration of bits and pieces in a computer that looks almost real. And with these non images assembled by a computer is a long winded nonsensical history about the picture, also written by AI, full of known errors.

Here is a google generated definition of AI, artificial intelligence;
Artificial intelligence (AI) is a set of technologies that enable computers to perform a variety of advanced functions, including the ability to see, understand and translate spoken and written language, analyze data, make recommendations, and more.

So there is a 4 long paragraph history about the 1927 Ford Model A full of errors and the picture is sort of a Model T with bits from a Model A and bits from nowhere at all, just generated from nothing, and I look at this nonsense and ask myself why.

The picture I included with your bulletin this morning is a teaching example. It's a nonsense picture of a computer generated steam locomotive, mostly British, hanging in space, over a computer generated river with some assemblage humans. That's OK if it told me that. But it claims to be an image of a real thing in real history. It IS NOT. It is artificial intelligence nonsense.

What is behind this AI (artificial intelligence) non reality. What is the motivation to re-write history with non reality doing the writing. Computer generates the image of nothing and writes a long history that is full of errors.

The history of the actual thing is well documented. I have to ask myself, why are we pouring out nonsense that over time will confuse and corrupt the actual documented history and ultimately replace it with nonsense that never was and errors about the reality?

A computer generated picture of a non thing with information full of errors that claims to be a true thing at a point in history. Frightening. This is just the tip of the iceberg folks. And an insignificant area that I happen to have 60 years of actual experience.

Think about our verse; *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Our sole protection is in faith in reality that we have not seen. Satan is pouring out parallel realities of things we have seen, and those who don't have expertise are easily confused. I think it's pretty clear that this new invention of AI is a satanic influence to confuse and corrupt actual history based truths with computer generated nonsense.

Nonsense about Model T Ford's is harmless although for those of us who happen to care about those particular antiques and the related history, it's greatly irritating. But it won't keep anyone out of heaven.

But like I said, this is the very tip of the iceberg. This is all brand new. I wasn't seeing this stuff even 6 months ago.

What happens when AI re-writes and corrupts the history in the Bible? Changes it just enough so that there is confusion. But beyond confusion, the erosion and corruption of reality we trusted for centuries.

Thousands of years of scribal copying of the scriptures undone by artificial intelligence. The basic foundation of my belief system confused and eroded and corrupted by AI tampering. What is real? What is AI?

I'm thinking I need to buy a big heavy antique safe and lock up my Bible. It's going to become the most valuable connection to reality we have.

I believe in things I can't see. But Satan is undermining all the things I could see. Computers are re-writing history. My faith is based in the realities of history. What happens when that connection to reality and history based in recorded realities is blurred by corruption?

I hope you see the danger on the horizon. I hope you don't accuse me of a nonsensical rant about nothing. Time will tell. But I can point to one little portion of history that I do know what is true and what is error being re-written, so why not jump to the logical conclusion. This will be a game changer for Satan.

Pilate asked Jesus "*What is truth*" when the truth was standing right in front of him. What will be left when AI has turned actual truth into a blur. Everythings a blur. Anyone who points to anything and says it is absolute truth is laughed at. You can no longer trust what your eyes see or your ears hear. It's all just a corrupted blend of artificial intelligence. Nothing's real.

16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Satan's first flaming dart that killed Eve began with him saying, "Hath God said?". After AI turns history into a blurred and corrupted non reality, Satan can say more than ever before; Hath God said. Maybe. But no one's really sure. AI successfully corrupted both assurance and reality.

Satan is in a war with both truth and faith. I believe he is behind a mass rush for computers to corrupt both of those pieces of armor. Christians beware.



Exploration Of History

A steam locomotive is transported across the Rio Grande River via a cable in New Mexico, USA. 1915.

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