

WORSHIP for March 14, 2021

Prelude played & sung by Brent Miller, “Find Us Faithful”

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynN_rO7_KsY&list=PLAdy2hvW6PL8_IitXDbTRrCeI331DmVVU&index=1

Call to Worship: Psalm 85:7, 9-10 Responsively

Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

Opening Hymn: “Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0cSJXnM6Xk>

Prayer of Confession: Ephesians 2:1-3 Responsively

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

(Pause now for a time of silent confession.)

Assurance of Forgiveness: Ephesians 2:4-10 Responsively

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression – it is by grace you have been saved.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

In order that in the coming he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves.

It is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

“The Gloria Patri”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgcYD_m4OhU

Hymn of Preparation: “Come Thou Almighty King”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Iso_fCDtHq

“Scripture cannot be set aside... What does Scripture say?” John 10:35 & Romans 4:3.

Prayer for Illumination: *Unison*

Lord, through your Spirit enable us to consider your Word, and to enact it in our lives to bring you glory and praise. Amen.

Scripture Readings: Ephesians 6:16-17

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6%3A16-17&version=NIV>

SERMON: “Shield of Faith” by The Reverend Dr. Janet Hufford

Watch sermon on: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAdy2hvW6PL93B6hbgswTxf93Evs575yd>

For the last two weeks we heard of the protective apparel for members in the family of God. First we heard of an armor of light to penetrate the powers of darkness that combat against God’s family. Last week we heard of three specific pieces of armor that Christ bore and put upon us: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace. Today we hear of the last three pieces of armor: shield, helmet, and sword. Though these are also bore and given to us by Christ, we must actively take them and apply them to serve their purpose in protection. These are the obvious subjects of this 3 point sermon.

Now let us begin with our taking up the helmet of salvation. Like the boots, breastplate, and belt, this piece of armor is not fashioned by us. The helmet of salvation comes only through Christ. The helmet is not our work. We are not the blacksmith who forges metal into armor of our preferred shape. We do not even start and stoke the fire. The fire that fuels the work is the refining fire of the Holy Spirit. The work of salvation in the helmet is not our work. The helmet is offered to us as a pure gift of grace through the work of Jesus on the cross, who at his point of death exclaimed, “It is finished.” But the gift of the helmet of salvation is not put on us, like the boots, breastplate, and belt. Since it is offered to us to choose or not choose according to our own free will, we must make the choice in whether or not to take it. Still note that the first action is God’s offering, followed by our decision whether or not to accept the gift of grace. Now consider the function of the helmet. Like other pieces of armor, the helmet offers protection, in this case specifically for the head to shield the brain, the most vital of all organs! Besides the helmet being one of protection, it also a covering. In taking up and putting on the helmet, we intentionally choose Jesus to be the covering over us. He becomes the head of us, over all our thoughts and desires. In following Christ, we submit to him, to become likeminded with him. We desire for his thoughts to be our thoughts. Through the helmet our thoughts become captive, guarded and guided through the Spirit of Christ. Though admittedly, we can combat against the influence of the helmet of salvation. We can work against the Father’s will in our life. We can forget our first love. We can break our vows and betray our Lord. And admittedly we do. We are not perfect soldiers. But if we work our salvation with fear and trembling, as 1John 1:8 directs, confessing our sin, Jesus who “is faithful and just... will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Little children without realizing the risk may refuse to wear their hats, pulling them off and tossing them aside, but let us take and wear the helmet of salvation.

The first defensive piece of armor that we are told to take up is the shield of faith, with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Like the helmet of salvation, we take up this piece of armor. However, the shield of faith is different than any other piece of armor. The helmet, boots, breastplate, & belt are for us as individuals. So is the shield, since at 2.5 feet wide and 4 feet tall when crouched behind or underneath it, carriers shield their entire body, unlike other pieces that only protect a part of the person. Remember, too, that Ephesians is about family, comprised of members. Consider also how soldiers can link together their shields to protect everyone in the unit. Ephesians is about being in God's family unit. In addition, the flaming arrows of the evil one might be aimed to destroy homes & other household goods, needed to care for the family. The shield can extinguish flaming arrows to protect the household as a whole! Note that the shield is of faith. Our faith, belief, or trust in Jesus as our Savior is that which protects us. The enemy may try to convince us that we are not saved, that Jesus does not defend us, that eternal life is not ours. These are flaming arrows. They are lies. They are deceptions of the enemy. When we ask, sometimes we hear those who say they are Christians answer, "I hope so" or "I think so." We need to take up the shield of faith and say with certainty, because I belong to Jesus, because he died for me, and because Jesus says so, I am saved. I am in the family of God. I have eternal life with Jesus. And we need to take up the shield of faith to pray for those for whom we are responsible and have prayed that they will not depart from the faith in which they have been raised! Don't stop praying. The shield of faith is better than our car windshield that protects the people who journey with us from wind and flying debris. The shield of faith is better than the bullet proof glass on a security limousine or the armored car. We bear his family coat of arms, which distinguishes us as belonging his household. We are baptized in the name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. We are shielded by Jesus.

Last but certainly not least is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The sword, like the shield, is unique. The sword, unlike any other item of armor, is a weapon of offense. All other weapons are ones of defense. With the sword, battles are fought and won. But like the helmet & the shield, the sword needs to be taken up. The sword needs to be wielded. The sword needs to be used. Consider the nature of the sword. First, the sword cannot be lost. The sword is sheathed and carried at one's core, from the belt of truth. In Revelation 1:16 Jesus is said to have coming out of his mouth a sharp, double-edged sword. Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Every thing is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." The verse in Hebrews corresponds to that in Ephesians 6 where the sword of the Spirit is defined as the word of God. This teaching in Ephesians 6 is not new to us. Over & over we have heard that Scripture must be used as the means to discern what is the truth of God. But are we in regular practice of training with the sword of the Spirit? Do we know the word of God and regularly resort to it? Or do we leave it in its sheath when times of hardship and battle come? Or worse yet, do we forget where we have put it for lack of use? We must become accustomed to carrying and employing the word of God. It is our only offensive weapon against the enemy.

We must “take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Don’t take my word for it. Without hesitation take God’s Word.

The enemy is our foe. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. To fight against the one who seeks to kill, steal & destroy from us, our family, and the family of God, take up the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. Stand on the solid ground of Christ alone.

Affirmation of Faith:

Ephesians 6:10-17

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6%3A10-17&version=NIV>

Colossians 3:12-14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A12-14&version=NIV>

Hymn of Response: “O Worship the King”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAl5pWbjKQc>

PRAYERS of Joy and Concern, followed by:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Please Continue to Give in Dedication to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus

Prayer Of Dedication: *Unison*

Jesus, Our Savior. In view of your mercy, we offer up our thanks thru giving. Amen.

Doxology

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqpXWF15avU>

Closing Hymn: “Standing on the Promises”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yc6iH-HW-A>

Benediction: Ephesian 6:23-24 *Responsively*

Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love,... in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**