

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

What – The Apostle Paul wrote this letter as a circulatory letter to all the churches in Asia minor. Many of Paul's letters were written to address specific heresies. This letter was written to encourage and teach as it was passed on from church to church. Ephesus sat on a major trade route, making it a crucial city to aid in the spread of the gospel and the advice Paul was giving. Because it is so practical and general in its nature, this letter has been a favorite in the church for centuries. It is worth mentioning that there are early copies of this letter addressed to the church at Laodicea. Since Laodicea sat on the same trade route and was less than 100 miles from Ephesus, this really does not change the power or meaning of the letter. In chapter 6, Paul specifically encouraged Christians to live fully in the power that their faith in Jesus supplies them. As the church began to be persecuted this was an especially important message. While the method of persecution may have changed, we are no less in need today of a reminder of the power afforded us by the gospel. Our faith is still under attack, we are still in a battle, and we still need the armor of God if we are going to be successful in serving God with all that we have.

Why – This scripture is important because as we investigate the life of the recipients of this letter, we see a parallel to our own spiritual journey. Whether this letter was written to the Laodicean church or the Ephesian church, we know some things about these people. Paul commended them in this letter (see Ephesians 1:15) for their faith. While they were obviously new Christians, they were also headed in the right direction. In contrast to this, approximately thirty years later, when John wrote the Book of Revelation, Jesus chastises the church at Ephesus for “forsaking its first love” (see Rev 2:4) and the church at Laodicea for being “lukewarm” (see Rev 3:16). Clearly these churches had lost the fervor that they had when Paul had written to them, and in only one or two generations. Likewise, many believers follow this same path in their spiritual lives. They start out strong. They grow and seek God in everything. As they walk this path, however, they lose their spiritual passion. Many fall into routine, becoming “lukewarm”, while others find goals to pursue other than those laid out by Christ for His church. They lose their first love. We must guard our spirituality like the precious gift it is. I believe Paul foresaw this struggle when he closed his letter with these specific instructions for how to fight the goods fight.

WOW – The battle plan laid out here is beautiful and practical. Paul compared our faith to a Roman soldier, giving the people of his day a practical picture to help them understand their faith. First, he identifies the enemy, Satan. Sin is not a product of God, and our battle is not against man, but the devil. Truth is our belt. A soldier's belt held his entire uniform together, and truth, better described as integrity, weaves our spiritual life together as a cohesive unit. Righteousness, or “doing the right thing”, protects our heart. What a powerful statement to a culture that has lost all sense of right and wrong unless defined by the moment. We are to be ready, at peace with what ever God might call us to do, and our faith, a belief that God is all and sustains all, protects us from the projectiles of the devil. No truer statement could be made. When we START with our faith as a basic assumption, the arrows of our modern culture, such as evolution and self-reliance, just fall meaninglessly to the ground. Finally, we protect our brain with our salvation, the

actions that stem from our faith, and we attack Satan with our only offensive weapon, the Word of God, our sword of the Spirit. It is amazing to compare this verse with the fourth chapter of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah's men were under attack, they did their work with one hand and carried their sword in the other. We are to take the Word with us everywhere we go. Moses told the Israelites to put it on their hearts and talk about it always (See Deut 6:6-9). In the end, Paul reminds us to pray. The armor that he described is the ARMOR OF GOD. It is not the armor of man. Without prayer, the armor is worthless. God empowers it, like He empowers us when we follow Him in faith into battle.